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OVERLIGHT



The Roleplaying Game of Kaleidoscopic Journeys

RENEGADE GAME STUDIOS


OVERLIGHT

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Before suns and moons and light, there was a great emptiness that did not know itself. *It had no eyes to see itself, no hands to feel its face, and no tongue to taste its breath.*

So from the center of this beginning-less awareness an invisible flame burned into being, and from its warm heart came the Light.

And so it was that the first Light came to be. The Light announced itself at the center of the boundless ocean of emptiness, and its long rays reached into that void and found no end to it.

And so it was that the Light's desire was to give warmth, and with its rays it caused the darkness to huddle around it. And so was made the first Other — and with it, the first shadow.

The shadow was of the light as much as anything and, bearing a great love for it, the Light searched the dark for secret cause and brought wondrous forms into being. It warmed these Countless Things and brought them into being, and the Light forever washed over them.

Soon, the great emptiness was hardly emptiness at all — the great sea was now filled with forms and light, and the emptiness sat beneath it all and knew the joy of Creation and of being its source.

Motivated to give illumination and warmth to all things, the Light divided into many stars that were no smaller or larger than the Light when it was one. The stars each had their own rays and gave warmth to many distant spheres, the faces and forms of which remain unknown to the Folk, to this very day.

And as the myriad worlds began to glow with the Light, the stars felt love for what they lit and, to care for all within the Light, gave up their most precious radiance. Those rays became flowing serpents — and those serpents, the custodians of our world.

The eight longest and most radiant serpents forged, from the Light's very heart, the Eight Keys that can unlock those secrets of Creation that had been hidden since time without beginning.

And each serpent but one bestowed their gifts in turn, and there was no world that was more serpent-blessed than our own world-that-was. Touched by each key, in turn, it flourished in its display of the Countless Things and, most curious among these Things, humanity.

The luminous guardians cared for all that the starlight shone upon, and humanity manifested wisdom and civilization upon its world and, amidst towers and temples, turned its gaze to the heavens.

And so it was.
And humanity proved wise.
And humanity proved cunning.
And humanity proved kind.
And humanity proved strong of will.
And humanity proved persevering.
And humanity proved powerful.
And in this way, humanity earned their initiations through ordeal and the revelation of mysteries.
It was by these Virtues that the Light's serpents considered the fate of humanity. Was it time to reveal unto this sovereign race the keys and secrets by which they were made?
Seven felt no, but one stood against seven and said that humanity had earned its place — earned its turn to take up the Keys so it may choose its place among the stars.
But it was even this dissonant serpent that warned of the eighth key. The Black Key. A forbidden key.
In turn, humanity made quick use of the keys, adorning its world in splendor and wonders exceeding all dream and aspiration.
Despite such glorious power, the mystery of the Black Key proved too great to go unraveled, and so it was that the world-that-was was unmade.

The sky was black and the Sun was at its center.
Space undid itself around the edges of that great white disk and fell.
As it fell, the world broke and men were tossed from their temples and clung to the pieces of the shattered world-that-was.
The black of space unfurled beneath us as a boundless sea that still pulses with the dying stars frozen within its murk.
And then it stopped.
It all stopped.
The falling shards of the world froze in their places and the Seven were made new.
It was then that humanity looked down from the edges of its broken world and knew what it had done and trembled.
But even as it feared the dark sea below, a warm light shone on its back, and humanity once more turned its gaze to heaven.
Above, more radiant and giving than ever, the Absolute light. The light eternal and first.

The Overlight, we called it.
And it is by its colored rays that you will know your power, oh Skyborn child…





CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Overlight*, a role-playing game of kaleidoscopic fantasy among the shards of a broken world. It's a world in which seven great continents hang in the sky, stacked almost vertically, far above an unending sparkling sea. And shining down upon it all is a limitless light, emanating not from a great sun or moon, but from the sky itself: the hallowed Overlight.

The heroes of this world are called the Skyborn. These individuals are born to disparate Folk and cultures the world over, and on some deep genetic or spiritual level are driven to make the world a better place, knowing in their hearts that things are not as they should be. The Skyborn are able to consciously manipulate the Overlight, fracturing it into seven distinct colors and using it to power remarkable abilities called Chroma.

WHAT IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME?

It may be that Overlight is your first experience with role-playing games, often called RPGs for

short. Sometimes these games are also referred to as *tabletop* or *pencil-and-paper* RPGs, to distinguish them from the computer or video game console RPGs that are now so familiar to many people.

Simply put, a role-playing game is a shared storytelling activity with a set of rules to help guide the drama and narrative. It's a lot like playing cops-and-robbers as kids, only now there are rules to help settle any arguments about whether or not you "got hit." Plus, we like to think we're telling more nuanced stories.

The players of an RPG each create a unique character, defining the role that they will play throughout the stories. These characters are called *player characters* (or PCs). But one player has a special role. Known as the *Gamemaster* (or GM), they will be the one who creates the overarching story and plot through which the PCs are guided. They will act as a narrator of sorts, spooling out the story to the other players, while simultaneously acting out the roles of the other inhabitants of Overlight — friends and enemies alike! These other characters are called *non-player characters* (or NPCs).

The GM is not playing "against" the other players, as their role is to instead act as rules judge and story facilitator. Ultimately, it is their job to make sure everyone is having a good time and that each player is contributing to telling the sorts of stories that the group will enjoy.

An RPG doesn't have winners and losers — all of the players, including the GM, are enriched by the tapestry of story that they weave with each other over the course of multiple sessions. You can tell a complete story in a single game lasting a few hours, but the most rewarding experience will likely spring from a larger story, spread out across many game sessions and lasting months or even years.

WHAT IS KALEIDOSCOPIC FANTASY?

When we think of fantasy, most of us conjure up images of elves, wizards, and dragons. We think of tales strongly rooted in western folklore and history, or at least in the stories of J.R.R. Tolkien — dark lords, abandoned underground holds, and bands of heroes questing to foil the schemes of some world-ending evil. Or maybe we think of the gritty dirt-beneath-your-fingernails fantasy of seminal sword-and-sorcery author Robert E. Howard and the new "grimdark" standard bearers like Joe Abercrombie. A lot of our fantasy role-playing tropes come from these and similar sources.

Kaleidoscopic fantasy (a term that we have ourselves created) draws its DNA from some very different places. Most importantly, the aesthetic tone is quite distinctive. Kaleidoscopic fantasy springs from the artwork of such luminaries as Roger Dean, Julie Bell, Moebius, and the early fantasy-themed work of Olivia de Berardinis. Bright colors, a riotous explosion of life, and fantastic beasts rooted more in the natural world than in nightmarish visions.

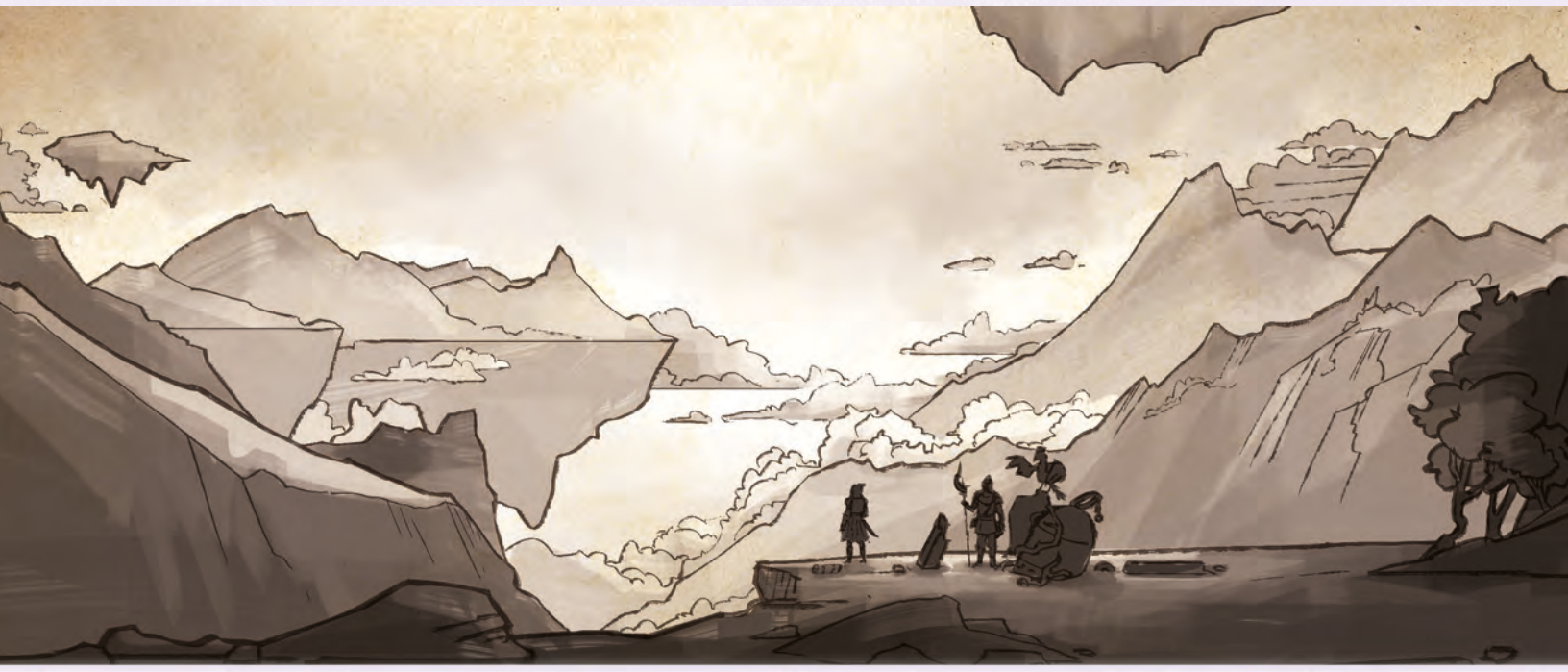
Roger Dean is especially important. The sweeping, otherworldly landscapes that populated his album covers for the progressive

rock groups of the '60s and '70s inform the backbone of it all. Fabulous creatures often overlook dreamy vistas of floating islands, dotted with structures that hint at a wondrous civilization just beyond the next stone or just beneath the jungle's canopy. There's an almost hyper-real quality to these images, and they're utterly vast in scale, with a sense of boundlessness like anything is possible if only one can remember how to get to these places. They exist almost in memory, like a half-forgotten dream.

In this way, kaleidoscopic fantasy actually shares some tonal space with the fiction of authors like Tolkien or Peter S. Beagle. The most beloved writings of these authors are laced with a deep melancholy, a knowledge that, somewhere along the way, humanity lost something and, despite barely being cognizant of that loss, we still desire with an aching heart to find it again.

Yet kaleidoscopic fantasy is also very much about the present. It is profoundly universalist, and it contains a reckless blend of varied cultural elements. The world can be a better place, we've just got to take decisive action for it to be so. The conceit of the Skyborn of Overlight is that they're subconsciously driven to do this, but have to decide for themselves exactly how.

Jon Anderson, member of the prog-rock group Yes, once said that their music was about "discovery of the self and connection with the divine." And so it is with kaleidoscopic fantasy. The path that our characters must take to "fix" the world is about the human condition as much as anything. And here we look to Clive Barker's *Imajica*, or the *Earthsea* novels of Ursula K. Le Guin, or indeed some of the more subtle themes in Jim Henson's *The Dark Crystal*. The decision to act is the important one, while the world swirls around you, with all of life's experiences and distractions and moral quandaries.





Yes, we're still talking about a fantasy role-playing game here, one in which the characters may operate on a mythic scale, and can make large changes to the setting through their actions. Yet Overlight is also an environment that simply allows for adventures — slaying huge beasts, or ferreting out corrupt cultists, or hijacking gleaming golden airships. It's the game that allows your neon tiger-striped warrior woman to ride into battle upon a screaming blue pterodactyl. Because that game needed to exist.

The purpose of all this? The purpose, the "why," is important — perhaps the most important thing. You are of the world, not simply in it.

HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

You'll need a couple of friends, including one willing to step up to be the GM. You'll need some pencils and some blank character sheets, which you can find in *Appendix A* or get at www.renegadegames.com/downloads. If you want to jump right in to the action, you can instead use the pre-generated characters provided in *Appendix A*.

You'll also need some dice. Overlight uses the now classic polyhedral dice common to so many other role-playing games. You'll very likely need a lot of them. Four-sided (d4), six-sided (d6), eight-sided (d8), ten-sided (d10), and twelve-sided (d12) dice will all be used. When multiples of the same dice type are needed, we simply add the quantity prior to the abbreviation. So three six-sided dice can be referred to as 3d6. Five twelve-sided dice? 5d12.

Overlight actually uses these dice types as Ratings for character features called *Virtues* and *Skills*. When speaking about Ratings, we'll use a capital "D" — as opposed to a lower-case "d" when talking about literal dice. For example, you might have a Wisdom Rating of D8, but if we're talking about a pair of actual eight-sided dice that you need to roll, we would say 2d8.

You will need as many as six of each type available, although you'll only need a single d4. Renegade Game Studios produces a special set of d4s, the Overlight Spirit Dice set, which should be available wherever you purchased this rulebook. Although they are not required to play (regular d4s will do just fine), we like to think they add a bit of flavor to your tabletop.

You may also wish to have a GM screen. Not all GMs like to use one, but many do. A screen can be helpful for hiding important notes or story spoilers from the other players at the table.

Renegade Game Studios produces an official Overlight GM screen, featuring beautifully thematic artwork as well as helpful play aids and reminders for the GM to reference during your game sessions.

THE WORLD OF OVERLIGHT

The setting for Overlight is an unusual one. There are seven continents, called shards, which float in the sky above an infinite sparkling sea. These seven shards maintain their vertical positions, relative to one another, while they slowly float about in patterns that have been largely indecipherable to the people of this world. Far above them all is an unending sky, bright and radiant. There is no sun, and no moon, only the perpetual shining of the Overlight. So while some shards may pass through periods of darkness when drifting beneath other shards, there is no true day or night. Seasons, such as they are, can seem unpredictable, being defined by the cycle of shard movements, and can only be truly understood by those who make a lifelong study of them.

All seven of the shards have distinct climates and cultures. The level of technology is roughly equivalent to late Middle Ages or early Renaissance at best. No steam power and no gunpowder, although the use of Chroma and the manipulation of the Overlight can sometimes result in some surprising technologies.

A brief description of the shards and their Folk, top to bottom, are as follows:

Nova: Rocky towers and crumbling mesas dot a horizon of sandblasted expanses, shimmering and brilliant white in the neverending light. Huge sentient centipedes, called Novapendra, contemplate their existence through meditation and quiet reflection, while shepherding their herds of giant dust crickets.

Zenith: Towering mountain ranges are home to the snow-covered temples of the Monks of the Zenith Orders. The Monks are humans, having long ago emigrated from Haark to find meaning among the ice and wind. The men and women of the orders live alongside the Hamanu, a massive-bodied ape-like people capable of scaling sheer mountain cliffs with their grasping hands and feet. The Hamanu and the Monks have developed a peculiar spirit bond and, once paired, individuals are rarely separated.

Quill: The jungles and torrential rivers of the floating islands of Quill are home to the Teryxians, a small, feathered reptilian Folk. Once they were emperors of their domain, with sprawling cities of spires populated by academics and philosophers, and many are still employed as tutors across the Seven. But much of that was lost when Quill was broken, and now the Teryxians cling to the remnants of a ruined civilization while they try to avoid becoming prey to the appetites of the jungle.

Banyan: The mysterious Banyari tribes are almost as distinct from one another as they are from the other Folk. Each tribe upon this forested shard is inextricably linked to their unique Hearthwood Tree, a spiritual

relationship that is poorly understood. These monumental wooden behemoths serve both as spiritual centers and, somehow, as physical progenitors of the appearance and biology of the symbiotic Banyari, some of which seem to be part plant, while others take different forms. As a whole, the Banyari are generally quiet and kind, and keep to themselves.

Haark: A single magnificent city, covering almost the entirety of the largest of the shards. It is home to humanity, called the Haarkeen. It is also the center of commerce and trade, and the meeting place for the Council of Seven — the parliament of representatives from all of the Folk, convened to adjudicate trade relations and settle disputes. Being the most centrally located of the shards, Haark is also the most cosmopolitan, and it is not uncommon to interact with people from many Folk, especially in the Great Market, a bazaar filled with many wonders.

Veile: The idyllic hills and estates of Veile overlook placid lagoons and inland seas. With Veile's pleasant weather and easy growing seasons, one would think the tall and almost eerily thin Aurumel would live a languid lifestyle. Yet behind the masks that they wear every day, the Aurumel also hide a passion and fervor for life that is most often represented by the great works that they aspire to build. Great bronze monuments, shining gold and silver armor, and fabulous airships — these testaments to toil and honest labor can sometimes take many lifetimes to complete, and those families with the greatest achievements often grow into dynasties with immense social and political power. Only the machinations of the Penumbral Court can begin to test their generational reach.

Pyre: Often bathed in darkness, the tundras and steppes of Pyre are lit by the glow of the shard's volcanic mountain ranges, which frequently result in rivers of magma coursing through the landscape. It is not a hospitable place. The Pyroi themselves are a sight to behold: eight feet tall, ruddy skinned and broad shouldered, they make fearsome warriors and charismatic negotiators and ambassadors. Much of Pyroi culture is centered around temple structures built at the base of the volcanoes, while other communities live a nomadic lifestyle hunting enormous beasts out on the open savanna.

WHAT IS THE OVERLIGHT?

The Overlight is the first emanation of the Absolute. Sun-like, its rays are boundless infinity or divine grace contrived into visible white light. Through mysticism, rituals, or other methods of insight, sentient beings are capable of the realization that its pure, undifferentiated quality may be parsed into its constituent Virtues. And so they may comprehend it on a practical and intimate level, rather than losing themselves in the unmitigated grandeur and fire of a god-like Sun. Although some mystics among the Folk can manage an anomalous miracle, only the Skyborn instinctively understand and become proficient in this practice, through the conscious use of Chroma.

There are some advanced teachings that seek to


SPIRIT


WISDOM


LOGIC


COMPASSION

WILL


VIGOR


MIGHT

comprehend the source of the Overlight, rather than the Overlight itself. The practitioners of such methods often go entirely mad or, on rare occasions, integrate with the Overlight and abandon physical form forever.

The Overlight works in strange ways. A common merchant or farmer might feel fulfilled and renewed simply by standing in the light. Some animals certainly seem to benefit from it, and there are many examples of "Overlight bonds" between individuals or even across species — the link between a Banyari and her Hearthwood Tree, or the connection between a Hamanu and his bonded Monk of the Zenith Orders. These links, while commonly accepted, are poorly understood.

VIRTUES AND THE COLORS OF LIGHT

The peoples of the Seven recognize seven Virtues that drive the spiritual lives of the people: Spirit, Wisdom, Logic, Compassion, Will, Vigor, and Might. Each of these Virtues is associated with a particular color in the spectrum of light, except in the case of Spirit, which is the unbroken light in its full white splendor.

While almost everyone aspires to use all of the Virtues as guides for living a fulfilling life, the Folk of each shard revere one of the Virtues above all others. In this way, the Virtues can define entire cultures.

CORE VIRTUES

Every character typically has one Virtue that they most identify with, known as their *Core Virtue.* This is almost always that Virtue which is most closely associated with the character's home shard — so Banyari most identify with Compassion, Pyroi with Might, etc. There are, however, always a few exceptions, and while these individuals might be thought of as a bit different, they are not usually viewed with much suspicion or disdain.

The Core Virtue of each Skyborn is almost universally divergent from their culture's norm. Part of what defines the wanderlust and dissociative nature of the Skyborn is this spiritual divide between themselves and their friends and family.

WHAT ARE THE CHROMA?

For every living thing in the world, the Overlight is a constant. It flows into and through every person, plant, and animal — from the slaves of Veile, to the Banyari

Hearthwood Trees, to the rats that scuttle along the prison chains beneath Haark. For most, the Overlight is a barely detectable sensation, a warm feeling on a bright day, a comforting presence during a moment of grief.

The strange powers that the Skyborn are able to manipulate are called the *Chroma*. The Chroma, however, are not exclusively the domain of the Skyborn. Most common people have the instinctive ability to perform one or two small wonders. Animals too, are often capable of basic tricks. Few of these behaviors are thought of as special or wondrous. They simply are. On our Earth, does a spitting cobra know that it's doing something unusual with its venom? Does an Arctic fox make the deliberate decision to change the color of its fur in the winter? No, of course not. Among the seven floating continents, these abilities might actually be functions of the Overlight.

The difference for the Skyborn lies in their conscious awareness of the Overlight and their ability to channel the different colors of light through their own bodies, almost like a prism. They can literally see the potential for breaking the light at all times, and are able to learn new Chroma through a combination of instinct and training.

HOW DID THE WORLD GET THIS WAY?

The myth told in the prologue is the literal truth. Since the beginning of time, a race of serpentine, celestial beings have been the caretakers and observers of the cosmos. At some point in Earth's past, probably around 1000 BCE, a small contingent of these celestials argued that humanity was ready to learn the secrets behind the making of the world. That the *Homo sapiens* species had achieved such a level of cultural growth and spiritual awareness that they deserved to be shown all the wonders of the universe, to be given the literal Keys of Creation.

This small group of celestials was overruled by the will of the majority. Humanity was not yet ready. Defying this judgement, one individual fled to Earth with the keys, and gifted them to humanity with one warning: "Do not use the Black Key." Humanity did not listen. All of reality was turned inside out. The burning heart of the world was now the bright white, unending sky, and the unknowable depths of space now a vast, star-filled sea beneath. Entire continents float in the space between, without a moon or sun to guide them.

PLAYER VS. CHARACTER KNOWLEDGE

It is important to note a distinction between what you, the player, knows about the workings of the world of Overlight, and what your character knows about the world. Specifically, the information regarding the origins of the world and the "uncreation myth" is something that no character would ever know. Indeed, it is an attempt to disseminate those very truths that got the writer of that myth, a Teryxian named Tonauac, executed for heresy. Most other information about the setting is common knowledge, and more detailed specifics are governed by use of the Folklore Skill.

What? Wait, let me get this straight…

There's no sun or moon? How is time measured?
Correct! No sun or moon, and technically no hours or minutes or days or years. But, for the sake of your fellow players' sanity, we suggest that you continue to use common nomenclature for units of time, even though it's perhaps not how you would truly measure time in the world of Overlight. But there's definitely no sun or moon, so that means there's no real night or morning or evening.

Yet the unpredictable cycles of the shards mean that most of the shards will occasionally experience periods of darkness, of varying length. The further down the stack it is, the more likely a shard will experience some darkness, so Pyre is far more likely to be under the shadow of another shard at any given time than Quill, for instance. And Nova, being the topmost shard, is in full light all the time. In practice, what this means is that the GM has the narrative flexibility to tell the sort of stories that they want to tell. Is the story best suited if it's dark for "weeks" on end? Then so be it.

So the sky just continues on forever?
Yes. And so does the Sea Below. The planet and the entire universe was quite literally turned inside out. The shards exist in an infinite space floating above the infinite sea.

How does one travel between shards?
The vast majority of the common peoples spend their entire lives upon their home shard. Yet many others travel between shards, although such opportunities are mostly available to only select portions of society. A number of the Folk have trained or domesticated flying beasts as mounts, including the Great Mist-Rays of Banyan, the Jeweled Dragonflies of Quill, and the dreaded Pyroi War-Bats.

And of course, much of the commerce and trade between shards, and back and forth to the Great Market of Haark, would not be possible without the grandiose airships of Veile, constructed and piloted by that most prosperous of Aurumel dynasties.

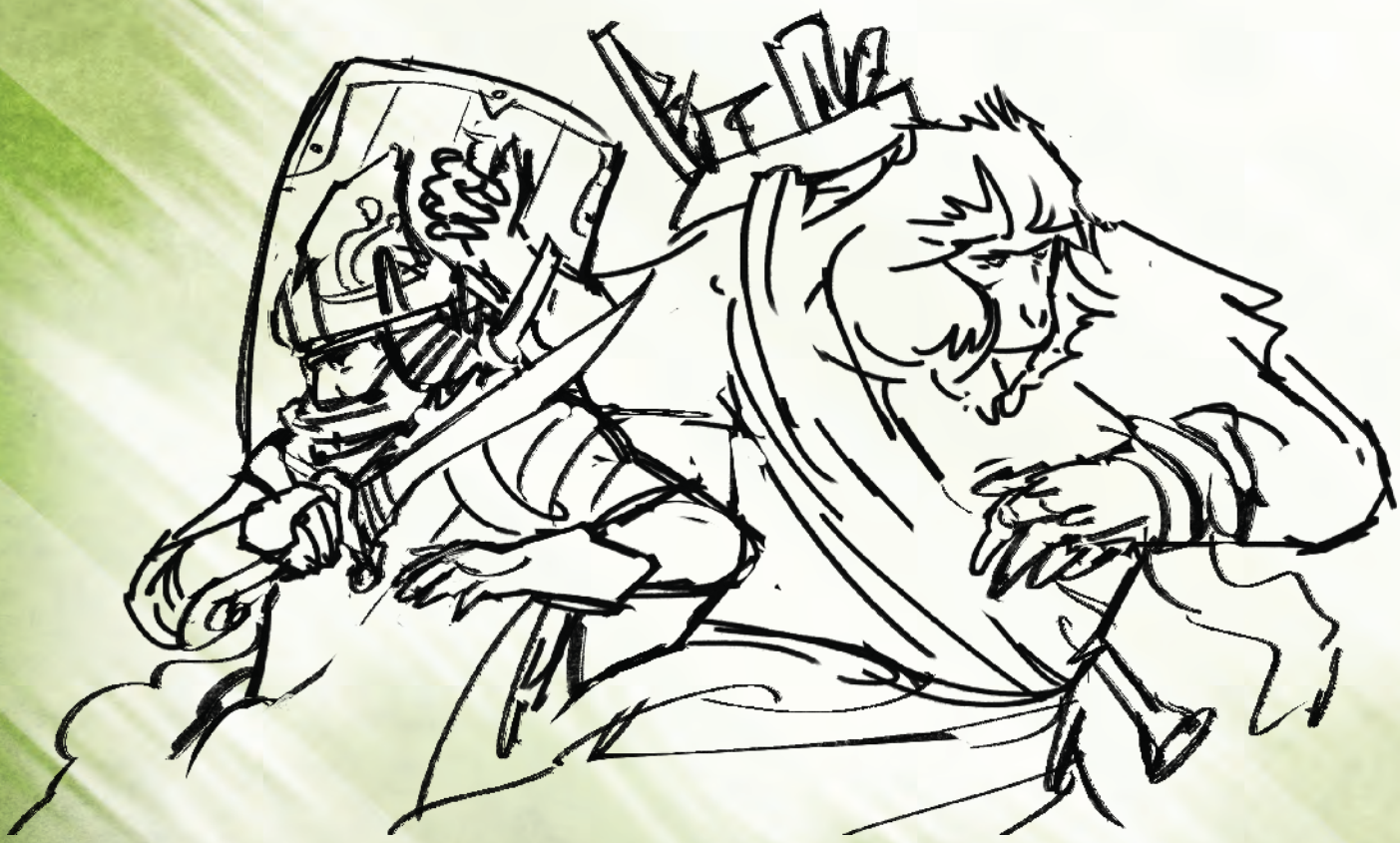
What happens if I hop on a giant pterodactyl thing and fly straight sideways? Or straight up?
It's easy to forget that, when we're talking about the shards, we're talking about *continents*. The scale is vast. There are often unfathomable distances between them. So someone wanting to just fly sideways would likely run out of food or water before seeing anything of interest, or their mount would fall out of the sky, exhausted. Besides, it's just not something a sane person would do. And flying up? Given how most Folk view the Overlight, that's almost akin to flying straight into the face of God. Needless to say, that's a fairly taboo idea.

If I fall off the edge of a shard, will I fall all the way down?
Even going near the edge of a shard is exceedingly dangerous. The winds are intense, and yes — it's a long way down. Again, these are continents we are talking about, so that's a very long fall before a rather unpleasant death upon striking another shard or the Sea Below.

Is the Sea Below made of salt water?
Yes.

It seems some of the shards have rivers or lakes. Where does the water come from?
Nobody knows. It's just one of those things, like the floating continents.

So gravity works normally?
Yes, with the exception being how the shards hang in the sky. How is it the shards float in the sky? It's just the way things are, it's not something that a person would question.



Overlight Lexicon

Chroma: Spiritual powers, fueled by the Overlight, and used by the people of the shards (especially Skyborn).

Cycle: One sequence or movement of the shards. These repeating patterns take a very long time and are not fully understood by anyone except learned Teryxian scholars.

Folk: Collective term for the peoples and cultures of the seven shards.

Ostrakonomy: The detailed study of the movements of the shards, practiced primarily by the Teryxians.

Overlight: The light from above, divine in nature, and believed to be the source of all life, spirit, and energy the world over.

Sea Below: The unending star-filled sea far below the shards. Also called the Stars Beneath.

The Seven: Collective term for the seven continents or shards.

Skyborn: Rare members of the Folk born with iridescent eyes and an improved ability to manipulate Chroma.

Under the Shadow: A phrase used when a shard or part of a shard is cloaked in darkness as a result of being directly beneath another shard.

Virtue: The seven sacred values and attributes recognized by the Folk. These virtues are virtually synonymous with various colors of the Overlight, and each of the shards and its Folk value one of the Virtues over the others.

SHARD	VIRTUE	COLOR	FOLK
Nova	Spirit	White	Novapendra
Zenith	Wisdom	Purple	Zenith Order Monks & Hamanu
Quill	Logic	Blue	Teryxian
Banyan	Compassion	Green	Banyari
Haark	Will	Yellow	Haarkeen
Veile	Vigor	Orange	Aurumel
Pyre	Might	Red	Pyroi

BASIC RULES CONCEPTS

Virtues: For six of the seven Virtues, each character will have a *Rating*. This is expressed as one variety of polyhedral die. So a character might have a Compassion Rating of D10, which is a very good rating!

Each character will also select one of their Virtues to be their Core Virtue. This is mostly for storytelling and role-playing purposes, as it helps you to define what it is that motivates your character. While it will not have much bearing on the rules, it will influence which Chroma are available to your character.

The Virtue of Spirit is an exception, and is instead represented by a pool of points that can be spent for a variety of things, including combat maneuvers and channeling Chroma.

Skills: There are 17 different Skills, and your character will have a Rating for each, just like with Virtues. One key difference is that, while you will always have at least a D6 Rating in every Virtue, you won't for every Skill. You may be *untrained* in a specific Skill — which is another way of saying that you have no current Rating in that Skill.

Remember, when expressing the Rating for a Skill or Virtue, we'll be using a capital "D." We'll be using a lower-case "d" when talking about the literal dice in your hand or being rolled.

Tests: Most of the gameplay is centered on something called a Test. There is a variety of different kinds of Tests, but the most basic is a Skill Test. We'll explain Tests in greater detail later, but for now, know that a Test is performed by rolling a handful of seven dice. In most cases, three of them will come from one of your Virtue Ratings, and three dice will come from one of your Skill Ratings.

You'll be looking for any die with a result of "6" or higher. This is called a *success*. So you'll be achieving between zero and six successes on most rolls. But you'll also be adding a single d4, called the Spirit Die, to each Test. The result of this die will be evaluated differently based on the sort of Test you are performing.

Chroma: Chroma are the mysterious abilities and powers that the Skyborn are able to manipulate to amazing effect. They are not an exact science, and as a result, sometimes a Skyborn might channel too much Overlight through themselves while using the Chroma. When this happens, the Skyborn is said to experience a *Shatter.*

Each Shatter will have a lasting effect on the physical or spiritual being of the Skyborn. After too many Shatters, the Chroma will burn itself out, searing away that particular arrangement of virtuous pathways in the character's Spirit, leaving the character without the ability to channel that specific Chroma again.







CHAPTER 2

THE SHARDS

What you are about to read are transcriptions of lessons taught by a Teryxian tutor called Tanouac to his young Skyborn ward, a Haarkeen girl named Malina. They constitute a brief primer on the landscapes and Folk of the seven shards, and so might be seen as representative of a basic working knowledge that any child of a well-to-do family would learn as part of their studies.

Malina has given these writings to the Skyborn Order as a gift, so that they might understand the life of Tanouac. For Tanouac had long been a friend to many people from across the Seven, and was considered a kind and beloved ally to the Skyborn.

Alas, Tanouac was recently executed by the Scholar-Priests of Quill, his home shard.

Accusations of treason and heresy suggested that not only was Tanouac aiding the enemy in the ongoing hostilities in the Great Forest on Banyan (a war that the Scholar-Priests will not officially recognize as an ongoing conflict), but also that he had befriended or otherwise domesticated a number of the Grymalkyn, those so-called "Shadow Jaguars" that have long been the ancestral enemies of the Teryxians.

Lastly, there are rumors that Tanouac had formally presented the Scholar-Priests with an alternate view of the universe, one that fractured the very basis of their understanding of the nature of the world.

It is thought that this last transgression was the crime for which he was put to death.

QUILL

ISLANDS IN THE SKY

Ask any young person of any shard if they have ever encountered Folk other than their own, and the vast majority of them will answer that they have known a Teryxian. Many are the children of the Seven that have grown up learning their letters and numbers under the watchful eye of a brightly plumed caretaker. And you, young Skyborn, are not the first I have tutored, nor will you be last — not by far.

The Teryxians alone have been gifted with flight by Tzahintli, and have the courage to visit other shards from a very young age, sharing with them the fruits of our many long years of research. The Haarkeen would not be the builders they are today without our insights into engineering and physics. Even the Aurumel of Veile would still be mindlessly digging after shining rocks if not for the knowledge of metallurgy that we so selflessly shared with them. But we are a proud and stubborn people. Our Scholar-Priests speak of sacrifice, and yet are so rarely willing to lift the clouds from their eyes to see the truth around us. We have allowed generations of our young to go to their deaths in service to a misguided ideal and, in the final analysis, it may all be for naught.



Hrm. But enough of all that. Let us begin.

THE TERYXIANS, ABOVE ALL OTHERS

Teryxians are a small-bodied reptilian people, indeed the smallest of the Folk. Most of us stand no more than knee high to a Haarkeen man. Although we are capable of walking about on two legs, albeit awkwardly, we are most at home in the sky. As you can see, we have a pair of fully functioning wings and a long, feathered tail. The toes of our partially feathered lower legs end in rather nimble little claws, and yes — that second claw is hyperextensible and can deliver a grievous wound. While many other Folk seem to think these "hands" might be clumsy, we can in fact use them to manipulate and carry items, though perhaps not as dexterously as some others might.

We have internalized sexual organs, not the dangling bits of our mammalian brethren, so easily gelded by a nest rival. The males and females of our kind, called drakes and queens, are sexually dimorphic in their feather color. Drakes are typically brilliant royal blue or rich aquamarine, while queens are more often a duller blue-black or deep indigo, and slightly smaller in size. Additionally, drakes have an impressive feather crest at the back of their heads which can be raised or fluffed up to express anger or excitement.

Unique across the Seven, Teryxians are egg-layers. Nests are constructed from mud pellets and lined with grass, leaves, or feathers. They are usually built onto the underside of strong tree limbs or rock ledges, and sometimes incorporate many of the strong vines or other natural materials that are ubiquitous in Quill's jungles. The nests typically consist of two or three chambers — just enough space for food storage, egg incubation, and rest. We are not usually collectors of objects or decoration, so the nests are quite utilitarian. Our energies are instead devoted to learning, and the library spires of Quill are where the full grandeur of Teryxian society comes to bloom. Or did once bloom, at any rate. The spires, as we shall learn, are not what they once were.

My people are also the only Folk across the Seven who are possessed of the power of flight, and it is perhaps for that reason that we are the least averse to traveling to the other shards. At certain times during the cycle, it is possible for a Teryxian to fly unaided from Quill to Zenith or Banyan, and from the latter perhaps even to Haark. Indeed, our renown as tutors has largely arisen from our desire to see the world and share our knowledge of it with other cultures. The learning of Teryxians long ago surpassed the knowledge of even the most curious of other Folk. We have forgotten more about physics, mathematics, science, chemistry, and biology than many others will ever learn. We have even turned the inscrutable movements of the shards and the patterns of the cycle into an erudite discipline that others have come to call *ostrakonomy*, and the many pupils of the Timekeeper's Lodge devote their entire lives to it.

The skies hold a pivotal position in the spiritual lives of Teryxians as well. Our holy codices tell of the creator deity, Tzahintli, the greatest of the

Cloud Serpents. A hungry god — it is said that, if not kept sated, he will devour the entire world in his vast jaws. To a Teryxian, Tzahintli is not malicious, simply hungry: a force of nature, no more evil than a predator killing prey for their young. But every three cycles, members of the Teryxian citizenry are sacrificed upon the well-worn stones of the temple chamber upon Mount Quiya, near the Last Spire. Young warriors, valued for their strength and the promise of years, and wizened scribes, full to bursting with the knowledge of a lifetime. The blood of these and hundreds like them spatters the rocks, as it has for cycles innumerable. Their ruined flesh and feathers are left behind for Cloud Serpents, the envoys of Tzahintli, to swallow and deliver to their god. These sacrifices may only be performed under direct light from above; to conduct these rituals while under the shadow would have dire consequences indeed.

These rituals have been part of our culture since before the Fall, yet they are beginning to lose favor with some elements upon Quill. But change is slow, and devotion to Tzahintli has long been the foundation of the Teryxian belief system. Many heated arguments fill the chambers of the Scholar-Priests of late.

To a Teryxian, the natural world is something to be studied, logged, codified, and manipulated. We believe that, by mapping and defining every detail and nuance of the world we live in, we can better understand our place in it. Logic dictates that every being has its part to play in the balance of the world, even if they don't yet personally understand what that part is. Maintaining that balance can sometimes come at steep personal cost. Compassion toward another can often be seen as weakness, a selfish act that ultimately undermines the entire cosmic ecology. This frequently leads to the opinion that Teryxians are a cold, aloof people, looking down upon others from their lofty heights, and yet there are countless students from all the Folk who have developed lifelong bonds of friendship and love with their tutors from Quill.



However we are viewed, there are times when Teryxian ideals inform certain cultural behaviors that are seen as downright barbaric by other Folk. When a Teryxian mother lays two eggs instead of the far more common single egg, it is expected that one of the hatchlings will eat the other to become the sole occupant of the nest. If both hatchlings survive long enough to reach fledgling age, it is regarded as a bad omen by the parents. Even given a loving, nurturing environment to grow up in, the siblings will

usually be ostracized to some degree by the community at large, and will live out most of their lives labeled as weak, soft-hearted, or "green." (It would be dishonest of me to suggest that the use of the word *green* in this way isn't due at least in some part to our poor relationship with the tribes of Banyan.)

THE ISLANDS OF QUILL

Ten generations ago, Quill collided with Banyan. Quill was the smaller of the two continents, and barely survived. The shard itself was torn asunder, broken into thousands of pieces. We call this event the Fall, because from that point on we spoke of Quill in terms of *before* and *after*.

So it is that Quill is more of a floating archipelago than anything else. Vast islands, some with broken rivers streaming over their edges, or bits of jungle clinging to life upon a vertical wall of rock. Some pieces are as small as boulders, some as large as mountains — all of them drifting through the sky in fixed positions relative to one another, held in place by whatever force of the Overlight holds the shards aloft. Being able to master the skies, we Teryxians can travel to and from the various islands at will, but we are nevertheless a divided people.

The dominant landform of Quill is tropical jungle, rich with wetlands and rivers, though there are also vast expanses of rock-filled marshy foothills and cloud-shrouded peaks atop towering mountain ranges. Quill receives more direct light from above than any of the other shards except Nova. It is a dense and steamy tangle, filled with abundant life and running water. Reptiles, birds, insects, and small primates of every variety and color can be found in its depths. Giant, carnivorous tree salamanders glide from canopy to branch upon webbed toes, feet splayed out to ride the wind. As they silently stalk down a tree trunk or drop from above, their prey never sees or hears them coming. Eyeless blind monkeys roam the middle layers, somehow detecting their surroundings through a trick of the Overlight. They forage for fruit in small family groups, and, when they detect danger, join forces with their neighbors to go on exploratory missions or even slave raids against competing troupes. There are butterflies three feet across that shine with metallic colors and leave glimmering trails and the scent of vanilla in the air behind them. Their cocoons, when touched with bare skin, produce hallucinations both sacred and maddening.

And, lest they be forgotten, the Ocehualli: the Shadow Jaguars. These are the same creatures known on other shards as the Grymalkyn, and they have always been our enemy. Long a plague upon the Teryxians, the Grymalkyn are large, jet-black jaguars which have the unnerving ability to bend space as they literally step into the shadows and disappear. It has long been hypothesized that, by stepping into the shadow, the jaguars are actually somehow stepping through the shadow to re-emerge from some other dark place far removed. This defies everything that we know about the Chroma (and indeed, physics), so these ideas are largely dismissed as speculative fancy, designed to frighten fledglings. That said, nothing is more satisfying to the palate of a

Grymalkyn than a clutch of newly hatched Teryxian young.

The flora of the jungle is thick and riotously prolific, with huge, glorious flowers bursting from vines thicker than a Haarkeen man's thigh, while trees and ferns boast leaves large enough to use as sails on small river vessels. Cloud drift from Zenith can create massive weather events, and any length of time on Quill without a short but heavy rainfall is a rarity.

The largest island of Quill is called the Azure Sea — so named because it is fully covered by the



largest stretch of jungle in the entire known world, much of its foliage tinged with the sapphire-blue hues so common to life upon this shard. The jungle on this island is cleanly split in two, courtesy of the astonishing natural feature known as the Barrier Waterfalls. The island that floats high above the far side of the Azure Sea is called the Cerulean Basin, and most of its surface area is given over to an ancient caldera filled with what was once a large inland sea. One of the walls of the caldera was broken during the Fall, and now an unimaginably huge waterfall streams out of the sky in a vast curtain, blocking out the sky and horizon, cleaving the land of the Azure Sea into two separate environments. The immense, unending flow of water has carved a steep river valley into the land, where the water rushes with tremendous force before plummeting off the shard's edge.

On one side of the Barrier Waterfalls is a bright and sunny jungle, with steam rising off the canopy. On the other side (if you can find one of the few safe places to cross beneath the deluge) is a darker and more foreboding environment, forever under the shadow of the island above it. Some of the most wondrous treasures of old Quill probably lie hidden in its depths — along with some of its most horrifying mistakes.

There is another island, a veritable mountain in the clouds, which we call Mount Quiya. If you look off the edge of a certain part of the Azure Sea, Mount Quiya positively dominates the sky. The towering structure of mud and stone that rises from its slopes is called the Last Spire, and the mere sight of the silhouette of this last remnant of the Quill-that-was is enough to lighten the heart of any Teryxian who sees it. While the remains of many towers and spires can be seen peeking above the canopy of Quill's jungles, remnants of the time before the Fall, the ones near Mount Quiya are some of the few that are not in ruins and still actively used by the Teryxians.

There is one area of Quill where, for reasons unknown, the rocks and small islands do not remain in static, fixed positions relative to one another, instead floating about in chaotic patterns, often grinding or crashing together. The scholars at the Timekeeper's Lodge have made long study of this area, called the Crumble (or the Bloodstones), but have not yet been able to decipher the physics at work. They fear that the delicate balance may somehow be upset by any activity other than the precise, dedicated study of the ostrakonomers. The Rangers too have officially recommended that the populace of Quill stay clear of the area. This has done nothing to keep thrill-seeking youths from using the area for hazing rituals and honor duels.

There is one long-standing story about a pair of nest-mates who, as young fledglings, were challenged by their peers to dart in and about the moving stones of the Crumble, in order to prove which was the stronger. When the older brother had a wing broken by an errant boulder, it was his smaller brother who flew out to save him. On the return flight, the younger brother was killed by rapidly spinning rubble and knocked from the sky. There are many who will use this story as a moral lesson for their

hatchlings, about how the smaller brother should have seized his chance and assumed a dominant role in his family. In some versions of the story, the smaller brother lived, and to this day hides among the Bloodstones with a message of compassion for all those who will listen. He is called Matlalihuitl. It is perhaps needless to say that this version of the story, and those who tell it, are not well regarded by Teryxians at large.

THE LAST SPIRES

The culture of Quill was only just reaching its peak when Banyan smashed into it. Sprawling cities of spires were torn apart, and many Teryxian sciences were set back hundreds of years. Ruined towers, temples, and even whole settlements can be found under masses of vegetation, deep within the jungle, or even sometimes precipitously perched upon the vertical sides of the rocky islands, caught there when the shard was broken.

Before the Fall, the skylines of Quill were dominated by these towering mud-and-stone spires which peeked out from beneath the jungle canopy, and the majority of the Teryxian populace lived and worked within them. The spires were crafted with the help of a variety of carefully bred beasts of burden, including Jeweled Dragonflies and the Pitzoquitl, the animals also known as Mud-Hogs. The selective breeding programs which produced these beasts, and others like them, were abandoned after the Fall. Strange and dangerous creatures can now be found running feral in the mists, having long ago learned to survive and thrive on their own.

The Last Spire, which is in reality a collection of spires situated on and around Mount Quiya, is now the center of Quill's spiritual and cultural life. The central spire is home to the Scholar-Priest's Lodge — those Teryxians who have long governed us. Many cycles may pass without any word from Mount Quiya, but when the Scholar-Priests emerge to declare a new time of sacrifice or enact a new law, the whole of Quill listens. What is not immediately apparent to the casual observer is that the Scholar-Priests and their agents rule the whole of Teryxian society.

Teryxians who are lucky enough to be members of a lodge live in communities which consist of many nests built in close proximity to one another, all occupied by lodge members and their families. These nests are often built upon the ruins of an old spire, or any natural feature that offers some modicum of protection from the dangers of the forest. The Grymalkyn are a constant danger, but there are many other denizens of the jungle that would also see an unguarded Teryxian as a tasty treat.

The rest of the populace, especially those not associated with a vocational lodge of any sort, will often live in isolated nests high up in the canopy or hidden deep within a cave.

THE WAR OF LEAVES

The Teryxian conflict with the Banyari is well known and documented. When the two shards collided, the Teryxians immediately blamed

Banyan. With their knowledge of shard orbits and their unending research into the natural order of the world, the Teryxians believed that surely the Banyari had brought this doom upon them all. The compassionate Banyari were looked down upon even before this incident, and the generations that followed would elevate the compassionate ideals of Banyan to an almost sin-like status.

However, to this day, there are those among the Timekeepers who still wonder at how their ancestors could not have seen the collision coming. Was it simply oversight? Or was something more sinister at play? Certain familial lines that have been with the lodge from antiquity are said to have plumage colors that are "less than blue." Rivalries are not uncommon.

In any event, less than one full cycle after the destruction of Quill, the Teryxian Scholar-Priests had regained enough control that they declared war on the Banyari. With the two shards still occupying much of the same physical space, it was simplicity itself for flights of Teryxian warriors to launch attacks upon their unsuspecting neighbors. But the Banyari had not just had their civilization literally crumble beneath them, and they were perhaps far better prepared than the Teryxian invaders would have thought possible. Still, the Teryxians were unyielding in their attempts at revenge. The war was waged for almost a generation, during which time the two shards shared the same orbit.

But finally the great land masses went their separate ways, and the two cultures turned their attentions to rebuilding. It was a war without a clear winner, an ending forced upon it by the unpredictable nature of the shards. Yet even now, there still remains a small population of Teryxian Outlanders upon Banyan, raiding the Banyari, pillaging their homesteads, and attempting to destroy their Hearthwood Trees. They act as though the war never ended, as though Quill is still owed some debt. The Scholar-Priests do nothing to publicly support or even acknowledge these vigilantes, but they continue to pay well for branches from Worulthing, the fallen Hearthwood Tree. Ever since the war began, the hearts of the sacrifices upon Mount Quiya have been thrown into Hearthwood coals.

I wish I had a different story to tell of my people, young pupil. But perhaps this is why so many of my kind seek the life of a tutor. While the rivers and jungles of my homeland will always call to me, and I long to once again see the Last Spire shining in the light as the mist from Mount Quiya burns off in the Overlight, my life has taken another path. And that road has led me, inextricably, to you — which perhaps is something to be celebrated.

BANYAN

IN THE WOODS THE FOLK AND IN THE FOLK THE WOODS

To describe the Banyari in a few short phrases is an exercise in futility. Their physical forms are as varied as the shapes and forms of the forest that they call their home. Despite the best efforts of Teryxian scholars during countless vivisections, the basic classification of the Banyari remains uncertain. They may be mammalian, vegetative, maybe even amphibian. In truth, they are probably some combination of all three, as most studies suggest that the Banyari are truly a conglomerate of separate, symbiotic beings.

Many of them appear to be something like bipedal trees, but others seem almost frog-like or as if made of living rock! Their basic form, beneath whatever tribal variations there are, seems to be of a short-snouted, lightly furred bipedal mammal, much shorter than a Haarkeen man. We have to assume that, at some distant point in the past, the Banyari all looked like this small, hairy creature. But now they have become something… more.

Why so much variation in a single species? While we are but guessing at what the Banyari must have looked like in their original form, they are now defined by their unique blood-ties to a number of different tribes. Each of these tribes worships a massive tree called a Hearthwood Tree (or simply a Hearthwood). These trees are all unique in shape and appearance, although all of them are extremely large, and the Banyari have developed some sort of Overlight bond to them which has caused the physical shapes of their people to change over the generations. Indeed, the Banyari are so like their Hearthwood Trees in look and appearance that it is impossible to discuss the geographic features of Banyan without discussing the various tribes of Banyari.

THE VERTHOD AND THE GREAT FOREST

By far the most populous of the tribes, the Verthod are what most people imagine when they speak of the Banyari. Wrapped in living leaves and vines, the Verthod would seem at first glance to be more plant than animal, although a closer inspection reveals that tell-tale mammalian face beneath the tree-like exterior and patchy fur. Their fingers are often hidden beneath the foliage trailing from their forearms, but make no mistake — they have fully functional hands under it all. The Verthod also have complete conscious control over their more plant-like appendages, moving them about like tentacles or prehensile tails. These vines, in every way that matters, are part of the living being.

At the heart of the Great Forest of Banyan lies the Hearthwood Tree of the Verthod. The trunk of this gargantuan elder of the forest is larger around at its base than even the Grand Council

Chamber in Haark, with trailing vines and moss and enormous buttress roots. Entire ecosystems of countless tiny animals and plants thrive within its branches, and even some of the Verthod themselves have been known to sleep on the lower boughs, which extend almost horizontally from the impressive trunk.

The Great Forest itself is second in size only to the Azure Sea of Quill, and even so, it is a vast temperate forest, the sheer scale of which can evoke wonder in even the most well-traveled Skyborn. While the dense undergrowth and close confines of Quill's Azure Sea keep the local fauna relatively small, the oversized trees of the Great Forest, with their large straight trunks and foliage that is mostly confined to top growth, allow for wide pathways and natural vaulted amphitheaters. So, too, the inhabitants of the forest can sometimes be built on a colossal scale, and often take rather unexpected forms. In fact, the exact borders of the Great Forest have historically been very hard to delineate, and it's only been in recent times that we have discovered why: the trees can walk.

Now these walking trees are not to be confused with the Verthod themselves, who of course can easily be mistaken for some sort of ambulatory tree. No, the trees that I speak of are the great woody giants that make up the majority of the forest itself, called Gastwudu by the Banyari. These trees are capable of lifting their large systems of exposed aerial roots out of the soil and "walk," one root at a time, across the landscape. We're not sure why they do this, or indeed what prompts them to do so, but the Verthod are certainly part of the process. It seems as if they're guiding them in some way, or at least walking beside the trees in companionable silence. Are these trees merely trees, or are they thinking beings of at least animal intelligence? And why do the Verthod walk among them? We



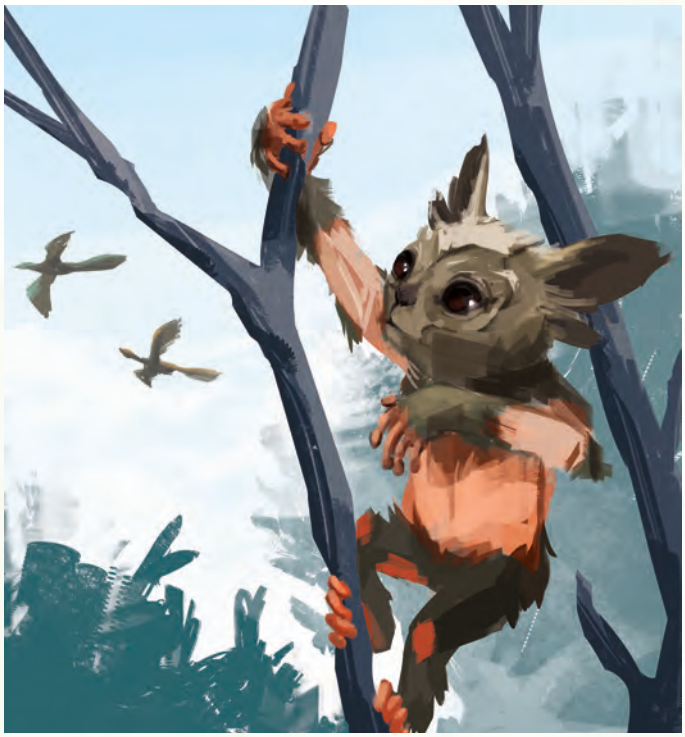
don't know. Who can say what goes on in the heart and mind of a creature that is partially a plant?

FROM THE CANOPY TO THE SOIL

The Great Forest is also home to Banyari from other tribes. And to find them, you'll have to go up. High in the canopy of the greatest of trees in the forest, you'll find a world wholly separate from life on the ground. There are scores of small plants and animals who spend their entire life cycles upon a single massive branch. Tiny horned weevils, odd mollusks resplendent with shells of mottled blue and pink, and the bizarre little mammals that we call Long-Muzzled Golden Honey-Lickers.

Here you'll also find countless pools of water, collected in the crooks of forked tree trunks or settled within small depressions upon the largest of branches. It is in these pools that the Banyari known as the Nitansien are spawned. The Teryxian scouts upon Banyan have yet to find the Nitansien Hearthwood Tree, so it is hard to say exactly how this tribe's unusual form may be linked to it. What we do know is that the Nitansien young are somehow nurtured within these arboreal pools. In neonate form, not entirely unlike the tadpole of an amphibian, these young creatures spend the first few cycles of their lives as fragile beings, clinging to the underside of branches and subsisting on insects.

As adults, the Nitansien are long-limbed creatures. They have enlarged finger-pads suited to their arboreal lifestyle, although the most striking part of their appearance is their gigantic eyes and enlarged ears. Their fur is concentrated around the shoulders and head, as well as on the lower halves of their limbs. The rest of their skin has become smooth and hairless, with a slick appearance, and it is believed that the Nitansien are capable of subcutaneous respiration.



Unlike the Verthod, who live their lives in small family groups or collections of such groups, the Nitansien have almost always been encountered alone. Given that they are often employed as spies and lookouts for the Verthod in their ongoing conflicts with the Teryxian Outlanders, it is hard to say whether this is their preferred living situation or simply a function of their wartime vocation.

Meanwhile, on the outskirts of the Great Forest, among the turned earth and mud left in the

wake of the traveling Gastwudu, you'll find yet another tribe, the Aeworn. Quite possibly the most peculiar of all the Banyari tribes, the Aeworn have traded the leafy vines and bark of the Verthod for a curious loamy flesh and thick woody roots. The Aeworn are almost as wide as they are tall, and they move slowly, placing each root-like foot carefully. Even more astonishing is that the body of each Aeworn is riddled with small holes, just big enough for what must be an entire colony of tiny Root Shrews to make their home. It is obvious that the Aeworn have developed an Overlight bond with the Root Shrews, but the nature of their partnership remains a mystery.

Much like their pointy-snouted hitchhikers, the Aeworn live in close-knit colonies, foraging for grubs and other small prey items in the dirt. They do not venture far from the perimeter of the forest, and indeed rely upon the upturned soil created by the Gastwudu. The soft mud provides the Aeworn with not only an easily harvested supply of food, but also temporary burrows in which to protect themselves from the cold weather that can unexpectedly sweep the shard when under the shadow. The Aeworn Hearthwood Tree is thought to be one of the many large, brown shrub-like trees that dot the landscape in the thinner parts of the forest.

The Aeworn are perhaps more intimately tied to their home shard than just about any other Folk. Any of their kind found out among the other shards is almost certainly Skyborn — as a short, stout Banyari with a throng of small hungry mammals to feed isn't likely to find an easy way of things out in the world.

THE MALACHITE PLAINS

For many Folk from other shards, the image of a Banyari is still often simply an image of a Verthod — so it might come as a surprise to you that much of Banyan is not, in fact, ancient forest. Most of the shard is covered in broad green meadows and sweeping grasslands. Rainfall throughout much of Banyan is an all-or-nothing affair. The waterfalls from broken Quill, and the manner in which they fall upon Banyan, have resulted in much of the green shard having two distinct seasons: wet and dry.

In the dry season, these rocky plains are anything but green. Pale brown grasses sway in the breeze, through which grazing animals, in herds of innumerable thousands, make long migrations to the dwindling water sources. Beneath their feet, sharp rocks jut from the dusty ground, making the going treacherous. As the water becomes scarcer, and the animals more desperate, so too do the carnivorous predators that stalk these plains: the Vrexle, lithe rat-faced pack hunters the length of a small banquet table, which are capable of terrifying bursts of speed.

If you've got keen eyes, and a bit of patience, you might be able to spot another creature running and bounding alongside the migrating herbivores: the Brendenol. This shy tribe of Banyari has become much like any other nomadic beast of the Malachite Plains. No tree-branch arms or root-feet for the Brendenol — no, they've adopted other defenses, speed first

and foremost. The powerful legs of the Brendenol have elongated bones of the feet, resulting in a digitigrade posture and an ability to sprint or spring across the rolling grasslands like they were born to it. The Brendenol also have small antlers that sprout from either side of their heads, and a crest of short quills that runs along their backs. Their fur, like that of so many of the animals that they run beside, is often spotted or striped.

When the rains finally do return to Banyan, the Malachite Plains are transformed. The dun-colored expanse gives way to a verdant, vibrant green wonderland. Dry ditches fill with rushing streams and cascading rivers, while the cracked and broken earth becomes a shallow marshland, resplendent with fast-growing reeds, cattails, and flowering grasses. What's more, the sharp, dust-covered rocks poking from the land are washed clean, revealing the shining green gemstones from which the plains get their name.

And here, yet another tribe of Banyari unveil themselves. As the seasonal rains metamorphose the lands around them, so too are a tiny number of the malachite rocks revealed to be anything but. As most of the rocks begin to shimmer and glow in the Overlight, a select few of them instead soften, revealing them to be no rock, but a succulent-like plant growing almost shell-like from the backs and heads of Banyari that unfurl themselves from a dormant slumber beneath the earth. During the wet season, the Romos can be found meticulously wading through the swamps, using short reed spears to hunt the small crustaceans that share a similar life cycle.

FABLES FROM THE HEARTHWOOD TREE

It is known that, periodically, some Banyari will travel long distances to meet others from across the tribes of Banyan. They meet together in small groups, at locations with no discernable connection but which we must assume have special spiritual or historical significance. Once there, the assembled individuals engage in a form of ritualized, competitive storytelling. We have come to understand that some of these tales are recollections and embellishments of actual events that have personally happened to the storytellers, but many others are complete fabrications, stories unspooled entirely from the imaginative minds of their creators. Tales of this latter sort take the form of new myths — fables crafted around a fixed set of characters, heroes of legend, or a pantheon of demigods that the Banyari revere.

The outcomes of these competitions can have tremendously negative effects upon the lives of the losers. More than just ceding social standing, some of the defeated Banyari appear to be physically wounded, and lifelong grudges and enmity can arise out of these meetings. It is believed that some of the storytellers use some form of Chroma to weave calamitous or fortunate consequences into their fables.

These Banyari wanderers (and we have yet to ascertain exactly why or how a tribe member might become such a pilgrim) rarely return to the same place twice in a row. We have identified a small number of these locations and have been quietly trying to find out

exactly what makes them exceptional.

There is a silver tree that grows out on a distant part of the Malachite Plains. When the rains are at their peak, the tree shines out like a beacon upon the horizon, standing in the center of a lake that does not exist during the dry season. It has been reported that this tree will sometimes release a cloud of spores the color of sea foam, which will gently float out across the grasslands, creating a repeating sound not unlike a drop of water hitting the surface of a standing pool.

There is another meeting place within the Great Forest, called the Dust Haven. It is a large sandy clearing where trees have not taken root, and it is the breeding ground for a small species of amphibian known as the Bloom Tode. During breeding season, these animals will emerge from their homes just beneath the surface of the sand, and the swollen glands behind their eyes will secrete a viscous toxin that the Banyari collect and vigorously rub upon themselves. The toxin also serves to attract a variety of brightly colored songbirds, the most notable of which is a shining, metallic-green animal called the Emerald Trill. I have been told that the sight of a dozen Banyari, standing in a circle and singing in unison with the chirping Bloom Todes while a swarming flock of Emerald Trills engulfs them all, is one of the most unforgettable sights in all the world.

Finally, deep within a grotto sunken in the forest floor, is the empty shell of a mind-bogglingly large snail — massive enough for an entire Pyroi hunting party to walk abreast into! Its species cannot possibly still be extant, for we would most certainly have seen evidence of such a creature. The iridescent and polychromatic inside walls of the shell shine with a light that can only be described as otherworldly. It has been said that it feels as though it is somehow of — but distinct and separate from — the Overlight. I'm not sure what to make of that, but there are accompanying reports of Banyari gently, almost reverently, gliding their fingertips along the walls while telling stories, often without audiences. I can do nothing but shake my feathers at that, but I feel it important for you to understand that, in many ways, the Banyari (or at least our perceptions of them) are stranger and more poorly understood than any of the other Folk, save the Novapendra.

At any rate, these are but a few of the story havens that we are aware of, and there are many others, some of which may be found in locations that have no remarkable features at all. Some havens have seen multiple story gatherings, and others have been used once for such a purpose and never again.

Long have I wished to partake in one of these journeys, to sing songs and craft fables with the Banyari. Or indeed simply to witness one of these story havens! Alas, my brethren in the Tutor's Lodge would not look too kindly upon such an adventure. And the Scholar-Priests would have me tried for treason — or worse.

For what should be obvious reasons, the Banyari are not too keen on allowing a Teryxian, even a learned individual such as myself, to come and

study their lands and their way of life. So much of what we know about Banyan (and many of the details I have relayed to you today) comes from the Teryxian Outlanders. Their scouts are very effective, but our information is still riddled with holes and mysteries, sadly.

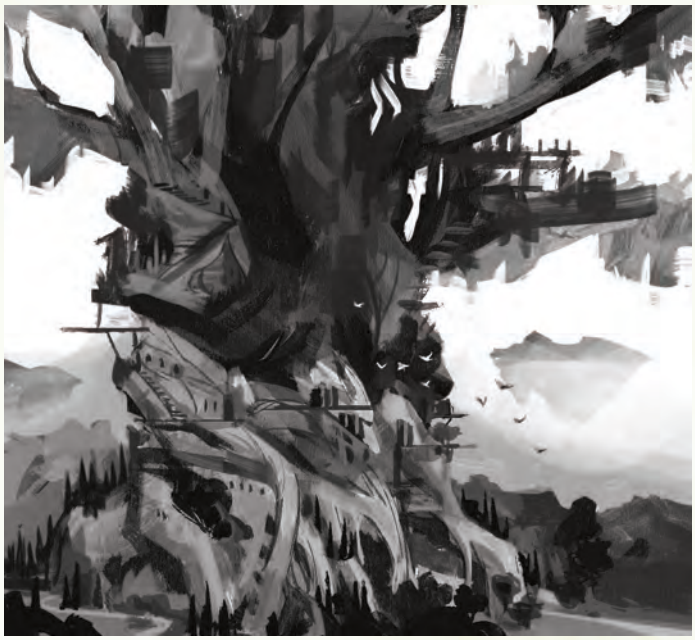
It is hard for us to imagine what the Banyari way of life must be like when not encumbered by the demands that an invading force puts upon their day-to-day existence.

A WAR WITHOUT END

Despite what the Scholar-Priests will claim, the War of Leaves still rages. The Teryxian Outlanders that stage their attacks from the territory they have claimed within the Great Forest of Banyan have lived their entire lives there, like their mothers and fathers before them, as their mothers and fathers before them…

Banyan is more their home now than Quill, although they would never utter those words. And to what end? The Last Spire is quiet on the matter. Can a catastrophe as cosmic in scale as two shards colliding really be laid at the feet of the Banyari? Where is the logic in the Teryxians fighting a war of vengeance that has lasted for generations? The Outlanders claim they will not rest until all the tribes of Banyan are eradicated, and all the Hearthwood Trees found and destroyed. They have accomplished at least part of their goal.

Although the Verthod — and, to a lesser extent, the Nitansien — are the frontlines of defense against the Teryxian invaders, the real burden of the war has largely been born by the Worulthing. Many generations ago, the Worulthing were one of the most populous of the Banyari tribes, second in number only to the Verthod. Their great Hearthwood Tree grew in an area called the Aametfeld, on the far side of the Malachite Plains. Tall and broad, it rose like a tower from moss-covered hills, its perforated, dark-brown bark only occasionally brightened by the presence of a sprout or lichen upon its surface. At its crown, long green tendrils vined up toward the sky before blossoming into huge bursts of flat golden-yellow flowers. The blossoms and the strange texture of the wood were all part of a self-contained ecosystem, supported by a thriving hive of unusual wood-boring insects that called the tree home.



As you might expect, the Worulthing were much like their beloved Hearthwood Tree. Looking not unlike a brightly colored Verthod, but with

blossoms about their head, each Worulthing also served as a home for their own colony of the woodbugs.

At the climax of a lengthy campaign that I shall not recount here, the Teryxian Outlanders were able to locate and assault the Hearthwood Tree of the Worulthing. And they did so with fire.

Imagine, for a moment, that your entire life is centered on an Overlight bond with a swarm of benevolent insects that live inside your very being. Now imagine that those insects began to catch fire and, in their simple-minded panic, to devour you from the inside. You would likely go mad long before the woodbugs or the flames killed you. But some of the Worulthing did survive, even if their Hearthwood Tree did not.

Now the rarest of the Banyari, the few remaining Worulthing are literal husks of their former selves. Their woodbug companions long since having abandoned them or died horrifically, the Worulthing are now blackened stumps, the light gone from their eyes. And although we still know next to nothing about Banyari reproduction or life cycles, we know that it is somehow intimately tied to their Hearthwood Tree. So we must assume that it is only a matter of time before the Worulthing fade from the world.

For longer than any of us have been alive, the Banyari have been a Folk defined by conflict. Our observations of isolated communities among the Aeworn or Brendenol suggest that the Banyari prefer a quiet existence, punctuated by the rhythms and seasons of the natural world, their lives strung out like the notes of a song, gently rising and falling before reaching a satisfying conclusion.

But now I fear that their traditional presence in our world has been irrevocably altered — first by the cataclysm that resulted in the war with the Teryxians, and now by the steady march of progress, as more and more Folk travel to distant shards. Even the Skyborn of the Banyari are a shock to their system, bringing new and different worldviews to this shard once hushed by the soft leaf bed and the peaceful ways of its people.

My own Folk have done their share of wrongs to the Banyari, but consider this: we know that the Haarkeen have already stripped their own shard of resources to provide for their own needs, and are indeed running out of space to stack even more people. And a time will come before long that the guilds of Veile find their own forests more and more reticent to give up the old-growth trees, which are vital to the creation of their airships that now drive so much of the workings of the world. Where will they turn? Pyre? Surely not. Quill? The birthplace of so many Teryxians that even now shape the hearts and minds of their youth? I think not.

One way or another, change is coming to Banyan, and I fear our compassionate brethren lack the means or the will to resist it.

ZENITH

THE VIOLET PEAKS

Snow.

At first glance, Zenith is an ocean of snow, broken only by cloud-encircled peaks, which seems to dominate the shard's entire surface. Though many who live here seek balance, the snow-heaped mountains and hidden verdant valleys of Zenith are places of dangerous extreme. From the mind-shattering ordeals of the monastics in their citadels, to the rigorous conditions of the extreme landscape, to the poisonous halls hidden between lies and stone, Zenith promises only clarity and realization. Form preconceptions at your own peril.

Compared to many of the other shards, Zenith is more or less intact, not much shaped by the footprints of those who walk upon it. The Monks who live there say it is because the shard's occupants accept it as it is. They seek to adapt to the shard's perilous climate and shape, rather than break them to accommodate the self-deceiver. Whether this is true or not, it seems to me that perhaps Zenith's physical foundation, that of a single unbroken stone buttressed by a vastness of iron-veined mountains, has as much to do with the shard's unchanging nature as anything else.

The weather and terrain of Zenith are some of the most unforgiving in the world. It does not require a Teryxian ostrakonomer to notice that this cold place lingers in the shadow of light-bleached Nova more often than not. While



it does, the entire place is awash in torrential snow and pounding hail and sleet. Travel upon Zenith's surface becomes impossible by conventional means, so the Folk who call it home have adapted in one way or another to the conditions created by the unforgiving storm. During these times, the wise stay within the monastery walls, but sometimes travel is required. Whether pulled forth by mission or vision, one must brave the tunnels beneath the ice. Not that the tunnels themselves are perilous — ah, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

When the surface of the shard is navigable, Zenith possesses a majestic beauty that has special appeal to mystics and others may who have their own reasons to seek communion with the light. Although none of my kind would willfully travel to such a frigid land, pilgrims and aspirants still seek peace in isolation there.

To understand the true story of Zenith, one must first understand the story of the three peoples who call this shard home.

THE DIAMOND QUEEN AND BOUNDLESS MIRROR

It is said by some upon Zenith that, before the breaking of the ancient world, a vanished people, spirit-beings of alien wisdom, hid a vast number of profound spiritual teachings within the landscape that would one day become Zenith. There are even a few religious extremists who believe these delinquent gods to be the first of Zenith's Folk.

Yet, according to the Tablets of Charuk the Undivided, the first two recorded intelligent peoples on Zenith were the Hamanu and the demonic Yamari. For a thousand cycles before the monastic migrations, these two species fought viciously, and the Hamanu did not fare well in that torturous and sustained campaign. The Yamari were simply too many, and their ceaselessly predatory and cruel method in all things diminished the Hamanu numbers almost beyond recovery. This time of destruction spanned two ages and, if not for the arrival of the Diamond Queen and her army of disciples, it is possible that the Hamanu would be no more.

The Hamanu? Have you not seen one of their kind accompanying the robed Monks around the city center? No? Very well.

The Hamanu are, as I was trying to explain, one of the native Folk of Zenith. They are apes, thick of fur and broad of back, standing head and shoulders taller than any Haarkeen. Many of them are very strong, and all are expert climbers, with clever fingers and toes. They are exceedingly observant individuals, and not much escapes their keen sight or hearing. They may be reticent speakers, but do not mistake their quiet ways for stupidity — the Hamanu see much that others do not.

So where was I? Ah, yes.

The so-called Diamond Queen Who Reigns from the Throne of the Void was once a Haarkeen girl who from a young age was privy to the prosperous business of her family. So taken

by commerce and her kind father's craft, she learned much of the world before most would have, and she traveled to more distant lands at a tender age than many would in a lifetime. Her education was well rounded and deep, and she had an easy time when the occasion came to please important people. Nonetheless, she was damned with true seeing eyes and, at the young age of fifteen, witnessed the murder of her family at the hands of cruel men. She would have died as well, if not for the kindness of a Pyroi merchant who was seeking iron to sell to the bladesmiths of his Folk. She accepted passage aboard the merchant's airship and, after a long journey, it was the wind-blasted sky-shores of violet Zenith that the travelers found. Much to the Pyroi's surprise, the girl thanked him and wandered up into the mountains, vanishing behind a ghostly dune of snow.

It didn't take long for the girl to realize how woefully unprepared she was for such a place as Zenith. She tried to hide in small caves for warmth, but each time the vicious winds would turn and shift and what was briefly respite soon became a rime-packed tomb. Snowblind and hopelessly lost, the girl sank to her knees in the snow, surrendered to her death, and prepared for dissolution into the endless white.

So it was nothing less than miracle and mercy when her eyelids parted and the gentle faces of strange beasts stared quizzically at her, as they balanced a teacup's edge against her still trembling lips. The Hamanu had found her against a snowdrift and brought her to warmth and shelter in their hidden temple within a carved mountain face. As she sat upright, she stood in wonder of the beautiful wall carvings and stonework. The lines considered the natural forms of the mountain's shapes, and the kind-faced Hamanu immediately transmitted a deep feeling of trust and friendship.

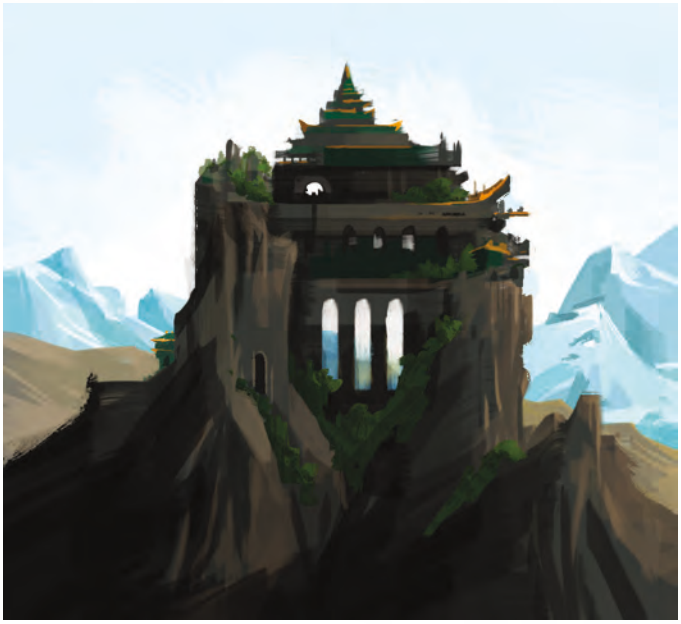
The Hamanu did not appear like the girl at all. They were enormous and lanky, like tree-dwelling things from a distant shard, but they lumbered gently about the cave, the intricately carved charms which ornamented their fur tinkling softly like falling snow. The warriors among them wore bands of iron on their forearms. But the Hamanu were also humble in their own way, and their ritual ornaments were worked so finely as to make an Aurumel master weep, while their records poetically captured the history and stories of a remote time unknown to anyone else.

The bond that the girl would come to share with the Hamanu named Boundless Mirror was like no other. Their friendship is the friendship through which the potential of such a bond is entirely realized. And it was by the grace of that bond that they walked the Path together. It is this very example that forms the beating heart of the Zenith Orders' most sacred and shared experience — for the Monks of the Zenith Orders form Overlight bonds with the Hamanu, the likes of which are not repeated across the Seven.

Stories of the adventures and realizations of the Diamond Queen and Boundless Mirror are as limitless as the imagination. Their battles with the spirit-eating Yamari are well chronicled in

teaching texts and holy biographies, and I encourage even the most lascivious lout to partake of them, if only for the pure joy of antics and poetry.

What is important to understand is that it was the realizations of the Diamond Queen that formed the base upon which the Zenith Orders are constructed. Although the traditions and lineages argue over minutiae and what practices form the best support for understanding, they are unified in the shared mystical experience of the native Hamanu and their disciplined monastic companions.



It is this humble scholar's belief, however, that the basis of their bond may not lie entirely on the grounds of compassion, but also in the fire of the shared wrath that they unrelentingly unleash against the cruel and terrible Yamari. The warrior Monks of the orders are incarnations of the Saint of Thunder, and the Hamanu are formidable until grievously injured. The Yamari are the only true enemy of either. But who are these dreaded creatures, and do they deserve the demonization to which they are subjected?

In short, yes. Absolutely and without any doubt. The Yamari are predatory malevolence personified. But I shall once again ask you to temporarily turn aside from such horrors. We shall find them again in time.

THE ZENITH ORDERS

Like crowns upon the three King Mountains, the shard's primary centers of spiritual practice are the citadel monasteries of the Zenith Orders. Standing stoically against the brutal elements of the mountain peaks, these perfectly carved monolithic sanctuaries house thousands of Monks, each pursuing the Path — as dictated by the original teachings of the Diamond Queen and by the traditions and realizations of the lineage and teachers that have followed. Disciplined outwardly so as to experience a boundless ecstasy of wisdom within, the monastic aspirants seek to comprehend the Overlight and its expressions. With the lightning-forged swords of compassion and awareness, the Zenith Orders seek to rid themselves of all obstacles standing between them and the prize of enlightenment.

Divisions of gender and age do not exist within the orders, as these are seen as dualistic obstacles. Men and women are treated entirely equally, and ritual texts and the methods of

meditation, art, and fighting are expected to be mastered by all disciples. Hair is entirely removed to invoke a minimalism of appearance, complemented by thick warm tunics, warm skirts, and shapeless flowing robes with long triangular sleeves. Huge fur-lined cowls with bell-shaped wraparound capes are worn when the chill is extreme.

Despite these ideals, the orders are made up of living, breathing beings. Shortcomings are inevitable. Politics and cruelty arise, as they would anywhere. While their philosophies espouse the unconditional connection of light between all sentient beings, the Zenith Orders are exclusively populated by Haarkeen and Hamanu. Some think the reason for this is that their founder was Haarkeen and shared friendship with a native Hamanu. Scientists say that it is because the Haarkeen and Hamanu seem like cousins, albeit strange ones, with their comparable physiology.

Whatever the cause, it is likely that a day will come when conservative adepts must prepare their combat circles for the wrathful mediations of a Pyroi monastic, and attempt to wrap their minds around the architectural prayers laced throughout the structures of Aurumel temple builders. But perhaps that is something for our descendants to ponder.

In the meantime, the orders are populated by countless Haarkeen men and women who long ago heard the wisdom spoken by others who had made the pilgrimage to those snowy pinnacles near the top of the world. Seeking balance, and perhaps a Hamanu bond of their own, they too somehow found their way up past Banyan and Quill to live their lives in the ice and wind.

The pilgrimages have now mostly stopped, though not entirely. Gone are the times when large numbers emigrated from Haark. The Zenith Order Monks are a Folk and a culture unto themselves, separate from that great city-shard. Still, called away from home to find meaning among strange environs and stranger Folk? Parts of this story may feel a bit familiar, don't you think, Skyborn child?

The organization of the Zenith Orders varies slightly by monastery. The Crystal Wind Monastery is home to the Scholars of the Unbroken Sky and the Crystal Wind Adepts. The Monks of this order are illuminated by the same spirit that brightens the minds of my Teryxian kin. Their monastery is a palace of knowledge filled with bright paintings and carefully maintained scrolls, encased artifacts, and tablets sacred to the order's history. The martial faction within the order is no less disciplined or studied. Their practice treats body as mind, conditioning it to the point of unwavering focus.

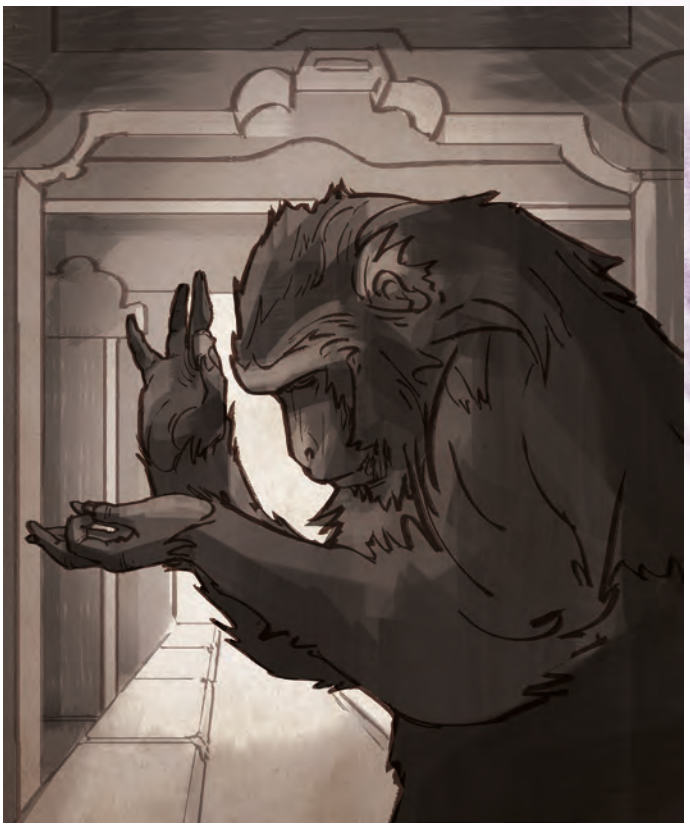
The remote Monastery of Silent Stone is isolated, even by the standards of Zenith. These Monks rarely travel beyond the monastery walls, and this lack of exchange with the rest of Zenith is cause for concern within the other orders. At Silent Stone, the Monks focus on spiritual practices that drill into the foundation of being,

with slow rhythmic mantras and unwavering methods of concentration and inner silence. They wear gray robes and are often the subject of jokes when a character of dour disposition is required for comedic effect.

Lastly, the multitudinous Monks of the Diamond Queen's Palace are practically a Folk of their own. In this veritable city of Monks, it is said that the monastics repeat this mantra: "Though we lack the precision of the Crystal Wind and the Silence of Stone, we are grandmasters of joy, blissfully dancing at the feet of Mercy's Queen." Their monastery is a wonder as well, with village districts each with their own religious festivals for different saints and sacred events. It is as if the whole place were a strange sort of orchestra, playing a rolling song of devotion made of lapis chanting and the glass ribbons of chiming bells.

And yet there are still some monastic initiates who wander into the wilds with the strength of their religious convictions as their only refuge. With their Hamanu bond-mate by their side, they come to understand the elements of the world's makings as directly as one could possibly dare. These Cave Yogis and wandering hermits are revered by the monastics, and sometimes give teachings while taking respite between long periods of exposure to Zenith's natural brutality.

No matter their monastery preferences, all Monks enter as novices, with their hair intact and brown smocks that mark them as people still of the world of lust and fear. After proving themselves reliable and finding the approval of a teacher within their order's higher ranks, the aspirant has their head shaved and is formerly initiated into the lowest tier of the order. Years of meditation, banal chores, grueling physical conditioning, and rote memorization of prayers and histories await them. Only after the fundamentals are mastered is one given more prestigious duties, while instruction in advanced awareness and esoteric combat arts begin.



But before any duties are assigned, the Monk is taken to the Silver Precipice — each monastery has one. It is a perilous overhang at the edge of a cliff from which the valley below cannot be seen. It is here that the new Monk sings the songs of the Diamond Mirror and has a vision of the Hamanu to which they will be bound. At the same time, an equivalent custom is performed among the

Hamanu so that the bond is assured to be one of synchronicity, not the fulfillment of some grotesque spiritual entitlement. After this, a special ritual is performed that joins the two in religious practice and friendship. Together they will begin the arduous path toward perfect awareness, acting as mirrors into each other's flaws and gifts.

These bonds are for life, and the death of one of the bond-mates means that the survivor lives out their days bonded to only the fond memory of a unique loved one — a loved one who has nevertheless yielded to the unstoppable void. Although much ink has been spent within manuals which attempt to detail the practices to avert such grief, the Monk or Hamanu who survives does not often live for long after their friend succumbs to formlessness. It has been said that some Monks and Hamanu are so gripped by a fear of such parting that they make this fear the basis for their entire spiritual practice, seeking to overcome it through a strange tradition of seeking self-annihilating union with that absence from which the Overlight shines.

Stranger still, there are whispered stories of an offshoot of Hamanu that broke from the greater Folk when they allied with the Zenith Orders. Not for them, these Overlight bonds with hairless Haarkeen. These creatures are powerful, elemental things, who despise the Monks and Yamari equally. Yet these Iron Hamanu reserve the greatest volume of contempt for their fellow Hamanu — those who bent the knee to the friendship of the Haarkeen invaders. It is said that the most righteous practice of the Iron Hamanu is cannibalism.

THE KIR-OI

And now we come to it. The Yamari. The Kir-oi. The Mothfolk. All different names for the same cruel and malicious beings.

Suppose you encounter Yamari,
Snow serpents and countless demons;
Think on the perfection of Sky-Mind
And none of them will dare harm you.

If the Mothfolk should encircle you,
Their red mouths and needles inspiring terror,
Think on the silence of Sky-Mind
And they will flee into the snow banks in boundless retreat.

So reads *On the One Mind* from the Wind Garland Tablets, written long ago by Circle Master Sho-Ki.

The Yamari claim to be far older than the Hamanu. Given their inhuman and monstrous customs and appetites, it is likely that they share a fouler beginning than most Folk.

Physically, the Yamari are androgynous humanoid beings with smooth, powdery-white skin, coal-black hair on their heads, and giant, gauzy moth-like wings. Their lips, teeth, gums, and tongues are all glossy black, while their eyes are an uneven red-and-burgundy crackle. They are small-framed, with a body shape close to that of an Aurumel or Haarkeen child. They move with a disturbing,

floating grace which is always accompanied by a desolate giggle or dreaming sigh, like one might murmur during a fevered nightmare.

The Yamari are also devoid of all sexual characteristics. Indeed, it is said the Yamari's entire form is an expression of wanton desire. This would account for the Yamari's second-most distinct feature: the faint crimson line that runs from the dimple beneath the nose to the sexless groin. Not merely coloration, this line in fact marks the Yamari's true mouth. When the back of the Yamari's victim is exposed, the line opens into a dripping maw, positively crowded with needle-like spines weeping with paralytic venom and absolute hunger. The length of the Yamari's body is then pressed against its victim's back as it plunges this rack of fangs into the meat on either side of the spine and, with a hammering gnash, tears the spine free of the back. A blood-curdling keening noise splits the air as the victim's spine disintegrates in the haunted gut of the Yamari.

It is said that the winds of Zenith are a mercy given to the shard by grateful air spirits. For it is only the mountain-borne winds that deprive the Yamari of their ability to fly. More than once on my visits to Zenith have the gales buffeted me out of the sky, and on at least two occasions I found myself taking shelter near a cave, only to return to the blizzard lest I face whatever red-eyed horror watched me from the darkness. The legends of the Yamari's capacity to haunt the dark carry enough weight that I wasn't about to test the truth of these stories.

The Yamari, having been evicted from the sky, are forced to live in the deepest tunnels beneath the mountains of Zenith, where the iron ore gives way to a terrible red stone that glows with the only light provided to a scream-filled maze. Some claim that these tunnels were built by the Hamanu long ago, using a wisdom and craft that has been lost in this present age. But now it is called the Scarlet Labyrinth, a baleful and terrible realm smelling of burnt blood and smelted metal, those veins of bulbous red stone bathing every surface in a sick vermillion light. Beyond that, details of this place are rare, as the nature of the Yamari hell-realm requires a certain madness and abandon to comprehend, and rarer still are those who experience this place and escape with their lives.

The Hamanu trust in the strength of their bonds with the Zenith Order Monks, and the help of the Diamond Queen is something for which they will be eternally grateful. But my recent visits to this cold and unforgiving shard have exposed a growing belief that the final test of the Zenith Orders and their Hamanu partners is on the horizon. And failure of their virtue could spell total ruin for everything that dwells beneath the Overlight.

The mountainous shard of Zenith is a place of hidden mysteries and forbidden secrets. Certainly, these secrets are boundless, and the meager handful of experiences I have shared with you today have barely raked my talon across the shard's frost-charred surface. But which of its countless wonders could ever

capture the mysterious shard's essence? The Undermines of the Thousand Iron Teeth? The edge-hung merchant haven of Konchog City? The Pagoda of Rubies? The Lost Golden City of the First Hamanu Kings? How could such wonders be fairly treated in such short time, when each's legend deserves an evening and fireside of its own?

HAARK
THE CITY MAGNIFICENT

I am personally torn on whether the advent of cities has been the greatest boon or the greatest failure of all achievements. Although the daub, clay, and stone of Haark's urban landscape is not as pleasing to the eye as the verdant jungles of Quill or the scintillating waters of Veile's lagoons, the city is a marvel all its own. The intricacies and problems that are worked out in the very architecture of buildings and their relation to one another is captivating in its own right. It is also fair to say that a city is possessed of hidden sites and wonders that are not immediately apparent to the roving eye. And so the city of Haark is supreme among all cities — unquestionably in size, but perhaps also in the sheer volume of secrets and back-alley miracles.

The shard of Haark is covered by a vast city that spans its landmass from edge to crumbling edge. Haark is the name we give to the shard and to the city, for they are one and the same. As Haark's human population has grown through the eons, so has its need for housing and land in general. The solution, as has been the case in cities from time immemorial, was to build *up*. As raw materials began to grow scarce — stone, most notably — Haark's unique decision was to also start building *down*. Digging down to quarry stone, the people of Haark brought ore and rock up to higher elevations and continued building.

Viewed from above and from great distance — provided that the dense airborne smog is cooperating that day — Haark can be recognized as a single massive bowl, so deep and extensive has the digging been over the generations. Unfortunately, the cost of these ambitions has been ongoing problems for the current population of Haark, which struggles endlessly with buttressing, the costly importing of foreign building materials, and the inevitable erosion of the shard's tortured ground.

But for all its precarious footing, Haark is genuinely wondrous. The Banyari and their almost obscene adaptations aside, there is no Folk as varied in appearance, culture, and disposition as the Haarkeen. Humanity comes in a wide array of skin tones, facial structures, and body types. We do not know if these variations are the remnants of regional differences from the days when humanity maintained separate communities and villages, spread out across

the not-yet-urbanized continent. For now, the Haarkeen are a teeming mass of humanity, the full splendor of nature's diversity represented in this unusual citified wonderland.

Boisterous and joy-loving, the vast majority of the city's denizens prefer a cup of Aurumel wine in a squat, domed fest hall to most other pastimes. The Haarkeen also love stories, and can sometimes be plied with precious things in exchange for a suitably enchanting yarn. But poke around another corner, or venture out from the city center, and you'll find all manner of subcultures and communities, each with their own distinct customs, style of dress, or even dialect. Yet, for whatever reason, there exists, within the hearts and minds of many of the Folk across the shards, the idea that all Haarkeen are somehow unworthy of their place among the Seven. As if humanity had somehow stolen its place at the table with the rest of the intelligent Folk. Sometimes subtle, sometimes almost violently forthright, the ugly face of this bigotry can be found without looking very far. But the Haarkeen are nothing if not persevering.

THE COUNCIL OF SEVEN

As perhaps some side effect of this ingrained bias, the Haarkeen are the only Folk not entirely under their own sovereign rule. And if I have not yet mentioned, Haark is the most cosmopolitan of the shards, with Aurumel, Pyroi, Banyari, Teryxians, and even a few Hamanu and Novapendra walking its streets.

As befits such a diverse populace, the affairs of Haark are directed by the so-called Council of Seven. The council is formed of members elected autonomously by the powers-that-be of each of the seven shards, and each of these members is accompanied by a delegation consisting of varied assistants, courtiers, and guards. The membership even includes the alien Novapendra — whose representative, I am told, mostly remains silent during heated council discourse, except to infuse the proceedings with cryptic and apocalyptic aphorisms that don't do anybody any good.

So these council representatives (of which there are actually eight, given the dual leadership of the delegation from Zenith) hold their seats for a term which is also established by their appointing populations. The Haarkeen, despite having the most to gain and lose from effective leadership on the council, frequently replace their representative based on the whims of whatever portion of local governance has the current favor of the populace. The Aurumel will go to great expense to have their councilperson presented to the membership only to be assassinated shortly thereafter. The Teryxian and Banyari representatives vacillate based on the current state of their ancient politics, and fight amongst themselves more often than not. The two representatives of Zenith whisper to each other and add little, while the Pyroi stand-in often looks bored or confused. The Pyroi hold the affairs of Haark in no regard and generally send a troublesome chieftain's child or aspiring Embertongue to Haark's claustrophobic conditions mainly so that they may learn how different one's path can be from that of a proper Pyroi.

Or at least, these are the trends of the council, as relayed on the street by the common people. A favored and beloved tutor I may be, but not even I have set talon in the Grand Council Chamber of Haark. The council meets irregularly, with the only mandatory meetings occurring about four times per cycle. This allows the council's members to tend to the affairs of their varied constituency while working on city projects, rubbing elbows with the powerful, or accepting bribes and other corrupt persuasions.

The most obvious show of force from Haark's City Watch is in and around the Grand Council Chamber, but it is a veritable legion of ludicrous size. The City Watch has forts and bunkers throughout the city, those locations chosen for neighborhood distribution as well as more strategic hard points to defend the city against threats from within or without. The onion domes and turrets of Haark's highest elevations sometimes conceal siege defenses, like massive ballistae to skewer any flying targets that attempt to attack the city from above. The streets of Haark are generally quite narrow and, with the cooperation of residents, the City Watch can create chokepoints wherever they see fit, sealing off specific areas of the city when extreme emergencies demand such rash action.

The ranks of the City Watch are filled with all manner of Folk — sometimes volunteers; sometimes offered by foreign powers, as a gesture of goodwill; and sometimes a Haarkeen whose father's father (and his father before him) wore the Golden Tower's emblem upon his sleeve. The disposition of each member of the City Watch largely depends on their assignment. While the guards that stroll the light-dappled awnings of the Great Market may be fresh-faced and joyous, the soldiers who patrol Haark's perilous Edge are a hardened and gritty lot, prepared for anything that its desperate denizens care to hurl from its ominous alleys. The patrols of the City Watch are assigned based on the basic divisions of Haark's urban space — that is to say, in accordance with the four rings that are recognized by the average Haarkeen.



THE CITY CENTER AND THE GREAT MARKET

The center of Haark is not so much a ring as an irregular and vaguely circular shape that fills an ever-growing commerce district in the city's deep, man-made crater center. The lowest points are

actually beneath the center of Haark's mass, and thinking about that while walking the streets can summon a sensation of crushing weight for anyone with a hint of claustrophobia. There are broken strips of land — land bridges, really — that cross the crater's width at several points, although many of them have long since crumbled away and are now made whole with stretches of wide-planked suspension bridges. The buildings here are of great variety, with some of those at lowest elevation actually having entryways in their roofs.

Perhaps the best-known landmark of central Haark is the greatest of its commerce sites: the Great Market. This dizzying network of tents, bridges, stalls, stands, kiosks, and rocky overlooks is bright with colorful canopies and buzzing with constant activity. There is no slow time at the Great Market, and its surging crowds are sometimes intolerable to those not acclimated to such dense population. But to those with cosmopolitan aspirations, central Haark is a paradise for the senses. All manner of things can be bought, sold, or witnessed within its corners and under its awnings. The businesses that ring the four branches of the bazaar benefit from proximity to one another, but offer quiet respite from the swarmed bridges and stalls. Among these businesses are popular cafés where a bewildering variety of confections, street food, and intoxicants can be acquired. It is in these curtained alcoves that the most influential and powerful among Haark's criminal empire meet to scheme or simply pass the day anonymously and undisturbed.

The most popular of these venues is an amazing place called the Golden Pool, which is virtually a catacomb, as it spans almost six square blocks *beneath* the other buildings. The Golden Pool is a tavern and brothel where virtually any appetite can be indulged. While standard fare is kept on hand, runners can be sent to the markets to find strange delicacies to appease alien appetites of every stripe, if the coin is sufficient. Lodging, food, drugs, performance, gambling, companionship, and bathing can all be had at the Golden Pool. The Golden Pool's proprietor, a native of Zenith's Konchog City, is called Mad Yeshur. Having grown tired of the religiosity of his home shard, Yeshur came to Haark's center many cycles ago and built its most thriving center of pleasure and joy. Even the City Watch enjoys time at the Golden Pool.

While absolutely bursting with markets, shops, restaurants, brothels, and theatres, Haark's center is not, in fact, a place made exclusively of commerce. There are countless small parks, public courtyards, and terraces leveled one on top of the other, with strolling trails and uneven paths winding among statues and well-maintained gardens. There are even some sculpted shrubs and trees reminiscent of parts of Veile. Fountains abound, and ancient memorials and ruins have been decorated with flowering plants and stately plaques that give meaning to the quiet serenity that visitors enjoy. Minstrel's Terrace is the largest of these parks, consisting of several tiers of ivy-coated patios arranged with oversized living wood furniture, provided by Banyari artisans of the Verdant Quarter.

THE RING OF SILK

The section of the city which encircles Haark's center is known as the Ring of Silk, and it is the wealthiest area of the megalopolis. Here the rich and affluent live in the newest, sturdiest villas while enjoying a scenic view of the cityscape and skyline that is unparalleled.

Although the exteriors of most buildings are rather uniform, with Haark's ubiquitous motif of stone-and-clay stacked-cube architecture, the skyline in the Ring of Silk is also broken by turrets and onion domes that ornament the urban palaces of the shard's elite. Security in this part of the city is the very best, and curious guests poking around the willfully concealed affairs of these neighborhoods had best cover their tracks well. Those who dwell in these luxurious manses have influence that extends far beyond the walls of their personal fiefs.



Amidst these homes extend looming, spidery platforms buttressed by stone pilings and iron chains. These sky piers collectively form a kind of harbor for Haark. Hundreds of these platforms extend from the inner ring and each is guarded and manned by unionized laborers. The leadership of these crews, under direction from the Council of Seven, have strict control of all the people and goods that come in and go out of Haark. And if you think that's the whole story — then, child, you haven't learned much from my teachings.

There are plenty of people who would brave the dangers of the Edge of Haark to bypass the various tariffs and taxes levied upon shipments and visitors, but the losses suffered by such smuggling operations force the criminals behind such endeavors to seriously consider whether the risks are worth the reward of such a shady process. The smuggling crews with deeper pockets find it far easier to provide bribes to harbormasters and dockworkers than risk robbery, capture, or murder at the hands of the Edge-Dweller gangs.

THE VERDANT RING

Beyond the Ring of Silk lies the Verdant Ring, so called because a full third of the area is occupied by the Verdant Quarter. This place is the home away from home for most of Haark's resident Banyari. The brown squares of Haarkeen architecture are covered in climbing vines and flowers, and the cobblestones give way to lush undergrowth flecked with wildflower colors. Every rooftop is a garden, and trees sometimes drive their roots through three full stories of a building, while Banyari gather in the chambers beneath, performing their bizarre rituals and communing with what, to them, must be a

healing and nurturing environment — here on this shard where most of nature has been literally strip-mined and quarried away to bare rock.

In the Verdant Quarter, the Banyari live as they do on Banyan and are not forced to adapt beyond their willingness. This is perhaps because the gardens and parks of this ring provide a disproportionate amount of Haark's food. The generosity of the Verdant Quarter causes many Haarkeen to be extremely fond of the Banyari, despite humanity's comical inability to grasp the customs and attitudes required to truly interface with that most peculiar of Folk. Alas, they do try, those people of Haark. If anything, they persist.

Plenty of shops fill this ring as well. Unlike the densely packed stalls of the markets, the boutiques and artisan shops here are where some of the highest quality merchandise can be found — if you know where to look. Elixariums, jewelers, sculptors, and the like give these charming venues an atmosphere more akin to a provincial village than the largest city in the world. One of these places bears mentioning more than any of the others.

Asturbahl's Crown is the shop and workshop of Asturbahl Gios, the greatest Aurumel jeweler and lapidary now living. That said, it is unknown if the Asturbahl of today is that legendary paragon of skill who established the reputation, or if he is a descendant bearing the mask of the famed Asturbahl. Either way, Asturbahl continues to produce strange and amazing objects crafted from stones, crystals, and gems of all variety.

It is said that, for an extra cost, Asturbahl can calibrate the jewelry in such a way to best serve the energetic tides within the buyer. Whether this is the garbage science of the poetically compelled Aurumel or some cruel yoking of the Overlight, I could not say. His personality aside, there is not a being with eyes that would not crave the delicate, insightful art of Asturbahl the Gem-Worker. Even I succumbed to a ring made of three metals found only on Zenith.

In addition to these public places, this ring has plenty of sprawling residential neighborhoods that are relatively clean and green with trees and bright with smiling Folk. It is not until these areas crest into the outer ring that the downside of urban existence is writ large.

THE RING OF SMOKE

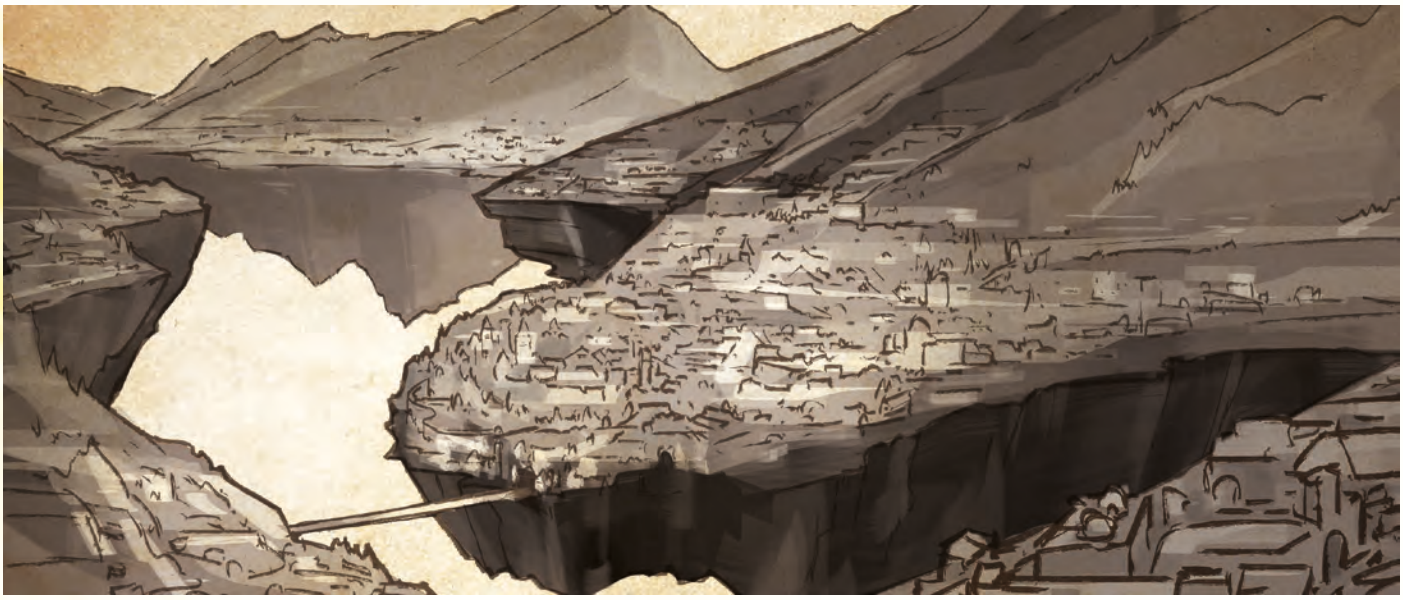
Shantytowns and ruin become more common here, and crime more frequent as well. Though not truly the outer edge of the shard, or even close to it, the Ring of Smoke represents the outermost part of the city for many Folk. Although criminals do not rule the streets here, the City Watch does not spend as much time in these places, and it shows in the dark corners and dead-end streets. This is Haark's most densely populated ring, and the wages of such a swarm of humanity has its cost. Food and water are often rationed. More than once throughout history, the City Watch from Haark's inner rings had to be mobilized to prevent civil uprising and food riots.

This ring boasts a number of large-scale

workshops, as well as warehouse districts. As one would imagine, many of the goods stockpiled in these dusty vaults are not known to the City Watch. In fact, much smuggling is conducted in this ring, sometimes with goods being lifted directly off-shard to faraway places where the consumer is as exploited as the workers from which they were stolen. Redlifting, as the practice is called, is considered one of the more grievous crimes on Haark. Blackmailing officials or bringing in contraband still hold a stiff penalty, but they are drastically less taboo than this. Those caught redlifting are often publicly executed, and their bodies can be seen hanging from the skydocks. Whether or not this is a worse fate than rotting in one of the iron cages which hang beneath the shard itself is a discussion which I am grateful I will never have to personally contemplate.

But this highest ring is not all bad. The people here are unpretentious, and the things one can buy here are cheaper than anywhere else on Haark. Although some of it is stolen, most is simply self-produced, fashioned the old way, with care and mindfulness: a sturdy, one-of-a-kind shawl, a perfectly smooth handmade bowl, or a pair of wooden sandals that will last longer than you. These and many items like them can be purchased from the no-frills merchants of the Ring of Smoke.

Let me just take one moment to warn you of the beverage preferred by the occupants of this ring and the Edge. Cloudbrew is a sweet, syrupy beverage that is often served in bowls with a slice of sour puckernut. The beverage causes body temperature to vacillate and heart rate to speed up. The result is a fast and aggressive drunkenness that has been the culprit behind many petty crimes of the area. Luckily, the seemingly unquenchable lust for cloudbrew and its sloppy dream-blur persists where other more problematic pleasures would likely gain footing.



For the sake of the record, the Blue and Breezy is the foremost venue for the acquisition of this local swill.

Travel through the Haarkeen streets can be more than problematic for visitors. To say they are labyrinthine is an understatement of poetic proportions, and to say they are inconsistent is to be the saintly heart of forgiveness. So it is that the Union of Porters and Drivers is flush with membership, and provides some of the best guides and travel assistance throughout Haark. The idiosyncrasies of sightseeing neighborhoods and dark alleys become less critical when a talented and enthusiastic guide is riding the strange beasts that bull carts and carriages through the curves and turns of the endless boulevards. Not surprisingly, the porters and drivers tend to charge higher rates farther away from the center. Although this logic seems backward, based on the decreasing levels of wealth, this allows the union to mitigate danger and avoid the worst perils of the Edge.

THE EDGE

Where Haark's rim touches the wind and sky, there is a region that wraps entirely around the shard. This place, called simply the Edge, is a desolate, wind-blasted ghost town where Folk come to hide or conduct the very worst sort of business. It is difficult for the City Watch to confirm a murder when the victim has been tossed bodily off the edge of Haark itself. The gangs that rule the place are strange and skilled, being the equal of any but the most experienced of city guard. Drug dealers, poisoners, slavers, assassins, fencers, leg-breakers, arms smugglers, cannibals, monsters, and worse make up the teaming micro-factions of the Edge. It is unheard of for all but the most saintly to attempt salvation here. The Edge, with the clay chimes that ring hollowly and ominously in its wind-smooth towers, is not for the civilized and untested.

When these criminals do wander into more controlled areas and are apprehended by the cunning men and women of the City Watch, there is a special place where they are kept. It is said that a deranged Aurumel architect in the hire of the first Council of Seven constructed the great and terrible Hanging Prison of Haark. Unwilling to cede livable ground to those who would act against the best interest of the shard's inhabitants, the council gave the underside of Haark to the architect Pelagius Karamag, which he transformed into one of the cruelest and most inescapable jails anywhere in the world. Consisting of little more than hanging iron cages connected by gangplanks and suspension bridges, the cells are unnervingly tossed by strong winds, driving the inmates mad with fear and uncertainty. The guards, in order to avoid the same torments, wear heavy iron boots that anchor them to the platform and give them a distinct shuffle of a walk that can barely be discerned over the ever-present whipping winds.

And so it is that limitless Haark is both a place of wonder and dismal consequence. Whether it be curiosity, desperation, or mere commerce that brings you to the city's countless streets and heaped square buildings — let it be said that only greater variety and delight awaits those willing to explore the hidden corners of the City Magnificent.

VEILE
THE AMBER PARADISE

The doctrine of impermanence is universal throughout the teachings of the Folk. This certainly does not sit well with my own people. One need only look at the Teryxians' generations-long defiance of the simple fact that the spires of Quill are gone and forgotten. But the battle against the idea of impermanence itself, and against the fleeting nature of lives and things, is fought with unequaled ferocity and conviction by those builders of the splendid cities upon the shard of Veile: the Aurumel.

THE MASKS OF VEILE

Through their arts — from architecture to spontaneous poetry to baroque ornamental surgeries to the subtle manipulations of elemental principles — the Aurumel seek only to *last*. To grasp at time indefinitely. To leave a mark upon their shard or upon their city or upon the horizon, that says *I was here*. The exact nature of this persistence varies from house to house and guild to guild but, on occasion, it takes that most Aurumel of forms: a particular technique which is passed through an interlocking spirit lattice of disembodied ancestors, reinforced by devotional crafting rites that invigorate a collective creativity which ensures its own future. Put more simply, this technique might simply be referred to as the masks of Veile.

In Aurumel culture, there is perhaps no symbol more meaningful than one's mask. The mask not only marks your station in society, quite visibly identifying you as a member of a particular house or guild, but also ensures that you carry with you the prestige or shame of your ancestral line. Finally, it creates a statement of continuity that conceals individual achievement in lieu of the greater exaltation of one's house or guild.

Laborers often wear heavy iron or solid wooden masks that are simple and well made. Even the faces of slaves are covered with hoods of cloth and secured with chain. The cloth's color is often tied to the guild or house that owns the slave, while the chain and lock provide less symbolic security.

Perhaps the most unusual manifestation of this practice is the Master's Mask. This is a custom that allows the work of multiple generations to be completed, albeit symbolically, by the master that initiated the project. If a glorious sculpture takes three hundred years to complete, the mask is passed through a succession of artists who then continue their lives and work as if they were that original genius. In many cases, this crosses lines of gender and age. The mask may bestow a mother's life upon a son's body, for example. The son assumes the name and identity of his mother, all in service to the work, and his mother's lasting legacy. There are some masters who have "lived" for well over a thousand years, carried on the backs of dozens of Aurumel bodies. It is in this way that a

single work of craft, especially a grand work taking generations to complete — be it a statue, a monument, or even an airship — can provide an Aurumel artisan immortality.



On a smaller scale, temporally speaking, the Aurumel are well known for the customs of some of their citizenry to elevate the modification and physical manipulation of their own bodies to an art form. Already marked as strange and somewhat unsettling by other Folk (particularly the Haarkeen, who see in the Aurumel a distorted reflection of themselves), the Aurumel almost appear as Haarkeen, albeit ones writ tall and stretched. They're taller than most Haarkeen, some even taller than a Hamanu. But they're thin, very thin, with long bones of the arms and legs, seemingly out of proportion to the rest of their bodies. Their faces, on the few occasions that someone might glimpse them without a mask, appear fine-boned but gaunt. Similar tissue and muscle mass on a Haarkeen and it would be assumed that the individual was malnourished, or at least unwell, yet the Aurumel maintain an alluring beauty all the same. Add to this the singular behavior of the Aurumel to decorate their bodies with implanted ornaments of precious metals and stone. Jewels, crystals, or plates of gold and silver are surgically anchored beneath the skin of forearms, the backs of hands, or more intimate places.

The Aurumel will even change the shape of their flesh, as one trains the shape of a tree in a sculpted garden. Wires are used to shape the ears into fabulous shapes, while heavier metal bands are even used to force the neck, wrists, or fingers into a stretched and exaggerated form. It should be noted that tattoos and branding are not part of this custom, probably to eliminate any comparison to their brutish Pyroi neighbors.

THE SEVEN CITIES OF VEILE

When I first arrived on Veile I could not reconcile its reputation with what I perceived as its reality. So serene, so graceful! Could this be the shard of rigor and severity matched only by its capacity for corruption and decadence? The crystalline inland sea and verdant, rolling hills would suggest otherwise, yet as I inhaled the gentle breezes that caress the lazy vineyards and seaside

villas, I could not help but sense something burned, singed, overworked. And it is when one follows that sensation all the way down its length that the twisting contradictions underpinning so many Aurumel customs begin to seem not so much like hypocrisies, but rather the complications of a mad and breathtaking contraption designed to evoke the bladed extremes of beauty.

The civilized portion of Veile is established upon the black-sand shores and crater-wall cliffs that ring a huge inland sea. Its seven lagoons and the great wide River Keres, which runs from the sea's estuary through the lowlands and off the shard's edge, each host a city-state that commands the lagoon as its territory, including fishing fleets and whatever portion of the navy docks or drops anchor there. The city-states themselves each have their own character: from encrusted and decadent, to military and reinforced, to meticulously integrated with the natural landscape out of reverence for those forms that will outlast us all.

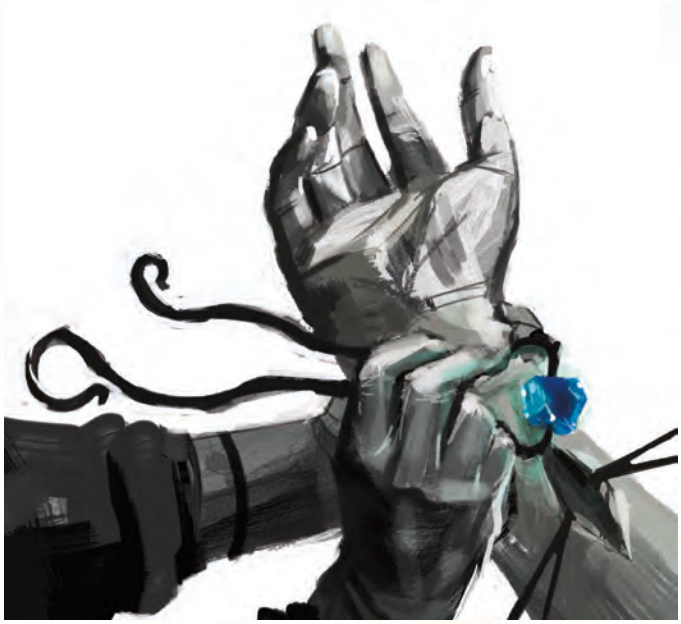
Beyond the farmlands and vineyards and hillocks, the green fields and golden wheat give way to broken earth and mist-covered bogs. Beyond that, the outland mountain wall that protects all of Veile. Invading forces that thought to brave the ice-sheathed mountains were either turned back by furious conditions or never heard from again. Nonetheless, sufficiently mad or brave Aurumel will occasionally venture into the mountains or into their labyrinthine caverns with old temple complexes from the first settlements. Hidden truths of the past and long unseen heirlooms do still remain in those painted vaults. But for each thing worth taking, there are presences unbidden and foul that, even if slain or outrun, would lay such a curse upon one's reason and rightness that the soul would bear it for all one's remaining days. It is for this reason that I will dream of these unhallowed places from the comfortable distance of Aurumel civilization, and no examples of it are so absolute as the seven cities and Gylnos, the Glass Citadel.

Each of the seven cities claims a lagoon, with which it shares a name. Although not all seven are entirely reliant on the resources of their lagoons and the commerce that surrounds them, many of them are. And so all but the most negligent of aristocrats and citizens show respect to the generous waters. In almost all cases, the Aurumel (and others who have chosen to live in their settlements) are divided into four castes and a fleeting fifth caste.

The houses and their aristocratic members are commonly thought to have the highest social standing, and the most power. They claim lineage to — and have lavish poetry that espouses the virtues of — noble ancestors who, according to the houses themselves, founded and directed all art and culture worth mentioning in polite company. The houses of Veile buy from and fund Veile's guilds, while also producing some of the strangest and most eccentric artists in their own right.

The guilds and their masters produce goods.

These are the engineers, architects, sculptors, blacksmiths, chemists, jewelers, alchemists, and many more besides. Beneath, the laborers and their initiatory unions reside. This caste also includes the military and its cults. Finally, come the slaves and the slavers who traffic in them. Slaves are also called the Lowly. I should also mention the Dekti, or honored guests, who are visitors from other shards and who must be sponsored by members of another caste (barring slaves, of course).



There is no doubt that the lowest of these castes is most certainly the slaves, but it is a matter of debate as to who truly holds the reins of the Seven Steeds of Gold. Common sense would suggest the houses hold the power, but closer examination reveals that the imprudent economics of lascivious aristocratic vice have turned the houses seemingly irrevocably in the direction of decline. It is by the grace of the meticulously managed and rigorous standards of the trade guilds that the houses persist. The guilds make use of the houses to do a fair amount of politicking abroad and enlist promising talent from the ranks of the high-blooded. Despite their shared delusions, it is clear to my Teryxian eyes that it is the unions of free laborers that truly make up the beating heart of Veile's industry. They who work the forges and the mills, they who fill ranks in the armies. Hushed and giggling vineyard pickers joke that the houses and the guilds are like a pair of drunks being walked home on the union's shoulders. If only it were that civil and harmonious.

The seven cities of Veile are Kylix, Polem, Teyloy, Sydor, Ogemos, Lyko, and the ominous Dome which reflects the sky and the curling movements of nearby blue waters, coruscating with opalescence.

Kylix is a city of elegant bridges, balconies, and terraces. Hushed conversation, the gentle sounds of oars through water, string music fluttering through curtained windows. The smallest of the seven cities, the City of Silent Water is also the most conservative. Its elite and unseen city police are draconian in their enforcement of public etiquette, and only the richest of merchant princes or most privileged of Aurumel aristocracy can avoid beatings or imprisonment once the ire of the police has been drawn. Several philosophical societies and household cults have shrines and meeting houses in quiet Kylix, and one may often see their shrouded number congregating along the waterfront. Where there are brothels and taverns in the larger cities,

Kylix is content with its breezy teahouses and fountained courtyards and parks where orators politely debate philosophy and politics. The occasional violation of noise ordinance from the audience of such debates rarely merits more than a stern look from the city police. A true disturbance, such as insubordination to the aims of Kylix's government, the professing of religion, or any other destabilizing agenda, is always dealt with swiftly and brutally — and even lethally, if the offense is vulgar enough. It is no wonder that the manses in the high hills surrounding Kylix occasionally produce a maddened slave or laborer who spins bloody yarns of torture, murder, and excess.

It is not unusual to see images of idyllic Polem in frescoes or in the background of aristocratic portraits. Whereas Kylix preserves tradition through code and statute, Polem simply bleeds with Aurumel custom and history. When looking upon the orchards, vineyards, and pastures of Polem's surrounding hills, I immediately understand the Aurumel desire for longevity. If I were to die here, surely I could not imagine a paradise more radiant than old Polem. Agriculture and wine production make the fields of Polem inseparable from notions of flowing bounty — and indeed, its fields provide food for Folk far from Veile. The Trader's Guild and the House Urjax work as a two-headed serpent here, and nothing in the city is outside of their striking distance. The families that have been trading boons here for generations have made agreements and treaties that make Polem relatively safe. Its festivals, however, are notoriously dangerous.

Although Teyloy covers a huge crescent of coastline (Teyloy's lagoon is the largest by far), its occupied quarters, of which there are only two, claim a small and sullen population that serves as a living reservoir of the old Aurumel funerary arts. The flooded ruins where old Teyloy once stood are a constant reminder of why the perpetuation of one's life and the favor of spirits is first and foremost in the mind of any true Aurumel. In addition to the rituals and crafts of the dead, the people of Teyloy are also known for their skills in weaving, calligraphy, the construction of musical and ritual instruments, and — most importantly — the finest masks crafted by living hands.

Sydor is a fortress out of necessity. It is not some terrible beast or foreign army that requires its entrenchment, but a shearing scythe of wind that comes ripping down out of the mountains edgewise, strong enough to tear to pieces anything of lesser construction than stone and carefully angled wooden windbreaks. This requires the people of Sydor to mostly make their homes underground or in the sea cliff upon which their city squats. As such, the largest mining center is a labyrinth of tunnels and subterranean wonders. I did not stay long, as such places are not for winged Folk.

The luxurious Ogemos is known far and wide for its decadence. The perfumes, drugs, medicines, poisons, and strange tinctures that are extracted from its sprawling flower gardens and herbariums decorate everything from the shard's lively portside markets to its most reclusive night gardens and reflecting

pools. Here, eternity is experienced in an expensive, fleeting moment, and future and past collapse into a sigh of ecstasy or a moan of surrender. Although the distractions of Ogemos seem meaningful to the enchanted, it takes a skilled navigator of awareness to yield fruit from this city's thorn-ringed delights. As an aside, Ogemos is also home to the Glassblower's Guild — one of the oldest and most prestigious Aurumel guilds, having contributed the most directly to the engineering of Veile's greatest known wonder. There is no house worth its craft that does not own property in the gardened hills surrounding Ogemos. The titanic, terraced mansions form an unbroken line of white marble villas that sit like sea birds along the high sea cliffs. It is a joy to fly past them, once the time for parties arrives and nothing but laughter and music pours from those villas down into the crashing sea waves below.

Save for a tiny break in the pale blue pines along the coast, Lyko is concealed from the water's edge. Standing like a stubborn stone in the middle of a leafy river, Lyko is an island in the midst of Veile's most lustrous greenway. It is here that woodworking is perfected, and it is here that the hulls of the finest ships are made. Even the Aurumel airships manufactured in the huge workshops of Gylynos have hulls, decks, and masts fashioned by the masters of Lyko. In fact, one might find the forest city to be idyllic. And so it is, to all but those who must forge a relationship with the forest. The lifestyle of the loggers is an exceedingly dangerous one. Enormous primordial beasts dwell beyond the treeline, and many stories exist about one-sided bargains between ambitious Aurumel foragers and the wicked, ancient things of the wood.

The waters of the Lagoon Orethe are glass-like on a windless day, as no vessel is permitted past its mouth. Although hospitality in some ostentatious form or another seems ubiquitous in Aurumel lands, this is most certainly not the case when it comes to the thousand-span high iridescent bubble known as the Dome. It took little to no snooping on my part to find that the Dome is, in fact, where the finest weapons, finest soldiers, and finest training originate. The city is a military city in all ways, and security here is virtually impenetrable. One drunken libertine I spent time chatting with in Polem also informed me that, beneath the pristine sphere's lofty curve, there are bloodsports and gladiatorial events as seen nowhere else. That being said, no Dekti is ever given permission to enter the Dome, as there is no reason for foreigners to know what lies beneath it.

GYLYNOS, THE GLASS CITADEL

From the beauty of the bridges of Kylix to the serenity of the orchards of Polem, the island citadel of Gylynos is without equal in beauty or innovation. This glass citadel-city is nested in an immense quartz cradle, carved from crystal at the center of the inland sea. It is radial and symmetrical when viewed from the air, a great pinwheel of shining glass and dancing light. But, like most, I was aboard an aquiline gondola set out from Polem when I saw the diamond Gylynos ignite with all possible color as the Overlight struck its rutilated spires. At first,

it was as art and I could not see beyond its display, but upon disembarking, my imagining was put to the test.

Despite the Aurumel tendency to embellish their works with more ornament and extravagance than my own people, Gylynos is deceptively precise in its design. Fanciers of architectural beauty claim it has something to do with some elder crafters who sought to arrive at some crazed single theory of assembly, while the more sensible realize that the materials themselves — glass and crystal, with accents of the smooth black stone found at the bottom of the inland sea — are themselves as unforgiving as the cruelest master. Each piece must be meticulously balanced against the next by the masters and their laborers and, if an error is made, rebuilt and reconfigured from the very beginning.

The quarters of Gylynos are stacked on top of each other, with the harbor level at the bottom and the manses of the highborn set high in the spires, connected by spun-glass bridges and walkways leading to secluded balconies and gardens. The quarters between are filled with a dizzying array of pleasures and enlightenments, from feast halls and palatial brothels to galleries and towering libraries.

The laws of Gylynos are almost entirely aesthetic. Unlike the laws of the seven cities, which are determined by the whimsy of deranged aristocrats or the arbitrary will of a privileged elite, the Code of Gylynos controls appearances and public appropriateness. Certainly the palaces of the ladies and lords of the place contain the same decadence and perversion as anywhere else they dwell, but the debauchery does not spill out into the streets of Gylynos as it does elsewhere on the shard. No, the citadel of Gylynos, through its rules, seeks a sort of visual perfection, which is the crux of its legalism. Here, design and beauty are the law. It is for this reason that the houses of the rich are laden with passages and secret access points to prevent public embarrassment or abject disgrace. Unlike the public face of Gylynos, which shines forever with unbroken dignity, in these tunnels and backways it is not uncommon to find the bodies of disappointing servants or the would-be suitors of Aurumel mistresses that failed to please or appease.



There can be no doubt that Gylynos is a banner of pride for the Aurumel. But, for those who know, the entire island of Gylynos is a citadel of war. It is here that the arms are made for the

Aurumel — those heretical instruments that can weaponize the very Overlight itself, those things the Haarkeen call laser rifles.

It is in the concealed hangars that the shipwrights assemble the sky flotillas and their arsenals. The airships are a pivotal part of not only the defense of Veile, but also the functioning economy of all of the Seven. Without the easy and regular transportation from shard to shard provided by the airships, much of what we take for granted in the current state of the world would cease to be. It is for this reason that the Shipwright's Guild, and specifically those families and lineages responsible for the creation of the airships, are among the most powerful in all of Veile.

Beyond all else, however, is the Golden Blade of Gylynos — a laser cannon extending through the very core of the island and empowered by the rainbow light trapped in the walls of every structure in the city. Although there are theories as to the magnitude of the weapon's power, it has never been activated. There has never been a need. Could it strike Haark despite its distance? If the device operates along the same lines as smaller versions of its type, what could be the spiritual cost of a single pulse? Considering that the heart of their culture (and the bulk of the Aurumel empire's wealth) lives on the island of Gylynos, such a cost would be gleefully paid by the powers that be, if the Golden Blade is ever required to defend the island from assault.

All in all, it is curious to me how the Aurumel could be so split in their spiritual effort: the vulgar and the subtle. While pure-intentioned Aurumel artists create their works in cottages among the pastoral hills beyond streams and grape-hung trellises, aristocrats integrate gold and jewels into their flesh so as to become like the gilded effigies of their ancestors.

Who am I to judge? My kind are no less full of the pride that comes from the construction of a glorious society, no less arrogant in our belief that we hold the moral high ground. Are the Teryxian excesses any better or worse than those that exist upon Veile?

Perhaps the truth of the shard and its strange people is best understood by way of this contradiction — not despite it. Perhaps the immortality sought by these wanton geniuses lies somewhere between gross form and the undiminished light of wonder and splendor.

PYRE

LITURGIES OF FIRE AND SPEAR

In the sky between Veile and Pyre, one can sail for days. The billowing heat that rises off the burning plains of the red continent allows for all manner of winged things to sail effortlessly, high above its surface. But should one of these idle beings allow itself to drift beyond the easy gliding of the rising current, and float or fly down to the surface of Pyre, it would find itself in the fierce lands of the powerful Pyroi and their unforgiving rituals, hunts, and battles. It is not unheard of for Skyborn to prevail in such trials, but to expect such luck is arrogance. The Pyroi are a proud and terrible Folk, tempered by constant sport and battle and hardened by the searing heat that flows through their wrathful stomping grounds.

To look upon, the Pyroi are not entirely unlike the Haarkeen. They have two eyes, two hands, and two legs, and they stand upright when walking about or hunting their food. But Pyre is not Haark. And Pyroi are not soft city-things or quick-tongued merchants who prattle about the price of Banyari honeycomb in civilized places.

The first thing you might notice about the Pyroi is their size. They're absolutely huge. Taller by far than the biggest Hamanu, and much more massive. Their skin ranges from a shining brass to a deep, reddened bronze. Their eyes have no visible whites, but have enormous irises that range from ruby red to copper to burnished gold. Although these Folk have lush hair on the tops of their heads, and the men occasionally wear beards or plaited facial hair, their bodies are entirely hairless, as the hirsute do not fare well near lava geysers and lakes of flame.

To provide support for their great size, the Folk of Pyre have feet that resemble those of the great beasts called Shovel-Tusks, which play such a central role in Pyroi rites of initiation. About a quarter of the way below the knees, their calves becomes wider and thicken to substantial girth. To the Pyroi, massive feet are emblematic of their connection to the fire within the ground, and those feet are often ritually tattooed with stylized flames and explosions of lava, or even decorated with rings of hammered bronze.

Above all else, the Pyroi are warriors. Warriors blooded on the magma-veined karst of their unassailable piece of the Seven.

It is fair to say that, if there are Pyroi who are frail or crippled, they are well hidden in the huts of the elderly and infirm. To that end, male and female Pyroi grow to similar size, with the males being broader of shoulder and the females wider of hip. So if you do ever find yourself in the black glass arenas of the Pyroi, mind the punches of women as much as the punches of men, for only the stoutest gladiator will fight again after such a powerful blow.

THE TASKS OF THE PYROI AND THE FOUR PILLARS

The greatest possession a Pyroi can acquire is social status, as granted by the people of their tribe. With the exception of outliers and hermits, the honors, marks, gifts, and punishments are the foundation of existence. One appeases gods, kills enormous prey, composes a perfect verse, and slays one's enemies. Even the priests who maintain the Pyroi ancestor-worship customs are given to the vanity of their achievements, with high-ranking Volcano-Priests lording their station over provincial shamans and thinking little of the insane Flameheart mystics who trade away their status for lives out on the open tundra.

How does one earn such status? See, I told you that you were a smart girl. Well, I'm glad you asked. All that is required of a young Pyroi is to accomplish a series of very precise and well-known feats.

The first task is to serve admirably as a Thrallscout in a warband or hunting party — and to survive the experience! Thrallscouts serve as outriders and lookouts, and it's not uncommon for young Pyroi to die in fulfillment of this role, being gutted by some gargantuan beast, or misstepping onto the too-thin crust of a newer lava flow. Even among those that live, not all Pyroi ascend beyond the rank of Thrallscout. But if they do, they will achieve worthiness and enter the warband as a full member, albeit a low-ranking one. The more martial of the warbands call these members Firethanes.

The next step depends on the warband to which the Pyroi is pledged. The Sons of Shaithus, for example, expect a small monument of bone and skull to be built and added to the great wall of remains erected by their hunting ancestors for countless cycles. The Jebtsuk Temple Guard require a lifetime's dedication to a complicated honor code, all while zealously pursuing advancement in a society that rarely has openings for such social movement. The Embertongue Poets of Mahalank demand the composition of perfectly spun stanza that, if deemed worthy, will be added to their endless poem. The Circle of Brass, though secret in all other things, is known to require a gratuitous offering of gold and jewels, spread out over seven cycles.

Once this laborious feat is performed, the Pyroi is recognized as a hero of the people and bestowed a more grandiose title befitting their new station. ("The Ascended Magma Prophet of the Temple of Jebtsuk," "Wing-Master Kiadhor of Ten Rings," and "The Wind and Flame of Endless Song" would be examples of these humble monikers.) Despite their audacity, these names are well earned, and those who bear them are truly champions among a Folk of natural heroes. It is not uncommon in the fables and myths of other Folk for a judge or champion from outside of the culture to appear and serve as the decisive hand in some conflict. These characters are almost always Pyroi.

The social standing of any Pyroi individual is not to be confused with what are referred to as the Four Pillars of Pyroi society, a distinct and

separate concept. These Four Pillars, or groups, are not ranked one above the other like so many Aurumel castes, but there are those who would claim that some of the groups do have a sort of social advantage over others.

The warbands are a scattered culture of fighters who all observe the same traditionalist code of Pyroi warrior-ship. Only outnumbered by the hunters, the warbands account for a large portion of the population.



The priesthood encompasses those who oversee custom while tending to the overarching schedule and performance of rituals throughout the Pyroi territories. Though they are traditionally to have no power over the military actions of the Folk, they have gradually usurped much they were previously denied.

Embertongues is the name given to scholars, diplomats, poets, orators, and any others who hold passionate exposition through flowing language to be an expression of the soul. These master courtiers are far rarer than either hunters or warriors, but they have greater numbers than the priesthood.

The hunting parties of the Pyroi not only provide food, but also serve as defenders against those threats that fight with fang and tusk rather than spear and scimitar. The hunting parties are loved by most. When they stop to gather supplies, they are generous with their game, which often serves as the basis for joyous, flame-lit feasts. You may find, if you ever have cause to visit the red shard, that the hunters largely eschew the sculpted headpieces and other finery often associated with the Pyroi, instead dressing themselves in furs and leathers.

The casual observer may consider the hunting and gathering tendencies of the Pyroi to be a mark of technological incompetence, or at least an inability to grasp agriculture (in whatever stunted form that would take on this blasted waste of fire geysers). Nothing could be further from the truth. The effort required for agriculture on Pyre would be unimaginable, and for a yield so paltry that any Folk so invested would deserve their demise. It is also a fact that the Pyroi people are entirely carnivorous. Although they certainly enjoy the non-meat foods of far-off lands when traveling, the Pyroi can subsist on nothing but meat and water indefinitely. This also accounts for their pronounced canines and unending fixation on the hunt. I must admit — the ready availability of such bloody bounty was a joy to me when last I visited.

But now we come to the Pyroi mystics. The mystics form a strange fifth grouping that stands apart from the Four Pillars. Clans of mystics are peppered in tiny concentrations all over the face of Pyre. These wild beings, called Flamehearts, are often clothed in flowing robes, and they carry frightening weapons that are heavily relied upon for survival at the gnashing edge of the wilderness. Despite the torments of these places, these holy ones spin songs of devotion and elemental realization brought on by their closeness to Pyre's landscape.

A STORY WRITTEN IN ASH AND IRON

In addition to all of their various titles and noble posturing, the Pyroi also decorate themselves with marks of office and symbols representative of their deeds or those of their warband.

The most common decoration is tattoo. In actuality, this is nothing like the needle-and-ink art that some Haarkeen have been known to etch upon their skin. The Pyroi method is more akin to deliberate scarification. These markings are created by slicing the flesh so as to create a wide gash, which is then rubbed for hours with volcanic ash. This procedure in time produces a ropy, raised scar with a gray-black color. These tattoos are most often found around the calves and feet, as it is the feet of a Pyroi that represent their primordial connection to the might of the land itself. And thus these tattoos are primarily images of flames, mountains, or rings of stylized predatory beasts. Above the knee, anything goes; there is no standard of placement or motif, otherwise. Delicate arabesques, loping fields of Steam Gazelles, Shovel-Tusk skulls, poetry in the flowing script of the Pyroi courts, or sinuous shapes that trace the muscles of a favored weapon arm. All of this and more is played out in stories of ash and flesh.

The Pyroi covet all things marked by flame, ash, and battle. And so their ornaments of office tend to be made of bronze, brass, or iron. The Embertongues wear enormous sculpted helms or crowns of metal. Warband champions wear armbands, wristbands, anklets, bandoliers, rings, earrings, and hair ornaments. It is rare for Pyroi to wear jewelry piercing any part of their flesh besides their ears, as they find the excesses of the Aurumel off-putting and the fashions of Haark unfathomable. Despite the necks of gold coils, the arms weighed down by iron bracelets, and the extensive branding and scarification, the Pyroi seem to make a conscious effort to differentiate themselves from the cultures on the shard above them, whose occupants they view as enslaved by desire and lascivious want.



If Pyroi culture can be said to have an excess, it is that of ritual obsession. There is no part of the Pyroi world that is not marked by ritual recognition, ceremonies, celebrations, trials, ordeals, or memorials. Cracked magma plains, lava-spewing volcanoes, and the furious beating of snow upon black sand and red rock is all they will ever know. That is why the Pyroi cling to one another, weathering the fury of the world together. Rituals are the way in which this togetherness is marked, over and over again. Although a hunting party may endlessly travel the wastes of Pyre, their bodies' ornamentation will hold the lore and history of their lines, and it is by the strength of those lines that the hunting party will forever be fortunate and gain ever-greater glory and quarry.

Much of this behavior is seen by other Folk as vainglorious piety or a fixation on physical power. I see it differently. I see in the Pyroi a people who understand and respect violence. Rituals require thought and awareness, and in the presence of such awareness and care, the sort of violence that destroys cultures is on the shortest tether possible. The forces of destruction and the ever-looming presence of violent outbreak are at the forefront of the Pyroi mind. Even those among them who follow a gentler path realize that the fire rages within, and they yoke it for inspiration and passion. The philosophy of the Pyroi is the healthiest way — perhaps the only way — to truly confront and live with the ongoing perils of might.

THE PROVING GROUNDS

The landscape of Pyre is an exercise in extremes. Few trees dot the horizon of the lichen-encrusted tundra which covers much of the lowlands.

The snows can be fierce here, but on the rare occasion that the shard is not under the shadow, the climate can become almost pleasant for a short while. But it never lasts, and temperatures most of the time are extremely cold. Of more concern than the temperature are the rivers of molten rock that flow beneath the surface of the tundra. Never predictable, they may be so deep down that you'd never notice, or they may be just below the surface, only barely betrayed by subtle gas vents or melting of the permafrost. One wrong step upon one of these thin-crusted patches can end in a terrible death.

The lichen which I mentioned, called the Crawling Tears, is a virulent strain that can thrive in absurdly low temperatures, often growing in a crust up to four inches thick. It can be carved into small tools and implements, although it will always remain somewhat porous. A suitably large piece can even be made into a sort of durable shell armor — oddly lightweight for Pyroi warriors, but nevertheless effective.

A visitor to Pyre would likely begin their excursion in the small city of Sukhaba Gol. This walled market city is located on one of the more pleasant stretches of tundra, known as a thundering ground because of the propensity for the creature known as the Colossal Shovel-Tusk to wander there; somehow, the creature instinctively knows that the area's subterranean magma is deep enough that even its enormous weight will not punch through the surface. An arrangement with Pyroi elders allows Sukhaba Gol to stand on one of these thundering grounds, which are thought of as sacred to the hunters. Many of the Pyroi view Sukhaba Gol as a sad, enclosed place, and derisively refer to it as the Warm City, but even the most tradition-bound Pyroi understand the benefits of trade and commerce with other shards.

Sukhaba Gol is somewhat sparse in the comforts that a native of Haark or Veile would appreciate, but it is positively agreeable compared to the rest of Pyre. The city's most distinguishing architectural characteristic is certainly the countless terraces and elevated walkways that connect the few businesses and strange, round residences. The Haarkeen and Aurumel who live and trade there spend no small amount of time complaining about the conditions, but again, survival is comparatively easy there.

Beyond the tundra you'll find the forests of the lowland taiga. These hills and plains are markedly less cold than the tundra below, and it is here that you'll truly begin to see the Frostcoal Pines. This coniferous tree can be found almost anywhere on Pyre, but it's on the taigas and in the mountain forests where it really thrives. The tree will sometimes even grow in the volcanic loam at the foot of active volcanoes. It is a vital part of the Pyroi way of life. The wood of the Frostcoal Pine is used to build their yurts and form the frames of their large temple complexes. The hafts of their spears and the shafts of their arrows are all made from Frostcoal. Even the Shovel-Tusks rely upon them, and it is in the taiga that you will also find the great herds of these animals. The Colossal Shovel-Tusk is perhaps the most archetypal game species on Pyre, providing meat, fur, bones, and ivory for

countless uses. The Shovel-Tusks use their massive ivories to scrape the bark from the Frostcoal Pines; this is the main source of food for the herds during the long cold seasons.

If one were to leave the Warm City of Sukhaba Gol and journey toward the nearest treeline, it would not be long before one would wind up in the taiga and upon a ridge of hills called the Mane of Makhno. These hills curve like a scimitar blade around a small volcano, called Pahaz by the priests who maintain a temple there. The Mane is the hunting ground of the Sons of Shaithus, one of the largest and most honor-laden Pyroi warbands. They hunt all manner of beasts that dwell there, and they are very generous with food when visitors happen upon them. So ferocious are the Sons that their strange kindness stems from the simple fact that, compared to the massive creatures they hunt, no sentient being poses sufficient threat. This oversight is an exploitable weakness of the Sons' worldview, and has cost them plenty when dealing with foreign traders in the past. Even still, some of the Sons have been known to hunt the Jetcracker Hatchetbeak — a large, flightless raptor bird which is often underestimated due to its enormously awkward head. But the Pyroi who braves that animal's brutal assault often ends up a dead one.

As formidable as the Sons of Shaithus are, even they fear the warband called the Ghost Worms.



Deep within the boreal forests — or maybe it was way out on an unclaimed thundering ground, such do the stories vary — you will find this peculiar group. Yes, called the Ghost Worms. An off-shard visitor might think such a name is too small and grotesque for a Pyroi warband, until they are so damned as to set eyes upon the ice-burrowing Ghost Worm of Pyre, a terrifying leviathan that keeps to the central part of the shard. The Ghost Worm warband reveres the beast and makes meaningless sacrifices to the

mindless, nightmarish thing. The Teryxian in me is aghast at this gruesome mockery of our own sacrifices made to Tzahintli, but the scholarly part wonders whether this pale and sightless wonder might be somehow related to the Cloud Serpents. At any rate, the warriors will occasionally find spines from the beast, protruding from the edges of the breaching craters that it leaves in its wake. Once recovered, the iron-hard things are fashioned into sacred blades which slay in the Ghost Worm's unspoken name.

But enough of worms and hatchetbeaks. At some point in any visitor's travels on Pyroi, all roads lead to Kushir — or perhaps its lone tributary, Darhu. Kushir is a great river of magma. No, I do not claim to understand why or how such a thing can exist. I only know that it does. The Kushir is wide and deep, its banks sheer cliffs of volcanic glass. Iron bridges are maintained along its length, which runs from the center of Pyre all the way to pour off the edge into the Stars Beneath. The bridges were allegedly built by a Pyroi blacksmith who wished to make it her life's work to connect the broken lands of Pyre, so that each Pyroi's honor would be the glory of all Pyroi-kind.

As for the river itself, most living things on Pyre do right to stay well away from it. But, as I have encountered at every perch in my journeys across the shards, there will always be some strange and unexpected way in which life takes hold. The less said about the Cemetery Crabs that live along its banks, the better. And I have yet to discover what draws the brilliant orange Magma Lynxes to the river's edge. The latter are prized by priests and chieftains, being kept as hunting pets or symbols of status.

If you follow the treacherous banks of the Kushir to the center of the shard, the ground gains elevation and the air becomes cold again if you wander too far from the river. Here lie the barren lava fields, largely uninhabited but for the infrequent presence of ancestor shrines among the charred remains of Frostcoal copses. Looming over it all is the source of the Kushir, the so-called Mouth of Pyre itself: the towering volcano known as Khar-Ulan.

Spend any real time upon the fields and you will find that they are anything but uninhabited. For this, you will discover, is the home of the Eight Tribes of Gab-Dragomir. Although some of the oldest and most powerful warbands on the face of Pyre, the Eight Tribes are eternally locked in a state of unending battle. Any attempt to unite them is folly, for they see their constant circuit of skirmishes and small field battles as serving some strange cosmic function, as if their endless warfare embodies the hot and labored breath of Pyre itself. Either way, the Smoking Fields of the Eight are littered with small fire geysers, each with an ancestral shrine, complete with carved obsidian effigies of beloved fathers and mothers, marked with ash taken from Khar-Ulan himself.

As for that great mountain, at its base you will find the great temple that bears the name of its founding high priest, the Garnet-Eyed Bat That Is Son of Khar-Ulan — named Jezbar by his Pyroi mother. The temple is a brutal heap of

volcanic-stone trapezoids set directly into the stone. Its grounds are rings of contest and its upper levels extend into balconies and terraces that allow all manner of worthy offerings to be hurled into Pyre's roaring heart. It is also of note that the lava tubes of Khar-Ulan are home to the largest colony of Fire-Bats on Pyre. These creatures provide holy omens, insofar as helping the priests and visiting warbands prepare for Khar-Ulan's molten temper. The Fire-Bats are also highly sought after by the Firethanes of the Leatherwing Cult, and there are few aerial forces across the Seven that can withstand the terror of being targeted by one of their brigades.

Finally, I would tell you of the two locations that were beyond my privilege to witness, as a visitor — and, I'm told, beyond my ability to imagine. One site I was forbidden due to the prescriptions of sacredness established by the intuitive and animistic faith of the confederated Pyroi people. The second I was warned against because the chances of being captured, tortured, and enslaved were prohibitively high.

The first of these two sites lies at the base of an innocuous fire pool near the edge of Pyre. On the outskirts of this simple pool, however, stands a remarkable formation, a colossal pillar of burning-heart tourmaline.

The uncharacteristically smooth surface of this four-span thick obelisk has served for generations as the only written record of the realizations of the Pyroi Flamehearts. It is upon this Oathstone that the warrior-poet mystics who live outside of Pyroi society write the final verses of their lives. Indeed, the Oathstone of the Flamehearts is a flowing record of the glorious deaths of Pyre's bravest mystics.

Of the Slave Pits of Hykos, no Pyroi would rightly speak. It was in a book written by an Aurumel who made his home in the Warm City that I found this piece:

"A Flameheart curse, once heard:

Damned be those lost warbands
that call fell Hykos home.
May he who would cast inescapable thralldom
upon his fire-wise brother be put to spear.
The slavers of Hykos are the worst of us,
and their number is as numberless
as the sins of our vain Folk."

So it is that the landscape of Pyre is one of extreme contrast: a people that seek stability and control amidst the shard's chaos. It is a wonder that they succeed as often as they do — and perhaps therein lies a lesson for all of us.

NOVA

Far above the windswept peaks of Zenith is a land which remains a mystery to all but a few. Reports from those who claim to have visited the shard called Nova include tales of endless sandy deserts, with violent windstorms carving strange shapes among the rocky buttes that dot the horizon. Stranger still are the gigantic many-legged arthropods, which the stories alternately describe as flesh-eating monstrosities or enlightenment-seeking ascetics. No matter the truth about them, there is no debating that the Novapendra — for that is what they are called — are a people apart from the other Folk of the Seven. Even my Folk, scaly and reptilian, are still vertebrates! The Novapendra are something else entirely, perhaps even more so than is immediately apparent.

Are bizarre anecdotes and fanciful stories to frighten children all that we truly know about these strange giants that sometimes walk (on many legs) among us? Not quite, but it is often difficult to separate fact from legend, as we shall see.

One glance at a Novapendra is enough to realize that they are utterly alien to us all, looking like nothing so much as monstrous centipedes, ranging in color from pale grey to solid black or white, or even a variety of strange, gem-like tones. And with a body length equal to three times the height of a Haarkeen man, it is understandable why the Novapendra can inspire such terror among the other Folk.

And what of the shard itself? What of Nova? There have always been stories. Old stories that have somehow taken on lives of their own, passed down from mother to child, from storyteller to captive audience. Older than the more recent tales from travelers who claim to have been there…

Crickets, as big as the Yakirin of Zenith, swarming in uncounted multitudes across silt-covered plains, the enormous centipedes like lone sentinels watching them from above, perched on rocky outcroppings. The Novapendra, arranged at intervals around natural stone circles, singing in unison and creating a pillar of incandescent white light which erupts from the circle's center and fires upward into the heavens. Labyrinths of tunnels and chambers, dug to immeasurable depths, bathed in an ultraviolet glow and filled with behemoth cocoons. A crystalline temple, towers taller than the tallest spires of Quill from before the Fall, scintillating and shimmering in the neverending light.

Legends? Memories? None of us are quite sure. One thing is certain: the Novapendra emissaries on Haark have made it quite clear that Nova would not be a welcoming place for visitors.

And where does that leave us? I've got one more story to share.

Skyborn child, you've always been clever. You may have heard that my standing within the Tutor's Lodge is currently under review. You have probably not heard *why* that is so. It is a complicated tale, and to convey it here may only serve to bring trouble into

your life. What I will tell you is this: all of my difficulties began with a series of conversations I had with a pair of strange individuals I encountered deep within the jungles of my homeland. I do not regret any of what would come later.

A little over two cycles ago, I was accompanying a patrol of Rangers out past the Barrier Waterfalls of the Azure Sea. I was to act as a guide and consultant as we searched for a fallen Library Spire which had long been rumored to exist. Not far past the falls, we were set upon by a party of Chitineers, those foul-tempered, trophy-hunting outcasts from Haark. We were outnumbered and outclassed. Though the Rangers fought nobly, it was not long before I was watching my comrades being butchered for their



feathers and talons. Not much of a fighter, and with an arrow in my wing, I soon found myself tethered to the largest of the hunters, and my mind began to fill with visions — auctioned off as a novelty in a slave market, to end my life as an ornamental pet to some Aurumel highborn, or on the dinner table of a curious Pyroi. But it was not to be, and my tale was about to take a much more peculiar turn.

The Chitineers were on the trail of a Novapendra. There have long been stories from some of my kind about witnessing Novapendra actually gliding through the clouds. These anecdotes are all variations on the same story: A Teryxian on a long flight far from the islands of Quill. A strange sinuous shape in the distance, seen vertically undulating as it seemed to gently float down from above. But never a clear view. Was it possible that the Novapendra could somehow glide down from their lofty homes, or through some unknown Chroma actually ride the Overlight itself, like an airborne version of a fish riding the river's current? These stories seemed farfetched even to me, but the Chitineers were tracking a Novapendra that they claimed to have watched fall from far above the jungle canopy. Regardless of how it may have come to be on Quill, there was in fact one of the great centipedes haunting the far side of the Azure Sea. And while it was being hunted, it was staging a vicious series of counterattacks of its own, whittling down the numbers of the Chitineers, one by one.

How long we were out there I cannot say, but in between the gruesome killings (which I shall not recount here) I came to know my captor, a fearsome and strong woman named Emma. As she crouched and pointed at trail sign with what I could only assume was some part of a Novependra's leg, Emma would recount previous encounters with her Novapendra prey. (This same individual? I do not know.) I had lost a lot of blood from my wound, and the punishing pace that we were maintaining was taking its toll on my mental faculties. I remember much of this as though it were a dream.

Novapendra, I learned, have 21 pairs of legs. Their mandibles are capable of crushing the thigh of an

adult Pyroi. They're venomous, and some of them have learned to mix and enhance their venoms to create horrific poisons. They're flesh eaters, and they find the taste of an animal that's been killed and prepared unappetizing. The flesh must be eaten while the blood is still coursing through it. Emma claimed that some of them can even see the future, and that this is part of what makes tracking them so difficult.

Many of the Chitineers were festooned with the macabre trophies of previous hunts, and Emma was even strapped into a set of armor made from what appeared to be plates of exoskeleton taken from a Novapendra! With such evidence in front of me, I had little reason to doubt the validity of Emma's descriptions relating to the ecology of these creatures.

The things that I learned from Emma during those odd times do, however, stand in stark contrast to what many from Haark will say. There is, of course, one of the Novapendra who sits on the Council of Seven, and many are the Haarkeen who must live and work in close proximity to this individual and their assistants and counselors. Accounts from Haark suggest that the Novapendra who live in the city are quiet and polite, although they rarely talk to anyone other than their own kind, and when they must venture out into public, they do so under the cover of darkness or through a series of hidden passages created expressly for the purpose.

But back to my captor. How, you ask, did my adventure with Emma and the Novapendra in the jungle end? How did I escape to find my way back home with enough health and wits to write this journal that you now hold in your hands? The Novapendra in question — whose name I would later learn was Astralis — would emerge victorious from that hunt, the remaining Chitineers picked off until only Emma remained, defiant to the last, with an ichor-dripping hooked weapon in her hands as she struck blow after blow upon her huge, lightning-fast opponent. But she could not overcome Astralis, and at the battle's peak she would disappear beneath the Barrier Waterfalls, cascading, I presume, off the edge of Quill, to meet her death some unfathomable distance below.

For my part, I had gone from assuming my ignoble demise at the end of a slaver's chain to now envisioning a much faster doom beneath the fangs of this gleaming-white segmented beast. Instead, I was met with an almost inquisitive face that stared at me with tiny, inscrutable eyes and twitching antennae.

"Teryxian," it said. "You are injured."

And so it was that the Novapendra named Astralis nursed me back to health. We didn't speak much, despite my repeated attempts at conversation. Astralis would rebuff my questions more often than not, but he was kind and gentle, using the pointed tips of his legs with surprising deftness to inspect my wounds. Only after many days, and my assurances that I was once again capable of flight, did he take his leave of me. I don't know where he went, just that he slithered away into the undergrowth, vanishing with astonishing speed for such a large creature.

My journey home back beyond the Barrier Waterfalls would prove to be an adventure in its own right. But that is a story for another time.





CHAPTER 3

THE SKYBORN

WHO ARE THE SKYBORN?

Every once in a while, a child is born among the Folk who is immediately recognized as something different. A Skyborn. Born with an otherworldly iridescent shine to their irises, Skyborn children may be revered, reviled, or even feared. No matter the local culture's response, the child is immediately and irrevocably marked as somehow other.

While not a universal experience, by the time most Skyborn reach adolescence or young adulthood, they find themselves being called off-shard. The desire to see more of the world, and the peoples and traditions that populate it, rises alongside a growing feeling of being out of sync with their homeland. Even those Skyborn who have been raised by loving parents or venerated as practically holy by their local communities will almost always, sooner or later, feel the call to leave the place of their birth and seek out new experiences. And along with these desires the young Skyborn soon discovers that they can interact with the Overlight and the Chroma in a way that others can only dream about.

For some Skyborn, leaving may be a matter of survival, while others may find themselves actively recruited by representatives of the Skyborn Order.

WHAT IS THE SKYBORN ORDER?

There are quite a few different organizations of Skyborn, in fact, brought together by some

common cause or another, but the most widespread by far is that simply called the Skyborn Order.

Founded nearly 500 cycles ago, the Skyborn Order was created by Skyborn prodigies from across the shards in order to protect themselves from persecution and exploitation. The order's message spread rapidly after its formation, and word had reached even the furthest reaches of the Seven. Aspiring sisters and brothers gathered from all corners, and upon recognition of its own vibrant growth, the order elected a Jury of Masters — one for each of the Virtues except Spirit.

In the hidden hall where the order meets, there are seven chairs at the table where initiators test candidates. The Throne of Spirit, as it is called, has been empty since the founding of the order. The purpose of its existence is a secret of the order's jury alone. Known as the Palace Unseen, the physical headquarters of the Skyborn Order is almost as transient as its members. The Palace Unseen has appeared on Zenith, Quill, Banyan, Haark, Veile, and Pyre at one time or another. There is only a single account of the one instance when the Palace manifested on Nova, but, due to the tragic and disastrous nature of that incident, it would be anomalous for it to ever appear on Nova again.

The goals of the organization are nebulous but unified. The Skyborn of the order believe that the shards and the space between them constitute a fundamentally broken world. This world, eternally in new forms of peril, requires champions capable of wondrous miracles and the ability to inspire the Folk toward a path that ultimately leads to their own salvation. Despite the seemingly benevolent intent of this philosophy, there are radicals within the order who have distorted interpretations that take the form of everything from Skyborn supremacy to unrelenting apocalyptic prophecies.

The membership of the Skyborn Order fluctuates, but holds at about one thousand and eleven Skyborn, including the Jury of Masters, but not counting novice probationers and testing prospects. Once a Skyborn receives the markings of their conclave (a smaller working group within the order), they become a member for life. Only violation of the order's code results in expulsion. Even then, the so-called code consists of a few cryptic lines of honor-and-goodness poetics that are easily twisted by a sufficiently cunning maniac.

Outside of the meeting of a member's conclave, the various cells of the Skyborn Order do not communicate in an efficient, networked fashion. Although Skyborn can often immediately recognize one another, membership in the order is not reliably detectable so friendships, trust, and experiences built between members of the conclave provide a security that is not common in a Skyborn life.

In recent times there has been talk of a great gathering of the conclaves, a Grand Summit that would trigger a new awakened age of

enlightenment in which all Folk would awaken as prisms of the Overlight and cast the seven holy rays into unknown infinities and deep into the Underfathom. Despite the glory of this vision, cautious heads have prevailed and recognized the inherent and terrible danger of such an idea. The Skyborn Order — despite its heroic intentions — has many enemies. The powerful, tyrannical, and corrupt do not like meddlers, and the disdain from those lofty places is often a problem for the vagabonds and mystics of the Skyborn Order.

CHARACTER CREATION

This chapter provides detailed, step-by-step instructions for creating your characters from scratch, as well as some important definitions for the various Virtues and Skills. But if you wish to jump right into the action, we have provided four pre-generated characters, which you will find in *Appendix A*.

Creating a character in Overlight uses a "point build system." If you've played other role-playing games, this will not be unfamiliar to you. The seven steps to creating your own Skyborn character are as follows:

1. Create Character Concept
2. Choose Folk
3. Choose Background
4. Choose Core Virtue
5. Spend Character Build Points
    - Upgrade Virtue Ratings
    - Upgrade Skill Ratings
    - Select Chroma
6. Generate Spirit Pool and Health Track
7. Name and Finalize Your Character

STEP 1: CREATE CHARACTER CONCEPT

Do you already have an idea for a character in mind? It might help to sketch out some thoughts or discuss them with your GM beforehand. The GM might have some ideas of their own or opportunities to work your character's history into the story they have planned. This is especially helpful if your new character is joining an Overlight campaign that is already in progress.

If you do not have an idea in place ahead of time, that's OK too! Perhaps the process of creating your new character will create some points of inspiration for you.

STEP 2: CHOOSE FOLK

The world of Overlight has many different Folk, but there are seven from which you can choose when creating a playable character:

- Zenith Order Monk
- Hamanu
- Teryxian

- Banyari
- Haarkeen
- Aurumel
- Pyroi

There are some special considerations when choosing either of the two Folk from Zenith, but we'll get to that later. Each of the Folk have their own bonuses that will be added to your default Virtue and Skill Ratings. The default Rating for each Virtue is D6, and the default Rating for each Skill is Untrained. (You can record D6 for each of your Virtues now.) When you first choose your character's Folk, you will be given new default Ratings for one Virtue and at least one Skill. Adjust your Ratings accordingly. Also record any Gifts that your Folk may bestow upon you.

Gifts: *You have undoubtedly noticed the space for listing Gifts on your character sheet. Certain Folk come with Gifts, and some Backgrounds come with Gifts as well. "Gift" is a catch-all term for special rules, given to your character during character creation, that don't fall under any other category. Generally speaking, the choices you make when choosing your character's Folk and Background may give you a Gift, but it is unlikely that additional Gifts will be gained during actual gameplay. Not all Gifts are beneficial, and indeed some have significant drawbacks.*

STEP 3: CHOOSE BACKGROUND

After you've chosen your Folk, you'll then choose one of seven Backgrounds for your character. Background represents the lifestyle, vocation, and history of your character before they left their stable existence and headed out to live the life of a Skyborn. Your chosen Background can help you to craft a story about your character, as it helps to define the sort of experiences and relationships your character might have had prior to the start of the game campaign.

In addition, your Background will determine your Wealth Rating, starting Wealth Points, Belongings, and Valuables. It may even provide you with a Gift or free Skill upgrade. Once you've chosen your Background, you may record these additional details. The complete list of Backgrounds and their relevant details begins on page 84.

STEP 4: CHOOSE CORE VIRTUE

The choice of Core Virtue is an important one for your character. While the decision only comes with a few associated rules, it is nevertheless a key thematic choice. You may choose any of the Virtues as your Core Virtue *except* that Virtue which is most associated with your home shard. A Teryxian character, for example, may not choose Logic as their Core Virtue. This is because the nature of being Skyborn is that they are a bit apart from the lands and peoples of their homes. They feel different, like they don't belong, and this rule reflects that. The Virtue of Spirit is never allowed as a Core Virtue.

Your Core Virtue should represent that spiritual

pursuit that is most important to your character, whether it be a conscious code by which you live your life, or something more subtle and subconscious. Few rules are involved with this selection of Core Virtue, but it should nevertheless inform a substantial part of the personality of your character. The only actual rules mechanic that comes from your choice of Core Virtue is your selection of Chroma, as we shall see later.

The Seven Virtues of the Overlight

What follows here is a primer on the Seven Virtues, *Footprints in the Snow*, an excerpt from the Wind Garland Tablets, written by Circle Master Sho-Ki of the Crystal Wind Monastery on Zenith.



SPIRIT: The power of the soul. Rarified. Ascending. Crystalline and triangular. It is the color of light itself. White, it is all colors, and none at all.



WISDOM: The Violet light. Wisdom is life's experience, distilled and cunningly refined. Both instinct and insight, piety and awareness. Wisdom is the compass of the mind, and the sole method for navigating the ordeals of your initiation and becoming. It is circular, stable. Encompassing and clarifying.



LOGIC: The ability to reason, to analyze. To sift through information, codified data, and memory. Logic can build, make plans, and discern subtle differences. From nothing comes something — science, mathematics, invention. The blue light of Logic is chain-like, reductive, and linear.



COMPASSION: Upon realizing that the dichotomy of self and other is a self-imposed delusion, we are connected to the activity of the primordial cosmos itself. Compassion is the activity of this cosmos as well as its law. The green light of the growing life of these seven shards, of which we are a part. Compassion is sympathy, empathy, communion, and connection.

WILL: Like an arrow of intent, Will is the force of the self. The willpower to establish your being, to formulate your needs and claim them from the world. Will is also a shield. Its own defense, a bulwark against the assault of others. Its light is yellow, reflected off the face of a gold coin, a theoretical idea turned into tangible reality.



VIGOR: Stamina and speed. Vigor is hungry and hot. It is two sticks furiously rubbed together to beat back endless darkness and cold. Hearth fires burn and families gather for warm feasts. The glow of the blacksmith's ember as it turns iron to its color. The flesh of the world made manifest in honey or amber. Vigor is the body as an object which is cared for, optimized, and protected. Orange is its color.



MIGHT: The engine that drives the body. The force of that body. Might is the abject result of pure power and strength. The killing blow, the unstoppable force, the capacity to persist under vile circumstances, it is brute strength and simple persistence. Muscle and mountains, iron and blood. The virtue of war and the hunting of titanic beasts. A fist squeezing red fire into intention.

STEP 5: SPEND CHARACTER BUILD POINTS

You've now got the basic shape of your character, and ideally some ideas about their history and story. You now have 45 *Character Build Points* to spend on further upgrades to your Virtues, Skills, and Chroma. As you're making your selections, be aware that any Character Build Points not spent in this part of the character creation process will be converted to Spirit Points to form your initial Spirit Pool. You will not get starting Spirit Points in any other way, so be sure to save some!

UPGRADED RATING	CHARACTER BUILD POINT COST	
	Skills	Virtues
D6	1	--
D8	3	4
D10	5	6
D12	N/A	10

The default Rating for every Skill is Untrained and for every Virtue is D6, unless otherwise specified by your character's Folk or Background. You may now spend Character Build Points for upgrades. All point costs are for the new upgraded Rating, and while you may upgrade Ratings by more than one level, the costs are cumulative — e.g., you must first spend points to upgrade to a D8 Rating before then spending more points to upgrade to a D10 Rating.

Every character chooses one Chroma to start. Additional Chroma may be purchased at a cost of five Character Build Points each. These should be recorded on your character sheet. The only Chroma powers that you may use are those of Chroma purchased in this manner. There are additional restrictions on your Chroma choices based on your Folk, Core Virtue, and Background. (See *Chapter 5: Radiant Power* for more on Chroma.)

STEP 6: GENERATE SPIRIT POOL AND HEALTH TRACK

Any Character Build Points you did not spend in the previous step convert directly into your starting Spirit Pool: one Character Build Point = one Spirit Point. You don't get initial Spirit Points in any other way, so it's important to save some, especially if you intend for your character to rely a lot on Chroma powers.

Your Health Track is determined by your Might Rating, and will usually have a number of spaces equal to the die value of your Might Rating, plus four (see the table below). By the nature of their Folk-granted Gifts, Hamanu, Teryxians, and Pyroi all have modifications that are made during this calculation.

MIGHT RATING	HEALTH TRACK SPACES			
	Hamanu	Teryxian	Pyroi	Other Folk
D6	11	8	12	10
D8	13	10	14	12
D10	15	12	16	14
D12	17	14	18	16

Count down from the top of your Health Track the correct number of spaces, and any extra spaces below this should be thoroughly scratched out or blacked out.

STEP 7: NAME AND FINALIZE YOUR CHARACTER

From here, all that's left is to fill in some details! Your character will need a name, of course. Along with the descriptions of each Folk and their Background choices, we've included a few sample names if you'd like to match the feel and tone of the naming conventions we've used for each Folk.

While each Background also includes starting Belongings, there's nothing stopping you from adding new traveling gear, personal effects, or other equipment to flesh out your character concept. You cannot add new Valuables at this point, however.

Finally, give a little bit of thought toward your character's personal history. What was their life like before they left their home shard to pursue the life of a Skyborn? At what point in their life did they leave home? Did they leave behind family or friends? What are their relationships with the other characters in your group? Is there any shared history there? Players with bond-mates from Zenith will certainly have a head start in this regard.

Any story and history that you can craft for your character at this point will only help your GM to create a more personalized story, and everyone involved will benefit!

SKILL DEFINITIONS

In many ways, Skills are the heart of the Overlight game rules. They are at least as important as Virtues. What follows is a brief description of how we imagine each Skill being applicable to a variety of situations. Some of them overlap a little bit, and the definitions of some may seem a bit fuzzy around the edges. This is intentional. It is

the GM's prerogative to determine which Skill is applicable in any given scenario. If you feel that a different Skill might be useful, make the argument to the GM, describing how that skill might apply! The GM's decision is final, but using Skills creatively should be rewarded, not punished. In the list below, each Skill's linked Virtue is listed in parentheses.

Athletics (*Vigor*): This Skill covers a wide range of physical activities, including running, jumping, swimming, climbing, and much more. A high Rating in Athletics is representative of well-rounded physicality, often gained through daily routine or vocation.

Beastways (*Compassion*): Some Folk simply have a way with the natural world, and the Beastways Skill represents one's ability to interact with beasts. A high Rating in this Skill could represent an instinctive empathy and rapport with beasts, a lack of fear when around them, or a general sense of companionability. It could also represent the rigors of study and training, learning the behavior and habits of animals in a wide variety of situations and environments.

Blades (*Vigor*): Knives, swords, axes, and spears. The use of any edged weapon is covered by this Skill, whether it be the strict discipline taught by the leadership of Aurumel soldiers and the martial Zenith Orders, or by the street-hardened talent of cutthroats and thieves. It also covers the knowledge of the maintenance and history of such weapons.

Brawl (*Might*): The art of blunt force trauma. Punching and kicking and clubs and hammers are the domain of this Skill. It also covers grappling and other forms of unarmed struggle.

Craft (*Will*): This Skill covers a wide range of learned handicrafts, artisan techniques, and manufacturing methods — from metalwork, to sculpture, to painting, to architecture. The Craft Skill covers the knowledge and history of these creative practices as well as their applications.

Folklore (*Wisdom*): Some people have an innate ability to find themselves at home among strange places and communities, while others make a lifelong study of the ways and customs of the disparate cultures that populate the shards. A character with a high Folklore Rating may recognize poetry, identify social cues, and participate in rituals and customs both commonplace and obscure.

Inspiration (*Compassion*): Inspiration is the art and practice of transmitting enthusiasm. This may be a righteous call to battle, an intimidating order, or soothing words of affirmation. Even a calming prayer said at the deathbed of a beloved friend may be covered by the use of this Skill. Inspiration speaks to the heart and the spirit.

Intuition (*Wisdom*): This Skill represents the ability to gain insight and awareness through the combination of subtle observation and a subconscious "gut feeling." It may act as a kind of sixth sense when attempting to ascertain the intentions hidden in a conversation or to identify the potential for danger.

Machinery (*Logic*): Many and varied are the contraptions and inventions across the Seven. Some Folk have a very good ability to visualize spatial relationships and the complex manner in which pieces and parts may act upon one another as part of a system. The Machinery Skill represents applied instruction in the workings of specific devices, as well as a basic understanding of physics.

Perception (*Wisdom*): The noticing of small or obscure details in one's environment. This Skill is distinct from Intuition in that Perception is about seeing particulars in physical surroundings, while Intuition is more about the behaviors of individuals. Finding a person in a crowd would probably be a Perception Test, unless that person is well known to you, in which case Intuition may apply.

Performance (*Compassion*): This Skill is the capacity to entertain and enthrall an audience through the use of the performing arts, which might include dance, song, and acting. Talents such as acrobatics or juggling may also be included here insofar as they relate to showmanship and the audience's reception. The Performance Skill also includes acting as it applies to lying and subterfuge.

Persuasion (*Will*): The ability to compel or influence a resistant subject, whether it be through manipulation, deception, or negotiation, potentially altering the course of their actions.

Resistance (*Might*): Less of a learned capability and more simply a hardy constitution, the Resistance Skill represents an acquired pain tolerance or sharpened capacity for perseverance through physical debilitation or exhaustion.

Resolve (*Will*): Mental fortitude and defense in the face of compulsion and hardship.

Science (*Logic*): The Science Skill is about the understanding of the natural world — biology, geography, herbalism, geology, botany, even ostrakonomy.

Survival (*Vigor*): Knowledge and application of the basic competencies required to maintain the conditions required for life is governed by the Survival Skill. This includes but is not limited to fire-making, hunting, navigating, and finding shelter and drinkable water.

Windlore (*Logic*): Windlore is an understanding of both weather patterns and aerodynamics, the latter of which includes things like throwing objects or using projectile weapons.

ZENITH ORDER MONKS

PLAYING A ZENITH ORDER MONK CHARACTER

The humans who populate the monasteries and village temples of Zenith seek to embody a crystalline awareness and harmonious relationship with all phenomena. No matter their practice, a Monk uses everything from martial arts to calligraphy to the construction of temples as the grounds of their understanding. They are generally hard working and can enjoy menial tasks in a way that others simply cannot comprehend. Fully initiated Monks are rarely dishonest, as they see deception as a willful muddying of the diamond pool from which all true insight arises.

Although they hold Wisdom sovereign among the seven Virtues, the Monks are often seen as childlike. In the eyes of outsiders, the Zenith method of awareness and open view is often mistaken as naïve wonder. The Monks can come off as gently condescending, if not innocent, treating all conflict as if it were merely a misunderstanding — assuming that the problem is caused by their opponent's inability to comprehend the obvious.

INNATE ZENITH ORDER MONK CHARACTERISTICS

- default Wisdom Rating of D8
- default Intuition and Survival Ratings of D6
- the RITE OF THE DIAMOND MIRROR Gift

GIFT – Rite of the Diamond Mirror: *Within the Zenith Orders, for a number of reasons both practical and esoteric, Monks and Hamanu engage in a ritual bonding rite that seeks to embed the principles derived from the legends of the Diamond Queen and Boundless Mirror. Though outwardly this custom appears as ritualized theater that conveys the lovely fable of the friendship, inwardly it literally fuses the spirits of the two beings. After this rite is performed, the Monk and the Hamanu are, in many ways, a single awareness.*

If you choose to play a Zenith Order Monk, then one of the other players in your game must choose to play a Hamanu, your spirit-bonded companion. A Monk and their Hamanu companion share a Spirit Pool. The starting Spirit Pools of both characters are combined into a single Spirit Pool, recorded on both characters' sheets. Any and all changes to the Spirit Pool incurred by either character are reflected in this shared pool.

An Overlight bond such as this is not without its dangers. When one character or the other experiences a Shatter, their bond-mate is rocked by the concussive nature of the waves of Overlight pouring off their friend. If the Shatter occurred during combat, the bond-mate must skip their next action. Additionally, the bond-mate should acquire a physical mark representative of the Shatter

experienced by their other. This mark should be cosmetic and relatively minor.

Should one of the bond-mates be killed, the consequences are disastrous. Monks and Hamanu have long told stories about how the death of a bond-mate feels like nothing short of losing half of oneself. Many do not ever fully recover from the experience and become radically different people, often mere shadows of their former selves.

At the moment of the bond-mate's death, the surviving character should halve the current value of their shared Spirit Pool or set it to seven (whichever is higher). That new value is a hard limit on the remaining character's Spirit Pool, which now functions in all other ways like the Spirit Pool of a non-bonded character. The points in their Spirit Pool may never under any circumstances go above this hard limit.

MEDITATION SPHERES

All Zenith Order Monks (and Hamanu monastic initiates) begin play with a meditation sphere. This clear, crystalline ball is used by the Monks as an aid in their spiritual practice. It is carried within a woven net sling, which is worn as a bandolier across the shoulder or sometimes attached to a belt or satchel.



The meditation sphere is also a sign of station, a symbol that one has completed their initiation into the orders' mysteries and is a fully actualized member. If a Monk is foolish or careless enough to lose or break their meditation sphere (or, say, trade it away as a Valuable), they cannot replace it.

A Monk without a sphere, while not necessarily ostracized, is viewed by other monastics as an individual who has failed in their efforts to fully embody the teachings of the orders. To acquire a new meditation sphere by some other means would be a grave error, and any Monk who does so is viewed as spiritually bankrupt.

SAMPLE ZENITH ORDER MONK NAMES

Chok-Yi, Krung-Po, Kunrig, Ling-Ma, Nagyam, Norboo, Sho-Ki, Urg-Yu, Yesh-Tsal

ZENITH ORDER MONK BACKGROUNDS

- Cave Yogi
- Crystal Wind Adept
- Emissary of the Queen
- Novice of the Monastery
- Scholar of the Unbroken Sky
- Silent Stone Groundshaker
- Void Shaman

CAVE YOGI				
Skill Upgrade: Resistance D8	**Belongings:** robes, heavy furs	**Valuables:** meditation sphere	**Wealth Rating:** Untrained	**Wealth Points:** 0*

Cave Yogi – So deeply have some Monks mastered the planes of awareness that they have forsaken all belongings and activities for solitude and silence. Within the cave to which they have retreated, a Cave Yogi has only a bed of straw and a fire upon which to boil water and make porridge of wheat and seeds. Their Hamanu usually lives nearby and keeps watch upon their shared physical territory. Others sometimes view Cave Yogis as removed and aloof figures but recognize that their engagement with the Overlight and psychic reality is absolute. But when circumstances are strange enough, or require someone beyond material temptation, a Cave Yogi may be called to serve.

**Cave Yogis have taken a vow of poverty and may never accumulate Wealth Points or increase their Wealth Rating. They may acquire small items that might be viewed by others as Valuables, but only those in keeping with their focused and simple lifestyle.*

CRYSTAL WIND ADEPT				
Skill Upgrade: Brawl D8	**Belongings:** formal robes, fighting robes	**Valuables:** meditation sphere, light breastplate, windcurve halberd	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 3

Crystal Wind Adept – Although all Zenith Order monastics are instructed in unarmed combat, it is rare that they choose to place martial arts at the center of their practice. However, for those that pass the basic exams and tests, departure to the Crystal Wind Monastery is the next step. The training there is grueling, and even the Hamanu complain of its unnecessary severity. This rigorous physical discipline forges the Crystal Wind Adepts into living weapons, capable of remarkable and rare feats of mystical prowess.

EMISSARY OF THE QUEEN				
Skill Upgrade: Persuasion D8	**Belongings:** satchel full of maps and proclamations, a selection of clothing for a wide range of climates	**Valuables:** meditation sphere, blue silk robes of the finest brocade worked with motifs of shining jewels and swirls of wind	**Wealth Rating:** D10	**Wealth Points:** 18

Emissary of the Queen – The main monastery occasionally has need of go-betweens when dealing with the outside world, or even the few merchant cities on the edge of Zenith. For this purpose, those Monks that seem to struggle with isolation and monastery life are given the opportunity to serve as speakers on the orders' behalf in wider worldly affairs. This function serves a double purpose, as it allows the Emissary to grow wise to the world so that they may inform the masters of changes and events outside of their sanctuary walls.

NOVICE OF THE MONASTERY				
Skill Upgrade: Resolve D8	**Belongings:** two sets of monastic robes, hardwood staff	**Valuables:** meditation sphere	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 2

Novice of the Monastery – All members of the Zenith Orders begin their path as novices. After making a pilgrimage to their monastery and having their heads shaved, novices abandon their belongings, taking up nothing but two sets of robes, a bowl, and a crystalline sphere used for meditation. Novices usually come from a long line of Monks living upon Zenith, but a rare few Haarkeen still make the pilgrimage to Zenith from the crowded streets and busy markets of Haark, trying to seize meaning from a chaotic and noisy existence. As a new Monk, they are assigned rudimentary chores and begin the basic psychic, academic, creative, and physical exercises that form the base of their future mastery. Novices are expected to be obedient and generally stay within the monastery. (It is curious how rarely this is the case.)

SCHOLAR OF THE UNBROKEN SKY				
Skill Upgrade: none	**Belongings:** robes, calligraphy set, sling satchel	**Valuables:** meditation sphere, rare text on Chroma Theory	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 4

Scholar of the Unbroken Sky – All Skyborn are versed in at least one of the Chroma. Older Skyborn attain a mastery that is uniquely insightful and can give them a deeper knowledge of the way this power works. However, all such insights pale in comparison to the collective wisdom of the Scholars of the Unbroken Sky. Their life's work is devoted entirely to the recording, chronicling, and studying of the Chroma in all their various forms. Through the intricate mapping of the chromatic lattice and the order's comprehensive model, they have a unique understanding of the Overlight itself.

GIFT – Student of the Chromatic Lattice: *Whenever the channeling of Chroma results in a "1" result on the Spirit Die, you do not have to spend that point from your Spirit Pool. The success of the Chroma is unaffected.*

SILENT STONE GROUNDSHAKER				
Skill Upgrade: Craft D8	**Belongings:** massive black fur robe, lacquered sandals	**Valuables:** meditation sphere, iron warbell	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 2

Silent Stone Groundshaker – The world we see is a world of forms. Whereas many of the Monks of the Zenith Orders renounce the world of impermanent things, the Silent Stone Disciples embrace form and find unity within the real things of the world as it is. So great is their understanding, they can integrate with the earth itself and accomplish miracles both wondrous and terrible. Such extraordinary powers are bestowed only upon those who submit to the body-breaking conditioning and astronomical meditation standards held by the Silent Stone Abbots.

VOID SHAMAN				
Skill Upgrade: none	**Belongings:** animal-skin drum, heaped rag-robes	**Valuables:** black meditation sphere	**Wealth Rating:** Untrained	**Wealth Points:** 2

Void Shaman – Occasionally, new Monks do not acclimate to the regimented culture of monastic life. Even after a true effort, some realize that discipline and structure are not for them. Many before have experienced this and abandoned the Zenith teachings to return to wherever they came from. However, there are a select few showing exceptional promise who are sent to study at the feet of the Void Shamans in the deep mountains. These jovial, fearless, and seemingly insane mystics often have Hamanu companions who are either equally insane or possessed of saint-like patience.

GIFT – Undisciplined: *Your Resolve Rating starts as Untrained and can never be raised above that. You may begin every combat with one point already in your Fury Pool.*

HAMANU

PLAYING A HAMANU CHARACTER

The most ancient of the Zenith Folk, the ape-like Hamanu have a deeply primordial understanding of their shard. As the Monk contemplates the void-like quality of boundless mind, the Hamanu explodes into being through raw contact with the elements and their ability to dance with them. It is said that the perfect harmony of a Monk and their Hamanu companion is like two friends pointing at opposite sides of the same mountain. Though there may be variations in the stones of the path, the destination is the same; when both arrive, the Hamanu pours the wine and the Monk sings a song of devotion to the unending sky.



Outsiders rarely know what to make of Hamanu upon meeting them. Hamanu are so fearless and friendly that Pyroi, Banyari, and Haarkeen find

it easy to enjoy the crazy wisdom of these Folk. Aurumel and Teryxians, however, can sense the untamed chaos embedded in a Hamanu's very soul and often find it unsettling. Either way, anyone who gives half an effort can easily find a way to enjoy the kind company of this Folk.

INNATE HAMANU CHARACTERISTICS

- default Wisdom Rating of D8
- default Athletics and Perception Ratings of D6
- the REFLECTION OF THE DIAMOND MIRROR Gift

GIFT – Reflection of the Diamond Mirror: *If you choose to play a Hamanu, there must be another player in the campaign who is playing your spirit-bonded Zenith Order Monk. This Gift works in all other ways like the Rite of the Diamond Mirror Gift of the Zenith Order Monks (see p. 84). Additionally, Hamanu are of stockier build than many of the other Folk, and even the slighter-framed among them have a physical fortitude that many would envy. Because of this, Hamanu characters have one more space on their Health Track than normal.*

SAMPLE HAMANU NAMES

Bhajrang, Dheera, Kirinjivi, Lakshman, Lokapu, Shanta, Shoora, Vanar

HAMANU BACKGROUNDS

- Kir-oi Slayer
- Monastic Initiate
- Natural Bond-Mate
- Scion of Stone
- Stormchanter
- Teacher of the Elements
- Wrathful Embodiment

KIR-OI SLAYER				
Skill Upgrade: Blades D8	**Belongings:** Kir-oi bone ornaments strung on Kir-oi hair, face paint, hooked skinning knife	**Valuables:** none	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 0

Kir-oi Slayer – Spawned of a Monk's oath, the demons called Kir-oi are perhaps the greatest local threat to the peaceful and good denizens of Zenith. Although these demons will always exist as long as the Monks do, the Kir-oi must always be fought as if all things depended on it. But to the Hamanu, Kir-oi are a much simpler matter. Kill them. Kill them all. Kir-oi Slayers dedicate their lives to eradicating these demons wherever they appear.

Monastic Initiate – Although it is rarely necessary, some Hamanu take identical monastic vows as the initiate to whom they are spirit-bonded. The interplay of the Hamanu's wild nature and the Monk's discipline is often of benefit, and it cannot be helped that some Hamanu seek to soothe their restless spirits in this fashion. This enables the Hamanu and their companion to become partners in practice, sometimes strengthening the bond to a degree that perseveres through the cycles of death and rebirth.

A Monastic Initiate's default Ratings, (and Belongings, unique Chroma option, etc.) are determined by the Background of their spirit-bonded Zenith Order Monk companion.

NATURAL BOND-MATE				
Skill Upgrade: Folklore D8	**Belongings:** a small token or artifact from your childhood that is a symbol of the lifelong friendship with your spirit-bonded Monk	**Valuables:** none	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 6

Natural Bond-Mate – Some Hamanu are not ritually introduced to their companions. In fact, dozens of shrines have been erected to commemorate the bonding of famous Monks and legendary Hamanu that have fought and lived legends together. Some, however, just become friends. A meditating Monk and a curious Hamanu who, through the serendipitous nature of chaos, cross paths and then make them one for the benefit of all Folk. Some Hamanu have been bond-mate with their Zenith Order Monk companion since early childhood, and their connection is one of profound love and friendship. For Natural Bond-Mates, devotion to their friend is their lifelong pursuit, and nothing brings them more joy than being their bond-mate's steadfast companion and defender.

SCION OF STONE				
Skill Upgrade: Brawl D8	**Belongings:** ornamented staff	**Valuables:** necklace of carved stone	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 6

Scion of Stone – Most Hamanu live amongst the Monks of the great monasteries. But that is not to say that the Hamanu do not also have their own customs and holy sites. When Hamanu gather for their own rituals, they appoint the strongest and most alert of their number to function as guards, who make sure that nothing intrudes upon or otherwise disrupts the ritual. These guards are the so-called Scions of Stone. In some cases these very same individuals are used in the same capacity for Zenith Order rituals, in recognition of the Hamanu's essential role in the rise and stability of the shard's spiritual kingdom.

STORMCHANTER

Skill Upgrade:	Belongings:	Valuables:	Wealth Rating:	Wealth Points:
none	pair of chanting sticks	strand of 550 lightning agate beads	D6	5

Stormchanter – The Stormchanter is the carrier of one of the oldest Hamanu customs. In the midst of the worst storms, those Hamanu who have proven themselves capable head out into the blinding whiteness and summon up the Stormchant that honors the Hamanu line all the way back to the First Kings. When Stormchanters are not performing their specific ritual duty, they function as guides and warriors due to their enormous endurance and resistance to hardship.

GIFT – Strength of the First Kings: *Stormchanters spend their lives climbing perilous peaks and suffering through the harshest weather conditions the mountains of Zenith can dish out. You are immune to damage from environmental Hazards when in mountainous terrain.*

TEACHER OF THE ELEMENTS

Skill Upgrade:	Belongings:	Valuables:	Wealth Rating:	Wealth Points:
Science D8	stone amulet painted with the Five Element Knot	none	D8	6

Teacher of the Elements – As the truly indigenous Folk of Zenith, the Hamanu have lived amidst its snow-covered peaks, torrential snow storms, avalanches, and earthquakes since the beginning of their ancestral record. Before the teachings of the Zenith Orders, the Hamanu achieved a natural integration with the elemental forces and understood that the outer forces are not much different from the inner forces. Lucky Monks who find themselves with Hamanu friends versed in the elemental philosophies have a much easier time coping with the difficulties of the wilderness of Zenith (or any other shard).

WRATHFUL EMBODIMENT

Skill Upgrade:	Belongings:	Valuables:	Wealth Rating:	Wealth Points:
Inspiration D8	silk sashes, ritual scroll in a brass case, sticks of incense	four skull-faced ritual daggers	D6	2

Wrathful Embodiment – In the practice yards of the Zenith Order temples, warrior Monks envision themselves as furious, flame-haloed, many-armed guardian demons as they perfect their forms and martial techniques. They learned this ritual from the Hamanu, who use this practice as a form of ancestor worship, telling the stories of the earliest Hamanu princes and generals while emulating their fighting styles. Although they are certainly capable fighters, the primary role of a Wrathful Embodiment is to embolden those around them by invoking the greatest masters and warriors of Hamanu kind.

TERYXIANS

PLAYING A TERYXIAN CHARACTER

Teryxians see the world in a very different light than the rest of the Folk. Many of them believe



that they are part of a universe which is nothing less than a great and holy equation. While that equation doesn't necessarily suggest that there is some master plan behind the scenes, Teryxians nevertheless think themselves a more important part of the equation than other Folk.

While Skyborn Teryxians and members of the Tutor's Lodge often have a more balanced view of the other peoples of the Seven, it can be hard to shake the cultural convictions that have been taught since first out of the egg. The Teryxian know-it-all attitude can make others view them as haughty and arrogant, even if the people from Quill are indeed usually more learned about the world as a whole.

INNATE TERYXIAN CHARACTERISTICS

- default Logic Rating of D8
- default Folklore and Windlore Ratings of D6
- the BORN TO FLY Gift

GIFT – Born to Fly: *As winged flying Folk, Teryxians can use Windlore (Might) in place of any melee combat Skill. Additionally, at the GM's discretion, when making Windlore Tests to perform any aerial stunt, a result of "1" on the Spirit Die during a successful Test adds one point to your Spirit Pool. (This is meant to represent your taking simple joy in spreading your wings and flying through the clouds, as you were meant to.) Unfortunately, your small stature and fragile bone structure also mean that your Health Track has two spaces less than normal.*

SAMPLE TERYXIAN NAMES

Aquetzali, Chalchiuitl, Coatl, Ihuicatl, Itzli, Matlahuitl, Yoally

TERYXIAN BACKGROUNDS

- Bluefeather
- Brood Master
- Outlander
- Ranger
- Scholar-Priest
- Timekeeper
- Tutor

BLUEFEATHER				
Skill Upgrade: none	**Belongings:** small leather satchel, traveling knife	**Valuables:** none	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 4

Bluefeather – Not every Teryxian is a member of a lodge or is an esteemed Tutor or Scholar-Priest. For the vast majority of Teryxians, called Bluefeathers, life is lived like any other Folk: you sleep, you eat, you make a home, and you hope to create a family. But for a Teryxian, this lifestyle is also punctuated by the knowledge that their people were once something far greater.

GIFT – Legacy of Glory: *The Teryxians were once masters of all they could survey from their lofty heights, and deep down in your bones you have not forgotten this. You still occasionally find yourself inspired by the history of the great achievements of your people. It's as if you were being propelled to greatness yourself, energized by the legacy of your ancestors, calling upon a deep well of cultural memory, and for a brief moment others can see just how majestic the civilization of Quill had been. Once per story, before rolling the dice on any non-Combat Test, by spending Spirit Points you may instead opt to automatically succeed at the Test. The result is considered to be a Radiant success (2 Spirit Points) or a Brilliant success (3 Spirit Points). For Open Tests, you are considered to have rolled the highest possible result, not including any bonus from the Spirit Die.*

BROOD MASTER				
Skill Upgrade: Beastways D8	**Belongings:** crop or whip, bone tube containing flower nectar, short length of vine rope	**Valuables:** a few scraps of exotic leather, bone, or fur	**Wealth Rating:** D8	**Wealth Points:** 6

Brood Master – Being small-framed and not especially strong, the Teryxians relied heavily upon beasts of burden in the early periods of Quill's cultural development. Creatures such as the Mud-Hogs were selectively bred over hundreds of cycles, with each generation's mating stock being hand-picked for desired traits. Specialized Chroma were even channeled to assist with the training and physical development of animals. Although many of the secrets of the Brood Masters of old were lost in the Fall, there still remain a dedicated few who strive to maintain close ties to these various beasts, which were once domesticated by the Teryxians but have since turned into feral creatures. The Brood Master's Lodge is tasked with keeping the swarms of Jeweled Dragonflies healthy and breeding, and with eliminating any threat which may arise from malformed feral beasts that have gone marauding or that otherwise endanger Teryxian lives or livelihoods.

OUTLANDER				
Skill Upgrade: Survival D8	**Belongings:** fire-making tools, pair of hatchets	**Valuables:** (choose one) *shard of bright green stone from the Malachite Plains *talisman crafted of burned wood of the Worulthing Hearthwood Tree *wooden box containing a colony of edible lime-moss	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 3

Outlander – Hatched and raised on Banyan, an Outlander is another soldier in a long line of soldiers fighting to destroy the Banyari and claim Banyan as a new home for their Folk. Many Teryxians view the efforts of their kind as misguided and unnecessarily violent, but just as many — including, it is rumored, some of the most highly positioned among the Scholar-Priests — believe that Outlanders are only doing what is right and just. It is likely that Outlanders first sense their Skyborn "disconnection" as a dissatisfaction with the ongoing conflict and a desire to engage the world without violence.

RANGER				
Skill Upgrade: Perception D8	**Belongings:** machete	**Valuables:** handheld skyglass telescope, wooden flask carved from a pureroot tree (slowly purifies stagnant water)	**Wealth Rating:** D8	**Wealth Points:** 8

Ranger – There are many wonders and technologies that were lost to the Teryxians after the Fall. The Ranger's Lodge was formed in an effort to recover and document as much as possible. Rangers are regularly sent out into the jungles of Quill to find fallen temples and ruined villages and to return what they can to the Scholar-Priests. Ranger patrols are sometimes also used as guards for expeditions of Brood Masters or Tutors seeking answers or doing research in the unforgiving wilderness.

SCHOLAR-PRIEST				
Skill Upgrade: none	**Belongings:** feathered scepter, copper-headed axe	**Valuables:** headpiece decorated with turquoise, feathers, and blue azurite; ritual Pyreblade dagger made of obsidian	**Wealth Rating:** D12	**Wealth Points:** 12

Scholar-Priest – The ruling class of the Teryxians, the mysterious Scholar-Priests live a life most of their Folk can only dream about. It is a lifestyle closer to that of ancient Quill than any other Teryxian could conceive. Scholar-Priests are well educated, even by Teryxian standards, and each has their own room to call home within one of the few spires still standing. The decision to follow the call of the Skyborn burns all bridges: Untrusted by many people out in the world, and unwelcome by the Teryxians who had been the only family they had ever known.

GIFT – Lords of the Last Spire: *Once per story, you may "know" a small piece of historical, scientific, or cultural information — no matter how bizarre or esoteric, no matter how unlikely it may be that you would have this knowledge otherwise. This information need not be about Teryxians or even about Quill. The secrets and histories stored within the Last Spire are vast, and the agents of the Scholar-Priests are many. Hidden away from the rest of the world, these secrets are secured as some of Teryxian's most valued treasures.*

TIMEKEEPER				
Skill Upgrade: Machinery D8	**Belongings:** bark paper, writing quills, colored glass spectacles	**Valuables:** skyglass sextant (pre-Fall relic used to measure distances and angles between shards)	**Wealth Rating:** D8	**Wealth Points:** 9

Timekeeper – The members of the Timekeeper's Lodge are chosen at a young age, selected for their manual dexterity and their innate aptitude for rhythms and spatial relationships. Trained in ostrakonomy from before their flight feathers even fully come in, Timekeepers spend all their days learning to understand the complicated motions and cycles of the shards. They build their first orrery before leaving the nest, and often dream of being able to work on an orrery as grand as those crafted by their ancestors before the Fall.

TUTOR				
Skill Upgrade: Science D8	**Belongings:** bark paper, writing quills, a Writ of Passage from your former master (detailing your role as a Tutor within a community on any shard of your choice except Banyan)	**Valuables:** a half dozen scrolls (primer for a beginning student on the topic of your choice)	**Wealth Rating:** D10	**Wealth Points:** 12

Tutor – Teryxian Tutors are known across the Seven for their excellent service while employed in the instruction and teaching of children. In many ways, members of the Tutor's Lodge have less emotional attachment to Quill than any of their kin, even the Outlanders. Following their initial training, Tutors usually spend their lives traveling to the different shards (often specializing in one over all others) and serving out lengthy contracts teaching children through to young adulthood, sometimes acting as surrogate parents or guardians.

BANYARI

PLAYING A BANYARI CHARACTER

The most insular and disconnected of all the cultures of the Seven, the Banyari have traditionally lived peaceful lives among the plants and animals of the Great Forest and Malachite Plains. With the notable exception of Haark and the population of Banyari within the Verdant Ring, seeing Banyari on the other shards is a rarity, as they prefer their quiet lifestyle back upon Banyan.

But change has come to the Banyari. Although the War of Leaves has largely faded from the memory of the Seven, existing only in the day-to-day lives of the Verthod and some Nitansien, many challenges stand before Banyan. Rumors swirl about a pending resource grab by the Haarkeen or the Aurumel, and many Banyari do not trust the Council of Seven to look out for the interests of their forest home. So it is that some of these strange Folk, Skyborn and non-Skyborn alike, have started to look beyond the borders of their land, even out across the clouds to other shards. Will they be viewed as troublemakers? Refugees? Freeloaders? Time will tell.



INNATE BANYARI CHARACTERISTICS

- default Compassion Rating of D8
- default Beastways and Resistance Ratings of D6

SAMPLE BANYARI NAMES

Aarthu, Aikwin, Askir, Barki, Embli, Irwny, Ivor, Mayda, Moyro, Nodin, Rowir

BANYARI BACKGROUNDS

- Aeworn
- Brendenol
- Nitansien
- Romos
- Verthod Leafkin
- Verthod Rootlord
- Worulthing

AEWORN

Skill Upgrade:	Belongings:	Valuables:	Wealth Rating:	Wealth Points:
none	colony of 8-14 Root Shrews	Hearthwood nut	Untrained	0

Aeworn – Life lived on the periphery of the Great Forest is a one of quiet and slow rhythms. Snouts turned downward, searching the mud for grubs and worms — the daily existence of the Aeworn is something that most Folk cannot begin to imagine. But the call of the Skyborn is not easily ignored, and some Aeworn have left the peaceful comforts of their soft-spoken tribemates for the chaotic turbulence of the world out among the other shards. Root-covered and squat-bodied, the most striking thing about the Aeworn is the Root Shrews climbing all over and through their bodies.

GIFT – Canticle of the Beasts: *The Aeworn are truly creatures of the forest, having long ago forsaken the companionship of other Folk for the friendship of the creatures of the wild. They are awkward and uncomfortable in social settings, but the animals and beasts of the world treat them as one of their own. Aeworn characters have a default Beastways Rating of D10, but when using any Skill involving the behavior, biology, culture, or technology of any non-Banyari Folk, those Skills are treated as Untrained.*

BRENDENOL

Skill Upgrade:	Belongings:	Valuables:	Wealth Rating:	Wealth Points:
Athletics D8	wooden spear, Banyari drinking gourd	Hearthwood nut	Untrained	0

Brendenol – These Banyari spend their entire lives among the flowing grasslands and unending vistas of the Malachite Plains. Swift natural runners, they revel in the ability to make huge swaths of terrain disappear beneath their flashing hooves. Thought of as flighty and simple-minded

by the Verthod, the Brendenol have not yet been convinced to join the war effort, being far more concerned with sprinting, dancing, mating, and drinking an intoxicating brew made from the sap of a particular weed. In appearance, the Brendenol have more in common with the Nitansien than any other tribe. They are long-limbed, especially in the legs, each of which ends in a split-toed hoof. Short fur covers a Brendenol's body, a crest of quills or spines runs the length of their back, and a pair of antlers rests upon their head. They completely lack the vegetative body parts of other tribes like the Verthod, Romos, and Worulthing.

NITANSIEN				
Skill Upgrade: Perception D8	**Belongings:** algae colony (living in your fur), stone sling or bola	**Valuables:** Hearthwood nut	**Wealth Rating:** Untrained	**Wealth Points:** 0

Nitansien – The Banyari known as Nitansien can barely be termed a tribe, given their solitary nature. Moving slowly through the canopy of the Great Forest, they spend most of their time eating, collecting the fruits, flowers, and insects that make up their diet. A more isolated and secretive people one will not find among the shards — even the Novapendra are more inclined to travel and diplomacy. And yet, some of the Nitansien have been convinced by their Verthod kindred to take up arms against the Teryxian Outlanders, and yes, even a rare few Skyborn have been counted among their number. But a Nitansien Skyborn, removed from the security of their arboreal canopy and thrust out among the Folk of the Seven, is truly a peculiar visitor and a stranger of note. Nitansien are long-limbed Banyari with enlarged eyes, ears, and finger-pads. They are furry around the shoulders and head, while the rest of their body is sleek and hairless.

ROMOS				
Skill Upgrade: Machinery D8	**Belongings:** fishing spear (made of thick, hard reed)	**Valuables:** Hearthwood nut	**Wealth Rating:** Untrained	**Wealth Points:** 0

Romos – During the wet season, the Romos are a gregarious fishing Folk, traveling the Malachite Plains to visit with others of their kind or even to share stories and news with the other tribes. They are friendly and generous with their time. A Skyborn among them is well-served by this demeanor, but the season-driven nature of their life cycle can create hardships when out among the other shards. When and where is a Romos supposed to dig a mud tunnel on a shard such as Haark or Zenith? From afar, it is easy to mistake one of the Romos as a small furry peddler, with a gigantic backpack creating a hunchbacked silhouette. It is no backpack, however, but a soft-fleshed succulent plant which sprouts from the back and head of the Romos.



VERTHOD LEAFKIN				
Skill Upgrade: Performance D8	**Belongings:** tall walking staff, bamboo musical instrument (flute or wind chimes)	**Valuables:** Hearthwood nut	**Wealth Rating:** Untrained	**Wealth Points:** 0

Verthod Leafkin – Many of the Verthod live solitary lives, only coming together with their tribemates at important seasonal occurrences or for council. They prefer the company of the trees to even their fellow Verthod, and the quiet solitude of the forest gives them peace of mind and a feeling of connection to all living things. Verthod find solace in the quiet simplicity of a newly sprouted leaf, and joyful exuberance in the sounds of the forest animals chasing each other through the branches. While walking beside the Gastwudu, they make music as they move, and the forest whispers in return. Verthod appear as though their form is encased in a bipedal leafy tree. They are part vine-like wooden armor and part small mammal, but it is impossible to separate the two halves of the whole.

VERTHOD ROOTLORD				
Skill Upgrade: Science D8	**Belongings:** Banyari water bladder, small stone knife	**Valuables:** Hearthwood nut	**Wealth Rating:** Untrained	**Wealth Points:** 0

Verthod Rootlord – The Rootlords of the Verthod are guardians of the Great Forest. Their kind have resolved to protect the forest against any who would upset its delicate balance. Rootlords spend their youth learning how to recognize the early signs of the froth in a Honey-Licker, or how to keep a Fog-Borer colony from breeding within an abandoned

woodpecker nest hole. As they grow into adulthood, they become wardens of the perimeters of the Great Forest, ever watchful for Teryxian Outlanders. All Banyari from the Verthod tribe share a similar appearance, whether Rootlord or Leafkin.

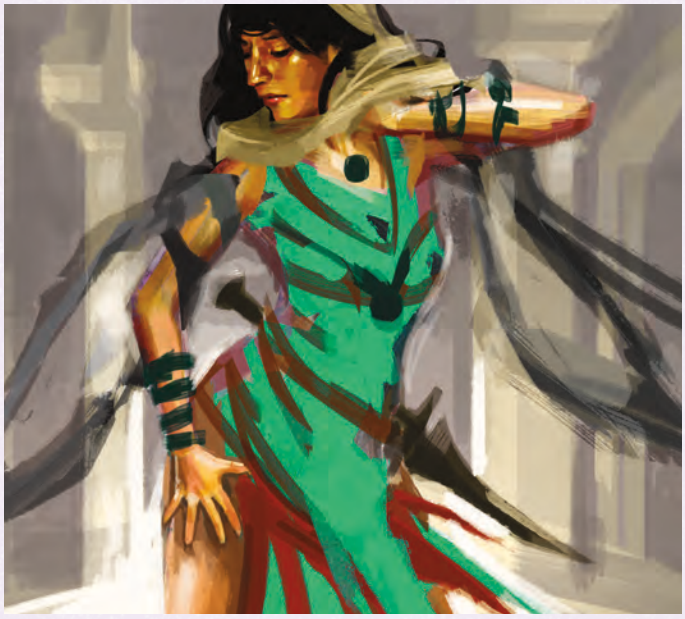
WORULTHING				
Skill Upgrade: Survival D8	**Belongings:** a memory of ash and sorrow	**Valuables:** none	**Wealth Rating:** Untrained	**Wealth Points:** 0

Worulthing – More than any other of the Folk, the Worulthing are diminished. Their Hearthwood Tree dead, their populace decimated by terror and flame, the few remaining Worulthing are wanderers and loners. Where once they found meaning and amity within their Overlight bond with the woodbugs, now even the memory of those tiny friends is but an echo of madness and burning pain. The Worulthing are pitied by their fellow Banyari, who are ashamed that the horrors which befell the tribe could not be averted. Out among the other shards, the burned Folk are largely ignored, and people hurry past them, averting their eyes and hiding the faces of their children. They scratch out what existence they can, as their kind slowly fades from the Seven. The Worulthing look much like a more bark-covered Verthod, if that Verthod had been set afire and left to slowly fall into dust.

HAARKEEN

PLAYING A HAARKEEN CHARACTER

Humankind occupies a unique position in the social hierarchy of the Seven. Haark, being the most centrally located of all the shards, and the home of the Council of Seven, is the community most likely to be encountered by other Folk when traveling off-shard. That being said, the Haarkeen are often looked down upon by other Folk, their bursting-at-the-seams and overpopulated city-shard viewed as a short-sighted and overly greedy use of resources. The Haarkeen themselves are also thought to be overpopulated as a species, and some less-than-



considerate other Folk will sometimes refer to Haarkeen as "city rats."

The Haarkeen have a strong cultural conviction to stake their claim upon the world. They will make themselves a home no matter where they find themselves, and, through tenacity and hard toil, carve a life even in the most inhospitable of places.

INNATE HAARKEEN CHARACTERISTICS

- default Will Rating of D8
- default Inspiration and Resolve Ratings of D6

SAMPLE HAARKEEN NAMES

Ahrima, Angra, Baraz, Faridun, Gaspir, Jahun, Kyrus, Simun, Tarika, Xerex, Yassimin

HAARKEEN BACKGROUNDS

- Agent of the Council
- Air Harbor Dockworker
- Apprentice
- Grifter
- Master Historian
- Performer
- Street Tough

AGENT OF THE COUNCIL				
Skill Upgrade: none	**Belongings:** thin-bladed saber, clothing appropriate for a council meeting	**Valuables:** badge or pin denoting Agent status, two small gemstones (ideal for setting in a piece of extravagant jewelry or bribing an uncooperative official)	**Wealth Rating:** D10	**Wealth Points:** 9

Agent of the Council – The city of Haark is the size of a continent. With less than a dozen members, the Council of Seven cannot possibly keep track of all its affairs. For this reason, the council employs a network of hundreds of informants, deputies, and enforcers to be its eyes and ears, enforcing its grislier agendas when it is inappropriate for the City Witch. Although an Agent of the Council gains some regard in authoritarian circles, being a known extension of the council's will creates difficulty among a darker, more clandestine crowd.

CHOOSE ONE GIFT

GIFT – Well-Placed Friends: *As a well-known Agent of the Council, you are feared or respected enough by the populace of Haark that you are frequently gifted with simple goods and favors from merchants and other citizens. Once per story, you may receive friendly consideration from an occupant of Haark that you are dealing with. This may allow you to skip a Wealth Test if required.*

GIFT – Allies in the Gloom: *Not all Agents of the Council are honest. Many of them have learned to navigate the less than savory elements of the City Magnificent. You are one of these Agents. Once per story, you may have a contact among the various shadow markets and underworld communities of Haark. This Gift works best if you and the GM develop this new NPC together and somehow tie it into a bit of backstory.*

AIR HARBOR DOCKWORKER				
Skill Upgrade: Windlore D8	**Belongings:** boarding hatchet, cargo hook, lots of rope, windproof dockworker's long coat	**Valuables:** none	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 6

Air Harbor Dockworker – Manning the rooftop skydocks of Haark is difficult work. Under constant scrutiny from guild, house, and council officials, Air Harbor Dockworkers must be familiar with a wide range of contraband, important captains, and laws pertaining to airships. In addition, they must have a rudimentary knowledge of how to maintain and even fly an airship. Resisting bribes is a daily meditation for this profession, and only the most virtuous or naïve Dockworkers resist such offers for long.

APPRENTICE				
Skill Upgrade: Craft D8	**Belongings:** novice tools of a relevant trade (your choice), a room at your master's home	**Valuables:** a piece of unusual equipment or artistry connected to your chosen trade	**Wealth Rating:** D8	**Wealth Points:** 4

Apprentice – From merchants to blacksmiths to apothecaries, experts of a craft desire to pass on all they have learned to a talented student. Without a proper trade, a livelihood is hard to come by on the shards. As such, children will often be entrusted to a tradesman at an early age and instructed in one of the vital jobs that keep Haark running. This often means a life of monotony and toil, which is not for everyone — especially Skyborn.

GRIFTER				
Skill Upgrade: Intuition D8	**Belongings:** lockpicks, a good pair of leather boots	**Valuables:** a trio of well-balanced steel knives, assortment of counterfeit coins	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 8

Grifter – Not quite street dwellers, and not quite respected citizens, Grifters have either fought their way up from the alleys through quick wits and quicker hands, or fallen from a noble house by way of a gambling or substance habit. Grifters occupy that grey space between the tiers of society that so many Haarkeen find themselves in. Some Skyborn Grifters finally decide to follow the call that resides deep within, pulling themselves out of the gambling dens and brothels of the City Magnificent to try their luck in the larger world.

MASTER HISTORIAN				
Skill Upgrade: none	**Belongings:** a few common books, robes of office, quill & ink, reading lantern	**Valuables:** pair of uncommon books, Veile-made magnification spectacles	**Wealth Rating:** D8	**Wealth Points:** 10

Master Historian – The libraries on Haark are the finest across the Seven, except in specific esoteric topics. Part academic, part investigator, and part occultist, the Master Historian is an initiated employee of one of Haark's libraries. Master Historians are privy to records, rumors, crimes, and legends that few others can access. Although they do not know the answer to every question, a Master Historian probably knows the best person to ask or the author of the definitive text on the subject.

GIFT – Every Brick and Window: *Although Master Historians eventually specialize in some concentration or another, their journeyman years are spent wandering the streets of the endless city and filling journal after journal with insights and observations. No matter what happens, a Master Historian will never get lost on their home shard. Unless deprived of their senses or in some extreme circumstance, a Master Historian can always pinpoint their own location while on Haark, without error and without performing a Test.*

PERFORMER				
Skill Upgrade: Performance D8	**Belongings:** flamboyant clothes, performing gear necessary for your craft (if any)	**Valuables:** deed or contract entitling you to permanent residence at an inn or court (a result of generous patronage)	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 2

Performer – Storytellers, musicians, dancers, fakirs, actors, and acrobats are a more valuable commodity than one might think. The vast majority of the Folk have elaborate etiquette for hospitality and generosity, and the offering of performance to weary travelers or visiting emissaries is one of the most opulent displays of this. There is a great network of entertainers who perform throughout Haark. Despite the weird element they must deal with, the eccentric nature of a Performer's contacts can yield some fairly esoteric information at some of the most serendipitous moments.

STREET TOUGH				
Skill Upgrade: Folklore D8	**Belongings:** blackjack or knife, ragged clothing	**Valuables:** fist-sized topaz (or other lucky grab), fine or warm coat (taken from the body of a rich man)	**Wealth Rating:** Untrained	**Wealth Points:** 3

Street Tough – Some of Haark's Street Toughs grew up in the city's Great Market, dodging in and out of stalls, while others hail from the broken cobblestones of the Circle of Smoke, and still others are Edge-Dwellers. What they have in common is they have all endured abuse and neglect at the hands of their fellow Haarkeen. Watching from the shadows, they see the treacherous, back-alley nature of humanity and realize that stealing, lying, and fighting are the only things that will guarantee survival. Though not inherently evil, Street Toughs are very much hardened by the trauma of existence and have a hard time empathizing with struggles less severe than their own.

AURUMEL

PLAYING AN AURUMEL CHARACTER

The extremes of Aurumel philosophy and lifestyle are both lionized and infamous. The languid ancients of the aristocracy are pallid things, dripping with riches and perverse boredom. The artists, merchants, and engineers of the guilds are savvy masters of intrigue and social warfare. The perfecters of the ancient crafting arts, who dwell in the forests and hills, are wise beyond measure and exact with their art. What can be said of all Aurumel is that they are extreme and exaggerated in both cruel and beautiful ways.



Outsiders see what the Aurumel want them to see: pretense and station; mysterious and exotic works; ancient and cruel customs; and polished, unflinching masks with the flash of cunning eyes behind them. What is rarely seen is the Aurumel love of family and home and the sincere desire to adorn the world with beauty and ingenious splendor and to preserve it unconditionally. It is somewhere between these facets that the truth of an Aurumel's heart resides.

INNATE AURUMEL CHARACTERISTICS

- default Vigor Rating of D8
- default Craft and Performance Ratings of D6
- the MASK OF THE AURUMEL Gift (optional)

GIFT – Mask of the Aurumel: *While all Aurumel have a mask, it is assumed that your character has a new mask — which is to say, one that was specifically created for them. However, during character creation you may spend Character Build Points in order to have a mask of an older generation. You may spend two, three, or four points to instead have a second-, third-, or fourth-generation mask, respectively. When dealing with other Aurumel, and called upon to make a Craft, Inspiration, Performance, or Persuasion Test, you may replace two of your Skill dice with new dice based on your mask's generation. Second generation may use d8s; third generation, d10s; and fourth generation, d12s. Aurumel with the Slave Background cannot choose this Gift, and Guilded Laborers are limited to second generation only.*

SAMPLE AURUMEL NAMES

Achilla, Arbuis, Aurae, Baligia, Celix, Fortua, Irix, Kaelus, Portia, Udos

AURUMEL BACKGROUNDS

- Airship Crew
- Arch-Exquisitor
- Guilded Laborer
- Jeweler Chirurgeon
- Lineage Poet
- Merchant Prince
- Slave

AIRSHIP CREW					
Role:	**Skill Upgrade:**	**Belongings:**	**Valuables:**	**Wealth Rating:**	**Wealth Points:**
DECKHAND or SOLDIER	Windlore D8	boarding hatchet, cargo hook, short sword	none	D8	6
NAVIGATOR	Windlore D8	high-collared warm coat	spyglass, navigation charts	D10	12
SHIPWRIGHT:	Windlore D8	high-collared warm coat	shipbuilding tools, schematics	D10	12
CAPTAIN:	Windlore D8	good boots, strong knife	fine sword, exquisite coat, medal of valor or commendation	D12	20

Airship Crew – Whether raised in Gylynos, the Glass Citadel, or recruited from one of the outer cities, Airship Crew are selected (or volunteer) to be part of the great flotilla of Veile. The airships of the Aurumel can serve as merchant vessels, weapons of war, and all manner of roles in between. If the Airship Crew's mask is of the first or second generation, their role is Deckhand or Soldier; if their mask is of the third or fourth generation, their role is Navigator, Shipwright, or Captain.

ARCH-EXQUISITOR				
Skill Upgrade: Intuition D8	**Belongings:** fine robes, plates of office embedded beneath the skin	**Valuables:** appraiser's instruments, mask made of mirrored platinum	**Wealth Rating:** D12	**Wealth Points:** 9

Arch-Exquisitor – A conditioned expert and appraiser of a major or minor artisan tradition of the Aurumel. Although an Arch-Exquisitor is certainly capable of developing their own creative vision, their astonishing talents of raw perception and education in the history of the houses place them in a position of remarkable power, insofar as social and economic influence are concerned.

GUILDED LABORER				
Skill Upgrade: Resistance D8	**Belongings:** Writ of Labor, laborer's mask, leather apron, well-crafted bludgeon (or favorably weighted tool)	**Valuables:** guild ring	**Wealth Rating:** D8	**Wealth Points:** 7

Guilded Laborer – The works of the Aurumel are many, and precious few of them are manifested through frugality and restraint. In all matters extravagant, Guilded Laborers are required by the dozens. Slaves simply won't do where skilled labor is needed, and the plight of an Aurumel commoner is not without a surprising number of obscure opportunities.

JEWELER CHIRURGEON				
Skill Upgrade: none	**Belongings:** embedder's instruments, scalpels and hooks, rich attire, Manuals of Anatomy and Heretical Yoga, mask of black wood (possibly with white and red stripes around the eyes)	**Valuables:** two small pieces of implant jewelry (either gemstones, crystals, or hammered silver or gold)	**Wealth Rating:** D10	**Wealth Points:** 6

Jeweler Chirurgeon – The delicate and cruel body-modification arts of the Aurumel are known across the Seven, but odd ornament is the least of this practice's forms. The Jeweler Chirurgeons are physician-artisans who focus on the interplay between their people's technology and their physical and energetic body-systems. Trained in both merciful healing rites and the most insane and inhumane of the Aurumel catalog of flesh-working experiments, the Jeweler Chirurgeons are a deeply entrenched guild of Veile.

GIFT – Flesh Shaper: *Once per story, you may attempt to heal a Dramatic Wound suffered by one of your allies, provided you have the appropriate implant jewelry. If you succeed at a Science or Craft Test, you may treat the Dramatic Wound in a fraction of the time normally required, and without the requisite Wealth Test from the character who suffered the wound.*

LINEAGE POET				
Skill Upgrade: Inspiration D8	**Belongings:** toga with heraldic ornamentation, historical scrolls and tablets, gladius	**Valuables:** none	**Wealth Rating:** D10	**Wealth Points:** 5

Lineage Poet – The chain of kinship, which ties today's Aurumel masters to the founders of their line's art, is supposed to be one's most precious possession. So, like all Aurumel endeavors, there are specialists within each house who are plucked from the workbench and appointed keeper of the lineage and its song. Lineage Poets refine a single lineage poem their entire lives — a task so difficult that lesser expressions of their art can provide a luxurious lifestyle as sustainable as the Lineage Poet's creativity.

MERCHANT PRINCE				
Skill Upgrade: Persuasion D8	**Belongings:** leather doublet, a fine journal and writing tools, bladed scepter, spyglass	**Valuables:** familial signet ring or amulet	**Wealth Rating:** D12	**Wealth Points:** 20

Merchant Prince – Traveling aristocratic officials of the old houses that handle both trade and money matters, as well as the potential complications of orchestrating and leading a caravanserai between cities and the shards. Merchant Princes are often charismatic and quick-witted, but a fair number persist through nothing but violence and brutality.

SLAVE				
Skill Upgrade: Blades D8	**Belongings:** the rags on your back, improvised shiv, chained hood (in lieu of a mask)	**Valuables:** none (the blood still beats in your veins, and the lash is no longer at your back; you cannot imagine a greater treasure)	**Wealth Rating:** Untrained	**Wealth Points:** 0

Slave – The commands of their masters and the whips of the captains are all they know of life. Some are born into slavery, some are enslaved due to a debt or perceived slight. Once loosed from their shackles, former Slaves are free to pursue the life of a Skyborn. Some Slaves are set free, the righting of an ancient wrong or the deed of a mysterious benefactor, while others escape and are pursued by their former owners, who seek to return them to their labors.

PYROI

PLAYING A PYROI CHARACTER

Not all Pyroi are martial fighters, but all Pyroi are warriors. Whether wielding a hammer, a wicked tongue, or the flaming spirit of Khar-Ulan itself, the Pyroi can seem meaninglessly aggressive and overbearing. What is not immediately obvious is that, of all the Folk, the Pyroi probably have the most balanced relationship with violence. Their ritualized embodiment of the Virtue of Might means that Pyroi do not lose their temper and do not act out of rage unless it is a willful and conscious decision.



There is a quiet strength that many Pyroi have, a smoldering sense of calm that can often bewitch or seduce those unaccustomed to it. All of this contributes to their charismatic beauty and makes one such as a Pyroi Firethane all the more frightening, for they have chosen to interact with the larger world through violence.

INNATE PYROI CHARACTERISTICS

- default Might Rating of D10
- default Brawl Rating of D6
- the CELEBRANT OF THE OPEN FLAME Gift

GIFT – Celebrant of the Open Flame: *Pyroi are huge, immensely strong individuals, and therefore always have two spaces more than normal on their Health Track. But Pyroi are also used to a particular habitat, with the wide-open tundra and a far-ranging lifestyle. Since they are on Pyre, far at the bottom of the world, they also like to keep the sky within reach. When in confined spaces, they feel disconnected from the sky and the Overlight. Pyroi characters may not spend Spirit Points or channel Chroma when in tight spaces such as tunnels, small rooms, or even within the confines of a small airship.*

SAMPLE PYROI NAMES

Batkhu, Jargal, Longo, Odger, Odtse, Rangarel, Saranger, Setsag, Solseg, Urkhu

PYROI BACKGROUNDS

- Boneskin Thrallscout
- Embertongue
- Firethane
- Flameheart
- Hunter
- Tundrarunner
- Volcano Priest

BONESKIN THRALLSCOUT				
Skill Upgrade: Blades D8	**Belongings:** loincloth, satchel with provisions	**Valuables:** obsidian knife or obsidian-tipped spear	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 2

Boneskin Thrallscout – In both hunting and war, the unproven serve dubious purpose. Once shaven of the locks and scruff of young adulthood, the aspirant is smeared with volcanic ash and ventures out as a forward scout. In the case of a hunting party, successfully baiting large game back to the party will be to the Thrallscout's credit. If the Pyroi survives a year of this trial, they may take their place among the hunting party or warband. In some cases, they submit entirely and become Firethanes in service to a volcano temple, its priests, and the glowing mysteries of primordial might. But there are a select few who remain as Thrallscouts out of choice.

EMBERTONGUE				
Skill Upgrade: Persuasion D8	**Belongings:** diplomat's robes, Seal of Court, tattoos and iron bands of achievement	**Valuables:** helmet or headpiece denoting the office of Embertongue	**Wealth Rating:** D12	**Wealth Points:** 16

Embertongue – Eloquence and strength are the twin foundations of Pyroi culture. The Embertongues are the emissaries par excellence of the Pyroi people. It was the first Embertongue who listened to the heart of a volcano and murmured the core syllables of the Pyroi language. Embertongues are go-betweens, diplomats, spies, and orators. So respected are they that they are given enormous gilded headpieces, signaling to other Pyroi that they are those who speak for the flame.

FIRETHANE				
Skill Upgrade: Resolve D8	**Belongings:** a great weapon of your choice, lava-scorched hide armor	**Valuables:** bangles, rings, earrings, necklaces, and other assorted ornaments crafted of precious metals	**Wealth Rating:** D8	**Wealth Points:** 8

Firethane – There is perhaps no more natural path for a Pyroi than that of a warrior. The Firethane is a fully initiated adult Pyroi of a respected hunting party or warband, one who has taken vows of service to a Pyroi noble. Although simple to most Pyroi, such an oath-bound role can be a living nightmare for a Skyborn. Nonetheless, the Firethane is the exemplar of Pyroi martial prowess, a philosopher of Might through action.

FLAMEHEART				
Skill Upgrade: none	**Belongings:** serrated bone-sword etched with devotional mantras, piecemeal leather armor, small musical instrument crafted from bone or ivory, relic sandals (passed down through 20 generations)	**Valuables:** six-foot loop of volcanic-glass prayer beads with alternating topaz and rubies	**Wealth Rating:** D8	**Wealth Points:** 4

Flameheart – There are still some for whom the discipline of priests or the rigor of Firethane duty is an ill fit. There are those who do not view the brutal tundra as an adversary, but rather a lover. Each burn, a kiss; each snowstorm, an embrace. And when the pain becomes too much, and Pyre's Might pours into the heart, that is when a Pyroi becomes a Flameheart — a warrior poet who wanders the landscape in search of wisdom.

GIFT – Persistent Harmony: *A friend to even the most remote and dangerous of Pyre's terrain, the Flameheart warrior poets persist through environmental conditions that would kill most people. During Tests related to Pyre's weather and topographical conditions, Flamehearts may raise their Resistance and Survival Ratings by one level.*

HUNTER				
Skill Upgrade: Beastways D8	**Belongings:** spears and arrows tipped with obsidian, fur-wrapped bow, heavy furs, skinning knife	**Valuables:** lava-rock charm	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 2

Hunter – The beast-hunting nomads of Pyre's tundra, the Shovel-Tusk Hunters live close to the land and make their livelihood by hunting the largest and most dangerous game. Once they find their quarry, the Hunters flow and strike in a dance of spears and arrows. When an animal is felled, every part of it is used — fashioned into tools, armor, and weapons, as well as converted to food and oil. Hunters live close to the land. Even though they have great prowess in combating vicious beasts, they are not trained soldiers.

TUNDRARUNNER				
Skill Upgrade: Athletics D8	**Belongings:** carrier bag made of Shovel-Tusk leather, soft-soled boots, loose- fitting silks, pair of serrated Pyroi climbing hatchets	**Valuables:** none	**Wealth Rating:** D6	**Wealth Points:** 8

Tundrarunner – Letters of challenge and contest between warbands and hunting parties are traditionally carried by a Tundrarunner. These ceremonial messengers are an artifact of an earlier time, a custom the Pyroi still believe must be observed in order to maintain honor. This tradition produces a Pyroi made of iron and fire, capable of traveling great distances through a savage landscape at surprising speed. It is no surprise that young Tundrarunners have considered ways to offer their heroic services for foreign coin.

VOLCANO PRIEST				
Skill Upgrade: none	**Belongings:** iron ornaments, scant silk clothing	**Valuables:** heavily ornamented ritual dagger with steel-and-obsidian blade, jeweled headdress and vestments	**Wealth Rating:** D10	**Wealth Points:** 9

Volcano Priest – The supreme symbol of Pyroi birthright is the erupting volcano. The interpretation of the symbol is for each priest and priestess to decide for themselves, but all must serve and engage in a pilgrimage in service to the grandfathers and grandmothers beneath the snow and stone. By making offerings at the great temples, the Volcano Priests earn their station and guide the Pyroi cities built at the base of these temples, as a council of theocrats.

GIFT – Burning Devotion: *All Pyroi revere the flame and stone of their home shard, but none compare to the Volcano Priests when it comes to a true mystical understanding of igneous might. When engaged in combat against other Pyroi, Volcano Priests may raise their Might Rating by one level.*





CHAPTER 4

SHARD LAW

We consider Overlight to be a narrative game — which is to say, on a spectrum of RPG rules complexity, Overlight is fairly rules light. The rules are not intended to provide specific, nuanced mechanics for every conceivable sort of interaction. Combat is not fought on a grid map, nor is every possible bonus or hindrance to swinging a sword carefully calculated. In fact, there aren't even unique statistics for various weapon types.

Overlight is built for speed of play and a forward-moving story. In practice, what this means is that sometimes the GM might apply a rule to a certain situation just because it "feels right" in order to move on with play. We are firm believers in trusting the GM to shepherd the story and keep all players engaged, without getting bogged down in rules arguments. Overlight's rules reflect that philosophy. We will discuss this more later on (see *Chapter 6: Secret Wisdom*, p. 238).

TESTS

Overlight uses a small set of rules to govern the various challenges and tasks that your characters may attempt over the course of their adventures. Variations on a simple dice roll cover every action, from fighting to negotiating to channeling Chroma. We call

these dice rolls *Tests*. Generally speaking, you should only be performing Tests for actions that contain some element of risk or uncertainty, or that may have an important dramatic effect on the story. In other words, you shouldn't have to perform a Test for simply walking along a path — but if that path were less a road and more a series of tangled vines suspended between two trees high above the forest floor of Banyan, you might need to roll! The GM is the final arbiter of when and where a player should perform a Test.

There are four basic types of Tests: *Skill Tests*, *Combat Tests*, *Open Tests*, and *Chroma Tests*. Each of these Tests will require you to assemble a hand of seven dice and roll them together. How you interpret the results of those dice will differ based on the type of Test.

TYPE OF TEST	HAND OF DICE (7)			
	Skill Dice	Virtue Dice	Wealth Dice	Spirit Die
Skill Test	3x	3x	--	Yes
Combat Test	3x	3x	--	Yes
Open Test	3x	3x	--	Yes
Chroma Test	--	6x	--	Yes
Wealth Test	3x	--	3x	Yes

The Spirit Pool

In addition to having Ratings in the various Virtues and Skills (which will inform the hand of dice that you assemble for your Tests), your character also has a *Spirit Pool*. This represents your character's personal drive, morale, and courage. It is also a literal congealing of the Overlight at the center of your being, and serves as the source of energy that fuels all of your Chroma.

Your Spirit Pool contains a finite number of Spirit Points, which can be spent to adjust your die rolls for better results or to perform certain maneuvers during combat. Running low on Spirit Points can put you in some dangerous situations, reducing your combat and Skill options or perhaps even leaving you unable to channel Chroma.

Each character starts with a certain number of points in their Spirit Pool — determined during the character creation process — which will slowly be depleted as they fight enemies or channel Chroma. Notably, the Spirit Pool does not "refresh" or refill in any regular fashion during normal play. Instead, the GM will reward characters with Spirit Points at suitably dramatic moments in the story (e.g., succeeding at a difficult task, something which would result in a morale boost). The conclusion of major quests or plot threads will also usually yield Spirit Rewards.

Spirit Flares

In any Skill Test or Chroma Test, when you roll an odd number of successes, you may spend one Spirit Point to create a bonus success, thereby bumping your result up to the next level. This is called a *Spirit Flare*. So by spending a Spirit Point in this way, you could turn one success into two, three successes into four, or five successes into six. This can only be done when an odd number of successes has been rolled, and only once per Test.

SKILL TESTS

Skill Tests are the most common type of dice roll that you perform. When you attempt any sort of non combat-related task, the GM will call for a Skill Test. Based on what you are trying to do, the GM will choose a Skill that they feel best aligns with the necessary competencies or experience needed to complete the task. In this, the GM is guided by the Skill definitions (see *Chapter 3: The Skyborn*, p. 74).

Trying to jimmy a lock with crude tools? The GM may require a Craft Test. Attempting to slowly back away from a mother Shovel-Tusk defending her calf? That may call for a Beastways Test. However, the Skill definitions are not hard and fast. If you can think of a way that a Skill might apply to a situation, then make your argument to the GM. They may decide that your approach to the problem makes logical and narrative sense, and therefore allow you to use a Skill different from the most obvious choice. As always, the GM's decision is final. (Please remember that their choices may be informed by information that is hidden from you or your character.)

To assemble your hand of seven dice for a Skill Test, take three dice from your associated Skill Rating and three dice from your Rating in the Virtue linked to that Skill. In addition, you will always add the Spirit Die. So while attempting to get away from that Shovel-Tusk without getting trampled, you would perform a Beastways Test



and refer to your Beastways and Compassion Ratings. Let's assume you had a Beastways Rating of D6 and a Compassion Rating of D8. In that case, your Skill Test would be performed by rolling 3d6 + 3d8 + 1d4.

"6" or higher is called a *success*. Because every Skill Test uses the same total number of dice, the number of possible successes is always between zero and six. Every pair of successes will increase the success level of the in-game result.

PERFORMING SKILL TESTS

Successes	Game Result
0-1	*Fail*. You do not accomplish your goal. The GM will describe the outcome of the failure.
2-3	*Luminous* success. You succeed at your goal, but with little flourish. The GM will describe the outcome.
4-5	*Radiant* success. You succeed at your goal competently and easily. If there was a secondary goal (e.g., remaining quiet while breaking down a door), you succeed at that as well. The GM will describe the outcome, but the player should offer up suggestions for the manner in which you achieve your goal.
6	*Brilliant* success. You succeed at your goal with expert skill, speed, or panache. Any secondary goals are achieved at a similar level. The player should be the driving force in describing the outcome.

In most instances, a Skill Test is performed with Skill dice plus dice of the linked Virtue, but that may not always be the case. Each Virtue has three linked Skills, listed to the right of the Virtue on your character sheet. (Might has only two linked Skills, however.) At the GM's discretion, you may be required to use Virtue dice of a different, unlinked Virtue. In these cases, the alternate Virtue will be noted parenthetically next to the Skill name. For example, to force open a closed portcullis, you may have to perform an Athletics Test, but using Might instead of Vigor. This would be written as Athletics (Might).

Once you've rolled your seven dice, how do you evaluate the results? Let's ignore the Spirit Die for now; we'll come back to that. For the other six dice, you're looking for any results of "6" or higher. Each die result of

In certain rare circumstances, the GM may require a Radiant success or higher for you to succeed at the Test at all. This might be the case when a character is using the wrong tool for a given task (e.g., attempting to throw a sword), or in situations that are daunting or extremely difficult.

Spirit Die Bonuses

The Spirit Die is also evaluated. For Skill Tests, the only result that matters on the Spirit Die is a "4." If a "4" is rolled on the Spirit Die, there are three possible bonuses that can be gained from the Spirit Die.

First, if you rolled an odd number of successes, the "4" result on the Spirit Die allows you to bump your success level up a notch without spending any Spirit Points from your pool. Effectively, you are granted a Spirit Flare without the normal required expenditure.

Secondly, if you have already achieved an even number of successes, the "4" result on the Spirit Die allows you to add one point to your Spirit Pool. You have accomplished your task with effortless grace and your heart is brighter for it.

Finally, if you have already rolled six successes, the 4 result on the Spirit Die allows you to achieve a Legendary success. The *only* way to achieve a Legendary success is by naturally rolling six successes and rolling a "4" on the Spirit Die. You cannot voluntarily spend a Spirit Point to turn a Brilliant success into a Legendary success.

SPIRIT DIE BONUSES

Successes	Normal Result	When "4" is rolled on Spirit Die...
0	Fail	No effect
1	Fail	Spirit Flare (treat result as a *Luminous* success)
2	*Luminous* success	Add one point to your Spirit Pool
3	*Luminous* success	Spirit Flare (treat result as a *Radiant* success)
4	*Radiant* success	Add one point to your Spirit Pool
5	*Radiant* success	Spirit Flare (treat result as a *Brilliant* success)
6	*Brilliant* success	*Legendary* success! This should be a character-defining moment, of heroic and mythic proportions. Folk who are there to witness the event will tell stories for years to come. The player and GM should work together to describe an outcome that is special, dramatic, and a bit over the top.

There is also a special kind of Skill Test called a *Wealth Test*. See the "Belongings, Valuables, and Wealth" section on p. 127 for details.

COMBAT TESTS

Combat Tests are similar to Skill Tests, but are used exclusively in combat situations, when a character is trying to inflict harm upon an opponent or group of opponents.

The hand of seven dice is assembled just like for a Skill Test, but the Skills involved are almost always limited to Windlore, Blades, or Brawl.

The key difference is that you won't be worried about pairs of successes. Instead, each rolled success counts as a single point of *damage*, inflicted on your opponent. The Spirit Die is also used slightly differently, with a result of "4" automatically contributing one point to your *Fury Pool*. (This is discussed in greater detail in the "Combat Encounters" section on p. 119.)

OPEN TESTS

At times, particularly during certain combat maneuvers or Chroma effects, you may be called to perform an Open Test. In an Open Test, you are directly pitting your abilities against those of another character, usually an opponent of some sort. (NPCs will typically have a simplified Physical or Mental Dice pool instead of individual Skill Ratings.)

The hand of dice is created in the normal fashion, but successes do not matter for an Open Test. You are simply looking for the *single highest die result*. If the Spirit Die rolls a "4," then you may add one to the value of your single highest die result. This single result is measured against your opponent's result, and whoever has the higher result wins the Test. In the case of a tie between a PC and an NPC opponent, the PC wins the Test.

CHROMA TESTS

Chroma Tests are required when you are channeling Chroma. Channeling Chroma requires the expenditure of Spirit Points. If you do not have any Spirit Points left, you may not perform a Chroma Test.

The hand of dice for a Chroma Test is assembled like for a Skill Test, but with one significant difference: Instead of three dice from a Skill and three dice from a Virtue, you will instead be taking three dice each from two Virtues. Which two Virtues to use are determined by the Chroma, and will be noted in that Chroma's description. (In some cases, you will be taking all six dice from the same

Untrained Tests and Test Modifications

It may be that you are called upon to perform a Test involving a Skill in which you have no Rating. This is called an *Untrained Test*. In such a case, you will roll a single d6 in place of the normal three dice that would be rolled for that Skill. This is one of the rare instances when you will be rolling fewer than seven dice during a Test.

Sometimes Chroma, Gifts, or other circumstances will cause you to *raise* or *lower* a Skill or Virtue die by one level. In such cases, simply replace one of the indicated dice with a die of the next better or worse type. For example, if your Skill enables you to roll 3d8 as part of a Skill Test and a Chroma allowed you to raise one of your Skill dice by one level, you would roll 2d8 and 1d10, instead of the normal 3d8. In some cases, you will be instructed to simply *replace* one of the dice with a specific type.

When attempting to raise dice that are already at the D12 Rating, you may instead raise a die from the other half of the hand of dice used for the Test — which is to say, if you're trying to raise a Skill which has a D12 Rating, you may instead raise one of your Virtue dice by one level. If all of the dice involved in the Test are already at the D12 Rating, the bonus is lost. When raising a die type on an Untrained Skill, you may roll 2d6 instead of the normal 1d6 provided in an Untrained Test.

Similarly, if you are attempting to lower a die type that is already at the D6 Rating, you must remove one of the dice involved in the roll. This means you will be rolling fewer than seven dice for the Test.

Virtue.) You will also add the Spirit Die, bring your hand of dice up to seven total.

You will still be counting successes in the normal way, with each pair of successes increasing the level of the result. If you have an odd number of successes, you may spend a Spirit Point to create a Spirit Flare. The results of each of these success levels will vary, depending on the Chroma.

The Spirit Die, however, is used in a different way. Unlike any other Test, in a Chroma Test you are hoping for a low number to be rolled on the Spirit Die. The reason for this is that, no matter whether you succeed or fail at the Chroma Test, the rolled result of the Spirit Die is the number of Spirit Points that are spent from your Spirit Pool.

If the number of Spirit Points you must spend exceeds what is left in your Spirit Pool, then you experience a *Shatter*. A Shatter can have permanent side effects on your physical being or mental wholeness. Eventually, after too many Shatters, you will lose the ability to channel that Chroma. (For details on Chroma, channeling, and Shatters, see *Chapter 5: Radiant Power*, p. 130.)

COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

The world of Overlight is a dangerous place and, between ferocious animals and cruel people, sometimes there is naught you can do but respond with a blade or a fist. Combat in Overlight is a simple affair. First, determine *initiative*. Then the participants on the side with higher initiative may each take a single action. Each action can be an attack, the channeling of a Chroma power, or any other behavior that might take a few seconds to complete. Then the other side may take their actions. After that, a new round begins, following the same initiative order as before. (Do not reroll initiative.) Generally speaking, the concept of combat "rounds" is only relevant for certain specific combat maneuvers or Chroma effects.

Where are the weapon stats?

If you have experience in playing other role-playing games, you may have noticed by now that nowhere in the combat rules do we reference specific mechanics for different weapons. That's because they don't have any. In Overlight, a weapon is a weapon is a weapon, and we have no rules for armor either. The rules are built for fast, deadly combats, not tactical exercises.



DETERMINING INITIATIVE

When combat becomes unavoidable, and one side or another makes a move toward violence, the first thing that occurs is determining initiative order.

The GM selects a character to perform the initiative roll. If the party is on the offensive, this should be the character who first made a move toward action. If the party is reacting to a threat, then this should be the character who is most likely to respond to the threat with the most speed — it might be the character who specifically stated that they were watching for signs of trouble, or the one who was face-to-face with an adversary when a knife was quickly drawn.

To make the initiative roll, the selected character should perform an Open Test using the Skill most applicable to the situation, which will usually be Perception or Intuition, but could conceivably be something more unusual like Athletics or Beastways. The winner of the Open Test, and their allies, get to take the first actions. The characters may decide their order of actions amongst themselves.

In the rare case when more than two sides are involved in an all-out brawl, then simply assign the order of actions based on relative success levels from the Open Test.

Making Attacks

Attacks are made following the rules for Combat Tests. A Combat Test is almost identical to a Skill Test, except that each rolled success counts as a single point of damage, inflicted on your chosen opponent. Rolling a "4" on the Spirit Die contributes one point to the Fury Pool. No other Spirit Die result has any effect during a Combat Test.

Melee vs. Ranged

Which Skill should you use? For melee combat, it's relatively easy to decide. The Blades Skill covers swords, knives, and axes — really, any weapon with a sharpened edge used for cutting, slashing, or stabbing. The Brawl Skill covers feet and fists, as well as blunt weapons like clubs and staffs.

For ranged attacks — when using bows, crossbows, or even improvised weapons like a thrown rock — Windlore is the appropriate Skill. Knives or axes specifically made for throwing should instead use Blades (Logic). If your party is significantly outnumbered, the GM may choose to not allow ranged attacks, depending on the circumstances.

The Fury Pool

The Fury Pool is essentially a temporary supplemental Spirit Pool that each character has, which only exists for the duration of the current combat. When the current combat ends, your Fury Pool is reduced to zero.

Thematically, the Fury Pool represents adrenaline and the rising passions of battle, as a life-or-death struggle swirls around you. Much like adrenaline, it will quickly wear off once the threat has passed.

Fury Points may be spent in place of Spirit Points. However, when channeling Chroma, you may only spend Fury Points if Might is one of the Virtues involved in the Test. Additionally, if the result of the Spirit Die would exceed your current Spirit Pool and cause a Shatter, the Shatter still occurs, regardless of whether you spend Spirit Points or Fury Points.

COMBAT MANEUVERS

During combat, you may spend Spirit Points (or Fury Points) to perform a *combat maneuver*. You may only perform one combat maneuver per action, and many of them must be done in place of your normal attack.



Aim (Cost: 0 Spirit Points)
If you plan to attempt a Precise Shot or Accurate Fire maneuver, you may decide to perform an Aim maneuver to prepare. To aim, forgo your attack and perform a Resolve Test. If you succeed, gain a number of Fury Points equal to the result of the Spirit Die. (The Spirit Die cannot be used for any other effect.) In effect, aiming creates a virtual secondary Fury Pool which may only be spent to supplement Combat Tests for Precise Shots or Accurate Fire. Once you have aimed, your next action must either be an additional Aim maneuver or the Precise Shot or Accurate Fire maneuver. The points in this secondary Fury Pool are lost as soon as the Precise Shot or Accurate Fire maneuver is performed, or when you suffer any damage (whichever happens first).

Challenge Foe (Cost: 2 Spirit Points)
Maybe you would like to challenge the corrupt captain of the guard in an attempt to make them lose face in front of their soldiers, or perhaps you're attempting to distract an enemy from their appointed task. The Challenge Foe maneuver is an attempt to manipulate your opponent's own pride. It cannot be used against beasts. To challenge a foe, forgo your attack and perform an Open Test (Performance vs. Mental) against that opponent. If you succeed, that opponent may only target you for the remainder of the current combat, until one of you is defeated or until you attack a different target.

Full Defense (Cost: 1 Spirit Point)
Sometimes you are simply outmatched, or too injured to risk your life in a desperate assault, and the best course of action may be to hunker down and save your own skin. When you perform the Full Defense maneuver, forgo your attack to instead hold back your action so that you may roll dice in response to an attack targeting you later in this combat round. If you are targeted by a melee attack, perform a Skill Test using whatever you are currently armed with. If you are targeted by a ranged attack, perform either a Windlore (Vigor) Test in an attempt to dodge, or a Perception (Vigor) Test if you are equipped with a shield. If you succeed, negate a number of damage equal to the result of the Spirit Die. If you achieve a Radiant success, you may immediately spend one Spirit Point to reactivate Full Defense. If you achieve a Brilliant success, you can reactivate Full Defense without spending a Spirit Point. (The Spirit Die cannot be used for any other effect.)

Intimidate Foe (Cost: 3 Spirit Points)
A well-timed insult hurled at your opponent or a growling battle cry screamed from the top of a hill can sometimes tip the scales in your favor. At the GM's discretion, you may perform an Intimidate Foe maneuver in addition to your normal attack. Perform an Open Test (Persuasion vs. Mental) against the opponent you wish to intimidate. If you succeed, the opponent cannot use the Spirit Die for any effect during their next Test.

Mighty Blow or **Accurate Fire**
(Cost: 2 Spirit Points)
A sword strike fueled by fury. A well-placed arrow to the heart. The Mighty Blow or Accurate Fire maneuver is performed in conjunction with a normal attack. If the attack is successful, you may deal extra damage equal to the rolled result of the Spirit Die. (The Spirit Die cannot be used for any other effect.)

Outmaneuver (Cost: 2 Spirit Points)
This maneuver has a wide variety of applications, intended to cover any goal which will take multiple combat rounds to complete or which has an ongoing function. We encourage you to be creative in devising new ways to use Outmaneuver. When you perform this maneuver, you should clearly state your desired goal to the GM, who will then decide upon the required Test. The GM will also decide whether or not you must forgo your normal attack to perform this maneuver. The baseline rule should involve an Open Test of some kind, perhaps Athletics vs. Mental, or Perception (Logic) vs. Mental. The exact Skills required should vary with the details involved, but a success on the Open Test means, for future Tests working toward this goal, replace the effects of the Spirit Die with a specific and dramatic (stated) outcome upon the roll of a "4." Note that for the new Spirit Die outcome to take effect, the main Test must still be successful.

Example: You've maneuvered your opponent back against a precipitous drop, in an attempt to force them off the edge. Your Open Test is Athletics vs. Mental, and a success means that, on later successful Combat Tests, a Spirit Die result of "4" could force your opponent to successfully roll Physical or be toppled from the cliff.

Outmaneuver can also be used when your opposition is more akin to an inanimate object, such as when you are attempting to break something. In this instance, a basic Skill Test should be used, as the object is not actively resisting you. A success on this first Test would allow a Spirit Die result of "4" on later Tests to finish the job.

Example: A fight is raging around you, and it's your job to break the glass wall that would allow the hatchling Cloud Serpent to escape its prison. To outmaneuver, you must perform a Craft Test. If you succeed, later successful strikes against the wall using a Combat Test would break the glass and allow the beast to escape.

Typically speaking, once you've committed to an Outmaneuver attempt, a "4" Spirit Die result may not be used for other purposes. Please note that in a situation outside of combat, the Outmaneuver rules do not need to be used, as simple Skill Tests can be employed to determine if you succeed in, say, breaking or fixing something.

Precise Shot (Cost: 4 Spirit Points)
There are times when accuracy is of the utmost importance: striking an artifact out of the villain's hand, throwing a dagger to switch a lever, severing a purse string with a crossbow bolt. At the GM's discretion, you may attempt a Precise Shot to



perform a stated goal that requires pinpoint accuracy. Precise Shot is *not* intended to be used for an accurate attack — that's what Accurate Fire is for — but for other non-attack actions during combat. It is also not intended to be used to disarm an opponent. Perform a Skill Test using a Skill decided by the GM. The most common Skill for this maneuver is Windlore, but creative GMs and players might find inspired ways to use Athletics, Craft, or even Beastways.

Protect Ally (Cost: 1 Spirit Point)
To perform the Protect Ally maneuver, forgo your attack and declare an ally you wish to protect, then perform a Perception Test. If you succeed, you can attempt to protect that ally if they are targeted during this round of combat. If you achieve a Radiant success, you can protect that ally twice this round. If you achieve a Brilliant success, you can protect that ally three times this round. When that ally is targeted during this round of combat, perform a Skill Test using Blades or Brawl — or

Perception (Vigor) if you have a shield. If you succeed, negate an amount of damage equal to the result of the Spirit Die. Then, you suffer the rest of the damage instead of your protected ally. (The Spirit Die cannot be used for any other effect.)

Rally Comrades (Cost: 3 Spirit Points)
A rousing speech or even a snippet of a long-forgotten song can let your allies know that you've got their back. This maneuver is performed in conjunction with a normal attack. Choose an ally, then perform an Inspiration Test. If you succeed, that ally gains Fury Points equal to the rolled result of your Spirit Die. (The Spirit Die cannot be used for any other effect.) If you achieve a Radiant success, choose a second ally who receives the same bonus. If you achieve a Brilliant success, choose two other allies who receive the same bonus. Any given character may only be the recipient of Fury Points from a Rally Comrades maneuver once per combat.

WOUNDS AND HEALING

As you sustain wounds during combat, you should be using a pencil (not pen!) to lightly cross out spaces on your Health Track, beginning with the topmost empty space and moving down, crossing out spaces equal to the amount of damage you suffer. These filled spaces represent scratches, bumps and bruises, small cuts, and abrasions. You will accrue them quickly during a combat, but afterward they will be quickly forgotten.

When you cross out a red space, that is something a little more serious — a *Dramatic Wound*. These spaces are meant to represent more lasting injuries: a minor stab wound, a sprained joint, a cut to the forehead, or something even worse. When you receive a Dramatic Wound, you and the GM should jointly decide what form that wound might take, weaving it into the descriptions of your combat encounter.

A Dramatic Wound is an opportunity for role-playing and drama. It is not a reason for you to become less effective in combat, because that's no fun for anybody. What a Dramatic Wound *will* do is take a while to heal, in the meantime lowering your endurance in future combats.

At the end of a combat, provided the party has a reasonable amount of time to catch their breath and rest, you may heal all wounds that are not Dramatic Wounds (erasing the pencil marks from those spaces). Non-Dramatic Wounds suffered outside of a combat encounter may be healed at the end of a scene.

Dramatic Wounds may not be healed until the end of the current story, or when they are successfully treated (whichever occurs first). To treat a Dramatic Wound mid-story, the character must find someone capable of helping them and

must then succeed at a Wealth Test. Depending on the source of the assistance, healing a Dramatic Wound may take hours or even days of dedicated treatment.

Mid-story help for Dramatic Wounds could take the form of anything from a Banyari Moss Shaman to a Haarkeen Elixir Merchant. The GM will ultimately decide whether a given NPC is capable of helping the character. Depending on the situation, the GM may waive the Wealth Test or modify it in some way. Only one Dramatic Wound can be healed at a time.

It should be noted that three or four Dramatic Wounds do not necessarily have to represent multiple injuries. They can be abstracted a bit. Multiple Dramatic Wounds could in fact represent one horrible injury, and the step-by-step healing of the wounds can be thought of as the slow, incremental healing process.

If a character only has a single Dramatic Wound (and did not have other Dramatic Wounds that were healed during this current story), another character may attempt a Science Test in order to heal that wound. However, this only works if the result is a Brilliant success or better. Only one such attempt may be made, and if it fails, the wound will have to be healed with medical help or between stories as normal.

It is assumed that, at the end of any story, there is a bit of narrative "downtime" as the party rests and prepares for further adventures. Unless the GM has something else in mind, all characters may heal all Dramatic Wounds at this time.

FADING AND DEATH

When you fill in the final empty space on your Health Track, you are said to be *fading*. When this happens, you must immediately perform either a Resolve or Survival Test (your choice). If you succeed, you manage to cling to life, and can crawl or limp your way to safety. Though you are no longer fading, the next wound you suffer is fatal.

If you fail that Resolve or Survival Test, then during combat, whenever you would normally be allowed to take an action (which is to say, once every "round") you lose one Spirit or Fury Point. If your Spirit Pool is reduced to zero before help arrives, you will die. During this period, you are assumed to be unconscious, or nearly so, and may not perform any Test or action that would require more than speaking.

Your last hope is for one of your companions to reach you before you die. When a character does arrive to keep you from dying, the assisting character must successfully perform a Science Test to prevent further Spirit Point loss. If this Test fails, barring some other wondrous event or deus ex machina, you will die when your Spirit Pool reaches zero.

If you have survived — either by a successful Resolve or Survival Test, or with the help of a companion — then you are alive and conscious. Though you are no longer fading, the next wound you suffer is fatal, and your non-Dramatic Wounds will no longer heal as normal. Getting mid-story medical help is a necessity at this point!

BELONGINGS, VALUABLES, AND WEALTH

When you create your character, the Background you choose will determine your starting *Belongings*, as well as which of those Belongings (if any) may be characterized as *Valuables*. Belongings are simply defined as any objects that your character carries with them, while Valuables are those Belongings that others perceive as having monetary value. Your chosen Background will also provide your starting Wealth Rating.

WEALTH TESTS

Wealth Tests are a special kind of Skill Test. Rules for money and wealth are very abstracted in Overlight. While the world of Overlight does have coinage, prices are negotiable and much of the economy is a combination of currency and barter.

It is not necessary for players to keep track of individual gold coins or other currency. Instead, every character has a Wealth Rating (just like a Virtue or Skill Rating), and the GM may occasionally call for a character to perform a Wealth Test. These Tests will cover a wide range of situations, from bargaining in a marketplace to bribing a source of information. Any instance in which the exchange of money or goods is part of the interaction may require a Wealth Test.

After stating your mercantile intent to the GM, you should perform your Wealth Test, then role-play the encounter based on the results of the Test.

The hand of dice for a Wealth Test is much like the hand for a Skill Test — but in lieu of rolling Virtue dice, you will instead be substituting your Wealth dice. So a Wealth Test uses 3x Wealth dice, 3x Skill dice, and the Spirit Die. The Skill involved will be up to the GM, but you may suggest an alternate Skill if the situation suits it.

In a Wealth Test, the Spirit Die is resolved much like how it is in a Chroma Test: The number rolled on the die is the amount of Wealth Points that must be spent from your Wealth Pool. In most instances, particularly those in which you are simply attempting to purchase something, a failed roll doesn't mean that you cannot buy the item, but that the required cost in Wealth Points (as indicated by the Spirit Die result) is doubled.

If you lack the required Wealth Points, then you may still succeed at your goal, but only by choosing to barter away one of your Valuables. (More about Valuables can be found in *Chapter 3: The Skyborn*.)

EXPERIENCE AND ADVANCEMENT



At the end of each game session, and especially at the end of each major story arc, the GM will reward your characters in a variety of ways.

Spirit Rewards are added directly to your Spirit Pool. These will be fairly common and may even occur mid-session.

Wealth Rewards may be fairly common, depending on the style of campaign. Like Spirit Rewards, Wealth Rewards may be added directly to your Wealth Pool. On very rare occasions, you may get a Wealth Reward that upgrades your Wealth Rating.

Experience Rewards come in the form of *Experience Points* (XP). You will gain at least one XP per session, and often you will get more than one, especially at the end of story arcs or major plots. XP may be spent to upgrade your Rating in Skills and Virtues or to learn new Chroma.

To upgrade your Rating in a Skill or Virtue, you must spend the required XP (as listed in the accompanying table) for the new, upgraded Rating. Ratings must be upgraded incrementally, so while you may upgrade a Rating by more than one level at a time, the costs are cumulative. Ratings may be upgraded at any time during play, provided you have the required XP to spend.

UPGRADED RATING	XP COST	
	Skills	Virtues
D6	3 XP	--
D8	6 XP	8 XP
D10	9 XP	13 XP
D12	14 XP	24 XP

New Chroma may be learned for nine XP each. You may only select from the Chroma associated with your Folk, Background, or Core Virtue. Chroma may only be learned between stories (i.e., not mid-session).



CHAPTER 5

RADIANT POWER

In essence, the Overlight is an undifferentiated light with no inherent meaning or purpose. It simply *is*. However, once the Overlight passes through the energetic and spiritual systems of the Skyborn, it is bent, twisted, folded, fractured, dovetailed, and refracted into all manner of wondrous effects, providing the powers that dazzle and terrify the Folk and beasts of the shards.

That being said, once the Overlight is transmuted within the Skyborn, it becomes as much the Skyborn as it remains the Overlight — the content of personality, temporary emotions, religious belief, and artistic expression, as well as terrifying manifestations of the subconscious and nightmarish ordeals that were perhaps required to master the Chroma in the first place.

Nonetheless, this is an opportunity to embellish your character — and, Chroma-wielding NPCs, for the GM — in a way that makes them unique and makes their use of Chroma powers potentially character-defining.

For example, consider the Chroma *Wrathful Strike*. This is a Might-oriented Chroma with a pretty straightforward effect: it makes your punches hurt more because they are wreathed in flame. Let's explore the ways this could work, as expressed through a few different character concepts.

- **Chob-Yam Goki,** a Zenith Order Monk, summons an entwined pair of flaming serpents that rise like a helix around his spine and then separate at the nape of his neck. The serpents coil about each arm, and then, when Chob-Yam reaches with his fists, open their mouths and erupt into balls of flame that seat about his open palms.

- **Eldrath,** a Banyari of the Verthod tribe, remembers the surging flames brought on by the terrors of the War of Leaves. He feels with the pain of the forest, feels the embers forming in the wood of those ancient trees, and for a moment mistakes their pain as his own. Erupting in pain and rage, the branches and twigs surrounding his fists catch as if struck by tiny strokes of lightning and add punishing torches to accompany his blows.

- **Shahara,** a Haarkeen pickpocket, remembers the coldest night she has ever spent on Haark's streets. She conjures images of her own hunger, her want for a blanket, the neglect in the eyes of each person with whom she pleaded for the tools of survival, and the resentment she immediately felt as she went ignored. From this inner need she conjures a spark and fans it with desperate need and bitter anger. As she holds out her hands in the traditional gesture of requested alms, her hands crackle with tongues of lashing blue flame.

- **Huictol,** a Teryxian Ranger, focuses on the fires that burn high atop the spires of Quill. After a deep inhalation, she unfolds her forked tongue and, as she licks her claws, they coruscate with the same flame that honors the Cloud Serpents.

- **Irius Kaelix,** an Aurumel noble, is imperious and cruel. His heart is cold but his ego is powerful. An insolent invader has stolen an heirloom gorget from his family's vault. Remembering the most decadent and tyrannical days of his line, he see an image of his traitorous aunt within the lines on his spidery palm. Narrowing his eyes, he imagines the betrayer burning upon the spit that was her fate. As he inhales with pleasure, he crushes the imagined effigy in his hand and, when he opens his hand again, blades of flame encompass his fist.

With a bit of imagination informed by your character's background, personality, or formative trauma, the possibilities are endless. In the case of Chroma that are used in combat, this provides a nice opportunity to insert some narrative where it might not otherwise exist.

Remember, this is not a means to make a Chroma more powerful or to circumvent its limitations. The purpose of this exercise is to let you add your own sense of style and panache to the way your character wields their Chroma. Under no circumstances should a description bypass the actual mechanics of the power in an attempt to add greater mechanical benefit.

Although Chroma can manifest as spontaneously as your group would like, you can also attach certain Chroma and their secrets to specific places or teachers. Perhaps the *Wrathful Strike* technique looks one way when it is taught by a Banyari hermit, another when it is realized in the meditation chamber of a Pyroi volcano temple, and yet another when spontaneously

discovered in a freezing cold mountain pass on a pilgrimage to a Zenith monastery.

It is important to remember that, although color and radiant brightness are the mainstay of Overlight's look, the Chroma should be the most spectacular fireworks and most vivid displays of them all. The GM should encourage players to express these Overlight-given powers in such a way that each use is memorable and your campaign is unforgettable.

USING CHROMA

SELECTING CHROMA

When initially creating your character, and later when spending XP to learn new Chroma, you may only select from the list associated with your Core Virtue and the list associated with your Folk. Some of the Folk-specific Chroma are only available to characters with certain Backgrounds. Each Background has one unique Chroma that characters with other Backgrounds may not choose.

CHANNELING CHROMA

At any time during play, you may attempt to channel one of your Chroma powers. Some Chroma specify exactly when you can channel them. During combat, channeling a Chroma is typically in lieu of making an attack or performing some other action, although it may sometimes be simultaneously with an attack if the Chroma allows.

To channel Chroma you must perform a Chroma Test. In order to do this, you must have at least one point in your Spirit Pool. Each Chroma will have a simple formula, presented as [Virtue] + [Virtue]. To create your hand of dice for the Chroma Test, take three dice from the first Virtue and three dice from the second Virtue, then add the Spirit Die for a total of seven dice. In some cases, the formula for the Chroma may list the same Virtue twice, in which case you'll be using six dice from that one Virtue, plus the Spirit Die.

Count successes in the normal way, just as if you were performing a Skill Test: two successes equals a Luminous success, four successes equals a Radiant success, and six successes equals a Brilliant success. You may choose to spend one point from your Spirit Pool to cause a Spirit Flare on an odd number of successes, thereby achieving the next success level. Each Chroma entry details the unique effects of the three success levels. If you do not achieve at least two successes (after Spirit Flare), you have failed to channel the Chroma and there is no effect at all.

Of special note is the Spirit Die. It is not used as in a Skill Test. Instead, the number rolled on the Spirit Die is the amount of Spirit Points you must spend, regardless of the success or failure of the Chroma Test.

Note that Chroma Tests may still achieve a Legendary success, in the normal way. But, because this requires a "4" result on the Spirit Die, you'll be paying for it!

If you wish to spend a Spirit Point to cause a Spirit Flare, you must do so before spending the points required by the Spirit Die result. If the amount required by the Spirit Die exceeds what you have remaining in your Spirit Pool, you will experience a Shatter. Reduce your Spirit Pool to zero, and resolve the effects of the Shatter, as described by the individual Chroma. (If your Chroma Test was a success, resolve the Chroma power as normal, but you will experience the Shatter simultaneously, unless otherwise noted.)

In some cases, you may wish to use the results of a lesser success level. You may choose to "toggle down" the success level of a Chroma Test without penalty. This does not affect the amount of Spirit Points that must be spent or any other detail.

EXPERIENCING A SHATTER

A Shatter is what happens when a Skyborn channels too much Overlight, overloading their body and soul. This results in strange, often permanent changes to the self. The first time you experience a Shatter while channeling a particular Chroma, check off the "Shatter 1" box in that Chroma's listing on your character sheet, and write down the side effects, which are detailed in that Chroma's entry later on in this chapter.

The second time you experience a Shatter while channeling that same Chroma, check off the "Shatter 2" box in that Chroma's listing on your character sheet, and write down the side effects. The side effects of this second Shatter will likely be more significant than before.

The third time you experience a Shatter while channeling that same Chroma, check off the "Shatter 3" box in that Chroma's listing on your character sheet, and write down the burnout effect. Burnout effects are potentially catastrophic, and can even result in the death of your character! In addition, burnout means that you will never again be able to channel that Chroma. You have channeled too much raw Overlight through yourself one too many times, and something disastrous has occurred, searing certain spiritual pathways in your being.

The side effects of Shatters are cumulative, so the results of a subsequent Shatter do not replace or negate the side effects of a previous Shatter with that same Chroma, unless otherwise noted.

USING FURY IN CHROMA TESTS

You may choose to spend Fury Points as substitute for some or all of the Spirit Points required by a Chroma Test, but only if Might is part of that Chroma's formula. In these instances, you may split the points between your Spirit and Fury Pools however you see fit, but if the total cost would exceed what you have remaining in the Spirit Pool alone, a Shatter still occurs.

SECOND ATTEMPTS

Sometimes, a Chroma Test for an ongoing Chroma power doesn't achieve the success level that you would like. You may always make a second attempt to get a better result. These second attempts are treated as entirely new Chroma Tests, requiring fresh die rolls and an additional expenditure of Spirit Points. New rolls with *worse* results, however, are simply ignored. There is nothing stopping you — except your dwindling Spirit Pool — from making third or even fourth attempts.

EXTRA SUCCESSES

In rare instances, some Chroma abilities may actually reward you with extra successes on other Tests. Simply add these successes to the total that you rolled. Regardless, achieving a Legendary success still requires a Spirit Die result of "4."

COMPLICATED INTERACTIONS

With so many different Chroma powers, unusual interactions will inevitably occur. Take some time to find an interesting and narratively faithful way for both powers to co-exist, rather than having them replace or negate each other. This is also true of side effects as characters start experiencing Shatters. Always find unusual ways to combine the cumulative side effects, rather than eliminating previous changes.

LUMINONS AND LUMINON CHROMA

There are mines upon Zenith, the locations of which are a closely guarded Hamanu secret, which produce crystals of outstanding clarity and lustre. These crystals, which to the properly trained may act as a sort of Overlight focus, are in high demand, for they are used to produce a variety of wondrous items. The meditation spheres of the Zenith Order Monks, the skyglass tools of the Teryxians, and even the crystalline batteries of the horrific laser weapons of Veile are all made from these Zenith crystals.

Luminon Chroma are a special subset of Chroma that create unique Overlight-fueled items called *Luminons*. Learning a new Luminon Chroma only costs seven XP. (The cost during character creation is unchanged, however.)

The first time you channel a Luminon Chroma, you are creating the item. In addition to the Spirit Point cost, the base cost of all Luminons is two XP. You must also have at least four Spirit Points in your Spirit Pool, as you cannot experience a Shatter while channeling a Luminon Chroma. Creating a Luminon is a much more precise and measured affair than a normal channeling. You may only have one of any given Luminon at a time.

If unusual circumstances (such as Spirit Point penalties) serve to create a channeling that would otherwise result in a Shatter, then the Luminon that would be created is destroyed instead. In some instances, these may be impossible to replace, or nearly so. Provided this doesn't occur, the XP cost of creating the Luminon may be mitigated by the success of your Chroma Test, as shown below.

Luminous: The cost to create the Luminon is unchanged. Spend two XP.
Radiant: The cost is reduced to one XP.
Brilliant: The cost is reduced to one XP. In addition, immediately add points to the Point Bank equal to the Spirit Die result.

All Luminons have something called *Point Banks*. Each Luminon will have a different way to add points to the Point Bank, which will be detailed in that Chroma's listing. The Luminon will have different powers, which are separated into three *thresholds*. Each threshold indicates the minimum number of points you must have in the Point Bank to have access to the powers at that threshold.

In the Chroma listings below, all Luminon Chroma are denoted with an asterisk.



WISDOM CHROMA

CLOUD OF UNKNOWING (Wisdom + Will)

Before there is insight, there is confusion. Before there is balance, there is chaos. Masters of the orange light know this truth and from it can manifest the fog that precedes knowing. This discord arrives as a sort of strange, sluggish fog that pours out from the mouth of the Skyborn. This Chroma is dangerous because, much like its source, it is not yet fully controlled. When this power is used, it affects both friend and foe, and only the channeler and beasts (who are ruled by this chaos) are immune to its befuddling effects.

Use of this power can be tricky, as a thick fog rolling from the mouth of a Skyborn is a pretty clear indication that something strange is about to happen!

Luminous: All characters within 10 feet of you must reduce Mental Dice by one or reduce the number of successes for any Test using Logic or Wisdom by one.
Radiant: All characters within 10 feet of you must reduce Mental Dice by two or reduce the number of successes for any Test using Logic or Wisdom by two.

Brilliant: All characters within 10 feet of you must reduce Mental Dice by three or reduce the number of successes for any Test using Logic or Wisdom by three.

Shatter 1: When the climate is cold, dark, or humid, a fine mist clings about your feet.
Shatter 2: You have difficulty with linear thinking. Reduce the number of successes for any Test using Science, Craft, or Machinery by one.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your ability to retain memories and experiences is like the flow of water between wide-spread fingers. When receiving Experience Rewards, gain one less XP than normal, and instead gain one extra Spirit Point.

CONTINUUM OF RAINBOW LIGHT (Wisdom + Compassion)

Wisdom shared is of benefit to all. In the case of the Skyborn, this is literally quantifiable. This Chroma takes the Skyborn's Virtue of Wisdom and temporarily transmutes it from a single point in space into a field of violet power. Although Wisdom is its source, *Continuum of Rainbow Light* affects all Chroma that are channeled within its space. Once a character channels this Chroma, they may not channel any other Chroma until an ally triggers one of the success bonuses (as detailed below) or the scene or combat ends. The character who channels this Chroma may not benefit from its effects.

Luminous: The next one of your allies to perform a Chroma Test may increase the number of successes by one.
Radiant: Same as Luminous. In addition, the ally who is performing the next Chroma Test may also lower the Spirit Die result by one.
Brilliant: Same as Luminous. After an ally performs a Chroma Test, you may spend one Spirit Point to allow a second Chroma Test (by any ally), with the same benefits. After this second Chroma Test, the effect ends.

Shatter 1: The very air around your body refracts light in such a way that a rainbow nimbus seems to follow you wherever you go. Many non-Skyborn view this as proof of your valorous intent.
Shatter 2: You are dependent on your allies and friends for existential comfort. Whenever you are acting alone (either literally or without the emotional support of allies), reduce the number of successes for *all* Tests by one. This makes Legendary successes impossible.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your fingers and toes become webbed with a rainbow membrane, and your coloration fluctuates through the spectrum with each breath.

FATE STONE* (Wisdom + Wisdom)

Through long study and inward searches, you have discovered what you believe to be your one true path. You are destined to become a hero, a voyager among the shards. Whether

through force of arms, balance of spirit, or a compassionate heart, you will make your mark upon this world, one way or another. You have focused your intent into a single heart-sized amethyst. You may only use a *Fate Stone* once, though you may create another. However, once a *Fate Stone* has been used at the second or third threshold, any subsequent uses may only be at the first threshold.

Point Bank: Each time you achieve a Brilliant success on a Skill Test, you may add one point to the Point Bank. If you achieve a Legendary success on a Skill Test, you may add three points instead. Any use of the *Fate Stone* reduces the Point Bank to zero.

Thresholds:
1–3: At any time, you may immediately upgrade a Skill Rating, even if you lack the required XP. You must have at least half of the required XP, however. This means it is possible for you to have a negative XP total. If you do, you must spend XP to repay the deficit before spending XP on anything else.
4–6: Same as previous threshold, but you do not need to have half of the required XP to upgrade a Skill Rating. Your first Test with that Skill is automatically a Legendary success, no roll required. Also, once the XP deficit is repaid, you are widely recognized as a master (or at least a promising prodigy of mythological proportions) of that Skill. A suitable nickname or title would be appropriate.
7+: Same as previous threshold, but even after the XP deficit is repaid, you may not spend XP on anything other than further upgrading that Skill Rating until it is D12. Once that happens, rumor of you has spread across the shards, and it is thought that you are among the greatest practitioners of that Skill to have ever lived. In future Open Tests involving that Skill, you may spend one Spirit Point to automatically win the Test.

HEART SPECTRUM INSIGHT (Wisdom + Compassion)

It is a great advantage to be able to discern the intent of those you encounter on your journeys. Even those with great emotional intelligence or great skill at bluffing games can find it little more than guesswork. Are you being actively deceived or manipulated? Sometimes there is little reason to a person's motivations and they appear to arrive out of pure chaos, the causes and motivations completely unknown. Using this Chroma, a Skyborn can perceive the nuances of a target's emotional self, deciphering the rainbow of patterns as they reflect off experiences and feelings.

Luminous: In the most general sense, you can tell if the target individual is well-meaning, ill-meaning, or neutral in their intent toward you and/or your allies.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you can detect specific emotions such as anger, sadness, happiness, greed, lust, etc.
Brilliant: You learn the target's exact emotional state, including the character their emotions are directed toward and the circumstances that caused them to manifest at this very moment.

Shatter 1: The air surrounding you appears viscous and iridescent, and pulses in time with your heartbeat.
Shatter 2: Wounds of the heart become considerably more real for you. In any circumstance when you are betrayed or willfully injured by someone you considered an ally, you lose one Spirit Point.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your baseline personality is fundamentally altered. Tapping into the emotional state of others for so long has worn down the barriers you normally erect between your true emotional self and the world around you. Select an emotion. This emotion becomes your new defining personality characteristic. Maybe you become hot-tempered. Maybe you are overly emotional and prone to weeping. Do you feel vulnerable? Underappreciated? Joyously effervescent at the wonders that life throws at you? Have fun with this. Reinvent your character in a way that surprises your fellow players and doesn't just provide comic relief.

THE MIRROR OF SELVES (Wisdom + Logic)

The mind reflects itself. Logic provides the tools to obtain Wisdom, and Wisdom refines the application of Logic. This axiom provides the basis for Skyborn to create multiple self-conceptions and then project them outward. The result is momentary phantom effigies that confuse and befuddle opponents in combat. The more successful the Skyborn is at creating copies of themself, the harder the situation become for their enemies. *The Mirror of Selves* may be channeled immediately, without using an action, as a response to an attack from an opponent in combat.

Luminous: If the opponent's attack roll yields a Spirit Die result of "1," the attack misses completely.
Radiant: If the opponent's attack roll yields a Spirit Die result of "1" or "2," the attack misses completely.
Brilliant: The opponent's attack automatically misses, and any Surge that would be triggered is ignored.

Shatter 1: Your reflection becomes distorted.
Shatter 2: You become ensnared in the paradox of this Chroma's source. Switch your Wisdom Rating with your Logic Rating.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your own self-image is now a multiplicity of contradictory perceptions. You are immune to all benefits when one of your allies channels Chroma, unless that ally voluntarily spends one extra Spirit Point. You are also immune to all negative side effects of Chroma channeled by your allies.

REVELATION (Wisdom + Wisdom)

All knowledge is contained in every moment. Fed by Overlight, realization lurks beneath every stone, in every stream, within every sentient being. Adepts of the Virtue of Wisdom

can access this reservoir of insight. Plunging into a deep meditative state, they can unfurl the mysteries that seem inaccessible by any other means. When channeling *Revelation*, you should have a topic in mind that you wish to learn more about.

The use of *Revelation* is distinct from *If You Know Where to Look*, a Chroma unique to Teryxian Tutors. The latter may be used to discern a discrete piece of information that might conceivably have been recorded somewhere, whereas the former is intended to give insight into the current events in which the party may be entangled.

Luminous: The GM provides a definite answer to a yes-or-no question OR answers with a vague but reliable hint to a more complicated inquiry.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the GM provides details that help progress the current storyline.
Brilliant: The GM supplies a detailed hint that is extremely helpful. This may relate to the nature of an important plot point or be a precise answer to some other in-game question.
GM Note: Be careful not to spoil large-scale hidden plotlines. The player should still feel as though they have been provided with information that they could not have obtained otherwise, but for the story's integrity you may feel it necessary to "speak around" a particular point, or provide a sort of sideways answer that is still direct from a certain point of view. One solution might be to provide the player with answers in the form of a metaphorical vision that needs to be deciphered.

Shatter 1: Convinced of your role in the cosmic interplay of events, you may not willingly lie about the intention or purpose of your actions, if asked directly. You have developed a kind of moral naïveté, as if you could not conceive a reason why anyone would try to belay or confront you.
Shatter 2: You become consumed by mystical realization and rarely pay attention to your immediate situation. For any Test in a circumstance which requires noticing details of your immediate surroundings, treat your Skill Ratings as Untrained.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You are lost in revelation. Sitting in meditative equipoise, you are now an oracle and prophet of the Overlight. You are sustained by the light and become entirely immortal, free of the need to eat or sleep. You find a suitable position close by and settle in to watch the universe unfold over the countless eons to come. Your disciples and friends (or indeed maybe even future pilgrims) may consult your strange cryptic wisdom, but aside from this deeper understanding, you have left the world of the Folk and drift within the boundless realm of infinity. Insofar as your adventures with your allies are concerned, your character's journey has ended here.

SPIRIT WALK (Wisdom + Vigor)

There are many who walk a delicate balance through life, threading the space between the culture of their Folk and the numinous realm of the spirit. Though some are able to do so by

imbibing strange concoctions made from exotic plants or the fluids of unusual beasts, these methods are unreliable and difficult to control at times. There are those among the Skyborn, however, who can reliably fling their spirit forms out of their physical bodies, temporarily leaving their corporeal flesh behind.

Luminous: You cast your spirit form out of your physical body. This spirit form is invisible to all and can pass through all matter. It can even float or fly above the ground, although only at normal walking speed. Your senses of sight and hearing work perfectly fine as you traverse space, but you cannot speak or make any sound, and the physical body that you've left behind is numb to all sensation (including physical violence). Your consciousness is completely within the spirit form, your physical self merely a shell. You may travel 100 feet or so from your physical body before it becomes too painful to continue. You may remain in spirit form until the end of the scene if you wish. If you ever return to your body during this scene, you must channel *Spirit Walk* a second time to leave it again.

Radiant: Same as Luminous, but by spending one Spirit Point, you may briefly coalesce part of your spirit form into a state solid enough that you can use your hands to manipulate an object.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you may travel anywhere on the shard. You also retain just enough of a connection to your physical body that you will detect if it is harmed and may immediately return to your body in such an instance. You may remain in spirit form until the end of the story if you wish.

Shatter 1: Your spirit form is visible to others.
Shatter 2: When you suffer a Dramatic Wound, you must succeed at a Resolve Test or your spirit form will be momentarily knocked free of your physical body, and you must use your next action to return to your flesh.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You become permanently rooted in your spirit form. Your physical body will wither, fade, and decompose as you live on in your new ethereal self. You do manage to achieve some semblance of physical form, so that you can interact with the world in a normal way, but you can no longer channel any Chroma involving Vigor or Might.



LOGIC CHROMA

ARTIFICER'S CONUNDRUM (Logic + Logic)

There are some among the Folk for whom the allure of machines far outweighs the mysteries provided by the natural world. For some of the Skyborn, this interest has been made manifest through the precise application of the blue light of Logic. *Artificer's Conundrum* allows you to "feel" the workings and movements of a simple, constructed tool or machine. You can psychically ascertain structural or design flaws, or current imperfections in the functioning of the object. This Chroma may not be used to alter the operation of Luminons or other devices that would normally require specialized Chroma to work correctly.

Luminous: If you succeed at a Machinery Test, you can diagnose any basic tool or simple machine (e.g., a wooden cart). You may then use the Overlight to repair malfunctions or cause the machine to work more smoothly and efficiently.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, except that you may now diagnose and influence a more complicated machine (at the GM's discretion). You may even temporarily disable the machine or demonstrably improve performance.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, except that you may now permanently disable the machine or improve its performance by adding entirely new functions. A Brilliant success would allow you to influence incredibly complicated instruments, such as an Overlight engine.

Shatter 1: Your perceptions of the world become more logical and precise, and you often attempt to solve problems without taking people's feelings and emotions into account. In certain situations, the GM may determine that you must lower one or more of your Intuition or Compassion dice by one level.
Shatter 2: Your disconnection from the natural world grows as you begin to see yourself less as part of the natural world, and more as an improvement upon it. Beasts cease to respond to you as if you were a living thing, and Banyari treat you almost as if you were an automaton of some sort.

Shatter 3: Burnout. In your continued efforts to understand the interlocking ways in which the parts of various machines work, there is some element of your own body that *forgets*. Your knees fail, permanently and irrevocably. You immediately suffer a Dramatic Wound, and you are incapable of walking under your own power for the rest of the story. A stroke of luck allows you to cling to one last lingering piece of Overlight that gives you a supernatural understanding of machines. From now on, one of your Machinery dice may always be replaced with a d12. After the current story, you must immediately spend two XP to create a pair of metal leg braces that give you back your ability to walk. We leave the exact nature of these devices (are they simply old-fashioned mechanical leg braces? Overlight-fueled devices?) up to you and the GM. These braces must be maintained through no small effort, and some element of your character's ongoing narrative should revolve around their proper oiling, maintenance, and repair.

GAMBLER'S STONE* (Logic + Logic)

There are some Skyborn who believe that the entirety of the universe is like a web, a series of threads connecting possible futures with the present and the past. Pulling or snapping any one of them may have widespread effects on the future. Some of these Skyborn, who have the sight to see the threads, have learned to create something they call a *Gambler's Stone*. The Skyborn finds a perfectly flat river stone, circular or oval in shape, the kind of rock that would be ideal for skipping across the surface of a lake. Into this stone they pour the spiritual intention that collects when they choose to hold themself back from the completion of tasks that would come naturally to them, thus "pulling on a thread" in an effort to create change at some indeterminate point in the future.

Point Bank: You may voluntarily remove any die from a non-Chroma Test you are attempting in order to add one point to the Point Bank. Only one die may be removed in this way from any given Test. You must declare that you are doing this before you perform the Test. Any use of the *Gambler's Stone* reduces the Point Bank to zero.

Thresholds:

1–2: You may replace any one die on a non-Chroma Test with a d8.

3–5: You may replace any one die on a non-Chroma Test with a d10.

6+: You may replace any one die on a non-Chroma Test with a d12.

HUNTER'S TELEMETRY (Logic + Vigor)

For Skyborn who revere the Virtue of Logic, mathematics and physics come easily, almost instinctively. Many of them use this aptitude when hunting, especially when throwing

objects or firing projectile weapons (e.g., a bow and arrow). *Hunter's Telemetry* is a Chroma which sharpens that talent and allows you to literally see the angles and arcs of fire, subconsciously incorporating data from environmental conditions and the speed of a moving target. For ranged attacks, this Chroma may be channeled just prior to performing an Accurate Fire or Precise Shot maneuver, without using an action.

Luminous: The Spirit Point cost of the maneuver is reduced by the Spirit Die result from channeling the Chroma. The minimum cost is zero; any excess "discount" points are lost.

Radiant: Same as Luminous, but during the Combat Test you may replace one of your Skill dice with a d12. Any excess "discount" points may be added to the amount of damage dealt by the maneuver.

Brilliant: Same as Luminous, but you may replace two of your Skill dice with d12s, and the Spirit Point cost of the maneuver is now zero. The Spirit Die result from channeling the Chroma may be added to the amount of damage dealt by the maneuver.

Shatter 1: When describing simple schematics or maps, you are now able to draw them, in simple glowing blue lines, on a surface or floating in the air, using your finger. These lines will immediately disperse, like smoke in the wind, the moment you stop directly focusing on them or leave their immediate vicinity.

Shatter 2: Something has gone wrong with the way your brain processes incoming information about spatial relationships, and your mind inevitably boosts your throwing skills with a little bit of Overlight-fueled propulsion. To use a thrown or projectile weapon, you must spend one Spirit Point (unless you have zero). You now add one to the Spirit Die result when channeling *Hunter's Telemetry*. This extra cost (or benefit) is passed on in all other ways as normal with the resolution of this Chroma.

Shatter 3: Burnout. You have developed a detached, almost mathematical method of dispatching your victims in combat. The taking of lives has become nothing more than an equation, made of angles and velocities, waiting to be solved. During combat, whenever you strike a killing blow with a thrown or projectile weapon, you may gain one Spirit Point.

MYSTIC'S PERSEVERANCE (Logic + Might)

Through intense concentration, and an eye toward the inner self, many Skyborn have learned to ignore the physical ordeals that they put their bodies through. Beyond mere pain resistance, some Skyborn can actually prevent their flesh from burning or freezing, and can even expel toxins from their body. You may channel *Mystic's Perseverance* any time you are confronted with potential damage from extreme heat or cold, or from venom or poison. You may also channel this Chroma to endure torture, when the application of pain is used as an interrogation technique. This

Chroma may not be used in combat situations, as the chaos of a hand-to-hand melee doesn't allow for intense concentration of this sort.

Luminous: You still suffer damage from the injury, but with a successful Resolve Test you may completely ignore the pain or other symptoms caused by it.
Radiant: As long as the injury is relatively localized and/or temporary (e.g., a hand in the fire, frostbite on your feet, a venomous bite wound caught early), you are immune to any damage from it.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you are immune to damage from even larger injuries, provided your exposure is relatively brief (e.g., you can walk out of a raging inferno or wade through a shallow magma pool). In addition, you briefly absorb the aspect of the injurious effect, which lasts until the end of the scene. You might appear to flicker with flame, cause ice crystals to form at your touch, or even have noxious fumes waft from your body. Be creative.

Shatter 1: The Chroma works as normal, but a scar forms as if you *had* been injured.
Shatter 2: You absorb the aspect of the injurious effect, as with a Brilliant success, but this condition is now permanent.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You are now incredibly intolerant of, and overly sensitive to, pain. If you are uninjured and then suffer damage, the first wound is always a Dramatic Wound. (Fill in that box first, out of sequence with the normal order.)

PHYSICIAN'S INSIGHT (Logic + Compassion)

By laying hands upon an injured person, Skyborn with *Physician's Insight* are capable of "seeing" into the workings of the victim's biological functions, and can sometimes identify the exact nature of whatever malady or injury might be impairing them.

Luminous: You successfully diagnose the nature of the victim's impairment: poison, madness, physical injury, Chroma-fueled compulsion, or something else.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you also learn more details, which might include more specifics about the type of malady, length of recovery time, or the required remedy.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you may also provide the victim temporary relief from their symptoms. This might be in the form of pain relief, in the case of a grievous injury, or a moment of mental clarity, in the case of madness or fear. If applicable, you might even pull a bit of knowledge from the Overlight itself, learning the location of a naturally occurring antidote to a poison, for example. This last detail is at the GM's discretion, but you should be creative with your suggestions. Depending on the situation, the GM may even allow you to perform a Science Test. With a Radiant success or higher, you may heal one Dramatic Wound.

Shatter 1: You develop a phantom memory of the victim's affliction, as if you yourself had experienced it. This might result in anxiety or flashbacks when confronted with similar

situations in the future.
Shatter 2: Something backfires, and your attempts to "see" within the body of your victim instead result in all of *your* skin becoming permanently translucent.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You become a low-grade empath, as the outer senses of your psychic self become almost "locked" open. The GM may allow you to perform Intuition Tests in certain situations to detect powerful but hidden emotional states or strong unseen physical ailments, like tumors or life-threatening illnesses. This is not intended to act as a replacement for the burnt-out Chroma, and can only detect the strongest of emotions or ailments, with no further detail.

TRAVELER'S EYE (Wisdom + Logic)

You have learned to read faint traces left in the Overlight. Like a faint vapor or echo of a passing mind, you can hear, smell, or even see the trails left by an individual's passing. *Traveler's Eye* may also be channeled as a form of clairvoyance, detecting hidden clues about traveling conditions or even reading directions to landmarks or settlements in the echoed memories of travelers past.

Luminous: If tracking, you learn whether or not travelers have passed this way recently (the equivalent of a day or two). With a successful Beastways Test, you may also learn if beasts passed this way. If reading the land for directions, you feel a subtle pull, like some kind of internal compass, which will direct you to any landmark, dwelling, or colony that is well-known to locals. You can also sense any incoming weather.
Radiant: Same as Luminous. If tracking, you learn more specifics about the travelers, including how many there are and whether there are any Skyborn among them. You may also detect beings who passed much less recently (the equivalent of a week). A successful Beastways Test is still required to learn details about beasts in the area. With a successful Survival Test, you may pick up a physical trail to follow, even if previous efforts of normal tracking had failed or the clues were too indistinct to read. If reading the land for directions, you can also sense less well-known destinations, provided at least a few locals are aware of them (i.e., no destinations that are mere rumor or legend).
Brilliant: If tracking, you have a brief vision that allows you to see, in your mind's eye, the travelers or beasts that you are tracking as they passed by this place. If reading the land for directions, you feel an unmistakable pull toward your intended destination, whether well-known or merely rumored, close by or further afield on the shard. You're also intuitively aware of any environmental Hazards you may encounter along the way.

Shatter 1: No matter how clean and coiffed you are, you always manage to be covered in the dust of the road, and you look as though you have just come in from a lengthy journey.
Shatter 2: A shifting, changing map of your recent journeys now crawls continuously across your skin, like a living tattoo. If someone observes this

for long enough, they will witness the equivalent of the last few years of your travels, with the most recent destinations being the most frequently and vividly displayed. This may prove to be very inconvenient in certain situations!

Shatter 3: Burnout. You become obsessed with discovering the location of some legendary place. You believe it is there that you will discover your true purpose. This works best if you assist the GM by laying the groundwork for this eventuality early on, concocting some story from the annals of your Folk, although there's certainly something to be said for coming up with an idea in the moment. Perhaps the GM will have ideas of their own.

TRAVELER'S KNACK (Logic + Will)

Some Folk were born to be on the move, and you are no exception, having now learned to harness the power of the Overlight to hasten you upon your journeys. *Traveler's Knack* enables you to form a temporary and tenuous Overlight bond with any machine or beast that you are piloting. Prior to performing any Machinery or Beastways Test that involves such piloting, you may channel this Chroma.

Luminous: You may replace one of your Skill dice with a d12.

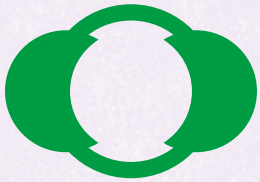
Radiant: You may replace two of your Skill dice with d12s.

Brilliant: You may replace all three of your Skill dice with d12s.

Shatter 1: You become distracted, always looking to the horizon and to the future, rather than focusing on where you are or what you are currently doing. Your naturally iridescent Skyborn eyes now shine even brighter, and others find them even more disconcerting, feeling as though you are looking right through them.

Shatter 2: There is now nothing that gives you pleasure quite like traveling at high speeds. Whenever you are allowed to indulge in this particular vice, you may gain one Spirit Point.

Shatter 3: Burnout. Life has passed you by. You have seen all there is to see, and nothing kindles the fire of your spirits like in your youth. You are an adrenaline junkie, and during any scene which could be construed as boring, you must succeed at a Resolve Test or spend one Spirit Point as you create a bit of ill-advised, juvenile excitement.



COMPASSION CHROMA

AGONY FETISH* (Compassion + Might)

The mechanics of Compassion are based on the interconnection of sentient beings. Love and connection are reliant on this reality. However, it is also true that malevolence and harm can be carried through its lattice and, when the green light is condensed by such intent, it can be shaped into a wicked puppet capable of inflicting pain and damage as readily as pleasure and healing. An *Agony Fetish* is a crudely (or not-so-crudely) fashioned doll, an effigy of a hated enemy or rival. When you destroy the doll in a violent way, perhaps through the use of pins or the application of fire, its real-life counterpart will suffer, no matter how far away they might be. You may destroy it in combat or outside of combat. After using an *Agony Fetish*, you may create a new one.

Point Bank: Each time you suffer a Dramatic Wound inflicted by an opponent, add one point to the Point Bank. You cannot add points through self-inflicted Dramatic Wounds.

Thresholds:
1–4: The target suffers crippling pain. If in combat, they suffer two damage.
5–8: The target suffers a sudden injury or sickness — perhaps a bone breaks, or perhaps they are overcome with a pox for a time. If in combat, they suffer four damage.
9+: The target suffers a grievous injury — maybe a broken limb, a missing eye or hand, a horribly scarred face, or a hobbled foot. If in combat, they suffer eight damage. When the target meets you at a later time, they will immediately, through the link created by the compassionate light, recognize you as the source of that pain.

ANGER WITHOUT HATRED (Compassion + Might)

Those who are weak in awareness of Compassion's continuum are often prone to pettiness, selfishness, and vindication when their tempers flare. Rationalizations of justice and vengeance often infect the flow of these feelings and manifest as rage and reckless destruction. It is not so for those who have developed this Chroma. You understand the need for violent force in certain situations, without getting entangled in toxic affliction, and you become a

purifying beacon. You exude a divine wrath able to cleanse the rage of your allies with the warmth of the all-encompassing green light. *Anger Without Hatred* can only be channeled during combat, as an action.

Luminous: At the end of this combat, you and your allies each convert one unspent Fury Point into one Spirit Point.
Radiant: At the end of this combat, you and your allies each convert two unspent Fury Points into Spirit Points.
Brilliant: At the end of this combat, you and your allies each convert three unspent Fury Points into Spirit Points.

Shatter 1: Beasts do not see you as a threat. Birds will perch on your fingers, and otherwise skittish animals will not flee at your quiet passing. Only willful displays of aggression will change this effect.
Shatter 2: Something about your bearing makes others perceive you as easily manipulated or weak of will. When trying to convince others to follow a certain course of action, or when attempting to change their minds, you are less than inspiring. In these situations, lower your Inspiration and Persuasion Ratings by one level.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You have achieved total benevolence of spirit. You no longer generate Fury Points during combat.

BECKON FROM AFAR (Logic + Compassion)

It is not unusual for Skyborn to find themselves all alone in dangerous situations, so the more adventurous develop the ability to call their allies over vast distances. When you channel *Beckon From Afar*, you can call to any single known ally, no matter how far away. The target ally is not compelled in any way, but will receive information about your location and circumstances, in accordance with the level of success. The higher the success level, the better prepared the target ally is to aid you in your hour of need.

Luminous: Your ally knows that you require assistance, but has no information beyond that.
Radiant: Your ally knows that you require assistance and knows your location, at least as well as you know it.
Brilliant: Your ally knows that you require assistance, knows your location, and knows the precise nature of the circumstances you are in (e.g., that you are trapped, being attacked).

Shatter 1: The center of your chest glows green, as if a device (or your very spirit) were shining through your skin. It flares brightly and can be seen through your clothing whenever you perform a Chroma Test involving Compassion.
Shatter 2: Same as previous, but the green light flares brightly whenever you use Compassion dice at all.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your entire being ripples with the light of a coruscating green flame, which dances and smolders upon the surface of your skin. You exude no heat, but whenever you perform a Chroma Test involving Compassion, your whole body explodes with a green light that can be seen from a great distance.

EMANATION OF BENEVOLENCE (Compassion + Will)

It is taught by the Masters of the Green Heart that to practice Compassion is to wield the supreme shield against the cruelties of existence. One who has learned this Chroma is one who has mastered this bulwark against aggression and violence. When you channel *Emanation of Benevolence*, you shine the green light into the heart of an opponent. That opponent becomes acutely aware of their connection to you, and any desire to harm you is diminished or negated altogether. You may channel this Chroma during combat, as an action, choosing an opponent as the target.

Luminous: The target must win an Open Test (Will vs. Mental) to attack you directly.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the target must also spend one Zeal to attack you directly.
Brillant: The target cannot attack you directly for the rest of this combat.

Shatter 1: Your appearance softens. Others do not feel threatened by your large, pleading eyes and childlike affect. When attempting acts of intimidation or methods of persuasion that rely on brute presence, you must replace one of your Virtue dice with a d6. However, when attempting to persuade by way of innocence or pity, you may reroll one failed die.
Shatter 2: Any time that you have less than two Fury Points, you may not spend them.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You become smaller and more childlike. You take on all the physical characteristics of a child of your Folk. This does not affect your attributes but can certainly cause complications, because in all other physical ways you are like a child. Your aging has effectively been reset to adolescence. Once reset this way, you age normally from that point on.

EMERALD SALVE* (Compassion + Vigor)

All Skyborn share a sort of bond of kinship. Having all been estranged in some fashion from their home shards — either by their culture or by themselves — they often treasure these connections they share with their fellow Skyborn. A master of this Chroma can transmute the essence of this connection into a softly pulsing emerald that is capable of healing any fellow Skyborn who were present for the object's creation.

The creation of an *Emerald Salve* requires an emerald large enough to fill your palm. Acquiring such an emerald can be an adventure in its own right, although it's not unheard of for well-funded gem dealers to have some for sale or barter. If you choose this Chroma during character creation, you may begin the game with one such emerald, which is considered a Valuable.

When you channel this Chroma to create the *Emerald Salve*, any other characters present are attuned. Only attuned characters will benefit

from the Luminon's power. If you crush the emerald with a rock or weapon, all attuned Skyborn who are present may heal wounds. Each *Emerald Salve* can only be used once, since it is destroyed in the process.

Point Bank: You may transfer points from your Spirit Pool to the Point Bank at any time.

Thresholds:
1–5: All attuned Skyborn, if present, may heal one wound.
6–10: All attuned Skyborn, if within your line of sight, may heal three wounds.
11+: All attuned Skyborn, if on the same shard as you, may heal five wounds.

EXILE OF HEARTS (Compassion + Compassion)

The majority of beings take for granted the interconnectedness of all life. This connection is the lattice of Compassion itself. Through it, all beings — from pauper to prince — feel an instinctual bond with trees, beasts, and other Folk. If you have mastered *Exile of Hearts*, you have a tremendous insight into these relationships, and consequently know how to sever them. You may channel this Chroma during combat, choosing an opponent as the target. Being targeted by *Exile of Hearts* is painful, alienating, and madness-inducing, for to suffer its effects is to be temporarily expelled from the cycle of existence itself.

Luminous: The target must win an Open Test (Compassion vs. Mental). If the target fails, they become overwhelmed by feelings of panic and isolation, and must reduce their Physical Dice by one. This effect lasts for one combat round.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but if the target fails the Open Test, they must reduce their Physical Dice by two instead. This effect lasts for one combat round.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but the effect lasts until the end of the combat.

Shatter 1: You now float an inch above the ground. Your feet simply do not quite touch the earth, as if you were walking on a cushion of air. This does not have any effect on falling or other gravitational Hazards, and indeed you still leave footprints. Others can be unnerved when they notice.
Shatter 2: When you touch a being that is friendly to you, you automatically inflict one damage. The damage is felt as an intense coldness that burns the flesh.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You have permanently damaged your place in the web of Compassion that connects all beings. Whenever an ally channels a Chroma that affects you directly, or includes you in an Overlight bond or other attunement, the Spirit Die result for their Chroma Test is increased by two.

SYMPATHETIC SEARCH (Wisdom + Compassion)

The Banyari say that, once you make contact with a being, they never leave your life completely. *Sympathetic Search* allows you to tune into this lattice of connections and hone in on a single being, ascertaining their location over any distance. You must have previously met the target in person for this to work. If the target is considered an enemy of your party, or of the Skyborn in general, increase the Spirit Die result by one.

Luminous: You ascertain the shard on which the target is located, or if the target is currently traveling between shards.
Radiant: You ascertain the general area where the target is located, whether a specific city, village, forest, desert, etc. You do not learn the name of the location, so if it is somewhere you are not familiar with, you may have to rely on landmarks or other assistance.
Brilliant: You can pinpoint the exact location of the target. No matter where the target goes, you can follow a scintillating trail of light that manifests in your mind's eye, merely by concentrating on it. Once you have physically sighted the target, the effects of this Chroma dissipate.

Shatter 1: A reverse bond is formed with the target, which allows them to always know *your* location.
Shatter 2: After ascertaining on which shard your target is located, you are affected by a kind of Overlight echo of that shard, which resonates through your spirit and changes your physical form.

- *Nova:* Crystalline plates form down your spine.
- *Zenith:* You exhale visible breath, as if standing in the cold.
- *Quill:* A ridge of tiny rainbow feathers forms along your cheeks. If you are Teryxian, these feathers elongate and change to a color that contrasts with your natural plumage.
- *Banyan:* Your neck grows a mane of brownish-green fur. This can take the form of a full lion-like mane, a fur crest down your neck or spine, or something else entirely.
- *Haark:* You become more comfortable in densely populated urban areas, and less so in the wild. You may reroll one Skill die when performing Wealth Tests, but you must replace one of your Skill dice with a d6 when performing Tests in remote areas.
- *Veile:* Your face becomes metallic and rigid. When you speak, your mouth does not visibly move.
- *Pyre:* Your footsteps leave glowing or smoking footprints as you pass. This is merely an illusion and has no effect beyond the visual.
- *Traveling Between Shards:* Your body is covered from head to toe with iridescent splotches.

Shatter 3: Burnout. You are completely blind. However, you can still detect all sentient beings within 100 feet of you, as if you could see them plainly. Treat invisible and hidden targets as if in your direct line of sight.

WILL CHROMA



FIGMENT OF SELF (Will + Will)

With intense concentration, you shape a small part of your Will into a semi-sentient floating globe of yellow energy, known as an *eidolon*. Depending on your success when you channel *Figment of Self*, this eidolon you create may perform a variety of simple tasks for you.

Luminous: The eidolon may act as a remote pair of eyes, set to a certain position. In your mind's eye, you see what it sees. It lasts until the end of the scene.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the eidolon may instead perform simple physical tasks, such as a Haarkeen child might. It lasts until the end of the scene.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but the eidolon lasts until the end of the story.

Shatter 1: Whenever you do not have an active eidolon, there are seven small yellow lights floating around your head.
Shatter 2: From now on, whenever you create an eidolon, it is the *same identical being*. It will remember your previous behavior toward it, as well as any tasks it completed before.
Shatter 3: Burnout. The eidolon no longer follows your orders and leaves you, never to return. Perhaps it will bond with a different Skyborn? Become a malevolent being of pure Overlight? Or something else? In any case, the GM should let this event inform the creation of a new villain, who seeks revenge upon you, its former master.

A HAND ON THE SHOULDER (Compassion + Will)

This Chroma allows you to establish a temporary Overlight bond which infuses one of your allies with potent willpower, spiritually encouraging them to persevere when any sane individual might give up. Immediately before one of your allies performs a Skill Test, you may channel *A Hand on the Shoulder* to give them the ability to reroll failed dice.

Luminous: During the Skill Test, your ally may reroll one failed die.

Radiant: During the Skill Test, your ally may reroll two failed dice.
Brilliant: During the Skill Test, your ally may reroll three failed dice.

Shatter 1: Instead of the normal result of the channeling, your ally must instead reroll that number of *successes* during the Skill Test. If the channeling was not successful, your ally must reroll three successes.
Shatter 2: Your ally gains a permanent, instinctive aptitude for that Skill. They may always reroll one failed die on any Test using that Skill. Unfortunately, you develop an unpredictable incompetence at a Skill as well. Select any Skill. On future Tests using that Skill, you must reroll one success on the lowest die type available.
Shatter 3: Burnout. The spiritual pathways that connect you and the recipient of your goodwill become calcified and permanent. You have developed a minor Overlight bond with this ally — unfortunately, it only goes one way. From now on, whenever you receive a Spirit Reward, one of those Spirit Points goes to your ally instead.

LUMINOUS SHIELD (Logic + Will)

A disc of concentrated psychic force radiates outward from your wrist, creating a small, protective energy shield, translucent and yellow. You may channel *Luminous Shield* during combat, as an action. When you do, the ongoing effect lasts until the end of the combat. You may not have more than one shield at a time.

Luminous: You gain a number of shield points equal to twice the Spirit Die result. Each time you would suffer damage, instead subtract that many shield points. Once these shield points are depleted, the shield dissipates.
Radiant: Same as Luminous -OR- reduce all damage you would suffer by one (to a minimum of one) until the end of the combat.
Brilliant: Reduce all damage you would suffer by one (to a minimum of one) until the end of the combat. In addition, each time you suffer damage, you deal one damage back to whoever attacked you.

Shatter 1: You develop a small magnetic field around your fingertips, enough to sense metal but not attract it.
Shatter 2: Your hands become partially frictionless, and you cannot hold tiny objects without dropping them.
Shatter 3: Burnout. A thin force field envelops your entire body. It is nearly impossible for you to discern or appreciate subtle textures, like a breeze upon your face or an animal's fur. You cannot feel skin-to-skin contact, and you become slowly isolated from the world around you, forever deprived of your sense of touch.

MEMORY OF FORM (Logic + Will)

When confronted with an inanimate object or structure that is broken or losing its physical integrity, you wrap the item in an embrace of the Overlight, coaxing it back to wholeness. With *Memory of Form*, you can fix anything from a splintered chair leg, to a broken mirror, to the failing foundation of a bridge — but you cannot return life to a deceased being or plant. The complexity of the item you are trying to fix has certain success level prerequisites. If you fail to meet the minimum required success level, the channeling fails.

Luminous: With a brief moment of concentration, you may return a naturally occurring object to its original state. This could be a tree branch, a small rock or boulder, disturbed soil, etc.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may instead, with added focus, return a small created object to its normal condition. This could be broken furniture, a shattered mirror, a wooden cart, basic tools, a simple wall, etc.
Brilliant: By spending extra Spirit Points, you may, with hands outstretched, reach into a kind of "memory" and tease almost anything back into form. This could be structural materials or a more sophisticated object with complex moving parts. The GM will determine how many extra Spirit Points you must spend to do this (typically 1–4), based on the complexity and size of the object, how long it has been broken, and how long it once existed in its unbroken state.

GM Note: It is not our intent for PCs to use Memory of Form to reconstruct something truly mythic in scale, like an entire palace or an airship. Although, with a Legendary success, who knows?

Shatter 1: One of your limbs takes on the semblance of the material you're trying to fix. It does not actually change *into* that material, but simply resembles it, perhaps with your skin altering its texture to match.
Shatter 2: You develop a sympathetic relationship with the material you're trying to fix. You may now, upon touching an object made of this material, judge its relative integrity with a successful Machinery (Wisdom) Test.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You begin to "forget" your own form, and you develop a bad palsy in one of your hands. At the GM's discretion, this may affect certain Skill Tests.

MINDSTRIKE (Will + Might)

Bringing the entirety of your Will to a single point, you project it outward as a lance of bright yellow energy toward an opponent within your line of sight.

Luminous: Unless your target wins an Open Test (Will vs. Mental), they suffer two damage.
Radiant: Unless your target wins an Open Test (Will vs. Mental), they suffer three damage.

Brilliant: Unless your target wins an Open Test (Will vs. Mental), they suffer six damage.

Shatter 1: A permanent black scorch mark appears in the middle of your forehead.
Shatter 2: The scorch mark transforms into a vertical scar-like slit, which occasionally weeps black-red ichor. The slit smokes whenever you successfully channel *Mindstrike*.
Shatter 3: Burnout. The slit opens to reveal a black-red eye, complete with nictitating membrane. Your countenance is now that of an angry sorcerer, wrathful and full of malice.

PHOTOCHROMATIC PRISM* (Wisdom + Will)

Perhaps the most bizarre use of Zenith crystals is reserved for those Skyborn who create *Photochromatic Prisms*. Built into jewelry, clothing, or armor, this medium-sized Luminon maintains contact with your skin and acts as a kind of overflow trap to prevent you from experiencing a Shatter. Unfortunately, creating such an object is not without its risks. The more frequently you use it, the more Overlight is concentrated into it — and not in a good way. Eventually, the prism will take on a will and mind of its own, grafting itself onto your body and irrevocably altering your life's journey. Once created, the prism cannot be destroyed by any safe and normal means, and you may not create a second one.

Point Bank: When a Chroma Test requires you to spend more Spirit Points than you have, you do not experience a Shatter. Instead, add points to the Point Bank equal to the Spirit Point deficit.

Thresholds:
1–2: The prism is like a quiet presence that you can feel upon the corners of your mind. You may occasionally feel as though you're being offered unspoken guidance.
3–5: The prism attains self-awareness. It has a name, and its personality is in direct conflict with your Core Virtue. Like a devil upon your shoulder, it regularly attempts to coerce you into actions that are representative of you at your worst. At this point, the prism grafts itself onto your skin, and any attempt to cover it with clothing or armor results in a sickly yellow light that burns away the material so that the prism is always exposed.
6+: The prism's mind becomes more clearly realized. It is now a somewhat malevolent companion to every part of your life, having literally taken form from the soul-searing excesses as you've channeled too-powerful Chroma. While its influence is never far from your thoughts and you can hear its voice clearly, during moments of great stress the prism might actually take control of your mind and body for a short while. The GM will determine when such moments occur, and you must achieve a Radiant success or better on a Resolve Test to resist the control of the prism, which will otherwise last until the end of the scene. (Though it is intended that you role-play the prism, some groups may find that they prefer for the GM to play that role.)

WILL TO LIVE (Will + Vigor)

There are some Skyborn who have learned to tether their spiritual essence to the Overlight itself when wounded, drawing energy into their dying bodies to delay death. When you suffer a wound that would cause you to start fading, you may channel *Will to Live* before performing the standard Resolve or Survival Test.

Luminous: You will not die if you run out of Spirit Points while fading.
Radiant: You automatically succeed at the Resolve or Survival Test.
Brilliant: You recover immediately and may heal your most recent Dramatic Wound.

Shatter 1: You maintain vague memories of your near-death experience. Sometimes, when confronted with death, you lose yourself in reverie.
Shatter 2: The fire of your life's energies is faltering. You no longer have a detectable heartbeat or pulse. Wealth Tests for mid-story healing now require two extra Wealth Points.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your spiritual self long ago tried to flee your mortal form, but through manipulation of the Chroma you have tricked it into staying. You may no longer receive mid-story or "inspirational" Spirit Rewards.



VIGOR CHROMA

BEACON OF THE LIGHT (Wisdom + Vigor)

By drawing upon the golden radiance of the Overlight itself, you are filled with a confidence and glow of vitality that is almost seraphic to look upon. There are few who can resist the charms of your presence, and you elicit favors and privileges effortlessly. This is not conscious manipulation; it simply never occurs to you that you would be denied. To channel *Beacon of the Light*, you must declare a target for your charms and give the GM a general idea of your goals.

Luminous: When interacting with the target, you may raise your Persuasion Rating by one level. This effect lasts until the end of the scene.
Radiant: When interacting with the target, you automatically succeed at a Persuasion Test.
Brilliant: Your target fulfills your requests at a level that no reasonable person would. Witnesses can only assume that you are a person of note, deserving of such treatment.

Shatter 1: Your facial features become idealized, and an unnatural symmetry develops. Some may even find your beautiful appearance to be unnerving or intimidating.
Shatter 2: The skin of your entire body turns a pale, lustrous gold color.
Shatter 3: Burnout. The rhythms and functions of your body take on a quieter, more measured pace as the Overlight envelops you with the calming pulse of life. So subtle are your movements and behavior that you are often mistaken for a statue, crafted of copper or gold. Your hair now has a stiffened and molded appearance, and you weigh twice as much as you should. If you wish, you may appear to actually *be* a statue, to any onlooker relying solely on their sense of sight.

BRONZE RESILIENCE (Compassion + Vigor)

By focusing their body's energies and the orange light onto the surface of their skin, Skyborn have been known to shake off blows in combat that would fell a lesser individual. In reality, it is a complicated combination of the orange and green lights that gives them this power, as it is their connection to their allies that gives them focus. You may channel *Bronze Resilience* as a modified Protect Ally maneuver, enhanced by the Overlight. The cost of the maneuver is reduced to zero Spirit Points.

Luminous: You may make a single attempt to protect your ally at any point during this combat. When you do, perform a Skill Test as normal to reduce the damage that you suffer on behalf of your ally, and you may add one to the Spirit Die result.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may make two attempts to protect your ally at any point during this combat, and you may add two to the Spirit Die result. In addition, you may reroll failed dice during those Skill Tests.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you do not suffer any damage at all.

Shatter 1: Whenever you are wounded in combat, sparks fly from your person as when metal strikes metal.
Shatter 2: The flesh of your arms turns to bronze, and your limbs now resemble those of a wondrous metallic automaton, with segmented metal plates that still allow for full range of motion.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your very touch now causes bronze and copper items to immediately develop a verdigris. Depending on the object, this transformation may change that item's status as a Valuable, for better or worse.

INSOLENT RIGOR (Vigor + Vigor)

Skyborn who revere the orange light above all others are known to possess an almost supernatural stubbornness. They are able to rely upon their stores of energy to accomplish just about any goal they set their minds to. You may channel *Insolent Rigor* at any time to use your Vigor Rating in place of other Virtue Ratings, except when channeling Chroma.

Luminous: Select a Virtue. Any time you roll dice for that Virtue, you may replace two of the dice with your Vigor dice. This effect lasts until the end of the scene.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may replace all of the selected Virtue's dice with your Vigor dice.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you may also select a second Virtue to replace with your Vigor dice for a single Test sometime during this scene.

Shatter 1: You are stubborn and prideful to a fault and often cannot accept your own limitations. You may no longer perform the Full Defense maneuver.
Shatter 2: You are filled with boundless mental energy, so much so that you find it difficult

to focus on complicated tasks which require intense concentration. Whenever you channel Chroma involving Logic, any Spirit Die result of "1" reduces the success level by one. (Luminous success becomes a failure.)

Shatter 3: Burnout. Like an insect trapped within the hardening of amber, your spirit becomes crystallized and immutable. Skyborn see you as someone strong with the orange light, but that light has turned a dirty, bloody umber. You are stuck in your ways, and finding new paths for the Overlight to channel through your being is difficult and painful. To learn new Chroma involving Vigor, you must spend one extra XP.

INVOCATION OF THE SEA (Vigor + Might)

Calling upon the relentless motion and unbridled fury of the Sea Below, you allow the inexorable push and pull of the tides far beneath you to fill your being with an unyielding force. The closer you are to the Sea Below, the more powerful the Overlight bond that you may create. Imagine that the seven shards are numbered from one to seven — with Nova as one, and Pyre as seven. The number of the shard you are on is known as your *shard position*. This number will be used to determine your success when you channel this Chroma.

You may channel *Invocation of the Sea* during combat, as an action, or during more social or diplomatic situations. You may only do this successfully once per scene, because a successful channeling is an ongoing process, as the Might of the Sea Below ebbs and flows through your being. This does mean that you may not make a second attempt with *Invocation of the Sea*, for the Sea Below is a fickle ally.

Luminous: In non-combat situations, you may reroll all failed dice during Inspiration Tests. If your shard position is five or higher, you may use Vigor or Might in lieu of Compassion during Inspiration Tests. This effect lasts until the end of the scene. During combat, you may immediately gain Fury Points equal to your shard position minus one.

Radiant: In non-combat situations, same as Luminous, but you may raise your Skill dice by one level during Inspiration Tests. During combat, you may immediately gain Fury Points equal to your shard position.

Brilliant: In non-combat situations, same as Radiant, but you may add one to the number of successes for your next Inspiration Test. During combat, same as Radiant, and your next combat maneuver costs zero Spirit Points. In either situation, water begins to pour or surge upward from the soil or ground beneath you, even in situations where water should not be present. It doesn't stop until the ground is sodden or there is a few inches of standing water. Fires low to the ground are extinguished and footing becomes momentarily treacherous.

Shatter 1: Your presence brings with it the smell of the sea.

Shatter 2: Your hair or fur becomes home to a heretofore unknown strain of blackish-green algae, and your skin occasionally weeps seawater.

Shatter 3: Burnout. Your skin turns blotchy with oily and gangrenous patches. These patches periodically blister and burst, while tiny filament-thin worms wriggle forth from the wounds and float up into the air on a current of wind. Whenever you channel Chroma, one of your allies must spend the required Spirit Points. If they do not have enough, you experience a Shatter as normal, and that ally gains the *Call of the Stars* affliction (see below), the severity of which is based on which Shatter you just experienced.

Call of the Stars

Shatter 1: Your ally can no longer drink fresh water or eat fresh fruit without vomiting it back up violently. In all other ways, they appear healthy.

Shatter 2: The normal iridescence of your ally's Skyborn eyes is replaced with a vivid blackness, as their eyes become inky pools, with shining points of light deep within their recesses.

Shatter 3: Driven to find the edge of the shard, your ally will throw themself off its edge at the earliest opportunity, desperately hoping to submerge in the Sea Below. They will not survive the fall.

STOIC PARAGON (Will + Vigor)

Some Skyborn have learned to channel the orange light in a way that allows them to subsist on nothing but the flow of Overlight through their bodies. It may also fuel them to heroic acts of stamina. You may channel *Stoic Paragon* at any point during a story, and the effects will last until the end of that story.

Luminous: You no longer require food or sleep. You may also ignore damage from any stamina-based Hazard Tests required by tiring journeys or similar ordeals.

Radiant: Same as Luminous, and you may spend one Spirit Point to automatically succeed at any stamina-based Athletics Test (e.g., running for long distance, or holding a heavy object for a sustained period).

Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but if you are killed, your body and spirit will not give out right away, lasting until the end of the story. There is no way to prevent you from dying at the end of the story, but until then you are effectively immune to further damage and only the complete destruction of your body (e.g., by immolation, an explosion, or similar) will cause you to cease existing.

Shatter 1: Your blood now shines the color of a rich, golden orange. Legends of Skyborn with golden blood are common, and there are certain alchemists and elixir-makers who claim to be able to turn such blood into a wondrous potion, capable of bestowing boundless energy and sexual vigor to those who drink it. If they receive word of your newfound changes...

Shatter 2: Your entire body now vibrates rapidly, and nothing short of death can stop it. The GM may allow you to raise your Skill dice by one level when you are attempting speed-based Tests, but you now find delicate handiwork exceedingly difficult.

Shatter 3: Burnout. The Overlight sustains you from now on. In fact, you *cannot* eat or drink normal food without being rocked with violent convulsions. Normal drinking water and the Overlight itself are the only fuel your body will ever again require.

SUTURES OF GOLD (Logic + Vigor)

Entwined with golden threads of the Overlight, a Skyborn can create a mesh of pulsing filaments capable of closing small wounds sustained in combat almost as quickly as they occur. During combat, you may channel *Sutures of Gold*, as an action. On each of your subsequent actions, the golden threads will act to bond and close newly acquired wounds. Only wounds suffered in the current combat may be healed in this way. You may normally only channel this Chroma once per story, as the demands upon the body are simply too great. If you channel *Sutures of Gold* a second time during the same story, it automatically causes a Shatter.

Luminous: At the beginning of each of your actions this combat, you may heal one wound. Dramatic Wounds may not be healed this way.
Radiant: At the beginning of each of your actions this combat, you may heal two wounds. You may heal Dramatic Wounds this way.
Brilliant: At the beginning of each of your actions this combat, you may heal three wounds. You may heal Dramatic Wounds this way.

Shatter 1: At the end of this combat, you suffer a Dramatic Wound.
Shatter 2: You are now always hungry.
Shatter 3: Burnout. All the horrors caused upon your flesh find a way to return to you, and the skin of your entire body is now a nightmare scene of criss-crossing scars and keloids.

THIRST OF COPPER (Vigor + Might)

Though few within the Skyborn Order speak of it, there are some among their number who draw sustenance and even exhilaration from the blood of the dead and dying. While not exactly forbidden, it is not spoken of in polite circles. Rumored to have its origins in some of the shadowy excesses of the Penumbral Court upon Veile, *Thirst of Copper* is a celebration of what it means to be a meat-eating animal, relishing your place in the food chain with glorious abandon. It is said that, in hidden ritual combats, certain Skyborn developed this technique to drink the blood from their dying enemies and use it to fuel unnatural prowess in the fighting pits.

During combat, the GM will inform you when an opponent is reduced to three health or less. Only then may you channel *Thirst of Copper*, as an action. In any given combat, for each channeling of *Thirst of Copper* after the first, you must increase the Spirit Die result by one, thereby costing more as the combat progresses. Drinking the blood of other beings is not without its spiritual burden.

Luminous: Immediately perform a Brawl or Blades Test. If successful, you kill the opponent and quaff their blood as they die in your embrace. You may raise your Brawl Rating by one level until the end of the combat.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may raise your Brawl or Might Rating by one level until the end of the combat.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you may instead raise your Vigor Rating by one level until the end of the story.

Shatter 1: Your teeth slowly fall out, replaced by rows upon rows of needle-like fangs.

Shatter 2: The skin of your neck becomes horribly distended, with raised tendons and strange cartilaginous ridges. The sight of blood makes you sweat with a barely disguised lust.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You become a feral thing that must be contained. You retain your mental faculties, but when your blood is up, it is incredibly difficult for you not to tear into the flesh of others with your teeth. Miraculously, you maintain a normal attitude toward your Skyborn allies. In other situations, the GM may allow (or require) you to spend one Spirit Point to keep your composure.



MIGHT CHROMA

ENDURANCE OF HEROES (Might + Might)

Conflict is not the only proof of Might. In some instances, Might manifests as a strong soaring harmony with your body and the world around you. When you channel this Chroma, you draw persistence from the very landscape to excel where others would falter. *Endurance of Heroes* is channeled preemptively, in preparation for a future Hazard Test. Its effects only apply to Hazards relating to physical endurance or constitution, such as falling, drowning, or poison. It does not apply to Hazards such as magma, acid, or anything else that would cause topical damage. As always, the GM has final say.

Luminous: On the next Hazard Test that you fail, suffer only half the damage.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may reroll all your dice. If you do, you must keep the new result.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but if you reroll you may keep the better of the two results.

Shatter 1: Filled with pride and a bit of arrogance about your constitution and physical strength, you wear little in the way of clothing, so as to best show off your physique and barbarous nature.
Shatter 2: Your eyes now smolder with a spectral red fire. Flames lick continuously at your brow.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Whenever you spend Fury Points, concussive waves of heat pulse from your body, causing the earth to tremble while those nearby are rocked with psychic trauma. Your allies must perform a Hazard Test (Force D8 vs. Resolve), and opponents are similarly affected (Force D8 vs. Mental).

FERAL DOMINATION (Compassion + Might)

Few creatures of the shards answer to words, and fewer still respond to a gentle plea. Calling upon the dominance of the primordial Alpha, you assume the aspect of an aggressive and dominant animal, in order to cow a beast into submission. You may channel *Feral Domination* at any time, choosing a beast to target. If you channel this Chroma in combat against powerful or aggressive beast opponents, it acts as a kind of modified Challenge Foe maneuver.

Luminous: Small animals or docile, domesticated herbivores will flee from your wrath. Predators or large, aggressive animals will be incited into combat if they are not already so engaged, and you may immediately perform a Challenge Foe maneuver as if it could be used against beasts.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but in place of the normal Performance Test for the Challenge Foe maneuver, you may instead perform a Performance (Might) Test.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but if you succeed at the Performance Test, the target beast immediately loses two Zeal.

Shatter 1: You acquire a physical trait (e.g., eyes, horns, hooves, patterned skin, etc.) of the target beast.
Shatter 2: You acquire a physical trait of the target beast. This is in addition to the first trait you've acquired, which might be from the same beast or a different one.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You take on an aura of the target beast. Other animals will respond to you in kind. For example, if you were targeting a powerful predator, domesticated livestock may startle at the scent of you. If you were targeting a large grazing beast, others of the same species may view you as a rival — and a small one at that!

FURY WEAPON* (Vigor + Might)

For many of the Skyborn, the path to meaning lies through their actions as righteous avengers. And for some, that means developing a distinct bond with one of their martial tools, a weapon that is deeply tied to their being. By channeling *Fury Weapon*, you may turn any one of your weapons into a Luminon capable of storing your righteous anger and adrenaline, to be unleashed upon unsuspecting foes at a later time.

Point Bank: At any time during combat, you may, as an action, spend one Spirit Point to transfer points from your Fury Pool to the Point Bank. Any use of the *Fury Weapon* reduces the Point Bank to zero.

Thresholds:
1–4: You may use the *Fury Weapon* at the onset of a combat to automatically win initiative.
5–10: You may use the *Fury Weapon* after a successful attack to deal extra damage equal to twice the Spirit Die result.
11+: You may perform a Challenge Foe maneuver for zero Spirit Points, and you may perform it simultaneously with an attack, which deals extra damage as above.

VISAGE OF TERROR (Will + Might)

Apex predators are often capable of summoning such dreadful mien that they can terrify or even paralyze prey by their mere presence. When you channel *Visage of Terror*, you boil over with an awful and intimidating bearing that is capable of shutting down any target by flooding them with the most ancient of fears. You may not channel this Chroma in combat.

Luminous: Until the end of the scene, the target will go out of their way to avoid you.
Radiant: The target will flee the scene if possible, only returning in your absence.
Brilliant: The target is paralyzed with overwhelming terror, blood draining from their face. Only after you have left the area will they regain control of themself.

Shatter 1: When you laugh, blood now trickles from the corners of your mouth.
Shatter 2: During combat, your body temperature rises and you emit a dark crimson steam.
Shatter 3: Burnout. A loved one or trusted ally will abandon you. No matter what you do, this individual believes that you have become a violent and irreconcilable monster, and they will never be comfortable around you again.

WALL OF SPEARS (Logic + Might)

The masters of Might know that the capacity to defend oneself is required of the true adept. The red light is concentrated in the chest and condensed until the energy becomes solid. When you channel *Wall of Spears*, you force Might violently outward with great focus, taking a powerful, effortless defensive stance.

Luminous: Until the end of the combat, if you are armed with a melee weapon (or unarmed), performing the Full Defense maneuver costs you zero Spirit Points.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the Full Defense maneuver negates one extra damage.
Brilliant: Same as Luminous, but the Full Defense maneuver negates two extra damage.

Shatter 1: Patches of tiny spikes erupt across your chest and shoulders.
Shatter 2: The spikes elongate to two inches and tear through your clothing.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Four-inch spikes grow from your shins, forearms, and brow. You are fundamentally monstrous and can use Blades (Might) while unarmed.

WARP FRENZY (Vigor + Might)

It is an outer discipline that allows for the cultivation of the deep rage of Might. A raging flame is stoked deep within you, your fear and wrath are fed to it, and the Might fire explodes through your body. This allows you to manifest a furious assault of terrifying speed. You may only channel *Warp Frenzy* during combat.

Luminous: For the next two combat rounds, after making an attack, you may immediately make a second attack against the same opponent.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the duration is three combat rounds.
Brilliant: Same as Luminous, but the duration is four combat rounds. In addition, you may target a different opponent with the second attack. Finally, at the end of this combat, you may save one unspent Fury Point.

Shatter 1: Immediately gain one Fury Point. From now on, whenever your Fury Pool is greater than zero, you foam at the mouth with bubbling saliva.
Shatter 2: Immediately gain one Fury Point. From now on, whenever your Fury Pool is greater than zero, your lip splits open upon a new, vertical bifurcation. Some or all of the teeth on your upper or lower jaw become long and pointed.
Shatter 3: Immediately gain one Fury Point. You now exude an air of terrible menace. Civilized Folk will avoid you as if you were a dangerous and malevolent animal, and all but the most primitive social interactions become impossible. You are so frightening in combat that an opponent must spend one Zeal before they and their allies may attack you.

WRATHFUL STRIKE (Will + Might)

Drawing upon your bodily reserves and anger-fueled emotions, you lash out at your enemies in a blur of red fists and spectral fire. You may channel *Wrathful Strike* simultaneously with an attack.

Luminous: Your next successful melee attack deals one extra damage.
Radiant: Until the end of the combat, all of your successful melee attacks deal one extra damage.
Brilliant: Your next successful melee attack deals three extra damage.

Shatter 1: Your hands become permanently stained, as if with red dye.
Shatter 2: Your hands grow bony protuberances, ridges, or oversized osteoderms. Your ability to complete tasks requiring fine motor skills is diminished. At the GM's discretion, you may have to lower your Craft and Machinery Ratings for certain Tests.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your hands become permanently cracked and bleeding.

ZENITH ORDER MONK CHROMA

BALANCE OF THE LIGHT (Wisdom + Wisdom)

Required Background: Scholar of the Unbroken Sky

The Scholars of the Unbroken Sky are a dizzying lot. Their understanding of the abstract movements of the Overlight, and how it interfaces with all things (including the Skyborn), is well beyond the grasp of all but the wisest and most educated. One of their theories posits that all seven Virtues are divisions of a primordial unbroken light, so any Virtue, when perfected, is indeed all Virtues; making distinctions between them is purely an illusion. Whether or not this esoteric idea has truth behind it, these Skyborn are able to manipulate the light of Virtue within themselves and transform it into the colored light of any other Virtue. When you channel *Balance of the Light*, as an action, you select any two Virtues: one to bolster, one to dampen. When you or your allies channel other Chroma involving these Virtues, the following bonuses and penalties apply.

Luminous: Chroma Tests involving the bolstered Virtue receive one extra success, provided at least one success was rolled. However, these Chroma Tests also cost one extra Spirit Point. Chroma Tests involving the dampened Virtue lose one success. If a Chroma Test involves both the bolstered and dampened Virtues, there is no effect. In combat, these bonuses and penalties last for an entire combat round. Outside of combat, they only affect the next single Chroma Test performed by any character in the party.

Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the bonuses and penalties last until the end of the combat or scene.

Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but the cost of Chroma Tests involving the bolstered Virtue is returned to normal, while Chroma Tests involving the dampened Virtue now cost one extra Spirit Point.

Shatter 1: Your right hand glows with the color of the bolstered Virtue.

Shatter 2: Your left hand glows with the color of the dampened Virtue.

Shatter 3: Burnout. Your Ratings for the two selected Virtues must be swapped. If they are the same Rating, you must choose a new Core Virtue instead.



CIRCLE STEP OF THE SPHERE (Logic + Logic)

Deep in the dimensions of mind explored by expert meditators, there is a place without boundaries or time. In this place, there is no movement, as all is suspended. The Skyborn Monks know this place well. *Circle Step of the Sphere* uses a reverse, circular stepping pattern to externalize this experience and impose timelessness within a 20-foot radius. Because this method distorts reality so brazenly, its use is restricted by certain laws. (In fact, the Crystal Wind Monastery considers this Chroma an abomination and will not knowingly tolerate its practice by their Monks.) No dissenting mind may be present within the circle, and your entire party must be within its boundaries.

Within the circle, nothing ages or degrades. The natural flow of physics stops: the flow of water, the blowing of the wind, the spinning of a top. Everything is as if frozen, although it may all be manipulated. Neither you nor your allies may leave the circle. Because the circle requires willing participants, generally only unconscious or otherwise incapacitated NPCs (victims, really) may be within the circle when it is created. You may not channel this Chroma if you have zero XP.

GM Note: Don't try to rationalize this ability or think about it logically. Just let it tell a good story. Time is stopped within the circle. Does the world continue outside the circle? Yes, of course. What if a river flows through the circle? Does the whole river stop moving? No, just let the stretch of water within the circle exist outside of time for a little bit. The fish are very confused.

Luminous: Spend one XP. Time stops within the circle for the equivalent of 10 minutes.
Radiant: Spend two XP. Time stops within the circle until the end of the scene or until you voluntarily end the effect. You may not channel any other Chroma while in the circle.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you may spend one XP to leave the circle, which will exist as a timeless bubble until the end of the story.

Shatter 1: You age the equivalent of 10 years.
Shatter 2: You are forever a step out of time. You're less speedy with witty remarks, and your reflexes sometimes suffer. During combat, regardless of the initiative result, you and your Hamanu companion must act last, after all other allies and opponents.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Something has gone disastrously wrong. When you and your allies emerge from the circle, you will eventually discover that your perception of time was catastrophically misjudged. The equivalent of 20 years has passed. This Shatter will probably end the current play session, as the GM will have to put a bit of work into determining what this seismic Shatter has done to your campaign. Manipulating time is not without its dangers!

COURAGE IN THE SNOW LION'S SHADOW (Vigor + Might)

The Snow Lion stands proudly on the sun-kissed ridge. Its mane is glorious, and its claws are deadly. Its bold display both inspires and terrifies. Its appearance is a duality worthy of contemplation, and the insight that arises imparts combat prowess. A Skyborn duo of Monk and Hamanu may infuse themselves with the essence and intent of the Snow Lion and manifest the beast's attributes in two bodies: one that encourages bravery, and one that punishes the insolent.

Luminous: Reduce the Spirit Point cost of the Rally Comrades maneuver by one for you, and the Spirit Point cost of the Intimidate Foe maneuver by one for your Hamanu companion, until the end of the combat.
Radiant: Reduce the Spirit Point cost of the Rally Comrades maneuver by one for you, and the Spirit Point cost of the Intimidate Foe maneuver by two for your Hamanu companion, until the end of the combat.
Brilliant: Reduce the Spirit Point cost of the Rally Comrades maneuver by two for you, and the Spirit Point cost of the Intimidate Foe maneuver by two for your Hamanu companion, until the end of the combat.

Shatter 1: You and your Hamanu companion both develop three scars along the brow. You develop them on the right side, and your Hamanu develops them on the left.
Shatter 2: In combat, the two of you become dependent on the flow of energy between you. If either of you wishes to spend Fury Points, the companion must have at least as many Fury Points as you wish to spend. The companion does not also spend the Fury Points, but must have them.
Shatter 3: Your Hamanu companion becomes the perfect symbol of valor in your eyes. If your companion dies, in addition to the standard disastrous effects, you may never perform the Rally Comrades maneuver again.

CRUSHING EMPTINESS (Compassion + Might)

Required Background: Void Shaman

The Void Shamans of Zenith are barely Monks, as commonly understood. Although most Monks hold philosophies that unify the manifest world with the emptiness that lies beyond it, the Void Shaman renounces form entirely. Seeking the annihilating void the way a crazed romantic pursues their lover, they come to understand the shadow of existence like the shape of that lover's face. As a Skyborn, you not only ecstatically embrace the void but can also wield it against your enemies as a weapon. You may channel *Crushing Emptiness* during combat, as an action, choosing an opponent to target.

Luminous: The target must reroll their next Test, using the worse of the two results.
Radiant: The target must win an Open Test (Inspiration vs. Mental). If they fail, they must

skip their next action.
Brilliant: The target must win an Open Test (Inspiration vs. Mental). If they fail, they suffer damage equal to the difference between the two results of the Open Test.

Shatter 1: All your hair turns white.
Shatter 2: Your bleak view of reality has reached the point that you can no longer experience casual happiness or joy. Others often avoid you in social circumstances or when times are hard.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your physical self instantly ages to the equivalent of 80 years old. You must lower your Might or Vigor Rating by one level. (If you choose Might, be sure to reduce your Health Track appropriately.) If both Virtues were already at D6, you die.

CUTTING WIND FORM (Logic + Vigor)

Required Background: Crystal Wind Adept

The wind, like suffering, comes from all directions. The torrents and gusts surround the Monk and also rise up from within. The Crystal Wind, the wind that soothes the enlightened masters, is the strongest wind. It is the unification of both inner and outer winds, and the Monk becomes the wind itself, capable of terrifying speed and the ability to scour the flesh and topple the unbalanced. *Cutting Wind Form* allows you to unite with the Crystal Wind and attack three targets at once, with deadly effect. As an action, you may channel this Chroma to prepare for future attacks.

Luminous: Until the end of this combat, you may split the damage you deal between up to three target opponents.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but each target opponent suffers one extra damage.
Brilliant: Same as Luminous, but each target opponent suffers two extra damage.

Shatter 1: When you stand in a gentle breeze or a strong wind, your appearance loses definition, the lines and contours of form becoming vague.
Shatter 2: When in confined spaces (e.g., narrow passageways, small rooms, deep caves), add one to the Spirit Die result for any Chroma Test involving Vigor or Might.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You have unintentionally become almost fully integrated with the element of air. Your body and belongings are solid, but of a flickering translucence, easily disturbed by a passing breeze.

DANCE OF FISTS (Logic + Might)

This Chroma finds its origins in the celebratory dance that honors the enthronement of the first Diamond Queen. In the dance, Monks and Hamanu use the lightning-fast movements of their hands to symbolize the all-encompassing nature of the Diamond Queen's understanding and inescapable enlightenment. Infused with spirit by Skyborn Monks, the dance becomes a

weapon that turns the Monk and their Hamanu companion into a single weapon — considerably more dangerous than two separate halves. You may channel *Dance of Fists* during combat, choosing one opponent to target.

Luminous: The target suffers one extra damage from your Hamanu companion's attacks until the end of the combat.
Radiant: The target suffers two extra damage from your Hamanu companion's attacks until the end of the combat.
Brilliant: The target suffers three extra damage from your Hamanu companion's attacks until the end of the combat.

Shatter 1: Your hair grows down to your feet and flows behind you when you fight, caught in an unfelt wind. If your hair is ever cut, it will grow back in full the next time you sleep.
Shatter 2: During combat, your ears fill with the blaring drums and chants of the ancient enthronement celebration. You and your Hamanu cannot hear each other during combat.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Every night, you dream, reliving the worst part of the Rite of the Diamond Mirror and the terrors of the Silver Precipice. Having felt so alone, and then receiving the balm that is the bond with your Hamanu companion, you desire to never feel so isolated again. If your Hamanu companion is killed, you too will die, though perhaps not instantly. You and the GM should work to make it a suitably dramatic moment.

FIRM EARTH INTEGRATION (Wisdom + Might)

Required Background: Silent Stone Groundshaker

"My posture is as firm as stone, and each breath is a cold wind across the mountainside; though the winds move swiftly about and within me, I shall not be moved." Or so goes the meditation litany of the Silent Stone Groundshakers. So integrated with the element of earth are they that they absorb its metaphorical posture and intent. When you channel *Firm Earth Integration*, you go one step further, drawing upon the power of stone deep within yourself to perform the mountain miracles attributed to the legendary founder of your order. The effects last until the end of the combat or scene.

Luminous: You become immovable, unable to be knocked prone or carried off.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, and reduce all damage you suffer by one.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, and all Brawl damage that you deal is increased by one.

Shatter 1: You no longer leave footprints in the earth.
Shatter 2: You always leave a residue or sediment in your wake. In the mornings, your bed has sand in it. When you replace a teacup, there are dirty fingerprints upon it as if you had been working in a garden. Your boots track mud upon tiles and rugs.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You become one with the landscape, permanently bonded to the

earth. Though you will remain conscious for some time, you soon lose the ability to speak. As the cycles pass, you will slowly become less of a being and more of a stony feature of the landscape, a rocky sculpture of your former self. Your journey ends here. Future generations of Zenith monastics will lay flowers and candles at the base of your transformed existence.



KETTLE OF WARMTH (Wisdom + Vigor)

Hospitality is important on Zenith. Weary travelers can find shelter from the storm in a monastery or household. A campfire in the wilds of Zenith can be safely approached with confidence. So it is that Skyborn Monks can heat the inward crucible and fill those around them with the feeling and comfort of warm tea in a safe home — even when exposed to some of Zenith's most hostile conditions. You may only channel *Kettle of Warmth* in non-combat situations, where dangerously cold weather conditions, or the lack of food or water, are an immediate threat.

Luminous: You and your allies may reroll failed Hazard Tests involving cold, hunger, or thirst. This effect lasts until the end of the scene.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but if any member of your party runs out of Spirit Points while fading, they will not die. This effect lasts until the end of the scene.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you and your allies may each gain one Spirit Point.

Shatter 1: You always smile earnestly, even under the worst circumstances.
Shatter 2: As you miss the camaraderie of a circle of friends sharing warmth around a fire, when traveling alone or with only your Hamanu companion, you must reroll successes on environmental Hazard Tests

and keep the new results.
Shatter 3: Burnout. From now on, when you channel Chroma, the Spirit Point cost is increased by one if you are not outdoors.

KNOWING WITHOUT KNOWING (Wisdom + Logic)

Required Background: Novice of the Monastery

The mind of the beginner is like generative void — although it is inherently empty, it is full with the potential of all possible knowledge. When the unskilled novice is confronted with a task for which they have had no education or instruction, they can center themself and allow all preconceptions to fade. And within that cool pool of stillness, a fresh potential arises, allowing them to act where previously they would have stood idly by. As an action, you may channel *Knowing Without Knowing* to bolster an Untrained Skill.

Luminous: You may roll 2d6 when using the Untrained Skill.
Radiant: You may treat your Rating in the Untrained Skill as D6.
Brilliant: You may treat your Rating in the Untrained Skill as D8.

Shatter 1: Having tapped into the Overlight for Wisdom, you return with the wrong tool for the task. Instead of whatever Skill you were attempting to use, you instead must use the Skill which seems like the worst solution. For example, if you were attempting to use Machinery to repair a delicate bit of technology, you instead must use Brawl to force the machine to work, probably breaking it.
Shatter 2: You become visibly aggravated and competitive whenever you see someone else who is competent at your selected Untrained Skill. You are jealous to the point of anger.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your meditation sphere cracks and becomes useless. You may not gain another, and the one you have is no longer considered a Valuable. It serves as a sign to other Monks that you have failed some crucial element of your path.

NEVER GRASPING METHOD (Wisdom + Vigor)

Required Background: Cave Yogi

There are some Zenith Monks who, once initiated, choose to spend their time developing their discipline in isolation. And so it is that the Cave Yogis find their mountain shelters and, with naught but scant food, a bowl of melted snow, and the warmth of their threadbare robes, establish their practice. Most Cave Yogis develop a strict regimen of rationing food and constant meditation in order to reduce the amount of actual sleep and sustenance that they require. Skyborn Cave Yogis, however, rely on the miracle of the *Never Grasping Method*. This allows them to

become resistant to some of the most dangerous conditions that Zenith's climate can impose.

Luminous: The next time you suffer damage from an environmental Hazard, you may reduce the damage by one. If you roll "1" on the Spirit Die during the Hazard Test, the effect of this Chroma dissipates. Otherwise, it lasts until the end of the scene.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you no longer require food or sleep. The effect lasts until the end of the scene.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you no longer have to breathe.

Shatter 1: Your skin takes on a grayish hue and becomes ashy and cracked in places, as if made of stone.
Shatter 2: Your metabolism and bodily functions have entered a state of semi-hibernation. When you perform Perception Tests, you must replace one Skill die with a d6.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You either grow a thick mantle of fur and become immune to the cold -OR- you lose all body hair and become immune to extreme heat (but not fire).

OATH OF SILENCE (Will + Will)

All techniques of the Zenith Order Monks are, ultimately, pointed at the perfection of meditation. There are Skyborn meditators who have come to completely rule their physical bodies, integrated as they are with boundless silence — so much so that they have learned to project it outwardly. *Oath of Silence* allows you to access a variety of abilities created by a mastery of silence itself. The success level of your Chroma Test will dictate how many times you may tap into these abilities in a given scene.

Once you have channeled this Chroma, you (the player, and by extension, your character) must remain silent until the end of the scene. You cannot make noises, speak words, or otherwise generate any sound with your mouth. You are free to interact and participate with the group in all other ways. If you make any noise at all, the Chroma effect dissipates and you experience a Shatter.

Oath of Silence abilities:

- You automatically succeed at any stealth-based Skill Test.
- One target character or beast cannot hear anything except normal, expected background noise until the end of the scene.
- You project a deep, inner silence that gives one target character an unsettling feeling. They automatically lose one Open Test using Mental Dice.

Luminous: You may use any *Oath of Silence* ability once during this scene.
Radiant: You may use *Oath of Silence* abilities twice during this scene. This can be the same ability twice or two difference abilities once each.
Brilliant: You may use *Oath of Silence* abilities three times during this scene. These three uses can be any combination of the available abilities.

Shatter 1: There is an imbalance between your ongoing commitments and your vows of uttermost silence. To help maintain your spiritual equilibrium, you take an oath which requires you to go barefoot at all times.
Shatter 2: You may now only speak in soft tones, with a thoughtful and even voice. You may not raise your voice or yell under any circumstances.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Any sound that you create, either generated by your own body or caused by your actions, turns into a flash of light, with an intensity directly proportional to the volume of the sound.

PERFECT VOW (Compassion + Will)

The taking of vows is a prerequisite for all initiations of every single Zenith Order. Although every monastery and every path of practice has different vows, the expectation is that they are upheld without compromise. In most cases, a vow is sustained by the will and good effort of the vow holder. However, when a Skyborn Monk imposes a *Perfect Vow* by consecrating the oath with spirit, that vow's violation invites catastrophe.

When any character makes a proclamation about their future actions, you may channel *Perfect Vow*, using the power of the Overlight to bind them to their words. Examples of such proclamations might be "I will not kill," "I will rescue my daughter," "I will avenge my master," and "I will not lie." The effects of the Chroma apply to one single task or prohibition. The vow holder cannot be compelled to uphold the vow and is completely ignorant of the *Perfect Vow*'s effects on them unless you tell them outright.

It is considered incredibly bad form to use this Chroma on Hamanu or your fellow Zenith Order Monks. To do so, you must spend two extra Spirit Points. You may never use *Perfect Vow* on your bonded Hamanu companion.

Luminous: If the vow holder breaks their vow, they lose all their worldly possessions. If the vow holder is an NPC, the GM must adjust the story to reflect this event. If the vow holder is a PC, their Wealth Pool is reduced to zero.
Radiant: If the vow holder breaks their vow, they may never have children or take lovers.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but if the vow holder breaks their vow, they also suffer damage equal to your current Spirit Pool.

Shatter 1: The Zenith Orders' sigil of balance, a design with three vertical yellow lines, appears on the palms of your hands.
Shatter 2: You now carry the title of Brother-Judge, and other Zenith Order Monks have great respect for you. Whenever you or your Hamanu companion attempt something duplicitous or scheming, opponents increase their highest die result by four during any Open Test using Mental Dice.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Too zealously have you played your role in the destinies of others. You and your Hamanu companion immediately suffer the broken vow effects of the Brilliant

success level. You may never accumulate Wealth Points or increase your Wealth Rating. You wear rags, and the sigil on your palms transforms into the Zenith Orders' sigil of transgression, depicted as three horizontal black lines.

SPIRAL STANCE (Logic + Might)

A straight line between two points is not always the best plan. Sometimes cunning must replace aggression, and precision is more important than destruction. The wide circulate movements of the *Spiral Stance* are deceptively effective, as they seek to undermine the opponent rather than slay them. Monks who know of this Chroma's existence see it as the mark of a preternaturally peaceful mind. You may channel *Spiral Stance* immediately after you make a successful melee attack, and the effects are considered simultaneous.

Luminous: The target must attack you with their next action.
Radiant: The target (and one other opponent, if you so choose) can only attack you until the end of the combat.
Brilliant: The target must win an Open Test (Brawl vs. Physical). If they fail, they are knocked unconscious until the end of the combat. If you attack or allow your allies to harm the unconscious target, you lose three Spirit Points.

Shatter 1: A wash of spiral patterns dances over your flesh, occasionally dissipating only to fade back into visibility on a different area of the body.
Shatter 2: If you intentionally kill an opponent, you lose two Spirit Points.
Shatter 3: Having integrated your least violent methods into the fabric of your being, you now always deal one less damage with your attacks. On the upside, the combat maneuvers Challenge Foe, Full Defense, and Outmaneuver all cost you one less Spirit Point. (Yes, that means Full Defense costs zero.)

UNFLAPPABLE HERALD'S SECRET (Will + Will)

Required Background: Emissary of the Queen

The mind is boundless. Outwardly, the body and the world have their limits, but the consciousness that permeates all perceptions is endless and treacherous to navigate. Heralds who serve the Diamond Queen are often given missives that simply cannot fall into the wrong hands. With this Chroma, a remote and mysterious island is established somewhere within the infinite sea of the mind. On that island, the information is kept protected and cannot be accessed by any except the one who sent the message and the one for whom it is intended. When you channel *Unflappable Herald's Secret*, you are locking away a secret message in your mind, safe from practically every attempt to

extract it. You may only speak the details of the message to its intended recipient.

Luminous: You can convincingly lie about the details or existence of the information.
Radiant: The information is secured in your mind until the end of the story and cannot be unwillingly extracted or willingly shared through any means other than Chroma.
Brilliant: The information is permanently secured in your mind and cannot be unwillingly extracted or willingly shared through coercion, torture, Chroma, or any other means.

Shatter 1: You permanently forget a common but inessential fact about yourself (e.g., your age, mother's name, ex-lover's name, or least favorite food).
Shatter 2: Your right eye turns metallic gold — iris, pupil, and all. A close examination will reveal layer upon layer of golden script written across the surface of your eyeball.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You have irrevocably altered your neural pathways and forever blocked access to a particular skillset. The GM should select a Skill, somehow related to the information you are attempting to hide. Your Rating in that Skill is reduced to Untrained and can never be upgraded or even temporarily raised.

HAMANU CHROMA

AWARENESS OF THE UNSEEN (Will + Will)

Required Background: Scion of Stone

The Scions of Stone, who are the silent sentinels on the boundaries of the most important Hamanu ritual gatherings, have learned to see things that are often beyond the sight of others. Their eyes and inner senses can detect trouble with an eerie accuracy. You may channel *Awareness of the Unseen* any time you are attempting to see an individual who may be hiding from you, even if they are using subterfuge to do so in plain sight. The effect is not ongoing, lasting only long enough for you to quickly examine your surroundings.

Luminous: You automatically become aware of anyone who is hiding in your immediate vicinity, provided they are using normal, non-Overlight means.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you can also detect anyone using Overlight-powered stealth or obfuscation.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but the range of your awareness extends as far as you can see in all directions. With a successful Insight Test, you may also determine which Virtue (if any) an individual reveres above others.

Shatter 1: You develop a bit of paranoia, and you see danger everywhere. The GM should work to occasionally give you "funny feelings" about situations, and reward them just often enough to

keep you guessing.
Shatter 2: You can now see perfectly in even the darkest of conditions. The skin of your face becomes gaunt and takes on a deathly pallor.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You are now able to perceive voices and bodies in the Overlight, echoes left behind by violent or emotionally charged deaths. You might call these echoes "ghosts." We leave it to the GM's discretion to determine the exact nature of these ghosts and how they interact with the Overlight. We have no immediate plans to establish ghosts as part of the canon setting, so we leave some white space for the GM to explore.

BONDS ALWAYS GUIDING (Compassion + Will)

The connection between a Hamanu and their Monk companion is a powerful thing. It is so strong that the Hamanu not only feels emotionally bolstered by their companion's presence, but also can literally become strengthened by it, through use of Chroma. As long as your Monk companion is present, you may channel *Bonds Always Guiding* to gain bonuses to select Virtues.

Luminous: If your Monk companion is uninjured (no wounds of any sort), you may raise one Might or Vigor die by one level for your next Test. In combat, this bonus applies to all Tests until the end of the combat or until your Monk companion suffers damage.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but instead of raising Might or Vigor, you may instead replace your Might or Vigor dice with your Monk companion's Wisdom dice.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you choose one of two options: Raise two of your Might or Vigor dice by two levels, regardless of your Monk companion's wounds, -OR- your Monk companion may forgo their action in combat to allow you to replace your Virtue *and* Skill dice with their Wisdom dice.

Shatter 1: Your snout becomes striped in bright yellow, red, and turquoise.
Shatter 2: You have come to rely upon your Monk companion perhaps too much. Upgrading your Vigor and Might Ratings costs one extra XP.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your Monk companion has been weakened through constantly channeling their strength to you. They must permanently reduce their Might Rating by one level. If their Might Rating is only D6, they die.

BONDS NEVER BREAKING (Wisdom + Compassion)

So strong is the bond between you and your Monk companion that you can create Overlight links that allow you to accept the burdens of pain and physical violence for each other. You may channel *Bonds Never Breaking*, as an action, at any time during combat.

Luminous: Until the end of this combat, whenever your Monk companion suffers damage, you may suffer the damage instead.

Radiant: Same as Luminous, but your Monk companion may also suffer damage for you.
Brilliant: Whenever either you or your Monk companion suffers damage, the two of you may divide the damage between you however you wish.

Shatter 1: You become verbally combative any time that your Monk companion is threatened in a social situation.

Shatter 2: Your Health Track is permanently reduced by one, and your Monk companion's Health Track is permanently increased by one.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Select a Shatter that your Monk companion has experienced during their journeys. You now experience that Shatter as well. If your Monk companion has not yet experienced any Shatter, instead experience a third-level Shatter (from among their chosen Chroma) at random.

DESCENDANT OF KINGS (Wisdom + Will)

The Hamanu are a storied and noble Folk, whose history stretches back to the height of the Teryxian empire. Though it has been generations since any of your kind have set foot in the Lost Golden City of the First Hamanu Kings, that lineage still runs strong in your veins. By channeling *Descendant of Kings*, you can call upon that pedigree, frightening your opponents — whether in a social situation or in a combat encounter — with a visible aura containing the boundless Wisdom of ages.

Luminous: In non-combat situations, you may raise your Skill dice by one level for your next Test that involves negotiating or otherwise trying to convince or inspire others to a course of action or point of view. In combat, one target opponent must add d10s instead of d12s when spending Zeal to add dice.
Radiant: In non-combat situations, same as Luminous, but you may raise your Skill dice by two levels instead. In combat, same as Luminous, and the target opponent must also reduce their Physical Dice by one.
Brilliant: In non-combat situations, same as Radiant, but the bonus lasts until the end of the scene, and your very next Test automatically achieves a Brilliant success. In combat, same as Radiant, but the target opponent must add d8s when spending Zeal to add dice.

Shatter 1: You lose some of your ape-like posture, standing taller and more erect. To some, this can be oddly intimidating.
Shatter 2: A radiant halo or aureole, resplendent in shining tines of purples and reds, illuminates your head.
Shatter 3: Burnout. The call of the mountains is strong. It is your utmost desire to return to Zenith to live out your days. This call supersedes even your calling as a Skyborn, and you wish to return to your mountain home so you can contribute to the lands and community of your birth. How this sits with your Monk companion is a matter which will bear some discussion or role-playing. At the very least, you must discuss with the GM your ultimate plans and how you will give up the life of a wandering Skyborn and return to Zenith. Maybe your

group's entire campaign shifts focus to Zenith, or maybe it is time for this character to retire. If you wish, you may change your Core Virtue to Wisdom.

FOLK OF THE MOUNTAINS (Wisdom + Vigor)

The Hamanu are at home in conditions that other Folk would find unwelcoming, if not downright deadly: icy footing, strong winds, and narrow rock ledges over precipitous drops. Some Skyborn among the Hamanu have learned to use the Overlight to bolster their already impressive natural abilities when climbing and leaping.

Luminous: For all Athletics Tests that involve climbing or leaping, you may add one success. This effect lasts until the end of the scene.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may perform Athletics Tests for feats that would otherwise be impossible.
Brilliant: For all Athletics Tests that involve climbing or leaping, you automatically succeed. This effect lasts until the end of the scene.

Shatter 1: You are compelled to have the literal high ground in social situations.
Shatter 2: When fighting in mountainous or rocky terrain, you begin combat with two Fury Points. When not in mountainous or rocky terrain, all combat maneuvers cost you one extra Spirit Point.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your connection to the mountains has eroded, and you no longer feel comfortable in the terrain that you were raised in. Against all odds, you feel an unmistakable pull toward an environment that is quite alien to your nature. Select one of the following: Folk of the Woods, Folk of the Waters, Folk of the Bricks, or Folk of the Grass. The effects of your previous two Shatters should now be adapted to thematically match this new "Folk." (If you have burned out both *Folk of the Mountains* and *Descendant of Kings*, life could get very complicated for you!)

A HISTORY OF FRIENDSHIP (Wisdom + Wisdom)

The rigors of a life spent journeying across the shards can test even the strongest of friendships. The Hamanu culture is in large part based on a rich and storied tradition of supporting and defending those who cannot defend themselves — both against the elements and against unforgiving foes. One frequently forgotten aspect of the Hamanu is their light-hearted ability to remain cheerful in even the direst of circumstances. When faced with insurmountable odds, it is a rare Hamanu who does not speak up and offer some tidbit of wisdom or tale of steadfast companionship to lift the spirits of their friends. Your Monk companion may not benefit from *A History of Friendship* in any way.

Luminous: You lift the spirits of your allies by

retelling a humorous anecdote from the annals of your Folk. One ally may gain two Spirit Points.
Radiant: You retell a tale of courage involving a Hamanu and a Zenith Order Monk, where only their bonds of friendship and love were able to get them through some difficult encounter. Two allies may each gain two Spirit Points.
Brilliant: You regale the group with an epic from the oldest histories of your Folk. All of your allies may each gain two Spirit Points.

Shatter 1: Although your allies do not notice, you have exhausted yourself with the effort of lifting the others. Neither you nor your Monk companion may spend Spirit Points until the end of the scene.
Shatter 2: You manage to bungle the telling of your tale and somehow offend your friends. One ally gains the Spirit Point bonus, but your other allies each lose one Spirit Point. If any ally did not have one Spirit Point to lose, they must skip their next action, if in combat.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You develop an unnatural hatred for the Folk of one of your allies.

HOPE OF YOUTH (Compassion + Compassion)

Required Background: Natural Bond-Mate

You were born with an open heart, and early in life the strength of your bond with your Monk companion was indicative of just how open. Even now, a lifetime later, you still find it easy to spiritually support the desires and dreams of those you are close to. You may channel *Hope of Youth* at any time, even in response to something another character does. When you do, one or more allies (which may not include your Monk companion) will benefit.

Luminous: You may spend Spirit Points on behalf of one ally until the end of this combat or scene. If you do, you must pay the entire amount for a given expenditure, and you may not reduce your Spirit Pool to zero while doing so.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may spend Spirit Points on behalf of all allies until the end of this combat or scene. You may also spend Fury Points in this way.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you may choose to spend more Spirit Points than you have in your Spirit Pool. If you do, you immediately experience a Shatter: this will be the Shatter for *Hope of Youth* or, if you were spending Spirit Points on behalf of an ally's Chroma Test, a Shatter for the Chroma they were channeling. The ally does not register or suffer from the effects of their Shatter, but you do.

Shatter 1: Your bonds with your circle of Skyborn friends are so intense that, if any of your allies is killed, you must immediately reduce your Spirit Pool to zero.
Shatter 2: This channeling fails, and the target ally suffers a Dramatic Wound.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your bonds with your extended circle of friends have strained your bond with your Monk companion. You break the Rite of the Diamond Mirror, and you and your Monk companion must each halve your

Spirit Pool and cap it as if one of you had died. The two of you are no longer bonded in any way. Other Hamanu will be able to tell what you have done with a simple glance. Your kind will view you with a mixture of pity and disgust for the rest of your life.

INVOCATION OF THE ANCESTORS (Wisdom + Vigor)

Required Background: Wrathful Embodiment

Invoking the names of the great Guardian Demons from the myth cycles of Zenith, you embolden your fighting allies with an unearthly scream and a burst of flame-like red energy, which licks about your fists and weapons. *Invocation of the Ancestors* drives the adrenaline of your allies as they fight alongside you in combat.

Luminous: One of your allies may gain two Fury Points.
Radiant: One of your allies may gain three Fury Points.
Brilliant: All of your allies may each gain two Fury Points.

Shatter 1: Your fur turns a bright, scarlet red.
Shatter 2: You grow a pair of curved, ridged horns from your brow, and your canine teeth become even more enlarged than is normal for your Folk.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You sprout a second pair of arms, looking for all the world like one of the four-armed red Guardian Demons from Zenith legends. It is exceedingly difficult for those not from Zenith to think of you as anything other than a monster. You may gain one Fury Point at the start of each combat.

PATTERN OF MANIFESTATION (Logic + Will)

Required Background: Master of Elements

From the void comes substance. All things born of substance arise and dissolve, in an unbroken cycle. Hamanu Skyborn who choose the Master of Elements path have been instructed in the earliest alchemical methods of their ancestors. They have the power to create and destroy the forms of substance. The secret of this Chroma is fiercely guarded. To discuss its philosophy with those who are not of the Zenith Orders or Hamanu is considered dreadful form. When you channel *Pattern of Manifestation*, your level of success determines the degree to which you can manipulate matter — it is easier to create a substance than to destroy it. This Chroma cannot be used during combat. You cannot manipulate valuable substances (those that would qualify as an increase in wealth), Zenith crystals, or anything that is alive or that has moving parts.

Luminous: You can create one cubic foot of any common, unrefined substance (e.g., sand, water, stone, fog, etc.).
Radiant: You can create or destroy one cubic

foot of any common, unrefined substance.
Brilliant: You can create or destroy three cubic feet of any common, unrefined substance.

Shatter 1: You may never willingly douse a flame.
Shatter 2: You must immerse your head in water when you wake from sleeping.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your inner essence plummets backward through space and time and connects you to the first clash of elemental forces at the very beginning of the world. You now suffer one extra damage from extreme heat or extreme cold, as you forever feel the birth pains of the world before.

STORMCALL (Logic + Vigor)

Required Background: Stormchanter

The Hamanu Stormchanters do far more than just honor the storm. They can summon the tempest's lightning to strike with devastating effect. You may channel *Stormcall* anywhere under the open sky.

Luminous: All beings in the immediate vicinity (friend and foe alike) suffer one damage and are totally deafened until the end of the combat or scene.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but one target opponent is stunned and must skip their next action.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but the target opponent is hit by a lightning bolt. Roll 8d12 as if for a Combat Test (include the Spirit Die). Count successes as normal, but divide them as evenly as possible into two groups: one for you and one for the target. Then, move dice equal to the Spirit Die result from your group to theirs. You and the target each suffer two damage for every die in your respective group. You may spend extra Spirit Points to move extra dice from your group to theirs (one Spirit Point per die), but this counts as part of the Spirit Point cost of channeling the Chroma, so it will cause a Shatter if you exceed your Spirit Pool.

Shatter 1: You smell of ozone.
Shatter 2: Touching or handling metal objects causes you pain.
Shatter 3: Burnout. The surfaces of your eyes dance with the crackle of lightning. You can detect storms and rain from far away.

STRENGTH OF THE TROUPE (Vigor + Might)

While it is true that the Hamanu are known across the Seven for their unique bonds with the Zenith Orders, it is often forgotten just how strong the ties of culture can be among all Hamanu. The Iron Hamanu notwithstanding, there is a fellowship that exists among the Hamanu, and they are more likely to support each other when Folk who are not of their shard are present. In any social situation where both Hamanu and other Folk are present, you may channel *Strength of the Troupe* to cause all other Hamanu present to vocally support your position. It does not matter if you are familiar with these individuals or have even ever met them before.

Luminous: Provided your goals are not especially unusual or bizarre, the other Hamanu will support you with quiet words or grunts of approval.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the other Hamanu will speak on your behalf or even offer arguments of their own toward your goals. If you succeed at a Persuasion Test, the other Hamanu will support you even if your goals are rather strange or unorthodox.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but all Hamanu who are nearby (the equivalent of half a day's journey away) will come in your direction, seeking their troupe mate who needs the support of the community.

Shatter 1: In social situations when you do not use this Chroma, you feel obligated to defer to other Hamanu.
Shatter 2: The channeling fails. Instead, the other Hamanu vocally reject your position.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your perceptions of the Hamanu role in the world become irrevocably skewed, and you find your hunger sated with nothing short of the flesh of humans or your fellow Hamanu. In time, you will seek out the companionship of the Iron Hamanu, forsaking the Rite of the Diamond Mirror and joining the flesh-eaters in their hidden places on Zenith. Your Monk companion must treat the situation as if you had died, including all of the negative fallout from that circumstance.



TUNNEL HUNTER (Wisdom + Might)

Required Background: Kir-oi Slayer

Trained from birth to hunt the Kir-oi in the tunnels beneath the ice of Zenith, you know a few carefully guarded tricks. You may channel *Tunnel Hunter* to grievously harm those who would hide from the Overlight.

Luminous: When fighting Yamari, Grymalkyn, or members of the Unlighter cult, you may deal two extra damage with each successful attack.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, and when fighting underground or in a cave, you may deal two extra damage with each successful attack. These damage bonuses are cumulative.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, and when fighting under the shadow, you may deal two extra damage with each successful attack. These damage bonuses are cumulative.

Shatter 1: Your forehead splits open to reveal a third eye, which glows with a violet virulence whenever you are fighting Yamari, Grymalkyn, or members of the Unlighter cult.
Shatter 2: In the darkness, your footprints momentarily glow purple.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your entire being glows a bright, angry purple. Only slightly noticeable in the brightness of the Overlight, it is weirdly painful to look at in the dark.

WITH HAND OUTSTRETCHED (Wisdom + Compassion)

With so much of Hamanu culture centered around their unique ties to the Zenith Order monasteries, known for their hospitality, it is perhaps not surprising that some Hamanu Skyborn can use Chroma to make lasting bonds with those they meet on their journeys. You may channel *With Hand Outstretched* whenever you meet an NPC for the first time, but the effects only work if you shake their hand in greeting. This cannot compel that character against their will; it is simply a use of the Overlight to bolster an already friendly, or at least neutral, first impression.

Luminous: The NPC will fondly remember this encounter as one where they forged important new friendships.
Radiant: The NPC will remember you by name as a kind individual, and will greet you as a beloved friend if you ever meet again.
Brilliant: The NPC is overcome with emotion, as if they have been waiting for you for their entire life. If you win an Open Test (Inspiration vs. Mental), the NPC offers to join the party as a pilgrim, devoted to the Skyborn Order or some other goal.

Shatter 1: When you shake hands, you always convey a sense of warmth and welcome.
Shatter 2: For every action, an equal and opposite reaction. Somewhere out there in the world, you have gained a lifelong enemy. This may be someone you have encountered before or someone completely unbeknownst to you.

But this individual carries a grudge or hatred toward you specifically.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Once they become aware of your existence, the Iron Hamanu determine that you must be eliminated, as an avatar of all that is wrong with your Folk. This should shape the future of your character and of the group's campaign.

TERYXIAN CHROMA

BALEFUL FLIGHT (Vigor + Might)

Given enough height and distance, some Teryxians can make long-range dive bombs to strike at prey upon the ground. You have learned to almost slide through rays of Overlight to slam your talons into a target at astonishing speed. Although *Baleful Flight* cannot be used during combat, it may be used in lieu of an initiative roll, if the GM deems the situation appropriate (i.e., your opponents have not yet noticed you, and you have ample room for a dive-bomb attack). Effectively, this Chroma works like an ambush, potentially boosting your initiative roll and giving you an augmented attack to begin the combat. You can also use it when you wish to grab an item with alarming alacrity.

Luminous: Perform an initiative roll using Windlore (Vigor). If you win the initiative, you may immediately attack using Windlore (Vigor), as you strike an unsuspecting target.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may use either Windlore (Vigor) or Windlore (Might) for the initiative roll and the attack. In addition, you may raise one of your Windlore dice by one level for both rolls.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you automatically win the initiative.

Shatter 1: You miss your target and land poorly. Ignore the results of your roll and instead perform a Hazard Test (Falling D10 vs. Athletics).
Shatter 2: You have misjudged your approach and slid into a space *between* the rays of light, finding yourself in a half-lit world haunted by indecipherable murmurs. You miss your target and lose the initiative for your party. You cannot participate in the combat, as you must find your way back to normal perceptions. From now on, you become irrationally paranoid when under the shadow, hearing phantom whispers.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You no longer cast a shadow, and you must remove one die from all future Chroma Tests.

BEAST TETHER (Logic + Compassion)

Required Background: Brood Master

You form a temporary Overlight bond with the mind of a beast in an attempt to experience its senses. In order to channel *Beast Tether*, you must be in physical contact with the beast.

Luminous: You can see what the beast sees. The bond lasts as long as you concentrate on maintaining it. You cannot take any actions with your own body, and you have no control over the actions of the beast. During this time, you remain fully focused on the experiences of the beast, and you lose touch with your own senses.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you can also hear what the beast hears.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you can also smell what the beast smells. With a successful Open Test (Beastways (Will) vs. Mental), you may subtly influence the beast's actions, provided you do not make the beast put itself in harm's way or otherwise act in a manner that would be outside its normal behavior.

Shatter 1: Your nights become filled with visions and dreams of bestial reveries, reliving the experiences you had, or might have, if you were to live your life as that beast.
Shatter 2: Your mind and memories start to become muddled and confused. You develop an extreme phobia of the beast to which you were bonded, believing that they can, in turn, see into your mind and use your senses.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You become lost in the mind of the beast. If the beast you have bonded to is large (e.g., a Mist-Ray or Shovel-Tusk), your mind is lost, existing only as a memory within the senses of the beast. If the beast is smaller (e.g., a Chain Rat or Honey-Licker), your mind overpowers the beast's mind, and you live out your existence in that new form. Effectively, you become an NPC with no Skyborn abilities and no will to be anything but a beast. You're *in there* somewhere, but you will slowly fade with time. At the GM's discretion, you may become an ally of the Skyborn party, but only as an NPC. Your old body will wither and fade, an empty husk without a spirit inside.

GREENBANE (Will + Might)

Required Background: Outlander

Long cycles spent fighting the Banyari on their home shard have resulted in the Outlanders developing abilities which can be used outright as weapons, despite whatever function they might have had at one time. As an Outlander, you can funnel the Overlight through the living tissue of plants in a way that causes them to wither and die. Usually used simply as a means of removing foliage to deny an opponent the benefit of its cover, *Greenbane* can sometimes fatally weaken trees or cause an entire swath of forest to cease growing.

There is nothing, other than your conscience,

to prevent you from using this Chroma as an offensive weapon against a Banyari. In this case, ignore the success levels below and each success deals one damage instead. Using *Greenbane* in this way is akin to a war crime, and any reasonable person witnessing it would view you with great disdain.

Luminous: The leaves of a nearby patch of vegetation (e.g., a grouping of shrubs, a hedge, some ivy, a small tree) wither and shrivel, revealing anything that might be hiding therein.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the plant life is irrevocably weakened and will never quite recover. Small, non-woody plants will die immediately, while trees and shrubs will appear sickly and weak in future cycles.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but not only do the leaves or needles immediately fall off the plants, the plants themselves blacken and die before your eyes. The area of effect increases dramatically, and nearby plant life is killed off also. Grass dies, plants wilt, fruit spoils.

Shatter 1: Though the effect is subtle, anyone paying close attention may notice that leaves and plants will slowly lean away from you when you are near. If there is a nest or perch that you regularly occupy, it will not be long before no evidence of plant growth can be found there — not grass nor moss nor weed.

Shatter 2: You can no longer handle wooden items without them slowly rotting in your talons. You can't perch on a wooden chair or tree branch for very long, lest it weaken and collapse beneath you. Weapons or tools that are made of wood must be replaced regularly.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your feathers fall out, only a shriveled and sorry few remaining. Your overall appearance is now like that of a plucked vulture, with leathery skin and cloudy eyes. This latter change may mean that you are no longer immediately recognizable as Skyborn. Banyari treat you as though infected with a horrible disease, for indeed your very presence is toxic to them. They will not touch you, they will sometimes become nauseated when you are close, and your continued existence is an affront to everything they hold dear.



IF YOU KNOW WHERE TO LOOK (Logic + Logic)

Required Background: Tutor

The members of the Tutor's Lodge of Quill claim to be able to remember vast amounts of information. And while this is certainly true, much of it is stored away in a subconscious

part of the mind, and only by manipulating the Overlight are the Tutors able to pull long-forgotten thoughts from the deep recesses of their memories. You may channel *If You Know Where to Look* when you wish to recall a trivial bit of information, whether scientific, cultural, or relating to another topic that could be mastered by book learning. If the situation is one in which the GM would require a Skill Test (such as Folklore or Machinery), then this Chroma must be used *before* the Test. The results of this Chroma may then bolster the Skill Test.

This Chroma is intended for knowledge-based Skill Tests only. It should in no way inform combat Skills, such as Blades — unless, of course, trying to ascertain the historical significance of a sword, or the way in which it was forged. This Chroma is distinct from the *Lords of the Last Spire* Gift of the Scholar-Priests. This Chroma should only be used to remember something that you might have conceivably come across in your studies, which do often extend to the other shards and their Folk. The Scholar-Priests, on the other hand, might have access to secrets that no person could reasonably expect them to know.

Luminous: You remember some vague details about the topic at hand. Before you perform the Skill Test, you may spend one Spirit Point to raise one of your Skill dice by one level.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may spend one Spirit Point to raise two of your Skill dice by one level.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you do not need to spend one Spirit Point.

Shatter 1: Your mind is not always focused on the here and now, sometimes getting lost in the deep memories of your teachings. When presented with a sudden and unexpected situation (such as combat), you must perform a Resolve Test. If you fail, you must spend one Spirit Point or else skip your next action.
Shatter 2: You are prone to squawking out unusual facts and data that have little, if anything, to do with the conversation or activity at hand.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your mind has become unhinged in time and space. As you age, more and more of your conscious mind is somewhere else, disconnected from the present. Memories of times past are in vivid color, while the present is like a dull, pale recollection. Any attempt to take decisive action requires a successful Resolve Test. Failure means that you cannot take the action, as you are instead lost in a reverie of the past. The GM may award you one Spirit Point if you role-play or describe the dreamlike memories that are filling your mind and keeping you from the task at hand.

INSECT EMPATHY (Logic + Compassion)

The Teryxians have used Jeweled Dragonflies as beasts of burden and flying mounts for generations. Of all the beasts that the denizens of Quill had carefully molded and bred to serve their purposes, only the huge Jeweled Dragonflies are still in regular use, due in no

small part to the ability many Teryxians have to forge short-lived Overlight bonds with the insects. Incidentally, it was also this ability that enabled the Teryxians to commit the unspeakable horrors upon the Banyari tribe known as the Worulthing. You may attempt to communicate with any insect by channeling *Insect Empathy*, reaching out through the Overlight to form a tenuous connection with that most alien of minds. The target may be a swarm of small insects or a single large insect.

Luminous: You succeed in encouraging a basic emotion or sensation in the target insect. For example, you may enrage a hive of stinging insects or calm a desperate Dazzling Butterfly which is trapped beneath a fallen tree.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may instead offer simple commands to the target insect if you win an Open Test (Beastways vs. Mental). The insect will fight for you if commanded to, but will not harm itself or fight to the death. This effect lasts until the end of the combat or scene.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but the target insect will obey your every command. In all instances, the insect does not communicate with you in any way.

Shatter 1: You grow a pair of antennae out the top of your head.
Shatter 2: Whenever you are near insects (which is almost everywhere), you are distracted by their near endless chittering, buzzing, and chirping — even if those sounds are not noticeable to others. For any Perception Test involving hearing, you must lower two of your Skill dice by one level.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your eyes grow into oversized compound eyes, like those of an insect. Your Perception Test penalty now applies to vision as well. Insects are instinctively attracted to you, and it is unusual to see you without some sort of butterfly, beetle, or swarm of flies zipping about your person.

OFFERINGS TO TZAHINTLI (Logic + Compassion)

Required Background: Scholar-Priest

When Teryxians are ritually sacrificed on Quill, their still-beating hearts are offered up to Cloud Serpents, the representatives of Tzahintli. The Scholar-Priests long ago created ways to channel the Overlight in a way that will summon Cloud Serpents to the temple platforms, like the ringing of a dinner bell. But dinner must be served. If you indeed have in hand the still-beating heart of a sentient living creature, you may channel *Offerings to Tzahintli* in an attempt to appease the Cloud Serpents, masters of the skies. This may only be done on the shards of Zenith, Quill, or Banyan, as the natural range of the Cloud Serpents does not extend beyond these areas.

Luminous: You summon up a blustery wind, which buffets the area until the end of the combat or scene.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the wind is much stronger, causing trees to sway violently

and birds to seek shelter. With a successful Windlore Test, you may actually control the strength and direction of the wind, lending power to sails or causing more specific results.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but a Cloud Serpent appears! The massive creature flies above the scene, seemingly summoned by the gales (or by you), creating panic and terror in those below. Despite some fear-inducing glances toward the ground, it does not actually interact with anything or anyone, content to undulate among the wind-swept clouds.

Shatter 1: You are afflicted with what seems to be bad luck. An ill wind always blows when you're around, and at the most inopportune times.
Shatter 2: A juvenile Cloud Serpent appears and attacks your party!
Shatter 3: Burnout. The ill wind that follows you around grows from just a humorous trifle to a quantifiable nuisance. When performing Skill Tests that might be affected by strong gusts of wind, you must lower your Windlore Rating by one level. Any allies who are using thrown or projectile weapons must replace one of their Skill dice with a d6.

PAROXYSM OF FEATHERS (Will + Might)

In the records of the Last Spire, there are few tales of great warriors among the Teryxians, but there is a story about a Teryxian captain called Ank-Ka-Nee. He once successfully dealt with an intoxicated Pyroi emissary who had turned savage and threatened an entire delegation of Scholar-Priests. Ank-Ka-Nee violently leapt at the Pyroi's face in a furious explosion of feathers and talons, distracting the great fellow long enough for the venerable Scholar-Priests to make their exit. To this day, there are some Teryxians who make use of this Chroma (sometimes called Ank-Ka-Nee's Assault) to distract and stupefy their opponents in battle. You may channel *Paroxysm of Feathers* in combat, choosing an opponent to target.

Luminous: Distracted by your display, the target must attack you with their next action and must reduce their Physical Dice by one.

Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the target must reduce their Physical Dice by three.
Brilliant: The target is dumbfounded and may only defend themself, without attacking anyone, for a number of combat rounds equal to the Spirit Die result plus one.

Shatter 1: Any opponent struck by a Brilliant success of *Paroxysm of Feathers* is left with bright, turquoise-colored talon scars upon their face. They will remember this encounter in great detail.
Shatter 2: Tiny feathers around your eyes turn blue and red, marking you as beloved by the Scholar-Priests. This can, depending on the audience, elicit a wide variety of responses.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Ank-Ka-Nee repeatedly proved he was willing to sacrifice himself for the Teryxian people. Provided this Chroma Test was successful, the target will attack you and you only until they are dead — or you are.

PATTERNS WITHIN PATTERNS (Wisdom + Logic)

The Teryxians believe that everything is a pattern, an equation to be deciphered, with meaning to be found within those complex sequences. They also believe that one can master one's anger and funnel it into willful intent, free from the adrenaline and hot emotions of rage.

Luminous: Until the end of the scene, you may spend Fury Points for any Chroma Test.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, and you may gain Fury Points equal to half of the Spirit Points (rounded up) that you spent to channel *Patterns Within Patterns*.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you may spend Fury Points for any Chroma Test until the end of the story.

Shatter 1: You have not yet mastered the balance of emotions that swirl within you, and your primal nature sometimes shines through, reminding you that Teryxians are predators, after all. Each time your Fury Pool reaches two or higher, your very next action in combat must be a regular melee attack.
Shatter 2: You find patterns in the strangest of places. Select a Skill for which your Rating is D8, then pick a number between one and five. Record the number, with an asterisk, next to the Skill's name on your character sheet. From now on, when you succeed at a Skill Test with that Skill, if the selected number shows up once and only once in the dice results, you may increase the level of success by one.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You develop a very strong case of apophenia, always looking for patterns and conspiracies. Select a second Skill and number, as with the previous Shatter. Except, in this case, when the selected number shows up once and only once in the dice results, the Skill Test automatically fails.

PRAYER TO TZAHINTLI (Wisdom + Vigor)

The Teryxians have been known to create a great shrieking cry when raising their beaks skyward in praise to their creator god, ofttimes fueling these invocations with Overlight and creating a kind of psychic call to prayer. Using these methods, some Teryxians can use a kind of limited telepathy.

Luminous: With a powerful cawing, you may communicate a short message to any allies within earshot. The wordless shriek imparts both emotional tenor and as much detail as could be communicated in a short, spoken message. It is indecipherable to all but your allies and other Teryxians.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the message can be conveyed to allies as far away as the equivalent of a day's travel (at normal walking speeds).
Brilliant: Same as Luminous, but the range of the message is extended to the entire shard and the skies surrounding it.

Shatter 1: The normal results of the channeling are ignored, as instead your piercingly loud caw serves to deafen everyone in the immediate vicinity, friend and foe alike. The GM should

determine what effects this has on gameplay, if any.
Shatter 2: Whenever landing from flight, no matter how gently or gracefully, you alight with a thunderous cracking sound. You won't be sneaking up on anyone in this manner ever again.
Shatter 3: Burnout. The ghostly apparition of a tiny Cloud Serpent is now your constant companion, weaving through the sky around your head and shoulders. This minute avatar of Tzahintli is incorporeal and does not interact with the world in any way, save one: it has the unfortunate habit of audibly echoing your inner dialogue in the most inopportune moments. To a bystander, this appears as though the little serpent is whispering your secret thoughts. You can only prevent this from happening by spending one Spirit Point and then achieving a Radiant success or better on a Beastways Test.

SEEKER'S SENSE (Wisdom + Wisdom)

Required Background: Ranger

With far-ranging duties in dark jungles and among the ruins of their fallen civilization, the Ranger's Lodge of Quill has great need for those with powerful observational skills. Once inducted into the lodge, many Rangers are taught techniques of the Overlight that afford them even greater awareness.

Luminous: You may automatically win initiative for the next combat.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, and you may replace two of your Perception dice with d12s until the end of the scene.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant. If you are in a forest, with a successful Beastways Test you can decipher the sounds of the animals to determine the presence of any predators or Folk. With greater levels of success on the Beastways Test, you may even be able to discern some preternatural information from the sounds that you hear.

Shatter 1: The naturally backward-sweeping feathers upon your head turn into extravagantly long tendrils, which wave behind you like the fronds of a plant or the tentacles of some deep-sea creature. They undulate, as if sensing what's going on around them, and frequently change color.
Shatter 2: Given the opportunity, beasts will attack you first in combat.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your senses are a jumbled mess, and you are afflicted with permanent synesthesia. From now on, your perceptions of the colors of the Overlight are always accompanied by a distinct smell, taste, sound, or tactile sensation.

SHARD OMEN* (Wisdom + Logic)

Required Background: Timekeeper

It is common knowledge that the Timekeepers are among the few beings across the Seven who truly understand the complicated patterns and movements of the shards. Lesser known but just

as common for them is the ability to augur, from within those movements, the actions and fates of various Folk and individuals. While many would argue with the veracity of the Timekeepers' predictions, some of their results are hard to dispute. The first time you channel *Shard Omen*, select an ally. Using the power of the Overlight, you then turn your own skyglass sextant into a Luminon which is attuned to the aura of that character. The skyglass still functions in all other ways, but through its lens you can see the possibilities of fate connected to that individual. The selected ally decides when to use the various threshold effects of the *Shard Omen*.

Point Bank: You only add points to your Point Bank by channeling *Shard Omen* again. You must have at least four Spirit Points when you do (i.e., you cannot experience a Shatter this way). Each time you do, add points to your Point Bank equal to the Spirit Die result. Any use of the *Shard Omen* reduces the Point Bank to zero.

Thresholds:
1–16: For any one Test, the ally may reroll the Spirit Die and keep either the original result or the new result.
17–29: For any one Chroma Test, the ally may reduce the Spirit Point cost to zero.
30+: The ally gains the *Harbinger of Destiny* Gift. Only one character in the campaign may ever gain this Gift. Once a character gains the Gift, the effects of the *Shard Omen* no longer apply. In addition, you (the Timekeeper) gain the *Shard Seer* Gift.

GIFT – Harbinger of Destiny
You have three destiny points. You may spend one destiny point on any Test to turn a Radiant success into a Brilliant success, or a Brilliant success into a Legendary success. When you have spent all three destiny points and achieved at least one Legendary success during your journeys, you gain a one-time ability to wrest narrative control from the GM in order to narrate the outcome of an event of your choice, with you at the center as some catalyst for change.

GIFT – Shard Seer
Your talons turn to a clear, crystalline material. During any Chroma Test, you may choose not to roll the Spirit Die and instead spend three Spirit Points.

SPLENDID PREENING (Logic + Vigor)

Required Background: Bluefeather

There comes a time in almost every Teryxian's life when they desire to appear more impressive than normal. Perhaps this is done to impress a mate, or maybe to gain favor with a superior. Bluefeathers long ago figured out a way to literally work the Overlight into their feathers to make them more lustrous. *Splendid Preening* allows you to pluck a single feather from your body and turn it into something truly wondrous. This Chroma is not intended as a way for you to save feathers as Valuables to be traded at a later time. The power may only be used in the moment, when you need a Valuable during a Wealth Test or when you wish to reward an individual in a special way. After all, no self-respecting Teryxian would pluck their own

feathers to fuel mere commerce!

Luminous: Spend one Spirit Point to transform a feather by bathing it in the Overlight. That feather now shines with an iridescent and unearthly glow, a veritable jewel desired for decoration or personal ornament. The feather may be treated as a Valuable. (If you do not have one Spirit Point to spend on the transformation, the Chroma Test fails.)
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you do not need to spend one Spirit Point.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant. Never has there been a feather so brilliant, so perfect an example of nature's beauty. The recipient of the feather will feel especially honored, as if you have given them a precious relic of the Teryxian Folk. If the exchange was more commercial in nature, the recipient will believe they got the much better end of the deal and will feel indebted to you, as if they owe you a favor. (Indeed, they do! The GM should make a note about this particular character.)
Shatter 1: The feather that you plucked grows back in a gleaming platinum color. It always manages to awkwardly catch the light and flare.
Shatter 2: Unbeknownst to you, something went wrong with the process. Sometime later, the feather that you plucked and traded away will rot and disintegrate, permanently staining cloth or flesh and drawing a cloud of bone flies. The recipient will view this as an abject betrayal and hold a grudge against you to the end of their natural life.
Shatter 3: Burnout. All of the gorgeous blue feathers on your body instead turn into a gaudy and flamboyant spectrum of colors. With reds and greens and purples and oranges, you become a veritable rainbow-colored bird. Other Teryxians now view you as vain and ostentatious or, even worse, trying to present yourself as above your station. In future dealings with other Teryxians, you must replace one of your Skill dice with a d6 for any Skill Test using Inspiration, Performance, or Persuasion.



TENACIOUS FLIGHT (Vigor + Might)

Packing lightly and carrying very little in the way of gear (to say nothing of clothing!) is a veritable Teryxian way of life. But there are times when a flighted being may wish to carry heavy objects or make a great pilgrimage. *Tenacious Flight* allows you to ride the Overlight in a near miraculous way.

Luminous: You can carry your own weight for

short distances, or fly for longer than is normally possible, an extraordinary act of endurance.
Radiant: You can perform great feats of flight which would seem to stretch the laws of physics: you can briefly carry heavy weights, fly for astounding distances, or stay aloft for incredibly lengthy periods of time.
Brilliant: You can briefly carry an impossibly heavy weight, or even fly to a neighboring shard.

Shatter 1: The channeling succeeds, but it takes a lot out of you. You suffer a Dramatic Wound and you may not fly again for the rest of the story.

Shatter 2: Your willingness to interact with those Folk who are tethered to the ground and incapable of flight deteriorates. The well-known arrogance of the Teryxians takes on near legendary proportions in you, and you revel in your mastery of the skies. Your *Born to Fly* Gift is modified so that you may gain one Spirit Point during any Windlore Test with a Spirit Die result of "1" or "2."
Shatter 3: You lose the ability to fly. Your feathers appear to be in perfect working order, there's just some trick of the Overlight that prevents you from sending yourself aloft.

WORD OF AUTHORITY (Logic + Will)

Once masters of Quill, the Teryxians ruled with an iron talon. Some of them have not forgotten the secret ways of bending another's Will to their own. When you channel *Word of Authority*, you may speak a single, one-word command to a target character within earshot. Beasts are unaffected by this Chroma.

Luminous: The target does not respond to your command, but is momentarily stunned by the outpouring of raw, Overlight-fueled willpower shaped into a single word. If in combat, they must skip their next action.
Radiant: Perform an Open Test (Persuasion vs. Mental). If you win, the target complies with your command in the simplest terms.
Brilliant: The target responds with total servitude, fulfilling your request in all its implied intent.

Shatter 1: Your voice becomes supernaturally stern, and just about everyone finds you to be pompous and arrogant.
Shatter 2: Your mere presence can frighten away those who feel that they have something to hide.
Shatter 3: Burnout. A glowing, pale yellow nimbus, known as the Hierarch's Crown, appears about your head.

BANYARI CHROMA

AWAKENED COMPANION* (Compassion + Compassion)

Required Background: Aeworn

For the Aeworn, the relationship they have with their tribe (and even with their Hearthwood Tree) is not the defining connection in their lives. That is reserved for the tiny Root Shrews that nest in their body, who are like extended members of their family — for they are indeed extensions of the Aeworn themselves. Over time, some Aeworn, through conscious action or subconscious affection, imbue one of their Root Shrews with enough Overlight that it becomes something *more* — a constant companion and life's partner, whose bond has echoes of those found between the two Folk of Zenith.

Point Bank: Once per story, you may spend one XP to add one point to the Point Bank.

Thresholds:
1–3: Your bonded Root Shrew will now respond to its name (it has a name, right?) and will obey simple commands, like a dog.
4: Your bonded Root Shrew will now respond to complicated, multi-part commands.
5+: Your bonded Root Shrew now gains the ability to speak.

BEAST MEND (Logic + Compassion)

In many ways, the Banyari tribes are as concerned with the health and well-being of Banyan's wildlife as they are with their Folk's own continued existence — or at least so it seems to an outsider. Many Banyari have found ways to weave the Overlight into the spirits of the tiny creatures with whom they share their homes. You may channel *Beast Mend* at any time to heal a wounded animal.

Luminous: You may voluntarily suffer a Dramatic Wound in order to completely heal one small animal of its injuries.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the animal you are healing may be approximately as large as an adult Haarkeen male.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you do not need to suffer a Dramatic Wound. Alternately, you may suffer a Dramatic Wound in order to heal any animal, no matter how large.

Shatter 1: You develop an Overlight bond with the species of animal you are healing. For any future Beastways Test dealing with this species, you may replace your Skill dice with d12s. You will not allow an animal of this species to be injured in your presence.
Shatter 2: As you wrap the injured animal in the light of Compassion, you find yourself tapping into the rhythms and passions of the

ecosystem that this beast is part of. If you are not on Banyan when this Shatter occurs, your attachment to the shard of your birth withers even more than your Skyborn nature would imply. Instead, you are driven by a desire to become a shepherd to the animals and plants of whichever shard you are on. You lose all Chroma bonuses that come from being on Banyan. If you are on Banyan when this Shatter occurs, your connection to your home shard deepens and, despite your Skyborn nature, you will never feel truly at home anywhere else. You may not spend XP to upgrade Virtue Ratings unless you are on Banyan.

Shatter 3: Burnout. Something goes disastrously wrong and the animal tears itself from your attentions. Not quite dying but not quite healed, it is stuck in a twilight space between life and death. As time passes, the animal will develop an infection of the spirit, and potentially live long enough to infect others of its kind, creating a malevolent new subspecies.

FABLECRAFT (Wisdom + Compassion)

Though few outside Banyan have witnessed it, many Banyari will, at some point in their lives, take a pilgrimage to one of the peculiar Banyari storytelling competitions. Skyborn Banyari are no exception, and can weave their tales with threads of the Overlight, using their stories to illustrate miraculous abilities. When you channel *Fablecraft*, you must regale the group with a short fable from Banyari folklore which illustrates a power that you will then be able to perform.

The power must in some way take advantage of your unique Banyari biology (or foliage!), the Banyari capacity for Compassion, or your connection to plants and animals. The power may not in any way replicate an existing Chroma, and the GM must ultimately agree to it. The success of your Chroma Test will determine how many times you are able to make use of that power. After the effect ends, you may never use that power again; each use of *Fablecraft* must involve a unique power.

Luminous: You may use the described power once immediately.
Radiant: You may use the described power until the end of the scene.
Brilliant: You may use the described power until the end of the story.

Shatter 1: You must craft a fable of the downfall of a Banyari individual or tribe.
Shatter 2: You must craft another fable of Banyari downfall, this time on a larger scale.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You must craft another fable of Banyari downfall. Taken in context with the previous stories, this should collectively paint a picture of what might be perceived as the twilight of the Banyari Folk. From now on, Aeworn will view you with a mixture of regret and reverence.

GREENBURST (Compassion + Vigor)

The Banyari have a deep understanding of plant life that is difficult to comprehend. While it is widely accepted that the unique Overlight bonds they share with their Hearthwood Trees is fundamental to their very biology, the Banyari also appear to have an innate kinship with all sorts of green growing things. You may channel *Greenburst* upon any one plant, be it a potted flower or a towering tree.

Luminous: The plant becomes the perfect example of health. Dying leaves fall away to be replaced by fresh new growth, and even the soil around it is temporarily enriched.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, and you may will the plant to grow in a specific manner: maybe you'd like its vines to wrap up a pole, or the fruit to sprout prematurely.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, and you may cause the plant to grow rapidly. You can also urge the plant to instantly grow, in that moment, in unnatural directions. You may shape the limbs of trees, cause soft-bodied plants to develop a sturdy bark, or even create thorns in a species that does not grow them naturally.

Shatter 1: Plants are now physically drawn to you. Flowers lean toward you as you pass, and vines might even unfurl from the trunks they are wrapped around to reach out in your direction.
Shatter 2: Some part of your natural coloring radically alters, changing to a bright, almost unnatural shade of your Core Virtue. Maybe your fur changes, or your skin, or the color of your leaves.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You have difficulty mustering intense emotions unless you are in the presence of plant life. If there is no plant life (not counting your fellow Banyari) in your immediate vicinity at the start of combat, the first Fury Point you would gain is negated.

KIN-STAVE* (Compassion + Compassion)

The Banyari are defined by their tribe. But for Banyari Skyborn, sometimes the need arises to create a new kind of tribe. Starting with a wooden stick (preferably from Banyan, although this is not required), you carve or sculpt small representations of yourself and each member of your party into a multi-faced rod or short staff. As the tiny facsimiles are sharpened and refined, the *Kin-Stave* becomes a kind of shamanic fetish that the entire party can tap into, using its power as an Overlight focus to wondrous effect. If any of your allies is killed, the *Kin-Stave* becomes useless. You may then make a new one, representing the new lineup of characters.

Point Bank: Whenever you or one of your allies spends XP to upgrade their Craft Rating, you may add one point to the Point Bank.

Thresholds:
1–4: When performing the Rally Comrades or Protect Ally maneuvers, you may increase the Spirit Die result by one, thereby increasing the amount of Fury Points gained or damage negated.

5–6: If an entire combat encounter is resolved without any member of the party suffering a Dramatic Wound, you and your allies may each gain one Spirit Point.

7+: At the end of each story, the players and GM hold a vote on which player contributed the most to the enjoyment of that story. That player's character gains one XP.

THE MACHINES OF LIFE (Wisdom + Compassion)

Required Background: Romos

Strange are the Romos, even by Banyari standards. Most Banyari appeal to an idyllic, untouched concept of the natural world. The Romos make no such divisions. In the Romos view, all phenomena are part of an interesting confusion, a confusion they wander with wonder and grace. An airship can be a strange beast; a wounded animal is not unlike a damaged contraption. Sliding back and forth between these views, the Romos have access to peculiar and special Wisdom.

Luminous: Until the end of the story, you may swap your Beastways and Machinery Ratings at will.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but now Craft may be swapped as well.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but now Folklore may be swapped as well.

Shatter 1: You develop a bit of a pack-rat mentality, attaching strange tidbits, curios, and pieces of junk to yourself as a sort of outer shell.
Shatter 2: You become obsessed with learning how things work. When confronted with a strange machine, unusual beast, or weird new puzzle, you have difficulty pulling yourself away. In some circumstances, the GM might require you to perform a Resolve Test.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Through a crack in the Overlight, the unique way in which you view the world slips free to become reality. In the area where you experience this Shatter, there is a chaotic explosion of plant life, overtaking natural features and buildings alike. There is a bizarre quality to the plants, which crawl and wave about as if not quite sure of their purpose or even what their form should be. This area is forever changed.

A MEMORY OF RAIN (Logic + Vigor)

Required Background: Nitansien

Very little is known of the life cycle of the Nitansien, who are different from other Banyari. Because they lack the leafy components of so many of their kin, it has long been thought by Teryxian scholars that the Nitansien might experience a kind of early-life metamorphosis, changing from a larval state into their adult form. It is certainly true that the Nitansien have been shown to be capable of staying underwater for almost stupefying amounts of time.

Luminous: Until the end of the scene, you may

breathe fresh water as if born to it.
Radiant: Until the end of the scene, you or one of your allies may breathe fresh water.
Brilliant: Until the end of the scene, you and one of your allies may breathe fresh water.

Shatter 1: The sides of your neck split open into vestigial gill-like slits, and your cheeks develop the shine of fish-like scales, green and gold.
Shatter 2: You can only heal Dramatic Wounds if entirely submerged in fresh water.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Ugly wattles grow from the backsides of your forearms and calves, eventually turning into fleshy fins! During Vigor Tests on land, you must lower two of your Virtue dice by one level, but during any Tests in fresh water, you may raise two of your Vigor dice by one level.

NEEDLE, FROND, AND LEAF (Wisdom + Compassion)

Required Background: Verthod Leafkin

The Leafkin of Banyan carry with them a small musical instrument. On their home shard, they use ethereal melodies to communicate with the strange flora, but even while abroad they play to commune with their exotic plant cousins in foreign places. By channeling *Needle, Frond, and Leaf*, you are weaving a musical tale which parts the Overlight and allows you to experience a memory of the forest. You may channel this Chroma any time you are in deep forest or surrounded by abundant plant life. Define a memory or a time as best you can, and the trees may share a memory with you.

Luminous: You can sense the emotional state of any nearby animals or Folk who might have passed through the area.
Radiant: As if through the fog of sleep, you catch glimpses or sounds of events, like some fragmented memory.
Brilliant: The trees remember! You may perceive entire scenes or events as if you were there, "seeing" through the plant life. But beware, as plants often perceive things very differently from Folk who walk on two legs.

Shatter 1: The pets of Folk you meet seem to prefer you over their masters! While some people find this charming, most believe you're using some "Banyari hex" upon their beloved animal, and they hate you for it.
Shatter 2: The forests have begun to distrust you. At some point in the future, the results of channeling this Chroma will result in the forest lying to you and giving you false information. (The GM may even decide that this happens now.)
Shatter 3: Burnout. For reasons that you will probably never understand, the forests have rejected you. Within every forest on every shard, except that one where your Hearthwood Tree grows, you are not welcome. While you cannot speak to the trees as you once could, you still hear their admonishments when you enter their domain.

PHOTOSYNTHESIZE (Logic + Vigor)

The cells within your woody and leafy parts chemically turn the Overlight into fuel and energy for your bodily functions, supercharging your healing process and overall health. You may not channel *Photosynthesize* while you are under the shadow. When on Banyan, provided you have achieved a Luminous success or better, you may increase the success level by one. (You may not achieve a Legendary success this way.)

Luminous: You may immediately heal two wounds. These may not be Dramatic Wounds.
Radiant: You may immediately heal all wounds up to and including your most recent Dramatic Wound.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, and you do not need food or sleep for the equivalent of a week.

Shatter 1: If you are already of a Banyari tribe that bears leaves, the volume of those leaves doubles, as your foliage becomes considerably more dense. If you are of a non-leafy tribe, you grow leaves!
Shatter 2: Your blood turns a fluorescent green. You may only receive mid-story healing of Dramatic Wounds via Chroma. Salves, traditional medicine, and elixirs are all useless.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Ignore the normal results of the channeling. Instead, immediately heal all your wounds, including Dramatic Wounds. Your skin or bark turns a bleached-out, pale grey color. Your Health Track is permanently reduced by one.

ROOT! (Compassion + Vigor)

Required Background: Verthod Rootlord

When you channel *Root!*, the vines and branches of your body grow and grasp outward to form an unnaturally strong grip upon an object, a person, or the earth itself.

Luminous: Your branches form a strong but momentary grip. In combat, this grip lasts until the end of your next action.
Radiant: Your grip is very strong and load-bearing. This grip lasts until the end of the combat or scene.
Brilliant: Your grip is unbreakable by almost any means, and lasts until the end of the combat or scene, if you so choose.

Shatter 1: Whatever you are grasping crumbles beneath your grip. If it is an ally, they must perform a Hazard Test (Crushing D12 vs. Resistance).
Shatter 2: You become permanently attached to whatever you are grasping.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your body withers, flowers, and dies. At the beginning of the next story, you may return to the game, good as new, but we encourage you to describe radical differences to your form and maybe even your personality.

SIPHON THE GREEN (Wisdom + Might)

Many of the Folk have longstanding stories of the bizarre ways in which the Banyari can suck the life out of animals, and even the very earth, giving them unnatural strength. While this is not entirely true, it is close to the truth. The Banyari may fuel Overlight through their bodies into their surroundings, receiving a supernatural stamina in exchange, if only for a short while. You may channel *Siphon the Green* once per story, and the effects will last until the end of the story, unless you begin fading. When on Banyan, you may reduce the Spirit Point cost of channeling this Chroma by one (to a minimum of one).

Luminous: You may voluntarily lower your Compassion Rating by one level in order to increase your Health Track by two.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, and you may also voluntarily lower your Wisdom Rating by one level in order to increase your Health Track by two.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, and you may also voluntarily lower your Vigor Rating by one level. If you do, you may spend Fury Points instead of suffering damage.

Shatter 1: The normal intake of food or light is no longer enough to maintain your bodily functions. From your body (or vines, if you have them) sprouts the snap traps or pitchers of a carnivorous plant. These are just large enough to capture tiny insect life, but it is enough to supplement your diet.
Shatter 2: You (the player!) must bring a live plant to the game table for the next session or you will not be able to channel any Chroma.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your connection to the green and growing things of the world has become tenuous. Without direct contact through the soles of your feet or the touch of your hands, you feel detached from the energies of life. In order to be in dense urban environments, on desolate mountainsides, or in other places that are mostly devoid of green plant life (such as caves), you must spend one Spirit Point per story to maintain your normal energy levels. Otherwise, you will feel exhausted and worn out.

UPON DISTANT SHORES* (Compassion + Compassion)

The Banyari are not known for their attachment to material things. But there is not a Banyari alive who wouldn't risk life and limb in defense of their Hearthwood nut. Each Banyari carries with them a single nut or seed from their Hearthwood Tree, bestowed to them at birth in a solemn ritual. For most Banyari, the nut simply serves as a personal totem, an object around which all of their love and Compassion for Banyan can coalesce. But, in recent times, some Skyborn among the Banyari have started an unusual and surprising behavior.

They *plant* their Hearthwood nut in the distant soil of a shard that is not Banyan. Over many cycles, the Banyari cares for the young tree,

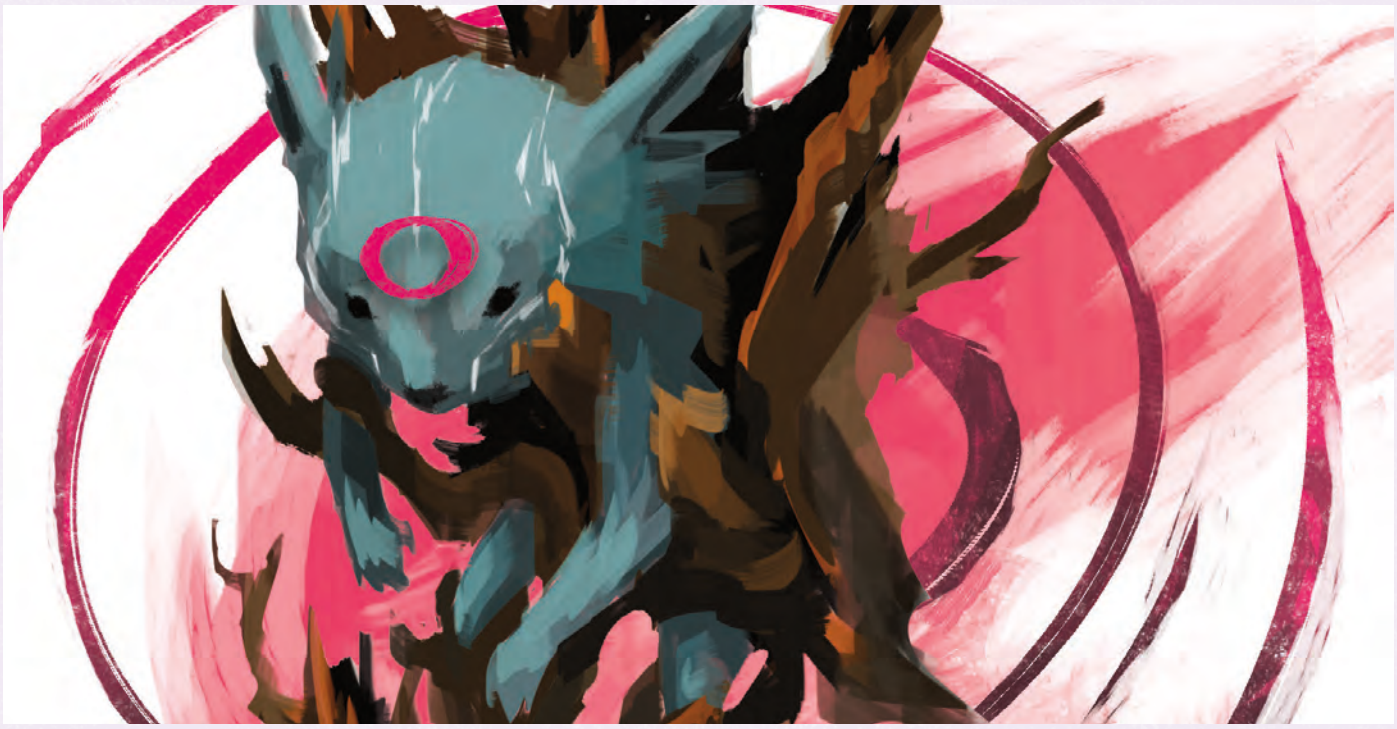
infusing it with the light of Compassion and the material needs of a green growing thing. In time, it becomes like a mirror of the tree from which it is descended, and the Banyari and their allies may come to rely upon the tree as a source of shelter, spiritual healing, and more.

The new tree should be sheltered as it grows, especially when small. When larger, it can become a focal point for the campaign, a sort of home base for the party or even a location that other stories can be woven around. A threat to the new tree would be dire indeed, and there are many forces in the world that would have use for such a physical symbol of the Banyari culture.

Worulthing may not choose this Chroma. Their Hearthwood Tree is dead and gone, and any seeds it may have produced are long since ash. If there are multiple Banyari with this Chroma in the party, their trees must be planted many leagues apart. (The party could not possibly spend time at different trees between any two stories.)

Point Bank: Between stories, you may visit the tree and spend one XP to add one point. The Point Bank does not deplete. Once reached, the effects of a threshold are always available.

Thresholds:
1–5: The tree is now the size of a sapling. Once per story, when the party visits the tree, each character may heal one Dramatic Wound.
6–7: When the party visits the tree between stories, each character may gain two Spirit Points.
8+: When the party visits the tree between stories, one character may gain one XP if they can convincingly describe to the group how they behaved in a compassionate manner throughout the previous story.



WAVES OF SORROW (Compassion + Will)

Required Background: Worulthing

The Worulthing are fading from the world. Without a Hearthwood Tree, and no Banyari cubs in their tribe, it is only a matter of time before they pass from existence. They are wanderers, pilgrims without a destination, and many of them — Skyborn or not — have left Banyan already, seeking some as-yet-unrealized destiny. And they carry with them a heavy burden, for they are veritable receptacles of sorrow and grief. Others cannot help but feel their own troubles as insignificant and trivial when face to face with a Worulthing. You may channel *Waves of Sorrow* at any time to send a pulsing cascade of melancholy and regret radiating outward from your being.

Luminous: In non-combat situations, one target will have their mood so terribly altered that they can barely summon the will to participate in society. In combat, one opponent loses one Zeal.
Radiant: In non-combat situations, the mood of the entire gathering is brought low. In combat, every combatant loses one Zeal or one Spirit Point, friend and foe alike.
Brilliant: In combat, one opponent completely loses the will to fight. If that opponent is a named adversary, they lose two Zeal and may not spend Zeal to negate this effect.

Shatter 1: The ground around you spoils and turns black. No vegetation will ever grow here again.
Shatter 2: An innocent bystander becomes depressed enough that they make plans to quit their vocation, maybe even leave their family behind — or worse. If there are no innocent bystanders, this effect will happen to someone you encounter at another time.
Shatter 3: Burnout. The ground around you not only will never grow vegetation again, but the place also becomes an emotional sinkhole, a stain on the landscape which all living things avoid. In time, it may become a holy site for the Unlighters or attendants more foul.

WILDERSTRIDE (Vigor + Vigor)

Required Background: Brendenol

There are few who can match the Brendenol for pure speed, with their powerful legs and graceful, fluid way of moving. Energized by the Overlight, and veritably riding upon a slipstream of orange light, members of that Banyari tribe use *Wilderstride* to cover ground like no other.

Luminous: Provided you do not have any Dramatic Wounds, if you win an Open Test (Athletics vs. Physical) you can outpace any individual, from any Folk. This ability lasts for a single sprint or distance run, dissipating once you catch your breath.
Radiant: You can outpace anything or anyone running on land, whether they run on two legs or four. This ability lasts until the end of the scene.

Brilliant: You can traverse great distances with almost mythic speed.

Shatter 1: You are forever filled with a boundless energy. Not enough to provide you with any mechanical benefit, but just enough to annoy your allies.

Shatter 2: Your hide develops stark striping, like those of many plains dwellers, except they are in bright contrasting colors, likely shades of orange or the color of your Core Virtue.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your antlers double in size and you can no longer run as once you did. Chitineers might view you as a valuable prize.

HAARKEEN CHROMA

CITY OF MERCHANTS (Will + Will)

The Haarkeen are traders. Even among the destitute and downtrodden, there is not a Haarkeen born without the blood of merchants in their veins. So it should come as no surprise that some of their Folk have found ways to manipulate the Overlight to influence even the most mundane of activities: trading or paying for goods and services. You may channel *City of Merchants* before you perform any Wealth Test. The effects will last until the end of the scene.

Luminous: You may reroll the Spirit Die for the Wealth Test and keep either result.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may reduce the Wealth Point cost by one.
Brilliant: If you would otherwise need to trade away a Valuable, you may instead spend all of your remaining Wealth Points to succeed at the Test.

Shatter 1: Money always seems to slip through your fingers. Reduce all Wealth Rewards you receive by one.
Shatter 2: You always appear as a pauper. Your Wealth Rating may never exceed D8.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Merchants always seem to think that you are a notorious thief. Getting a good deal, or any deal at all, becomes exceedingly difficult.

DEPUTY OF THE COUNCIL (Will + Might)

Required Background: Agent of the Council

The Skyborn instinctively process their experiences in terms of the Overlight. An Agent of the Council wields authority and looks after the interests of both the council and Haark. When one of the Skyborn takes this office, they become such a pure manifestation of the council's will that they are able to impart its authority through light. The Agent infuses a deputy with an energetic echo of their own

office. This echo enforces loyalty and, eventually, imparts authority. You may channel *Deputy of the Council* at any time to deputize another character to act with your authority and, by extension, the authority of the council. You may only have one deputy at a time, although you may end the ongoing bond with an existing deputy at will.

Luminous: You deputize a target character. They may not betray you without severing a tenuous Overlight bond that has formed. If they do, you will know it immediately.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the deputy now gains a brilliant-white, glowing sigil of the Seven upon their palms. This identifies them as a Deputy of the Council and authorizes them to act with the council's authority.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but the sigil can now be used to immediately break up small scuffles or disputes among common Folk, as if the sigil itself has some measure of authority.

Shatter 1: When you strike your fist upon any hard surface, it makes a sound loud enough to get an audience's attention — not unlike a gavel.
Shatter 2: The bond between you and your deputy is now fueled by the deputy's own life force. In time, your deputy will weaken and die. You may not assign the sigil to a new deputy until this happens.
Shatter 3: Burnout. A version of the sigil appears upon your own palms, in sickly yellow and grey. If you ever return to Haark, you will be expected to resume your old vocation and make a full report to the council. Your palms glow especially bright and hot when you set foot in the City Magnificent, making it exceedingly difficult to avoid detection.

DISCIPLE OF THE SEVEN (Logic + Wisdom)

Required Background: Apprentice

Embracing the life of the Skyborn, you have left your home and the life that you had built for yourself — and your master in the process. But to be Skyborn is to be constantly seeking your place in the world, and for you this means always looking for your next teacher. At some point during your journeys, you may find a new master. This person may be a mentor, a mystic, a craftsman, or something else entirely (but may not be a fellow PC). When you have found this master, you can offer yourself to them as a student or disciple, channeling *Disciple of the Seven* at that time.

If the channeling succeeds, your new master will become an important recurring character in the campaign and will likely influence new plotlines or story developments. If the channeling fails, it simply means that this master does not wish to teach you, and you will have to find a new candidate. You may only successfully channel *Disciple of the Seven* once. All Apprentices start the game with this Chroma, in addition to their free Chroma, without paying any Character Build Points for it.

Luminous: Select a Skill that your new master could conceivably teach you, given their area of expertise. If the GM agrees, your XP costs for upgrading this Skill Rating are reduced by one,

provided you spend time learning under the master's tutelage. This discount only applies up to and including a D10 Rating.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may select a Virtue instead of a Skill. Narrative faithfulness is extremely important here. For this to work, your new master should be a paragon of the chosen Virtue.
Brilliant: You may learn one Chroma from your master. This may be any Chroma except those which would be available to characters with Will as a Core Virtue. Again, this must be narratively appropriate — no learning Banyari Chroma from a Pyroi! To learn this Chroma, you must spend 12 XP, instead of the normal nine XP. While there are certain Chroma that will obviously make no sense (e.g., the Teryxian ones that refer to flying), most Chroma, even some of the more unusual ones, could be rationalized using some weird Overlight powers. Discuss with the GM.

Shatter 1: The channeling fails.
Shatter 2: Burnout. Seeking a new master is now pointless, and you must find your own path across the Seven.
Shatter 3: N/A

ESTEEMED HOSPITALITY (Wisdom + Compassion)

Required Background: Performer

Actors, singers, dancers, poets, and painters all carry both fame and notoriety. When politics are at play, they are often denounced as free-spirit types, deteriorating the edges of society and loosening the morals of the common people. The reality is quite different. Courts across the shards often invite and patronize these artists in order to lend interest and beauty to their throne rooms and salons. Where many would need elaborate invitations, a musician or poet may have enough fame to be welcomed without such fuss.

There are some courts, of course, that will scrutinize attendees of all sorts. In these situations, it helps to be Skyborn. You may channel *Esteemed Hospitality* any time you would like to gain entrance to a social or political gathering, when you are not otherwise welcome. After performing the Chroma Test, you may spend one extra Spirit Point for each ally who you would like to receive the same benefit.

Luminous: Although not the most glamorous outcome, if you succeed at a Performance Test, you may pass yourself off as a member of the help or some kind of lesser servant. You might not be performing on stage tonight, but at least you're in!
Radiant: You are welcomed into a situation where large groups of people are gathered, be it a party or council meeting.
Brilliant: Folk at the gathering assume that you are a special guest or entertainer. To deny you entrance would certainly reflect poorly upon them should your patron hear of it.

Shatter 1: Your clothing always looks finer than it really is. Maybe it is the way you style it, the fact that you repair it constantly, or some exotic

quality it has, but people constantly inquire as to its origin and cost.

Shatter 2: You are rarely given credit for originality. Your performances and works fetch one less Wealth Point than they would otherwise, as they are always being compared to the works of a better-known artist.

Shatter 3: Burnout. You will never be mistaken for someone else again on the shard of Haark. Your name has spread far and wide, and complete strangers now approach you to make demands of your celebrity. It is also possible that your fame or notoriety has spawned a superfan, who may not have your best interests in mind, or that successes which are not yours will be attributed to you.

THE GARDEN MEMORY (Wisdom + Vigor)

Somewhere in the past, amidst verdant curling vines and long-necked birds the color of lapis, there was a garden. In that garden, there was a lazy being, called the First One, who laid in the garden and dreamt of nothing at all. Then serpents of light came, and the First One grew curious, following the serpents through the unlocked gate and into our world. From that point on, the First One would have to fight for everything she would possess, and if she fought hard enough, one day, she would return to that garden. Or so the tale goes.

When channeling *The Garden Memory*, you enter into an eternal instant, and for a moment you rest and heal in the dream of a mythical, primordial garden. Allies may join you as guests on this journey, if they make physical contact with you, by spending one Spirit Point each. As far as onlookers are concerned, the entire thing occurs within a second; the characters experiencing the memory simply close their eyes for a moment, and then they are back. But within the memory, the garden is experienced as several hours of dreamy leisure.

This Chroma requires some objects to represent garden tokens, harvested from the experience of the garden memory. You can use stones, leaves, flower petals, bones, or whatever — they should just be distinct and in some way representative of the primordial garden. These tokens last until they are spent, and *The Garden Memory* may not be channeled again until the tokens are gone. This Chroma cannot be channeled, and garden tokens cannot be spent, in combat.

Luminous: You witness the blooming of the garden's hundred thousand orchids. Inspired, you and your guests may spend garden tokens to reroll failed dice during Craft, Performance, and Science Tests. You gain two garden tokens, and each guest gains one.

Radiant: You experience a breathtaking display of exotic birds taking flight in awe-inspiring formation. Exposed to this grandeur, you and your guests may spend garden tokens to reroll failed dice during Beastways, Inspiration, and Resolve Tests. You gain three garden tokens, and each guest gains two.

Brilliant: You fall sound asleep in the garden and have dreams that replenish your essence.

You and your guests may spend garden tokens to reroll failed dice during any of the Tests mentioned previously. You and your guests each gain three garden tokens. Each guest also gains one Spirit Point.

Shatter 1: Whenever you are standing outdoors, beneath the Overlight, your edges become fuzzy and less distinct.
Shatter 2: There is a storyteller in the garden who occasionally visits your dreams. Their tales are immersive and perfect. When they finish each tale, you pay them a coin but are filled with sorrow, as you will soon awaken. From now on, when you channel *The Garden Memory*, you emerge from the memory to find your Wealth Points are reduced by one. You may not channel this Chroma again for the rest of the story.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You are locked out of the dream, and you will forever feel that the perfection of happiness is beyond your reach. Your memories are filled with images of the world that was. Is there anything that can make you feel so whole again?

GHOST CHARM (Logic + Will)

As any Master Historian will tell you, the Folk of Haark would not have achieved the glories they have without their penchant for cutting to the chase. To the Folk of the other shards, the Haarkeen can seem obsessed and urgent, completely absorbed by lust for success. In some cases, this hard-headed perseverance has paid off. Of course, Haarkeen Skyborn are even more passionate about following the iron thread of their fates, and they are possessed of such unstoppable Will that they can channel *Ghost Charm* to force their way through solid barriers by rendering them temporarily insubstantial. When you channel this Chroma, you can take one other character with you through the barrier if you spend one extra Spirit Point.

Luminous: You are able to pass through a barrier of any material, up to one foot thick.
Radiant: You are able to pass through a barrier of any material, up to three feet thick.
Brilliant: You are able to pass through two barriers of any material, with a combined thickness of no more than ten feet.

Shatter 1: You avoid touching surfaces with your bare skin because they now feel slightly adhesive to you.
Shatter 2: The ground feels like it is gripping your feet. You have trouble running at significant speed. If you try to do so under duress, you must succeed at an Athletics Test or else you stumble and fall.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You pass into the barrier, but you do not pass through to the other side. There is a brief, barely audible yell from inside the barrier, and then you are never seen or heard from again.

GLIMPSE THE ANCIENT (Logic + Will)

Required Background: Master Historian

Though they do not consciously know it, many Folk of the Seven believe it is the Haarkeen who bear the true weight of the history of the world. And perhaps the Haarkeen want to connect more personally to that history. The Master Historians of Haark seek to enumerate, decipher, and catalogue the events of the remote past, as well as the moments extending from that time to the present. Skyborn Historians have a distinct advantage, as they can sometimes tell the complete history of an object with a touch. You may channel *Glimpse the Ancient* just before touching any item, in order to learn its history. This Chroma may not be used on people or structures.

Luminous: As if in a vision, you can tell the identities (or at least the faces) of everyone who has recently touched the item.

Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you also learn how and where the item was manufactured. If the GM deems it appropriate (and the item significant), with a successful Folklore Test you piece together enough information to recall an obscure fable, little mentioned in your studies, that references this item. Gain one Spirit Point. In the right hands, this item might be worth Wealth or Spirit Rewards.

Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you also immediately learn the complete history of the item and its notable owner. But you have also uncovered a unique secret from the earliest days of the Overlight and, possibly, the breaking of the world. You are the only person who knows this, and you must decide if the world is ready for what you have discovered.

Shatter 1: The tips of your fingers and the tip of your tongue become the same indigo as the ink used throughout the works of Haark's scriptoriums. If you try, you can now write with the tip of your finger.

Shatter 2: You enter a trance when reading historical texts, examining artifacts, or channeling this Chroma. You are distracted enough that you cannot participate in combat until the end of the scene.

Shatter 3: Burnout. History has become one big, continuous map to you. All the connections, layers, and events now make sense. You are now aware of the true history of the breaking of the world (as detailed in this book's prologue). You have gone borderline insane, muttering to yourself and getting utterly lost in the details of personages and events and how they might relate to your understanding of the universe. To utter any of this might get you branded a lunatic, or worse, so you keep it mostly to yourself and your friends.

KNOT OF ROSE THORNS (Logic + Will)

The origins of *Knot of Rose Thorns* are lost in the remote past. For as long as the Haarkeen have existed, there have been binding charms. In this case, the charm is a humming figure-

eight of black energy that encircles the feet or hands. These bonds are created out of a strip of Will braided with the contemplation of an infinite loop. Once entwined, it is hard for a target to escape. Even if the strength of the bonds is eventually overcome, they will often burn or sting the escapee.

Luminous: The target is wrapped in stinging black bands. They must spend their next action attempting to escape by winning an Open Test (4d8 vs. Physical).
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the Open Test is harder (6d8 vs. Physical). If the target does manage to escape, they suffer two damage.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but the Open Test is harder (8d8 vs. Physical). If the target does manage to escape, they suffer three damage.

Shatter 1: You smell of fresh-cut roses.
Shatter 2: When you touch processed wood or natural fibers with your right hand, the grain or weave bloats, growing prickly and painful to the touch.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Vines and runners sprout from your arms and tightly entangle your body, then harden into a woody mesh. When you are under the shadow, buds sprout and open into dark indigo flowers. Your Health Track is permanently reduced by one, but you have an intoxicating aroma.

LOCK CHARM (Logic + Compassion)

In the City Magnificent, you do not overcome barriers by way of machete and pickaxe. It is true that you may have to scale a wall from time to time, but eventually you will come to a locked door. To speak the language of locks gives access to chest and palace alike. Long ago, the famous thief Gulzari stole the language of locks from the scroll vaults of the Zenith Orders. Although the Monks themselves had restricted the practice to be turned inward to the locked doors of their own minds, Gulzari used it for baser desires. The Monks eventually apprehended Gulzari and transformed him into an immortal horned boar (who now lazes about at the feet of the Diamond Queen on Zenith), but not before the thief whispered the language of locks to the rest of the Haarkeen Folk.

Although many now know the secret tongue, no Haarkeen commoner will dare speak it, for fear of absolute madness. The Skyborn have no such anxiety and have perfected a form of the language spoken only by those who have mastered *Lock Charm*. (It is rumored that Pelagius Karamag, the near-mythical Aurumel architect of the Hanging Prison of Haark, successfully made that most famous of prisons inescapable after he stole the language of locks by sawing off one of Gulzari's boar tusks… but that's another story.)

Luminous: The Charm of Gates. You may unlock a door or chest that has a simple lock.
Radiant: The Charm of Keys. You may unlock a door or chest that has a complex lock. You also detect any trap mechanisms, but do not automatically disable them.

Brilliant: The Monarch's Charm. You may unlock a door or chest that has either been sealed, mystically locked, or otherwise obstructed by something massive and immovable. If you spend one extra Spirit Point, you may remove any traps or special seals.

Shatter 1: A keyhole appears somewhere on your body. If someone looks into it, they see their own eye looking back at them.
Shatter 2: A fine scar forms an outline around the keyhole. If someone looks into the keyhole now, they see ill-defined pulsing lights behind a wall of murk.
Shatter 3: Burnout. The scar becomes a defined edge. If you ever find the key that fits, you may open this hidden compartment that has formed in your body and discover what hides inside it.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY (Logic + Compassion)

Required Background: Grifter

The streets of Haark can be brutal and cruel. The rings get more and more hostile the closer you go to the Edge — a lawless, wind-blasted area plagued by poverty, famine, and crime. To make matters worse, the corrupt City Watch enforce nothing but their own whims and greed, inflicting violence and death upon Edge-Dwellers who will never be missed. *Mistaken Identity* is a Chroma used by the Skyborn who frequent such places, a life-saver amidst countless close calls and second chances.

You may channel *Mistaken Identity* whenever you are called out by authorities (be they guards, nobles, or others) in a public place. When you are pursued or asked to answer for your crimes, this elaborate deception can manipulate perceptions so as to pin the deed on another person. (For reasons that will be made clear, you should keep track of the number of times you have successfully channeled this Chroma.)

Luminous: You may point to a character who is present. If you win an Open Test (Performance vs. Mental) against the authority figure who has accosted you, then their focus immediately shifts to the character you just pointed out.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the individual you name need not be present, merely within the same geographic area (e.g., town, forest).
Brilliant: You describe an entirely fictitious person, but your accusers blindly accept what you say about that person and their crimes. As nobody has been falsely accused, and you have gotten away none the worse for wear, you may gain two Spirit Points.

Shatter 1: The channeling succeeds, but not quite as intended. Your accusation "misses" and hits someone friendly to you instead. This does not need to be a member of the party, but very well could be, in the absence of another option.
Shatter 2: City Watch, judges, and other authority figures always seem to single you out of a crowd. They may outright suggest that you are up to no good, or at least aggressively question you because they believe you would know the type of person they are after.

Shatter 3: Burnout. All the crimes you have ever committed (especially those you have escaped from with this Chroma) are laid bare. Those close to the circumstances of the crimes will recognize you as the culprit as soon as they see you. In addition, the skin of your arms and face is suddenly and spontaneously scarred with the brands used across the Seven to identify criminals, convicts, and lawbreakers. If you are ever apprehended by the authorities, you will be dragged to trial, and anecdotal evidence will appear as fact to whoever is determining your fate. If you are ever apprehended by a mob or other hostile throng, you will likely be mutilated, exiled, or executed.

RALLY THE DOWNTRODDEN (Compassion + Will)

Required Background: Street Tough

At its worst, Haark is one of the toughest and meanest of the shards. The general populace of the City Magnificent view outsiders and those above their station as without practicality and unworthy of respect. But you have come from these streets, and they will listen to one of their own. You may channel *Rally the Downtrodden* in any heavily populated area, be it a large trading camp, major monastery, teeming village, or even one of the larger airships — anywhere there are lots of people and social strata that separates them. Using this Chroma will rally a few of the dispossessed to defend or support you for a single scene. When you are on a shard other than Haark, channeling this Chroma costs you one extra Spirit Point.

Luminous: A pair of derelicts come to back you up. This is mostly for show (they think that visibly supporting you will reflect well upon them), but they will fight for you if the odds are not overwhelming. They have 4d6 Physical Dice, 3d6 Mental Dice, and nothing to lose.
Radiant: A small group of penitent gang members, disinherited mercenaries, or disillusioned villagers rallies around you. The GM will determine their exact number, but it should be between three and five. This is enough to intimidate most Folk, but if push comes to shove they have 5d8 Physical Dice and 6d6 Mental Dice, with one Zeal and a Surge that deals one extra damage.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant. In addition, from the shadow of a hovel or the doorway of a gambling house, a local hero of the people emerges from semi-retirement upon hearing your emotional call to action. They step forward to resolve your dispute.

Shatter 1: Your voice has an unnaturally strong projection when you speak to any crowd in a public place.
Shatter 2: An enemy agent of some kind slips undetected into the group of individuals who have just rallied to your side.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You are held up as a hero among the downtrodden. Having supported you, they beseech you to stay with them and help them in whatever righteous (or not-so-righteous) cause is currently motivating their

actions in their community. Every fiber of your being wants to be that champion for these Folk. If you refuse, your Spirit Pool is now permanently capped at seven.

SPEAR FORM OF THE HIGH GUARD (Will + Vigor)

On Zenith, the martial arts are esteemed as the unification of mind and body. The Monks and Hamanu there are fearsome warriors because it is an extension of their religious practice. On Haark, the inhabitants learn to fight as a matter of survival. Yet the Haarkeen are not without their martial tradition, and the spear form practiced by the officers of the City Watch has proven to be a deadly art unto itself. The form is accessible to wet-behind-the-ears recruits and veterans alike. While the spear point keeps the primary target occupied with full-force jabs, lightning-fast flourishes allow the wielder to attack secondary targets when they get too close.

Skyborn warriors have adapted the form to suit any style of fighting, but only when used with a long-hafted spear does it show its true potential. You may channel *Spear Form of the High Guard* at any time during combat, selecting one opponent to target. If you are using Blades to attack with a spear, this channeling occurs simultaneously with the attack. The effect lasts until the end of the combat.

Luminous: Each time you successfully attack the target, deal one extra damage. Select a secondary target within striking distance, who suffers one damage.

Radiant: Each time you successfully attack the target, deal two extra damage. Select a secondary target within striking distance, who suffers two damage.

Brilliant: Each time you successfully attack the target, deal three extra damage. Select a secondary target within striking distance, who suffers four damage.

Shatter 1: Your spear now glows with a pale yellow aura. This is *your* spear. If ever you should lose it, *Spear Form of the High Guard* will be prematurely burnt out.

Shatter 2: You are an explosive flurry of spear strikes. The motions of your spear now leave trailing yellow bands of light in the air behind it, which wildly streak about before dissipating on the breeze. Each time you deal damage to secondary targets, one of your allies (your choice) must suffer the same amount of damage, as they are inadvertently struck by one of these burning bands of yellow.

Shatter 3: Burnout. Feeling as though you have mastered the use of the spear, you must pass along your spear to another student of the form. You abandon the use of weapons altogether and now fight exclusively with your bare hands. From now on, you may only use Brawl in combat.

A VOICE IN THE CROWD (Logic + Compassion)

Though the rhythms and pacing of the City Magnificent are like a comforting heartbeat to a native-born Haarkeen, there are times when being able to focus in on the voices of a select few is a blessing. By concentrating on a conversation that is happening within your line of sight, you may channel *A Voice in the Crowd* to hear the voices involved from some distance away, with other sounds fading to a dim hum in the background.

Luminous: You clearly hear one of the voices (your choice) involved in the conversation.
Radiant: You clearly hear two of the voices involved in the conversation.
Brilliant: You clearly hear all voices involved in the conversation, and you may also experience the participants' other senses, like smell and taste. In addition, your perspective shifts so that you experience the conversation as if you were standing there yourself, and you may even turn your head to look at your surroundings.

Shatter 1: You become unremarkable to a fault. This allows you to go unnoticed in crowds, but it is now incredibly difficult for anyone to remember your name or face.
Shatter 2: Snippets of conversations enter your awareness with some regularity. It is often impossible to tell where they are coming from. Maybe they are echoes from long ago? Or perhaps conversations that are yet to occur?
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your eyes and pupils turn poisonously blue and trail a pale teal vapor.



YAKIRIN'S STRENGTH (Will + Vigor)

Required Background: Air Harbor Dockworker

Burly Dockworkers diligently staff the skydocks under the hot rays of the Overlight. The goods that maintain Haark's wealth and vitality move through their strong hands and onto the decks of airships or into the keeping of merchants. Although violent labor riots break out from time to time when the Dockworkers are treated unfairly, their greatest feats of strength are evident when they are carrying out their work — a profession that maintains the flow of Haark's lifeblood. You may channel *Yakirin's Strength* at any time.

Luminous: You may reroll all failed dice on a single Test involving Might or Vigor, if you are attempting a non-combat feat of strength or endurance.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may do this for all such Tests until the end of the story.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but during such Tests, if a Spirit Die result of "4" would allow you to gain one Spirit Point, you may gain two instead.

Shatter 1: Your shoulders and arms swell disproportionately, although not quite to unnatural size. You look almost like an animal bred especially for hauling weight.
Shatter 2: The fingers and thumb of one of your hands fuse together and calcify with a hardened, shell-like material, forming the shape of a sharply curved Dockworker's hook.
Shatter 3: Burnout. A lifetime of lifting heavy weights will take its toll on anyone, even someone who uses the power of the Overlight to strengthen their body — maybe even especially then! The aches and pains of an artificially enhanced body become a constant burden. You must reduce your Resistance Rating by one level. Your bones and joints creak like those of an old person, and it's difficult for you not to groan as you move about.

AURUMEL CHROMA

BALLADEER'S NAMING (Will + Might)

Required Background: Lineage Poet

The method of poetry used in Aurumel culture is considered one of the highest arts. Some cultures dismiss poetry as something only for wooing lovers or earning some coin at an inn. Not so on Veile, for the Aurumel record their immortal lineage in poem. These prayer-lines of golden rhyme are the continuity of all that is Aurumel. Elekos's *The Golden Taxonomy of Poetic Law* states that the Overlight's most exalted state is as a proclamation of *The Word*. Once the word is placed upon a thing it becomes *The Name*, and by that name a thing is commanded. To give a thing a name is to be an enforcer of its destiny. *Balladeer's Naming* gives you the opportunity to rename any object or person in your presence. Sometimes this will simply come across as a clever jab or skillful compliment, but at other times you will speak to the very nature of the object or person at hand.

Luminous: You publicly refer to the object or person by this new name. Although the audience will appreciate the insult or flattery that was intended, only a few Folk will pick up on the use of the new title, and it will quickly fall out of use except by those who were there at the time.
Radiant: The object or person is renamed. Your selection of title cuts to the quick and is so fitting that it is only a matter of time before everyone refers to the target by its new name.
Brilliant: Your target is now renamed for true. You may replace one die with a d12 when performing a Test involving the target using its new True Name. Opponents must lose one Zeal when you use it in combat against them. If you rename objects, each member of your party may only have a single such renamed object.

Shatter 1: You are now viewed less as a poet and more as a fool.
Shatter 2: Another member of your party gives you an unflattering nickname. Folk only ever call you by that name from now on.
Shatter 3: Burnout. In all this playing with names of things, you have let your one True Name escape out into the void. Something or someone will learn it and seek to enslave you.

BREAKING IRONS (Will + Might)

Required Background: Slave

You have broken the bonds that held you, broken the weights that kept you in thrall to another's Will. You will never again be enslaved.

Luminous: You may automatically break any bonds of rope, silk, or any other fabric.
Radiant: You may automatically break any bonds of copper, gold, or rusty aged metal.
Brilliant: You may automatically break any bonds of iron or steel, or even bonds composed of pure Overlight.

Shatter 1: You break your bonds but, in this instance, the action is accompanied by a loud cracking sound, which draws any possible captors to your position.
Shatter 2: Whatever bonds you break stay forever upon your wrists. You are free, but the tattered rope or broken manacles will remain as a constant reminder of your former life.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You cannot countenance the bondage of another living thing. It is rare indeed that you can pass even so much as a single beast of burden and not feel compelled to break its harness.

CHARLATAN'S FOIL (Wisdom + Logic)

Required Background: Arch-Exquisitor

It is said that there is not a brick laid upon Veile that is done so without a lie or an unfulfilled promise. So it is a valuable trick indeed to be able to tell truth from fiction, especially when one makes their living as an appraiser of fine goods. You may channel *Charlatan's Foil* during any conversation, targeting a single character. The effects will last until the conversation reaches its natural conclusion.

Luminous: You can detect whether the target is withholding information.
Radiant: You know if the target is lying to you, or if they are speaking the absolute truth.
Brilliant: You can detect subtle grey areas between truth and lie.

Shatter 1: The tools of your trade become fused to your fingers.
Shatter 2: Your jeweler's lens becomes fused to your eye and face, and the operation of its intricate apertures and lenses can be completed with but a thought.
Shatter 3: Burnout. The Overlight presents you with a radically different perspective on the choices you've made in life. To have spent so much time focused on the material value of things, and on gaining the upper hand during mercantile negotiations… You cast off all material possessions, wearing nothing but simple robes and your mask. You may no longer benefit from the bonuses provided by Luminons, and you do not attribute special significance to any object other than a good pair of shoes.

DUPLICITOUS MASK (Logic + Will)

In the courts of Veile, the storied masks of aristocrats and legendary artists provide instant recognition of one's standing and station. To forge the mask of an Aurumel of higher station than your own is considered a grievous offense of religious magnitude, punishable by

extended torture and death, in most cases. And so *Duplicitous Mask* is a terrifying idea to those who know of this well-protected secret. To bear a formless mask is to become formless oneself, but to forge the mask of the most powerful Aurumel is to truly steal fire from heaven.

Luminous: You morph your mask to imitate the mask of another Aurumel. Aside from the mask itself, you remain as you are. This transformation will last until the end of the scene. To truly pass yourself off as that individual will require a Radiant success or better on Performance or Persuasion Tests.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may adequately mimic the voice and body language of a specific Aurumel. Unless there is a drastic difference in height or build, you can reliably imitate that Aurumel until closely scrutinized, at which point the viewer must win an Open Test (Performance vs. Mental) to catch the deception.
Brilliant: Your imitation is flawless. Even a beloved ally of the imitated Aurumel cannot tell your ruse from the real thing. The only way to distinguish the two is by removing your respective masks.

Shatter 1: Your mask now moves with your facial expressions.
Shatter 2: Your voice changes to audibly resemble the material your mask is crafted from. It may take on a strange metallic grating or echo, sound like the splintering of wood, or whisper like the shifting of cloth.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your mask grafts directly to your face. Although your mask can be (painfully) lifted to eat and drink, you may never remove it — to do so would require surgery so extreme that your face would largely be removed as well.

JEWELS OF VEILE* (Vigor + Might)

Required Background: Jeweler Chirurgeon

The Aurumel use implants and wires to shape and customize the very flesh of their bodies, often in ways which would be impolite to discuss in high society, which is to say nothing of some of the atrocities committed in the dark shadows of the Penumbral Court. The Jeweler Chirurgeons are responsible for all these works, although most Folk from other shards would only ever encounter the implant jewelry that is used to miraculously heal grievous wounds. You may channel *Jewels of Veile* to prepare a faceted jewel, or plate of gold or copper. The superstitions of the Aurumel prevent you from ever carrying more than one such Luminon at a time, and each is a significant burden upon the spirit. To create a new one, you must acquire a suitable jewel or plate of crafted gold — often an adventure in its own right. Only characters with the *Flesh Shaper* Gift may implant the jewelry.

Point Bank: Once per story, you may spend one XP to add one point to the Point Bank.

Thresholds:
1–2: You may implant the jewelry, following the rules described in the *Flesh Shaper* Gift.

3–4: You do not need to perform a Science or Craft Test to successfully implant the jewelry.
5+: The recipient of an implant may increase their Health Track by one. Only one such bonus may ever be gained by any non-Aurumel character, but Aurumel may gain it twice.

KISS OF SLEEP (Will + Vigor)

The martial tradition of the Aurumel is exceeded only by their mastery of the arts and their addiction to intrigue. The *Kiss of Sleep* is called by many different names that characterize the many legendary instances of its use, but the effects are always the same. When the channeler's lips touch the lips of another, that target falls into a sleep that ranges from a wistful nap to a terrible slumber. As the Shatters become apparent upon the channeler, it is not uncommon for the Assassin's and Poisoner's Guilds of Veile to take special notice, even going so far as to view that individual as some sort of "chosen one." *Kiss of Sleep* may not be channeled during combat.

Luminous: The target must win an Open Test (Will vs. Mental) or else fall asleep until the end of the scene. They can be awoken normally, and if they fall asleep while in a standing position, they will wake upon hitting the floor.
Radiant: The target falls deeply asleep until the end of the scene. They must be shaken awake or disturbed by an extremely loud sound (e.g., point-blank screaming or loud clapping). They can slump onto the floor without waking.
Brilliant: The target falls into a coma-like sleep. The target will sleep for the rest of this scene and the next.

Shatter 1: Your lips and chin are stained a deep crimson. Your mask develops an equivalent mark.
Shatter 2: You exude an intoxicating musk. Anyone in your presence will sometimes find their mind turning to carnal thoughts, although not necessarily to the point of distraction.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Any ally or loved one whom you kiss will die instantly.

KNEEL BEFORE ME (Will + Might)

The Aurumel fixation on sovereignty and station is the only passion that exceeds their fixation on immortality. Aurumel aristocrats are often cruel and bestial, whether standing before an honorably defeated enemy or castigating their insubordinate servants. For vindictive nobles, it is among the highest joys to extract a willing submission from fallen adversaries, shamed slaves, and those they perceive as lesser Folk. For those Aurumel with an understanding of the Overlight, there are some forbidden techniques that are taught among the shadows of the Penumbral Court, which allow one Aurumel to achieve temporary mastery over another, even when social mores would dictate otherwise. You may channel *Kneel Before Me* when trying to exert social dominance over a fellow Aurumel. It may only be channeled outside of combat situations, and direct eye contact with the target is required.

Luminous: If the target has a mask of lesser generation than you, they break off eye contact and demonstrate a subservient nature, maybe even a hint of fear. Their spirit has been broken until the end of the scene.
Radiant: If the target has a mask of equal generation to you, same as Luminous. If the target has a mask of lesser generation, they take a knee and lower their head. If you win an Open Test (Resolve. vs. Mental), they can even be forced to announce their fealty to you or take a single oath, promising the completion of some task.
Brilliant: If the target has a mask of equal or lesser generation, same as Radiant. In addition, the target's initial response will be to collapse in complete fealty, as if confronted by a member of royalty. If the target began with one Zeal or less, they will act as an abject servant until the end of the scene. If the target has a mask of higher generation than you, same as Luminous.

Shatter 1: A platinum-colored stripe encircles your skull, like a crown. Any mask you wear will also manifest this stripe.
Shatter 2: You become exceedingly haughty, acting as if you are objectively better than anyone other than the fellow Skyborn members of your party. If circumstances require you to reign in your arrogance, you must spend one Spirit Point to behave respectfully or subserviently, lest you lose your temper. This could obviously lead to incredibly deadly consequences under certain circumstances, particularly when dealing with Aurumel who are of higher social station than you.
Shatter 3: Burnout. The platinum band grows platinum prongs and shines with a lunar light. When you wear your mask, it has a similar crown. Some other part of your mask becomes tarnished or even broken.

LABOR OF LOVE* (Vigor + Vigor)

Required Background: Guilded Laborer

Labor of Love represents the Guilded Laborer's ongoing artistic endeavor. It is their personal "great work" that has been haunting their thoughts and actions since they first picked up their tools. The *Labor of Love* can take any form, but should be a small or medium-sized object that you wear upon your person, either as jewelry, clothing, or even a weapon. You might be a leatherworker or a stonemason or a blacksmith.

Point Bank: Once per story, you may spend one XP to add one point to the Point Bank.

Thresholds:
1–5: Your object, whatever it might be, is clearly the work of an artisan. By people with such knowledge, you will be recognized as a talent. Upgrading your Craft Rating costs you two less XP.
6–7: The object has now progressed to a level of quality that even a layperson can appreciate its beauty. You may immediately upgrade your Wealth Rating by one level.
8+: You have perfected your craft and might, in time, come to be widely hailed as a master

artisan. If only you hadn't left the guild to pursue life as a wandering Skyborn! Your Spirit Pool is never empty. You can still experience Shatters as normal, but after any event that reduces your Spirit Pool to zero or less, you immediately gain back one Spirit Point.

MARVELS FROM AFAR (Compassion + Will)

Required Background: Merchant Prince

The Merchant Princes of Veile have seen many things and traveled to many places. One thing they have learned above all is how to discover what someone wants and fulfill those desires. It is not uncommon for them to have all manner of useful tools and widgets about their person, collected over many journeys to many distant locales. For Skyborn, this skill is further enhanced by the Overlight, allowing them to pluck some small object or curiosity from their voluminous pockets, always appearing to have exactly the right object at exactly the right time. Once per story, you may channel *Marvels From Afar* to astonishingly produce a tool that would be ideal for the current situation, or some small object to fulfill a person's cravings or desires.

Luminous: You produce a small, exotic marvel from on your person. It must be small enough to be palmed, and you should relate a tiny anecdote about how it came to be in your possession.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but the object can be of any size that could reasonably be carried among your things, and could even be produced as some new detail of an existing belonging, whether on (you never noticed this tiny pearl on the haft of my sword?) or even in (look at this secret compartment!) that object.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but the object can be as spectacular or as unlikely as you wish, provided it's still of a size to reasonably have been on your person without anyone seeing it before. If necessary, it could even count as a Valuable.

Shatter 1: You've inadvertently given away something that caused others to view you as a person of means. You must reduce your Wealth Rating by one level.
Shatter 2: Ignore the normal results of the channeling. Instead, you pull something dangerous out of a pocket. Be creative here! Maybe it has ties to a current villain or plotline.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Somewhere in your travels, you've lost something very precious to you. It could be a Valuable, but it should be intimately tied to your character's story, no matter what. If you lack an appropriate item, come up with something on the spot whose absence will have ramifications for the campaign.

MASTER'S FINE FINGERS (Wisdom + Vigor)

Not all Aurumel are born into luxury and opulence. Many work their way up through the rank structures of the guilds or survive by their own wits on a remote shard. This Chroma allows

Aurumel Skyborn to spontaneously develop extraordinary precision, speed, and grace when using their hands — from fine detail work to sleight of hand. As this Chroma developed in the interest of the craftsman's endeavor or the vagabond's survival, it is used exclusively in non-combat situations. You may channel *Master's Fine Fingers* before performing any Test which requires expert precision with your hands and fingers.

Luminous: Until the end of the scene, you may raise your Virtue Rating by one level when performing any Skill Test involving feats of manual dexterity and skill. If the Test fails, you may reroll one failed die.
Radiant: Until the end of the scene, you may raise your Virtue Rating by two levels when performing any Skill Test involving feats of manual dexterity and skill. If the Test fails, you may reroll one failed die.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but if you roll six successes on the Skill Test, you automatically achieve a Legendary success.

Shatter 1: Your fingers develop dozens of extra joints. Although you can maintain the shape of a normal Aurumel hand, your digits are fully prehensile and eerily fluid.
Shatter 2: With a bit of concentration, you can make the flesh of your hands and forearms split open up to the elbow, hatching a mass of feelers capable of ultra-fine manipulation. When you perform Craft and Machinery Tests, a Spirit Die result of "3" or "4" will now cause a Spirit Flare.
Shatter 3: Your arms become anemones of braided feelers and fronds. They scintillate with iridescent light and can even divide into separate clusters capable of multiple non-combat actions at once. Your arms can still congeal into vaguely Aurumel arms, but will appear strange unless completely covered.



PRAETORIAN'S SWIFT BLADE (Vigor + Might)

Veterans of a thousand wars, the Praetorians are those Aurumel who have taken to a life of mercenary and military devotion. They have chosen the blade as the expression of their life's accomplishments. As the death of each Praetorian is a sacrifice to the Aurumel people, their heroic and villainous deeds have etched a martial glyph upon the lineage of all Aurumel. Skyborn bearing this mark upon their flesh are among the *Electissimi* — the chosen heroes and villains that stand as grand champions among the elite. You may channel *Praetorian's Swift Blade* during combat, as an action, or simultaneously while performing a Mighty Blow maneuver.

Luminous: Until the end of the combat, spend one less Spirit Point when performing the Mighty Blow maneuver.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you may gain Fury Points equal to the Spirit Die result when channeling Chroma.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but the costs of the Rally Comrades and Challenge Foe maneuvers are reduced by one Spirit Point as well.

Shatter 1: You develop the mark of the *Electissimi* on the back of your neck. The sigil depicts a golden serpent ensnaring a black sword. Anyone familiar with the mark will recognize it immediately. Upon developing the mark, you must decide if you will pursue the path of the hero or the path of the villian. The decision is irreversible.
Shatter 2: If you chose the path of the hero, you take on an idealized affect that is associated with the heroic ideals of your Folk. This is purely a matter of perception and has no mechanical benefit or detriment. Nonetheless, Aurumel will often plead with you to fulfill impossible tasks well beyond your abilities, and will view refusal as betrayal of generations of societal tradition. If you chose the path of the villain, you will experience similar pleadings, but of a radically different variety. Murder, theft, the disproportionate exacting of revenge for some perceived slight — you will hear all of these and more.
Shatter 3: If you chose the path of the hero, you are charged with the fulfillment of a prophecy. If not of your own Folk, of another. Nonetheless, you are expected to become the very embodiment of an Aurumel demigod. The nature of this task, and its reward, should be negotiated with the GM. If you chose the path of the villain, you are the harbinger of a terrible doom somewhere beneath the Overlight. You are reviled and compared to monsters drawn from the pages of Aurumel myth, and you will end your existence as monstrously as you have lived it. Again, this requires a significant discussion with the GM.

REVERED APPRAISAL (Logic + Will)

Each Folk has their cultural contributions. The Banyari know the ways of flora and fauna, and the Pyroi are legendary for their war arts. The contribution of the Aurumel is their understanding of aesthetics — the grand presentation of themselves and their allies. As such, the Folk of Veile can enhance the social impact and magnificence of an ally. The Skyborn who commands this Chroma can so alter appearances, by twisting the minds and appetites of those who look upon the chosen ally, that a prince unfolds where once stood a pauper. When you channel *Revered Appraisal*, select one ally to target. You cannot use this Chroma on yourself.

Luminous: Your ally's appearance is now as if they were fashionable and well dressed for the situation at hand.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, and your ally may raise their Wealth Rating by one level until the end of the scene.
Brilliant: Same as Luminous, and your ally may

raise their Wealth Rating by two levels until the end of the scene -OR- by one level until the end of the story.

Shatter 1: Your flesh occasionally flutters with a dance of light, like fire upon gold.
Shatter 2: Your body mass doubles. Although your strength remains sufficient to allow regular movement and locomotion, your doubled weight can affect other objects (e.g., a fragile wooden floor or the back of a riding animal).
Shatter 3: Three tiny motes of golden light orbit around your body. Immediately upgrade your Wealth Rating by one level.

STORM'S REFUGE (Wisdom + Compassion)

Required Background: Airship Crew

Despite the excesses of their culture, the societies of Veile can be very conservative. When a trusted Airship Crew member is revealed to be Skyborn, the shame and derision that follows drives them from the crew. Set adrift with a set of skills that is often useless outside the ship's lifestyle, they have difficulty finding their way. *Storm's Refuge* is powered by that ever-present desire to return home. Airship Crew with this power can mystically navigate to the closest friendly haven, where they will find shelter and camaraderie.

Luminous: You find a hovel, which may or may not be occupied, and some meager comforts.
Radiant: You find a comfortable home with an inviting hearth and people there who welcome you and your friends for a time.
Brilliant: You serendipitously find a village or town. You may even find an as-yet-undiscovered shortcut to an even bigger settlement! There you make a fast friend who offers you luxurious lodging until you no longer require it.

Shatter 1: You become exceedingly buoyant in water. Although your physical shape and weight are unchanged, you can easily keep yourself and up to two allies afloat.
Shatter 2: Negative rumors begin to circulate about you, and your name becomes associated with bad luck by those who pilot airships, especially the Aurumel crews.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your freeloading reputation becomes known to your former crewmates and family back on Veile. You are declared an outlaw and your family disowns you.

TWIST OF LIGHT (Wisdom + Vigor)

The jeweler winds golden wires about a sparkling gem. The Merchant Prince bends words to maneuver between the desires of lesser traders. The Skyborn who has internalized these philosophies now twists the Overlight itself, stepping between its shining bands, to become invisible to onlookers. The effects of *Twist of Light* last until the end of the scene, but will instantly dissipate if you engage in combat or otherwise make physical contact

with anyone. Due to your fellow Skyborn's ability to perceive the subtle movements of the Overlight, this Chroma has no effect upon Skyborn viewers.

Luminous: You are entirely unseen by one target.
Radiant: You are entirely unseen by up to two targets.
Brilliant: You are entirely unseen by up to three targets.

Shatter 1: Your physical appearance intermittently blinks out for a fraction of a second at a time. This happens more frequently if you move quicker than walking speed. You are still physically present in every way that matters, and this blinking does not provide any narrative or mechanical advantage.
Shatter 2: During combat, flashing or pulsing light might daze and distract you. In such conditions, you must succeed at a Resolve Test or else skip your next action.
Shatter 3: The Overlight retaliates against your manipulations, and you dissolve in a shimmer of iridescent light. You no longer exist. Your character's journey ends here.

PYROI CHROMA



ASPECT OF THE MAGMA LYNX (Logic + Vigor)

Despite its rarity, the Magma Lynx is one of the more commonly represented beasts in Pyroi culture. It is known for its speed, ferocity, and invulnerability to some of Pyre's worst conditions. When a Skyborn Pyroi forges a totemic connection with the Magma Lynx, a strange and bestial force rises within them, allowing for a spectacular display of martial terror. You may channel *Aspect of the Magma Lynx* during combat, as an action.

Luminous: You become lightning fast on your feet. You may immediately perform a melee attack on any visible opponent, regardless of the distance, as you close the gap with supernatural speed.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but reduce the Spirit Point cost of channeling this Chroma by one, then gain Fury Points equal to the number of Spirit Points you just spent.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you are immune to damage from fire-based attacks until the end of the story.

Shatter 1: There is a strip of wispy fur that runs along your jawline, from your chin to your ears, which becomes tufted with red fur like the ears of a Magma Lynx.
Shatter 2: You are easily and instinctively distracted by beasts smaller than you. If one is present, you have difficulty taking your eyes off it. In these circumstances, you must reroll one success for all Tests. In addition, you become entirely carnivorous and require fresh meat for all meals.

Shatter 3: Burnout. You become reckless and overconfident due to the strong totemic influence of the Magma Lynx. Because you prioritize offense over defense, opponents increase their Physical Dice by one when attacking you.

BANE OF THE BEHEMOTH (Logic + Might)

Required Background: Hunter

There are beasts on the tundra of Pyre that defy description. Impossibly large and aggressive, these creatures would haunt the nightmares of most Folk. Only the hunting parties of the Pyroi truly know the methods and techniques for taking them down. The Shovel-Tusks, for instance, will always win in a clash of brute force. And so the hunters must use an understanding of the beast's instincts and habits, setting spears and placing arrows so that the animal itself assists in its own slaying. By channeling *Bane of the Behemoth*, you tap into the instinctive thoughts of a single, specific beast until the end of the scene. This beast must be substantially larger than you. Multiple uses of this Chroma are not cumulative.

Luminous: You may reroll failed dice on Skill Tests that involve tracking the beast. Every time you successfully attack the beast, deal one extra damage.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but every time you successfully attack the beast, deal three extra damage instead.
Brilliant: You automatically succeed at Skill Tests that involve tracking the beast. Every time you successfully attack the beast, deal five extra damage.

Shatter 1: You can discern the cries and calls of enormous beasts from up to a mile away.
Shatter 2: Developing a fondness and respect for the beast that you hunt, you are obligated to perform a brief ceremony upon each waking. When this creature is killed, you must take a trophy from its body and use the trophy to anoint yourself with the spirits of this and other creatures you have killed. The trophy may be considered a Valuable, but if you ever lose it or are not able to perform your waking ceremony, you become incapable of using any Pyroi Chroma against beasts until the ritual can be performed.
Shatter 3: Burnout. In a moment of clarity, you and the beast achieve a mutual understanding, and the animal ceases fighting, provided it can leave. You may no longer hunt or injure beasts of this type.

DANCE OF THE BURNING HEART (Will + Vigor)

Perhaps the greatest romance in the history of the Pyroi people is that of the lovers Ari and Ati. It was from their passion that the Pyroi were given their lust for existence. The dance that tells the story is a legendary one, and while all Pyroi know the tale, few can

perform the dance with enough talent to present the required nuance. Skyborn Pyroi, who stoke the tale with spirit, give life to the characters and their plight with such fabled beauty that onlookers have little choice but to watch. *Dance of the Burning Heart* may not be channeled in combat.

Luminous: Your dance is elegant and interesting. Observers are distracted enough that they ignore other activity unless a deliberate effort is made to get their attention.
Radiant: Your dance is forceful and impassioned. Observers are enthralled and must win an Open Test (Persuasion vs. Mental) to respond if others try to get their attention.
Brilliant: Your dance is mythic and otherworldly. Observers are transfixed by your perfect grace and cannot act unless a blatant threat (e.g., combat or theft) presents itself.

Shatter 1: A band of thatched black lines surrounds your chest, then dissipates into an indelible tattoo.
Shatter 2: You become so focused on the mastery of the dance that, for all Performance Tests that are not dance related, you must lower your Skill Rating by one level.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You fall madly in love with the next person you see who aligns with your romantic preferences. You will not pursue them without consent, but they will own your heart forever.

DEFIANT MISSIVE (Will + Vigor)

Required Background: Tundrarunner

There are few roles in Pyroi society that require the bloody-minded perseverance of the Tundrarunner. These messengers and diplomats were once a necessity for almost all communication among the various tribes and clans of Pyre, but now they are employed only for the most important or ceremonial errands. So great in importance are these tasks that Skyborn Tundrarunners use this Chroma to ensure profound consequence. You may channel *Defiant Missive* upon accepting some mission or task, and its effects will last until the mission has ended in success or failure. At the GM's discretion, this mission might even transcend the scope of a single story.

Luminous: If you are attacked while traveling in service to the mission, or assaulted while attempting to complete the mission in some other way, you may reroll initiative.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but whoever tasked you with the mission is immediately aware when you are attacked.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you also gain three Fury Points.

Shatter 1: You must travel on foot until this task is complete. If you ride a beast or accept passage on a vehicle of any kind, the effect of the Chroma dissipates and can never be restored for this specific task.
Shatter 2: You cannot accept reward for your services. This includes not only wealth but also personal favors.
Shatter 3: Burnout. The mission has no end and

no beginning. Your life's journey has become the mission. You now run the tundra out of pure joy, without destination. Your running speed becomes almost supernaturally fast, but you receive one less XP at the end of each story.

EVERBURNING VALOR (Will + Might)

Required Background: Firethane

Virtually all young Pyroi dream of the heroic deeds and profound courage of the Firethanes. At the center of countless songs and epics are tales of standing side by side with your battle fellows and spilling blood against overwhelming odds. Skyborn Firethanes are champions among champions, and can truly fight as those Pyroi of myth and legend — the greater the enemy's number, the more will fall before the Firethane cohort. You may channel *Everburning Valor* any time you and your allies are outnumbered in combat. This may occur simultaneously with an attack, and its effects will last until the end of the combat.

Luminous: As long as you and your allies are outnumbered in this combat, your attacks deal one extra damage.

Radiant: As long as you and your allies are outnumbered in this combat, your attacks deal three extra damage.

Brilliant: As long as you and your allies are outnumbered in this combat, your attacks deal five extra damage.

Shatter 1: Any weapon you hold glows as if superheated. Small tongues of flame can be seen to lick along its edge.

Shatter 2: Anything less than overwhelming odds no longer seems a fair fight to you. When you and your allies outnumber your foes, you are honorably merciful, and every attack deals one less damage. This effect does not apply when you are dealing with beasts.

Shatter 3: Burnout. You have discovered the heart of true valor. You will always give quarter to any being who pleads sincerely; to do otherwise is no longer within your nature.

INFERNO AXE (Logic + Might)

The Pyroi style of axe is a very large weapon, sacred among both Firethanes and the best of Hunters. Making use of the immense physical strength of the Pyroi, these heavy weapons are hurled at foes to do catastrophic harm. The axe is also the symbol and chosen weapon of the Fire Emperor, a demon of pure flame featured in the rhymes of children's song. The Fire Emperor is said to delight in this Chroma as he sits upon his throne of cinder, eating balls of ash. You may channel *Inferno Axe* in combat to cause a Pyroi axe that you throw to ignite as it leaves your hands. Besides dealing extra damage, the flaming weapon will ignite any object that is normally capable of burning. *Inferno Axe* may be channeled simultaneously with the throwing of the weapon.

Luminous: When you throw a Pyroi axe, the weapon bursts into flame and deals one extra damage.
Radiant: When you throw a Pyroi axe, the weapon bursts into flame and deals three extra damage.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but you also gain two Fury Points.

Shatter 1: You develop a peculiar dietary need for the ash of wood or bone.

Shatter 2: Your eyes become huge and bulging, while an immense set of demonic horns grows from your brow. You have become a nightmare incarnate. From now on, in any Test for a social encounter that does not involve intimidation, you lose one success.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your voice becomes like that of a villain from the darkest myths, slicing the air like a perfectly sharpened hatchet of sound and malice. When attempting to intimidate someone, you may replace your Persuasion dice with d12s.

LINEAGE OF BATTLE (Will + Might)

You are a link in a chain of revered warriors. Through your veins flows the fire of countless generations of Pyroi, masters of strength and honor instinctively gravitating toward the next challenge. Your Skyborn nature elevates the strength of this line and turns it into a great source of power. You are a child of combat, funneling the intention and prowess of the greatest fighters of your line and sharing it with your worthy comrades. *Lineage of Battle* must be channeled as your first action during a combat. You must declare the type of attack (in the form of a Skill) that will benefit from this Chroma. To receive the benefit, your allies must use exactly the same Skill and Virtue combination you declared.

Luminous: Your allies may reroll two failed dice on their next attack, and one failed die for all other attacks until the end of the combat.
Radiant: Your allies may reroll four failed dice on their next attack, and one failed die for all other attacks until the end of the combat.
Brilliant: Your allies may reroll all failed dice on their next attack, and one failed die for all other attacks until the end of the combat.

Shatter 1: Golden triangles appear in a line along your spine, down your legs and arms, and maybe even up over your head.
Shatter 2: You must spend one Spirit Point if you choose to attack from an unseen position. Ambushes are for cowards.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your blood is strong with the ancestors, and so is your pride. If you are ever challenged to single combat and refuse, your Spirit Pool is reduced to zero.

MAGMA TORRENT (Wisdom + Might)

Required Background: Volcano Priest

The highest station one can achieve in Pyroi culture is that of the Volcano Priest. The great chieftains, war-leaders, mystics, and poets all have their legends and deeds, but the Volcano Priests have power — pure and simple. Who but they command the heart of Pyre itself? Who but they wield the blood of the earth as a weapon? Who but they are obeyed by the First Flame? Infused with the power of Khar-Ulan, you may channel *Magma Torrent* at any time during combat. Its effects will trigger whenever you suffer damage during this combat. You may not choose to voluntarily injure yourself or allow yourself to be injured. (What self-respecting Pyroi would do that?) When you are on Pyre and within sight of Khar-Ulan or another volcano, the effects of this Chroma deal one extra damage.

Luminous: When wounded by an opponent's attack, your skin briefly ruptures and shoots forth a thin stream of magma. The opponent who wounded you suffers two damage.

Radiant: Same as Luminous. However, any time you are wounded, you may allow the ongoing effect to end. If you do, you immediately blast forth a torrent of magma from your palms, dealing four damage to any target within your line of sight.

Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but with a third option: Any time you are wounded, you may allow the ongoing effect to end. If you do, a short-lived geyser of lava spews from the ground in a forceful fountain, dealing three damage to all other combatants, friend and foe alike.

Shatter 1: The skin of your calves and feet cracks and develops softly pulsing lines of glowing heat.

Shatter 2: Very flammable things smolder, perhaps even ignite, at your touch.

Shatter 3: Burnout. You have taken enough of the volcano's power. You know that your ultimate destiny will be in service to Khar-Ulan. Maybe not soon, but one way or another, your journey will end in sacrifice of some kind. Hail grandfather volcano.

RITES OF HONOR (Wisdom + Compassion)

Etiquette and respect are matters of life and death in the camps of some Pyroi warbands. Almost all Pyroi customs have an accompanying ritual. These ceremonies are the hard stones that hold up all Pyroi society. *Rites of Honor* is used by Pyroi to wrap social encounters in a kind of empathic web, reading subtle cues from the participants while amplifying their own social and political capacity. This allows them to navigate the situation with grace and poise, all while not causing offense or revealing secrets that must remain hidden. You may channel *Rites of Honor* at the beginning of any social encounter, but it may not be used in combat.

Luminous: Once during this scene, you may

reroll any number of Skill dice in a single Test involving Folklore, Intuition, Perception, or Persuasion.
Radiant: Once during this scene, you may reroll any number of dice in a single Test involving Folklore, Intuition, Perception, or Persuasion.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant. If you succeed at the Test for which you rerolled, you may use the reroll ability a second time during this scene.

Shatter 1: You must anoint or create a small object which you wear or carry with you always. Failure to do so will prevent you from using Chroma.
Shatter 2: You must invent a small ritual to be performed before each combat. Failure to do so means you will not be able to use Chroma at all during that combat. This ritual could be as simple as rubbing the sand of the battleground between your hands, or as complicated as etching the sigil of your Core Virtue upon your flesh. The ritual should not be at all related to the object that you carry.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You must design a second ritual to be performed consistently after waking. Failure to do so prevents you from using Chroma at all. Your fellow Pyroi will either view you as someone with a deep connection to Pyre's fire, living such a ritualized life, or as someone who has lost what it means to be Pyroi, desperately grasping for meaning with widgets and baubles.

SONG OF THE BONEBLADE (Will + Vigor)

Required Background: Flameheart

The Flameheart sings a song of ancient power that awakens the lineage of the warrior poet within. The song expands within the Flameheart's chest and through their limbs and senses, with courage unflinching. The opponent is called out and must face the Skyborn in single combat. You may channel *Song of the Boneblade* in combat, where it acts as an enhanced Challenge Foe maneuver.

Luminous: The Chroma acts as a successful Challenge Foe maneuver. In addition, any ally of the target must win an Open Test (Inspiration vs. Mental) or else they may not intervene.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, and the target must reduce their Physical Dice by two.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, and the target cannot trigger Surges.

Shatter 1: Your movements create the sound of the wind across the open tundra when you move any faster than a walking pace.
Shatter 2: Gripped with primordial passion, whenever you channel this Chroma, you suffer two damage.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You are consumed by sorrow and longing as the landscape itself becomes an unrequited love. The next time you visit Pyre, you must return to the wilds, where you will walk the open tundra alone until your death.

SPEAKER'S FIRE (Wisdom + Compassion)

Required Background: Embertongue

Embertongues fill many roles in Pyroi life. Often called upon as mediators and emissaries to foreign dignitaries, more than a few of them have developed methods of the Overlight that can serve to relax and soften social tensions or tempers arising from trade dealings. When you channel *Speaker's Fire*, you may influence a conversation or gathering of people meeting to discuss any number of topics. The Overlight works in subtle ways, removing suspicion and smoothing over sharp edges of personality.

Luminous: Circle of Friends. The assembled Folk speak to you as if you were a well-known acquaintance.

Radiant: Circle of Trust. Same as Luminous, but the assembled Folk might open up to you as if you were a beloved friend.

Brilliant: Circle of Secrets. Same as Radiant, but the assembled Folk might even treat you as if you were a co-conspirator or confidante.

Shatter 1: When you arrive in large social situations, you are welcomed as a friend among strangers. Almost by instinct it seems, the gathering treats you as the life of the party.

Shatter 2: It becomes nearly impossible for you to pass unnoticed in a crowd.

Shatter 3: Burnout. Smoke and fire leak from your mouth when you speak, with an intensity that betrays your emotions.



SURVIVOR'S SPARK (Wisdom + Might)

Calling back to reach into the burning heart of Pyre's elemental core, a Pyroi may summon up a sparking piece of that most enduring of flames.

Luminous: A small flame appears on your fingertips. This can be used to light easily flammable materials or to provide a tiny light by which to see. It lasts until the end of the scene.
Radiant: A small blaze the size of a campfire appears on the ground in front of you. It will burn naturally thereafter.
Brilliant: An area within your natural line of sight erupts into a massive conflagration, approximately 10 feet in radius. Anyone caught in the blast must perform a Hazard Test (Fire D10 vs. Physical). Anything flammable in the area will catch fire, and the blaze will burn itself out naturally.

Shatter 1: The *Glyph of the Spark* appears somewhere on your body. It may be as a brand, scarred flesh, or a glowing rune. You are marked by other Pyroi as "upon the Path of Fire."
Shatter 2: Your face or forehead is marked by the *Glyph of Flame*. Beasts and simple-minded Folk respond to you as they would a large open fire.
Shatter 3: Burnout. Your receive the *Glyph of Pyre* somewhere on your body. You are now immune to fire and heat damage in all respects.

TRACK THE SPIRIT (Wisdom + Logic)

Required Background: Boneskin Thrallscout

The role of the Thrallscout is to range ahead of the warband, find the enemy, and report back with enough intel that the Firethanes can engage the targets with preparation and honor. Sometimes the Thrallscouts range for incredibly long periods of time, where they are often ambushed and killed, or simply die of exposure. Such is the challenge of their station. Yet Skyborn Thrallscouts can sometimes circumvent what is often the deadliest part of this duty. If you find the footprint of a target you are tracking, you may channel *Track the Spirit*, plunging your senses into the impression and assuming the perceptions of your quarry, like a mantle over your own mind. This effect lasts until the end of the scene or until you choose to end it. You cannot channel another Chroma while this is in effect.

Luminous: If the target is on the same shard as you, you can see through their eyes.
Radiant: Same as Luminous, but you can also hear through the target's ears.
Brilliant: You can see through the eyes and hear through the ears of the target, no matter which shard they are on.

Shatter 1: This Chroma taps into your deep connection to the wilds around you and the cultural memory of the wide open spaces of Pyre. With each successive Shatter, that connection becomes more intense, such that when you

are not in these wild expanses, you become increasingly uncomfortable. When in cities or large settlements, you find the smells and noises overpowering and unpleasant.
Shatter 2: You must reroll one successful Skill die when performing Skill Tests within the confines of cities or large towns.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You now fear urban areas and prefer not to set foot in them. The negative effects of the *Celebrant of the Open Flame* Gift, regarding confined spaces, now extend to urban areas also.

WARHOWL (Wisdom + Might)

There is no soul that does not tremble at the sound of a Pyroi's *Warhowl*. The power of harnessed Might radiates outward as a baleful howl, pouring across the landscape as a warning. You may channel *Warhowl* at any time.

Luminous: One target is gripped by the shakes. The next time this target attacks you, reduce the damage you suffer by one. The howl is loud enough to startle anyone nearby.
Radiant: Your howl is one that all your enemies will remember, if they survive this day. Any opponents with fewer than two Zeal must spend one Zeal or run from the battlefield in terror.
Brilliant: Same as Radiant, but any remaining opponents suffer one damage. The radius of the howl extends for several miles. Flocks of birds panic, herds spook, and Folk look to the horizon, stirred by a primordial dread.

Shatter 1: The front of your face extends and grows more muzzle-like, while your canine teeth grow to a size that would make a Hamanu envious.
Shatter 2: You have come to view your allies like a beast might view its pack. Despite your large size, you become uncertain in social situations. For Skill Tests in social environments, you automatically lose one success unless you are accompanied by at least three allies.
Shatter 3: Burnout. You must always sleep outdoors.





CHAPTER 6

SECRET WISDOM

THE ROLE OF THE GAMEMASTER

If you have chosen to step into the role of Gamemaster (GM) for your group's Overlight campaign, congratulations! We salute you. You are about to undertake the challenging and incredibly rewarding role that every role-playing game requires. What's more, you are the vessel through which the other players will experience the world of Overlight, and indeed the manner in which other people may learn to enjoy tabletop role-playing games. You are an infection vector for our hobby.

It is also possible that you find yourself reading this chapter because you intend to be a player and would like a full understanding of all the rules of the game. If that's the case, we implore you to consider donning the mantle of GM yourself. The world needs all the GMs it can get, and we firmly believe that anyone is capable of stepping into this role occasionally. It is our hope that this chapter will give both GMs and prospective GMs alike some tools and ideas to craft an Overlight game that is exciting and rewarding for your players.

We believe that a GM has two primary roles to fulfill. The first is that of *storyteller*. You will be the lens through which the players experience the world of Overlight, which means you'll have to maintain a certain level of narrative consistency, while being the well from which the campaign flows to become a living, breathing setting that the players feel part of.

Secondly, the GM must act as *referee*. We firmly believe that the rules of any role-playing game exist mostly to facilitate fun and provide some structure — they're not worth arguing over to such a degree that the game gets derailed. The Overlight rules are fairly simple, even if some of the Chroma can get a bit complicated.

If you can't come to a quick decision about a rule during play, we encourage you to decide with a random die roll, or make a call in some other way in order to get on with the game. After the session, you can circle back and examine the rules more closely to have a better understanding for next time.

GAMEMASTER AS STORYTELLER

As GM, your most important role is arguably that of story facilitator. You will create the stories that the other players experience, describing their adventures and the world they move through, and acting the part of the many other characters that the players will interact with. First and foremost, remember that it's your job to make sure the other players are having fun. But there's a few specific topics that bear some discussion.

"GAME TIME" IN OVERLIGHT

In a setting that lacks a true difference between night and day, the measurement and parsing out of time can get a bit tricky. When it comes to the relative time measurements of the game itself, we use three specific terms to designate time as it applies to duration of certain effects, rewarding players with advancement, or allowing for an epic, game-changing event. The three measurements of game time we use in Overlight are *scenes*, *stories*, and *campaigns*.

The Scene – The scene is theoretically the briefest of the three. If you imagine a movie or a play, a scene is a single moment, at a single location, using a small portion of characters. Although there is some variation in the format of scenes, most players and GMs won't have trouble understanding what a scene is. A single session will consist of one or more scenes, depending on the length of the session. Below are some examples of a scene.

Palami and Yorthus find themselves trapped by furious Banyari forest wardens, who caught the thieving duo attempting to harvest the last flower of Hangman's Sorrow from a sacred grove. The failed attempt at negotiation, and the ensuing melee and unfortunate capture of Palami and Yorthus, make up this scene.

Meng the Crystal Wind Adept fights off Aurumel Pirates while swinging from the docking lines that dangle from the

bottom of the airship. Gotami, Meng's Hamanu companion inside the airship, flips random levers and yanks random handles in an attempt to land the blasted thing so that she can save her friend. Even though Meng and Gotami are in somewhat separate locations, this sequence of airship hijinks is a single scene.

Scenes should culminate in *something* and should have good conflicts and decisions to make them memorable: the daring duel upon the rooftops of a council hall in the middle of Haark; the solemn retelling of the death of Szandu the Cursed during the careful social ballet of etiquette with grim Pyroi priests; a dreaded debate with Teryxian ostrakonomers as you present evidence of a failure of their science. These are all exciting episodes that would make great scenes.

The Story – When enough scenes precipitate into an interesting sequence of events that they begin to reveal the bigger pieces of your tale, you have a story. A story is not so much a moment but a series of moments or scenes — which should rightly have a beginning, middle, and end. These elements should be compartmentalized within a narrative arc in such a way that they are recognizable beats. What Overlight calls a story, other games might call an "adventure" or even a "module." Below are some examples of a story.

The noble Pyroi warriors have discovered that the Lance of Star-Iron has been stolen by another tribe with whom they are currently brokering a truce. The Skyborn characters are ordered to find and retrieve the lance, after an awkward rumble with Temple Guards. They undertake three quests, each with their own ordeals, at three sacred locations. Once the lance is returned, the characters are celebrated and rewarded.

The characters have come to Veile to celebrate the Legacy Gala of the great House Fortua. At the apex of the festival's revelry, the Matrux Irix Fortua is poisoned and disintegrates into a colony of spiders. The characters question witnesses and Irix's enemies, revealing that the House Fortua long ago exiled an exceedingly cruel cousin who was obsessed with grotesque methods of life extension. The characters make their way to his ruined villa in a remote part of Veile. They confront him and his menagerie of monstrous experimental subjects, and the characters lay him low. With his relic arm as proof of demise, the characters return to Lady Fortua's hall and are honored appropriately.

The completion of a story usually takes a fair bit of game time (often quite a few sessions), makes use of a wide range of character abilities, and puts sufficient demands on the role-playing

faculties of the players. The characters should be given a handsome acknowledgement of their efforts; memorable scenes should be further rewarded (see the "Character Rewards" section, p. 259), and the story should unfold into another story and another story and…

The Campaign – The campaign is the largest possible increment of game time. A campaign is what happens when a bunch of stories coalesce to form a saga, an epic, the grand legend of the characters and their entire catalog of deeds. The beginning of a campaign is the birth of the party's story, the middle of the campaign is filled with all the adventures they share while consciously or unconsciously being pushed toward the culmination of their Skyborn destinies, and the end is the fulfillment of their mythic purpose and the end of their tale.

Campaigns should change the characters. No character should remain unmarked by the events of a campaign, and no major plot thread should be left dangling. Could a particularly memorable villain give our characters the slip and never been seen again? Sure. But perhaps that very villain's escape and ascent to greater evil is the perfect spark that grows into the blazing inspiration needed for another campaign.

While these three classifications are largely to help with the design and pacing of your storytelling, it is important to remember that there are some specific rules that reference them as defined units of time. For example, characters with certain Gifts or Chroma may be restricted to using them only "once per story." These uses will have to be notated on the character sheet or elsewhere to keep track. It is ultimately the GM's decision when scenes, stories, and campaigns begin and end.

OTHER OVERLIGHT STRANGENESS

Overlight is an unusual setting, with some elements that are rather high concept. A few of these concepts require a bit of direct discussion, considering how odd they are.

Light and Dark – Overlight does not have daytime or nighttime, and no sun or moon either. What this means is that the general timekeeping conventions that we take for granted have no meaning in this setting. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, it's probably best to continue using terms such as *hour*, *day*, and *week* — if only to keep your group's brains from doing somersaults.

The absence of a regular day and night provides other challenges. It does mean that, as GM, you can pretty much decide when it's light and when it's dark. The precise movements of the shards are left intentionally vague and are intended to be complicated patterns that require dedicated study to understand. To that end, you can really use light and dark as you see fit, to best suit the sorts of stories that you are trying to tell.

It should be mentioned that it is our intent for the cycles to be long, not remotely akin



to Earth's day and night, being instead tied to the slow movements of continent-sized floating bodies. Indeed, even characters within the world might use the word "cycle" to mean any number of things, as only the Teryxian ostrakonomers really have a proper comprehension of the entire system.

We imagine that a single cycle represents one full rotation of all seven shards through their various routes and patterns, drifting through the sky at an immeasurably slow pace. (Remember, the shards' positions in the sky, relative to one another, never change — just their positions on the horizontal plane.) A full cycle is probably between two and three of our years, but the patterns are complex enough that the exact length of a cycle is always in flux. Not entirely unlike the reckoning of time by certain cultures on Earth, the movements of the shards are patterns within patterns within patterns. It's best to leave it ambiguous.

As for actual light and dark? Generally speaking, periods of "day" last longer on the uppermost shards, while "night" is more common further down. So it is that Nova, having no other shard above it, is eternally bright, while Pyre is often shrouded in darkness, lit only by the glow of volcanoes. Zenith is often in the shadow of Nova — although when it is not, there is steady light, reflecting brightly off the snow, or sometimes shining through heavy cloud cover. Quill has the brilliant light and warm temperatures one might expect from a jungle environment, but clouds and winds from cold Zenith can produce unusual storms and weather patterns. Banyan and Haark are similar in that their relative periods of light and dark are almost equivalent. We like to think Veile is in a state of perpetual twilight.

It is worth mentioning again here that the Overlight itself is thought of as divine energy, a literal blessing. As such, when a shard is under the shadow, it is not uncommon for some communities — especially upon Quill and Haark — to believe that dreadful events and ill omens are more likely to occur.

Seasons and Weather – Other than the recurring rainy season on Banyan, we haven't really discussed many specifics about seasons or weather on the various shards. The changing of the seasons is best used as a GM tool, to help give shape and color to your adventures. As for weather patterns, who can really claim to understand the ebb and flow of cloud cover and air streams (or even the ocean currents in the Sea Below) in a place with such bizarre geography? For now, we leave it to you to define the various seasons and the intricacies of the shard rhythms that influence them. But here's a few ideas to get you started.

There's a constant flow of lava in Pyre's magma rivers. Is the volume of molten rock consistent? Do the volcanoes erupt with any sort of pattern?

Does the huge inland sea of Veile have tides? What would cause such a thing?

Most of Haark's natural landscape, whatever it may have been, has been built over. What did it look like before? Did some environmental change in the ancient past contribute to the decision to build a city on such a scale?

The Malachite Plains of Banyan have rainy seasons. What about the Great Forest? Does it experience something akin to spring? Winter? There's no axial tilt to cause seasons in this way. But if an autumn-like occurrence does happen, how does this affect the Hearthwood Trees?

Rainstorms are not uncommon on Quill. How often does the shard see typhoon force tempests? If Quill's weather is so heavily influenced by Zenith, do the rituals of the Hamanu Stormchanters effect it?

The entire continent of Zenith can't be all wind and snow and ice all the time, can it?

Flying Teryxians! – Teryxians as PCs can provide a unique puzzle for the GM. It's not often that role-playing games feature playable characters who are capable of full flight! You should be mindful of how this ability can influence your attempts to tell a story. Here are a few guidelines to help you navigate this potentially tricky situation.

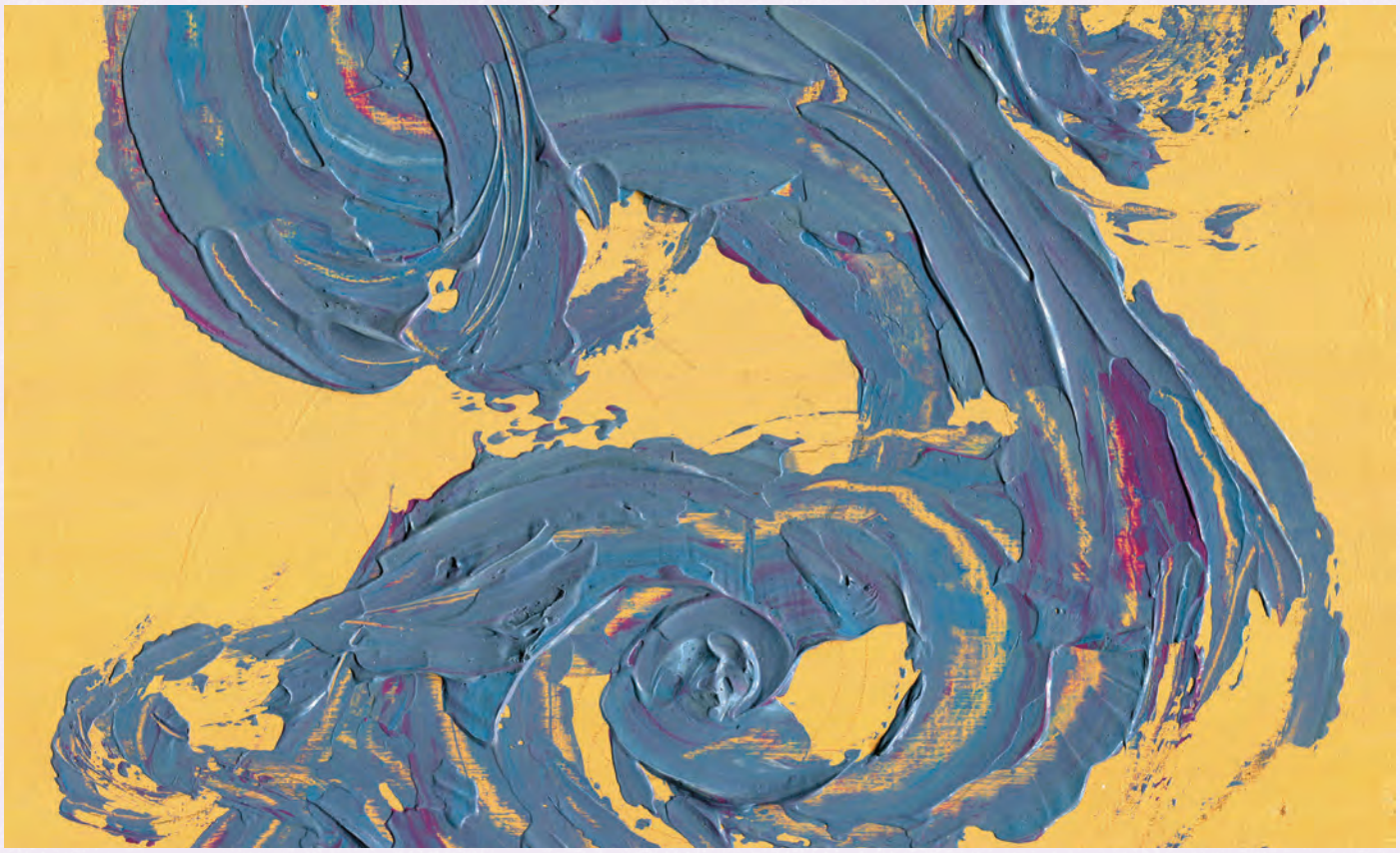
Teryxians are not hummingbirds or helicopters. They cannot hover in the air, nor can they float like a seagull upon ocean breezes. In combat, they must swoop down to strike their opponents, so they should not be invulnerable to enemy melee attacks if they are engaging the fight in such a manner. Also, keep in mind that the manner in which the Teryxian body is built does not allow for the shooting or throwing of a projectile weapon while flying.

If you're not careful, you might find that having a PC who is capable of flight will lay waste to some of your best plots. Chasing a fleeing opponent through crowds or cover is much easier if you can fly. There's little need for rope or ladders to deal with a deep pit. Even something falling off the edge of a cliff

might be saved if you've got wings! When designing your Overlight stories, keep in mind that some hurdles or challenges that would be perfectly fine in other games might not be so interesting when there's a Teryxian involved.

Windlore Tests are your friend. Teryxian players are likely to attempt all sorts of airborne acrobatics and other wild aerial feats. Be demanding with Windlore Tests when a player is trying some of their zanier ideas. These Windlore Tests should be required in most instances where a more terrestrial Folk would be using Athletics. In fact, for most flying stunts, Windlore (Vigor) or Windlore (Might) would probably be more appropriate than Windlore (Logic), which is really more about discerning angles and gravity when piloting airships or using projectile or thrown weapons.

Flying is a tiring affair, and the laws of physics from our world still apply, despite this being Overlight. Flying for long distances, or while carrying large burdens, is not a task to be shrugged off easily. Flight between shards should really only be possible between Quill and Banyan, or maybe between Banyan and Haark — and even then only for an extremely limited time during the cycle. Teryxian characters with the *Tenacious Flight* Chroma are capable of more heroic feats while flying.



Air Travel – For the rest of the Folk, travel between the shards — whether by Aurumel airship, flying steed, or other methods — should really be a narrative tool, and not necessarily one with need for special rules (at least for the purposes of this rulebook). Simply acquiring the means to travel from shard to shard can be an adventure in and of itself! Here's a handful of thoughts about air travel in your campaigns.

Travel between shards should not be *exceedingly* rare, because where's the fun in that? Having adventures on different shards is a huge part of the appeal of the Overlight setting. But when your campaign does hop from shard to shard, it should feel eventful, a moment of true wonder. It's a delicate balance to maintain: rare enough that air travel feels special, but not so rare that players aren't experiencing the fullness of the setting!

The great airships are all built and piloted by the Aurumel. The Verena dynasty is the most powerful of all the Aurumel lineages, being both a house and a guild all in one. There is nary a bit of inter-shard trade that occurs without the involvement of the House Verena, save for only the smallest of endeavors. From small, sleek skiffs to gargantuan merchant vessels, these airships are the domain of the wealthy and prosperous. Portage upon one of these machines should be very expensive, requiring a Wealth Test at the very least — and only if you can get an audience with a suitable NPC. If nothing else, more people are always needed to energize the Overlight engines that power these monstrosities. The mortality rate among the slaves whose Spirit fuels the engines is quite high.

Many of the Folk have creatures, domesticated or otherwise, that they utilize to fly to neighboring shards, though some of these beasts are the exclusive domain of the societal elite. The Teryxians have the Jeweled Dragonflies, still maintained by Brood Masters in large numbers. The Pyroi Leatherwing Cult has its Fire-Bats. And Haark has the formidable Iron Wasp Navy, in addition to the many Aurumel merchants (and their purses) who are now most loyal to that greatest of cities. As for Zenith, it has long been told that the Zenith Order Monks began their migrations thanks to the hospitality of a rogue Aurumel merchant vessel, and there are indications that such relationships persist in secret. The Banyari are isolated enough that they have not traditionally traveled to other shards.

The Outlawed and the Profane – Despite having many and disparate cultures and customs, the populace of the Seven have some beliefs in common. It is accepted that the Overlight is divine in nature, not only providing heat, light, and warmth such as our sun does on Earth, but also literally filling and fueling the spiritual lives of every living thing and every inanimate part of the natural world.

One does *not* contemplate flying directly up into the Overlight. To do so would be an affront to the purity of the sky's light. Similarly, one does not touch, or even

come close to touching, the surface of the Underfathom. No light penetrates its dark waters, so the atmosphere there must be truly abhorrent indeed.

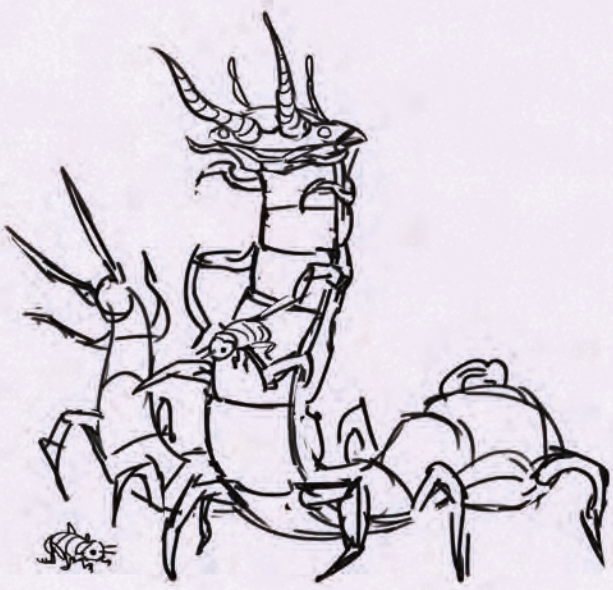
It is accepted that the seven Virtues are guiding principles by which to craft one's life journey. Of course, every being is fallible, and each of the Folk revere one Virtue above all others, but collectively the Virtues are ideals that one should aspire to and also tangible representations of those values, in their purest manifestation. It is not uncommon to find the Virtue sigils inscribed upon talismans, relics, idols, and other religious objects.

CAMPAIGN SETTINGS

Overlight presents opportunities for a wide range of story ideas. In fact, Overlight presents so many of these opportunities that it may be difficult to decide what sort of tale you would like to tell. In this section we will discuss the shape of your campaign, insofar as what each shard has to offer by way of description and tone.

Campaign Setting: Nova – Nova is the purest expression of both the Overlight's unfettered, undiminished nature and also the desolation and isolation of religious ideals when separated from the world we live in. It is a bleak and terrifying wasteland, at the center of which lies a temple manned by the alien, sometimes flesh-eating Novapendra. To brave Nova for any length of time is a heroic feat in and of itself. Here there are ancient secrets and traces of the pre-broken world that cannot be found anywhere else. Although it would be difficult to set an entire campaign on Nova, it is the perfect place to bring a campaign to a memorable finale or to serve as a dangerous chapter where characters must prove that the path they walk surpasses regard for their own life and safety.

- Themes: Pilgrimage. Faith. Selfless devotion. Revelations of the unknown. The food chain (i.e., you're not at the top).
- Sources of Wonder: Stark white and beige bands of endless desert. Novapendra shepherds tending their cricket colonies. Torch-lit grottos painted with fragmented scenes from the world's unmaking. The Temple of Nova projecting a laser-like column of pure Spirit into the infinity above.



Campaign Setting: Zenith – The shard of mountains and snow, Zenith is the home of the Hamanu and the Zenith Order Monks. As these character types are always played in bonded pairs, a tale focusing on the duo could be entirely fulfilling and exceedingly convenient if you only have two players besides yourself. As these two characters would be Skyborn, perhaps they are trying to reconcile the fact that they long for distant shards and no longer feel a connection to the shard from which they came.

Larger groups in Zenith-based campaigns could be Skyborn Monks from different monasteries, working together to resolve some peril that has befallen their beloved shard. Or perhaps the characters could start as such a consortium and then travel the Seven to spread the shared points of the characters' different worldviews. As Zenith is huge, mountainous, and difficult to navigate for many reasons, virtually anything could be hidden here — whether it be in a dusty nook in some elder Monk's quarters or in the blood tunnels of the Yamari. (Speaking of which, if you really find yourself desiring a traditional tunnel-crawling monster fight, you will find no better location than the dark caves of the Yamari.)

The Zenith Orders tend to have a general respect for members of the Skyborn Order but often take issue with the invasive way the Skyborn Order goes about its agenda. A campaign based around Skyborn attempting to politic their way through the social obstacles created by the Skyborn Order's evangelical method on Zenith could also lead to some interesting debates and role-playing opportunities.

- Themes: Hidden wisdom. Honor and humility. Mysticism. Unconditional friendship.
- Sources of Wonder: Mountains so great as to be the stuff of myth. Steep slopes sealed in shining ice. Monasteries adorned with the images of wise beings cast in bronze. Hidden green places in concealed valleys known only to mad sages.



Campaign Setting: Quill – There can be no denying that Quill and the Teryxians play a vital role in the big-picture story of Overlight. The fact that the Teryxians developed the science and theory of the way the shards

themselves behave means that, at least in that regard, all Folk will come to understand these things as the Teryxians do. If your players like to integrate debates about strange theories into your game, Quill provides a culture where this is commonplace. If you want to terrorize your players with pedantic, haughty NPCs, Quill can serve this need.

It is important to remember that Tanouac the Heretic, the narrator of the early chapters, was Teryxian. This is a major element of the bigger story of Overlight. Tanouac's Teryxian compulsion to analyze and define probably had some role in his being pushed to the point of dying for what he knew and spoke about. On Quill, the shadow of Tanouac (and that of his rumored Grymalkyn pets) is likely longer and darker than most other places. Campaigns that want to bring this mythic component to the forefront might find Quill a suitable locale for such a story.

One might also consider that a society built on ritual, reason, balance, and control may not have the best reaction to Skyborn interlopers. Perhaps characters arrive at just the wrong time and disrupt some hyper-particular ritual that the Teryxians must observe every six (or was it seven?) cycles to prevent their world falling into chaos. What if screwing this up for the Teryxians is exactly what obligates the PCs to invest in Teryxian interests?

Classic adventure tropes like hidden treasures, jungle ruins, and fallen civilizations are all right at home on Quill.

- Themes: Sacrifice. Reason and faith. "Could we" vs. "should we." Science and illumination.
- Sources of Wonder: Spire temples hung with meticulously crafted nests. A turquoise sky framed by broad jungle leaves while a Cloud Serpent glides above. A procession of Teryxian priests escorting Banyari prisoners to stand judgment before the Teryxian elders. A shining blue-green islet gushing with lapis water that spills into the sky below.

Campaign Setting: Banyan – The shard called Banyan is every forest tale, tree legend, and myth o' the wood ever told, happening all at once. Far from a united people, the tribes of the Banyari each present an opportunity to examine a different facet of Banyan's ecology, as well as different strata of the story. If you are having trouble coming up with a point of view for your Banyan game, visit each of the tribes in your mind and think about how each one of them would tell your story. Would they even tell your story, or would they consider it a dangerous secret that should never be spoken of?

Banyan campaigns can be as abstract or as straightforward as you like. Our heroes could be Skyborn initiated by an otherworldly Banyari adept who provides a concoction that lets them travel into Banyan's past, so that they can witness events from history or even contend with a villain who needed to be uprooted from Banyan's antiquity. Or the

characters could be Skyborn warriors who have come to prove themselves by slaying an ancient and terrible beast lurking in the undergrowth of Banyan's primeval forests. If the Skyborn are just stopping by, Banyan drips with strange flora and fauna, any of which could be the rare and key ingredient in an antidote, potion, or aphrodisiac needed for some other impossible task. Also, the storytelling traditions of the Banyari contain a lot of hidden information and are themselves a sort of magic. Maybe the characters came to Banyan to hear a tale that is only recounted once every so many cycles? And just about any sort of story can be complicated when presented against the backdrop of active aggressions in the ongoing Banyari-Teryxian conflict.

- Themes: The story that tells the world. The hunt. Flowers among the ruins. The wages of war.
- Sources of Wonder: A Hearthwood Tree surrounded by its tribe. An assembly of Verthod appearing along an emerald treeline in vast numbers. The view above Banyan's miles-deep canopy. Giant primeval beasts moving in the shadows beyond the reach of a campfire's light. A proliferation of life that is almost an assault on the senses.

Campaign Setting: Haark – The city-shard of Haark is likely to be the most "familiar" location in Overlight to new players. This is intentional. Haark is the home of humanity in the game, so it is painted with ideas slightly more "of Earth" than some of the stranger places you can go. With that said, it is also important to remember that Haark is *not* Earth. In fact, Haark offers some of the most deranged elements in the setting, as well as unusual clashes of the many disparate elements of Overlight. As a result, Haark has an enormous amount of contrast, and this contrast should be highlighted in order to make the crumbling jewel shine as brightly as possible.

Haark has its own powers, too. Between Edge-Dweller gangs, the Council of Seven, the City Watch, and all of the Aurumel lords, Banyari citizens, Pyroi diplomatic envoys, and the Teryxian advisors they retain, Haark is the most densely populated of the shards. You can't swing your arms without offending, transgressing, or otherwise gaining the notice of someone who might have an interesting task for the party.

Haark is an obvious campaign hub. For new GMs who do not want to get too weird too quickly, Haark serves as a sort of buffet where you can tease at all the elements of Overlight — effectively waving them under the noses of your players. When the players eventually seize on some oddity or wonder that you put before them, Haark's flexibility allows them to really choose their own path in a variety of ways that won't necessarily mean leaving the shard.

Perhaps the best thing about Haark is that it is incredibly easy to rationalize a diverse group of characters being in the same place at the same time.

- Themes: The city eternal. The cost of progress. Rags-to-riches and riches-to-rags. Class war. Culture shock.
- Sources of Wonder: That most luminous and amazing of marketplaces. The lush rooftop gardens of the Verdant Quarter. The array of airships and flying beasts making use of the spindly skydocks. The terrifying planks and rusted cells of the Hanging Prison of Haark.

Campaign Setting: Veile – Veile is breath-taking in both its beauty and its dangers. The landscape is a veritable paradise of rolling hills and idyllic vineyards dotting the shores of a crystalline inland sea. The people are elegant and transcendentally artistic, but also display a capacity for debauchery and cruelty. The culture's fixation on permanence and immortality has been the basis for some of the finest art the shards have ever seen. It can also produce nightmarish abominations that few will speak of.

Between the seven cities and the Glass Citadel, there are many routes that a Veile-centric campaign could take. The Aurumel tendency toward hired help — ranging from mercenaries to laborers to courtesans — is a perfect rationale for a very diverse party. Perhaps an Aurumel Skyborn hears of an Aurumel aristocrat who collects (and imprisons) Skyborn as a personal menagerie. Maybe the Aurumel stages a plot to rescue their fellow Skyborn from the aristocrat, later seeking out the Skyborn Order for sanctuary.

Motivating characters to visit Veile is perhaps one of the easiest tasks one could lay at the feet of an Overlight GM. For all its beauty and intrigue, the shard of Veile is the source of some of the world's deadliest weapons and most miraculous inventions. From lasers and airships to secret methods and techniques said to have been taught to the Aurumel at the beginning of the world, characters who seek expedient means to achieve magnificent ends will find what they desire on Veile.

Veile is where clandestine murders, poisonings, and betrayals are paired with some of the most monumental achievements of any of the Folk; where the unbridled joy of life itself is married to the unfathomable desire to take that joy from another; where all your best tales of intrigue, secret societies, spurned lovers, exotic drugs, and mad artists come home.

- Themes: The price of power. Immortality. Permanence and impermanence. Art as religion. The excesses of the flesh.
- Sources of Wonder: When the shard drifts just so and the Glass Citadel of Gylynos captures expressions of the Overlight and the whole place dances with rainbow light. The unloading of myriad wonders from guild airships flush with goods from trade expeditions. An Aurumel ball attended by the masked scions of ancient lines and the most powerful organizations on Veile. The quiet serenity as candle-lit revelers gaze out upon the tranquil surface of the inland sea.

Campaign Setting: Pyre – The Pyroi say the greatest heroes and greatest weapons are made

in the same way. Pyre is a place that pushes the Spirit to strive, lest it be devoured by the very landscape. Rivers of lava, flaming volcanoes, vicious fauna, and the trials of the Pyroi people make Pyre an anvil of glory, capable of forging herculean champions. Pyre is about managing strength and cunning in excellent balance, gauging each in turn so as not to exceed the tolerance of a world that punishes the arrogant with fire and stone.

Pyre is not an unintelligible wilderness marked by hazards and monsters of the week; it is a place of myth and tradition. The Pyroi vigilantly observe custom because there must be some ordered sanctuary at the heart of the geological chaos. The beasts of Pyre come in two forms — those beasts with whom the Pyroi have achieved harmony, and those with whom the Pyroi must ceaselessly compete and battle. Even hermit-like Flamehearts express an outer peace because they are constantly wrestling with the mysteries and faith within themselves. Although the Pyroi seem to live closely with the concept of Might, it is a constant effort to balance and control such a furious strength, and an endless struggle of faith to guide such fury as well.

Skyborn Pyroi are rarely rejected by their fellow Pyroi. It is accepted by the Folk of Pyre that Skyborn must venture out into the greater world to manifest their purpose, and no Pyroi would ever deny such a thing to their kin and their kin's kin. But, before that can happen, the Skyborn is often tested to the greatest extent their people can manage. Once these trials are complete, the Skyborn is heaped with gifts and sent off with the tribe's ritualized blessing.

Pyre is the place to explore tales of a brutal existence at the literal bottom of the world. Nobody wants to visit Pyre, and with good reason. Gladiatorial combat and the fight for resources can feature largely in your adventures, but Pyre is also an excellent setting for courtly splendor and inspiring orators. Plus, all your favorite post-apocalyptic stories can be told here, writ large through the lens of fantasy. Desperate struggles of small bands of roving warriors, fighting the hostile environment and one another, with pockets of civilization secured through the bonds of fellowship, strange rituals, or cults.

- Themes: Honor. Ancestors. Survival. Initiation. Primordial conflict. The hero's journey.
- Sources of Wonder: Fire-Bats gliding from lava tubes into the hot, undulating sky. Shovel-Tusks grazing by lava pools in numbers too vast to count. Robed Pyroi priests bowing in devotion to the innards of a grandfather volcano.

Talk to your players about mature content. *Having a conversation with your group prior to the start of your campaign might be a good idea. Talk about expectations regarding themes, tone, and darker subject matter. Nobody wants to be in an R-rated game when they were expecting something PG and light-hearted. Overlight can be a brutal setting, in the same way that nature can be brutal and unforgiving. Violence. Hunger. Living things killing to beget life. This is simply the way things are.*

Add in Pyroi ritualized violence, Teryxian sacrifices, an active slave trade, and the horrors of the War of Leaves, and things get more complicated — to say nothing of the orgies and drug use prevalent in some of the more secretive gatherings on Veile. (Many of these topics are likely to see some increased attention in Overlight supplements.)

Have the conversation now. Set some expectations that everybody can agree upon.

THE SKYBORN ORDER

The Skyborn Order is our gift to you as a new Overlight GM. It provides...

- Party Cohesion: An integrated rationale for all these different sorts of player characters to come together under a common cause.
- Political Organization: A longstanding establishment loaded with interesting NPCs and opportunities for inter-organizational intrigue.
- Missions & Quests: A way to feed missions and quests to your players without a contrived "a stranger approached you in the tavern" schtick.

Party Cohesion – To be a member of the Skyborn Order, a candidate must be Skyborn. Once accepted into the order, they can — and often do — meet a lot more Skyborn. The use and knowledge of Chroma aside, all Skyborn share an alienating wanderlust. This forms a basis for friendship, which can result in a wide variety of dramatic interactions between members of a given conclave or even between different conclaves. The Skyborn Order is a narrative tool that allows these relationships to make sense, no matter the Folk.

A Political Organization – The Skyborn Order has its heroes, but it also has its villains and secret masters. An order that unites some of the most powerful and unique beings from across the shards would be a terrible weapon in the wrong hands.

Who knows who is pulling the strings? Who knows why your characters have been ordered to assassinate a Novapendra saint when he speaks before the Council of Seven? Why has your much lionized conclave suddenly been tasked with what seems to be a complete waste of your talents?

An entire web of questions and motivations surfaces when you begin to dig at the potential of the Skyborn Order. What's more, by developing important personages and motivations within the order, you might find yourself with the framework for an entire campaign.

Missions & Quests – Perhaps the most obvious benefit of being an agent of the Skyborn Order is that it is, in effect, a job. A job with some of the most dangerous, rewarding, and exciting work that Overlight has to offer. As the characters gain fame, they will be approached to undertake increasingly outrageous heroic feats, gradually building their own legend.

However, it is here that we offer a word of caution: Do not turn your game into an endless series of widget hunts and spec ops by relying entirely on derivative missions. These adventures should build your story and work toward your greater campaign goals. To be sure, the episodic nature of tightly defined missions and quests allows a lot of flexibility for a group that only meets sporadically, or even for Overlight one-shots. But your campaign will truly sing if the missions you offer are richly colored by the themes of Overlight and if you have a clear idea of what it is your game is about.

No matter how you decide to approach these themes in your own campaigns, remember that the players and their characters are the heroes, the *main characters* of the story. Meaningful NPCs are important, but it is the decisions and actions of the characters that should influence the world all around them. A role-playing game in which the players stand around to witness great deeds completed by others would get old pretty quickly!

WHAT IS OVERLIGHT ABOUT, ANYWAY?

Well, it's your game. You can make it about whatever you want. But we have a few of our own ideas.

Although each of the shards has themes that can be explored in a focused way, the main theme of Overlight is the wonder and horror which ornaments a *journey of becoming*. Through hunting rituals, storytelling customs, battles with mythic beasts, confrontations with narrow-minded organizations, and helping those in need, the characters make decisions that unfold a path of realization. Although the characters will certainly face threats from without, the true quest is the internal one.

As characters advance through Overlight, it is not simply about tripping in gadgets and gewgaws until they become nothing more than lists of equipment piggybacked upon some meaningless organic lifeform. The point of Overlight is for each character to become a hero (reluctant hero, anti-hero, or some other iteration), determine their view of the world, and then venture out into the radiant madness and put those views to the test.

When this view fails, a character's very personality may change. It is proven empirically true that one's worldview can further embed firmly held convictions. Either way, at the end of these decisions, you will have a story that begins with who the character was, and your game's unfolding legend will reveal who that character *becomes* — for better or worse.

GAMEMASTER AS REFEREE

Rule Zero – Many role-playing games have something often referred to as "Rule Zero" or "Gamemaster Fiat," and Overlight is no exception.

Here's our version: If the dice that you roll fall in a way that would produce an undesired effect, ignore them or change them. It's that simple. You're the GM, and you can feel free to "cheat." Similarly, if the application of a rule would prove to be counter-productive to a good story, ignore it. However, these kinds of "cheating" decisions should be made very rarely, and only to maintain the integrity of your story or to prevent a beloved character or important NPC from dying too early.

But you should always consider the alternative. What if you let the dice fall? Maybe an unexpected turn of events or shocking death would make the story even more exciting. Be prepared to adapt on the fly. Just remember, the GM should always serve the story and the player's enjoyment of that story. You are the shepherd of the characters, not their foil.

Now, here's the trick about tweaking the dice results: This works best if the players have exactly zero idea that you have fudged the rules or dice in this manner. To preserve dramatic moments and maintain a true sense of danger and risk, you should never let the players know what's going on behind that screen. (Which, for the record, is why we prefer to use a GM screen and have all the GM's dice rolls be hidden from the view of players.)

Using Open Tests – Whenever a PC is pitting their abilities and Skills against those of an opponent, an Open Test might be the appropriate way to handle the encounter.

Beasts and NPCs have a simplified set of statistics (see *Chapter 7: Myriad Beings*, p. 262) that largely boils down to Physical Dice and Mental Dice. Deciding which of these two options to use as the opposition in an Open Test with a player character is important, and it should be driven by your conception of what the skillset or instincts of that beast or NPC would be. While some should be obvious — like using Mental Dice to defend during heated negotiations, or Physical Dice to defend during an arm-wrestling match — others are less intuitive.

Perhaps a PC is using Athletics to corral an opponent into a disadvantageous position or within striking distance of a trap. Your NPC might be a strategic mastermind, so instead of defending with Physical Dice as you might against a lowly guard, you allow this NPC to defend with Mental Dice as he's probably aware of what the PC is attempting to do. There's no incorrect option, and it's your decision as the GM, but it's best to err on the

side of internal consistency for your NPCs, and to not simply default to the better stat.

When to Use Which Skill? – One of your most common tasks as the GM will be to determine which Skill should be used when you call upon a player to perform a Skill Test. The Skill definitions (see *Chapter 3: The Skyborn*, p. 74) provide a solid framework to guide this determination. But the definitions are broad, and it is intended that there is some overlap between them.

More importantly, the players should be encouraged to apply Skills to Tests in ways that aren't necessarily obvious, creating a bit of in-game story to justify this new Skill use. A player might even use their Background to suggest some bit of knowledge that would come in handy. Below are some examples.

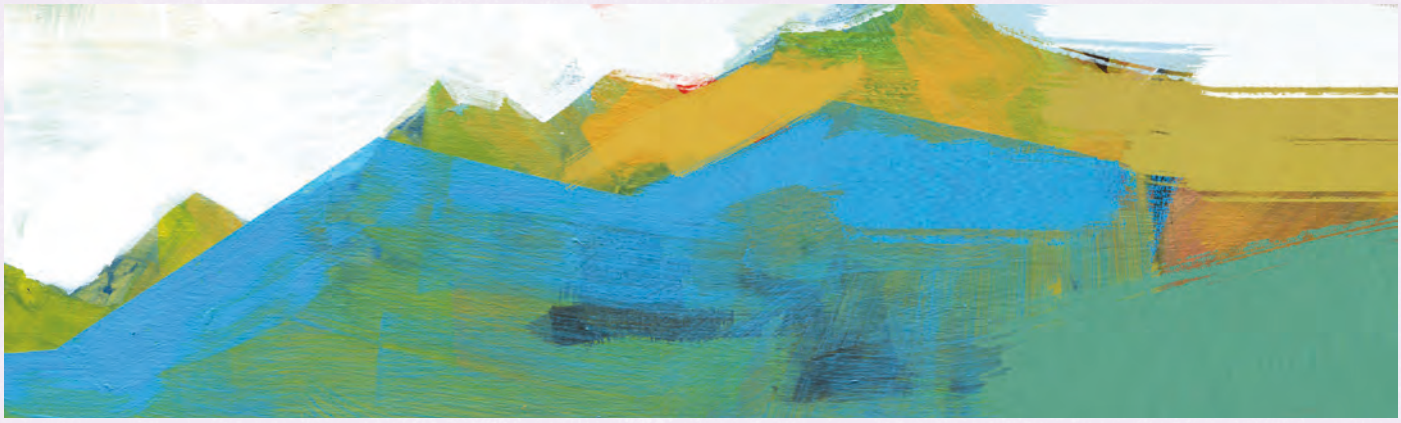
A novice from the Zenith Orders is attempting to calm down his traveling pack animal, a large furry Yakirin. The beast is bellowing under the weight of its gear and is stubbornly refusing to trudge forward through the deep snow. The GM calls for a Beastways Test to encourage the animal to do its duty. The player had not imagined his character as an individual who was often in the company of beasts, and had instead created a PC that was clever with his hands. He argues for the use of Craft to modify the animal's harness and perhaps reduce its discomfort. The GM agrees.

A Haarkeen wood carver's apprentice is fleeing from her master's killers, attempting to lose them in the crowds of the Great Market. The GM determines an Open Test is required for her to escape. How is the apprentice fleeing? Is she running for her life, hoping to outpace her opponents? Then maybe Athletics vs. Physical is in order. Is she instead hoping that her knowledge of the market and the behavior of the merchants will allow her to slip into the throngs of people unnoticed? Folklore vs. Mental. But what if she knows her attackers? Maybe the player argues that she knows her pursuer well enough to anticipate their approach. Then maybe Intuition vs. Mental is the best way to resolve this chase.

Deciding whether or not to use each Skill's default linked Virtue is also a consideration. Generally, it is a good idea to go with the default, avoiding unnecessary complication. But depending on the specific application of the Skill, it might make more narrative sense to use an alternate Virtue. Below are some examples of when this might make sense.

The Zenith Order novice has broken a favorite knife, recovered from the body of a fallen comrade. The Blades Skill covers the maintenance of bladed weapons, but surely Vigor is not the right Virtue for this task? Blades (Logic) is the best choice as the novice attempts to repair the broken handle.

Our Haarkeen wood carver's apprentice is shaping a new wooden mask for her Aurumel companion, after the old one was destroyed in battle. A standard Craft Test might suffice, but the relationship between an Aurumel and their mask is a complicated thing. In order to satisfy both the demands of Aurumel culture and the pride of the apprentice's friend, the GM calls for a Craft (Wisdom) Test.



And sometimes, the task at hand simply seems to fall in a gray area between Virtues. Lifting up a heavy portcullis, for example, should probably be an Athletics (Might) Test.

One final point about Skills: Try your best to use all of them. Obviously, not every Skill is going to come up in every scene or session, but being cognizant of which Skills are used frequently and which ones are neglected can not only help avoid the conception of the game having a "dump stat," but can also inspire you to create new and different scenarios and challenges for your players.

Environmental Hazards – The world of Overlight is a dangerous place, and not every threat comes at the end of a villain's sword or the fang of some beast. Sometimes the very land itself can seem to be against you.

In Overlight, we refer to potential non-combat damage — from extreme weather conditions, a fall from perilous heights, even drowning or poisons — as *Hazards*. Each Hazard is given a Rating based on the severity chosen by the GM, and the character must succeed at a modified Open Test to avoid damage. The Skill required will depend on the type of Hazard being confronted. Some suggestions and examples are listed in the chart below.

EXAMPLES OF HAZARD TESTS	
Extreme Climate or Weather	**Hazard Test vs. Survival**
Extended exposure to the elements or "sunburn"	Rating: D6
Strong storms or grueling marching conditions	Rating: D8
Unforgiving desert or blizzard	Rating: D12
Fire	**Hazard Test vs. Resistance**
Cooking burn	Rating: D6
Torch or campfire	Rating: D8 – D10
Bonfire or proximity to river of magma	Rating: D12
Drowning	**Hazard Test vs. Athletics**
Swept away in a strong current	Rating: D6 – D8
Left adrift in the open sea	Rating: D10 – D12
Falling	**Hazard Test vs. Athletics**
Fall distance equal to or less than the character's height	Rating: D6
Fall distance up to twice the character's height	Rating: D10
Fall distance more than twice the character's height	Rating: D12
Poison or Venom	**Hazard Test vs. Resistance**
Strong or excessive alcohol; spoiled food	Rating: D6
Intentional poisoning	Rating: D8 – D12

To make a Hazard Test, perform an Open Test as normal, with the GM rolling the Hazard Rating instead of an opponent's Physical or Mental Dice. Roll six dice of the Rating type, plus the Spirit Die. Resolve like a regular Open Test, with ties going to the player character.

If the player character rolls higher, they suffer zero damage from the Hazard. If the Hazard roll is higher, determine the *second highest single result* from the Hazard roll. This is the amount of damage that the character suffers. (If the Spirit Die result is "4," do not increase

this second highest result by one. The Spirit Die result only affects the highest result, and the success of the roll.)

The Hazard Test can be used to represent a single instance — such as a fall, or getting swept away by a rushing river — or may be used to more abstractly represent an entire ordeal, spread out over some time. The long journey through a blizzard, for instance, may be represented by a single Hazard Test, with the GM incrementally inflicting damage on the characters.

As always, in some circumstances, the players may argue for the use of a different Skill. We leave it to the GM to determine if a character's success in any given instance may be used to assist other characters and thus prevent damage.



CHARACTER REWARDS

As players complete adventures, fulfill quests, and advance through storylines, they will naturally expect their characters to reap some tangible benefits — especially so that they can upgrade their Ratings in Skills and Virtues and learn new Chroma. There are four different types of benefits that characters can gain through the course of their wanderings: Experience Points, Spirit Points, Wealth Points, and Valuables. We refer to these four benefits collectively as *Rewards*.

Experience Points – At the end of every session, each character should be rewarded with one Experience Point (XP), plus one more if the characters took direct action which made progress toward the end goal of the current story. In some instances, individual characters may have their own separate subplots or other personal objectives, in which case you may see fit to reward only those characters with the bonus XP.

While every game has a different play style, for the purposes of XP Rewards we assume that most sessions last anywhere from three to six

hours. Anything longer than that and the XP Rewards should probably be adjusted. Also, at the culmination of major stories, the GM should consider providing a bonus of one to three XP per character, especially if the characters were changed or if they helped to change the world in a meaningful way.

Spirit Points – Spirit Rewards can be given out with some frequency during a given session or story. Any moment which raises the character's morale or is spiritually uplifting, or indeed even a scene of wonder, can result in a single Spirit Point for each character, adding to their Spirit Pool. A word of caution: These "inspirational" Spirit Rewards are really only meaningful if they accompany a particularly moving or transcendent scene, and not given out like so much candy.

Spirit Points should also be given out at the end of a story, especially if that story saw the fulfillment of some quest or a positive change to the overall setting. Any situation for which you would give out bonus end-of-story XP Rewards is probably a good candidate for similar bonus Spirit Rewards.

Altering and manipulating the manner and frequency with which you give out Spirit Rewards is one of the easiest ways to toggle the game difficulty. A scrappy, desperate, and dangerous game might have very few Spirit Rewards, while a mythic and heroic campaign which sees the PCs become major movers and shakers of the setting might have significantly more. The suggestions that we've given in this section are merely that — suggestions — and we encourage you to modify Spirit Rewards to fit the play style of your group. Here's a few optional rules to consider allowing your players to use.

Spirit Negating Damage: *When taking damage, a player may decide to spend Spirit Points to ignore any or all of the damage. Each Spirit Point spent negates one point of damage in this fashion. This rule allows for less deadly combat, and also makes for a more dynamic Spirit Point economy. You may find it especially useful or fun for Teryxian characters. We're quite fond of this rule, and it was in many of our early playtests.*

Spirit Boosts on Open Tests: *When performing an Open Test, a player may spend Spirit Points to increase the final result of the Test. Each Spirit Point spent increases the final result of the Open Test by one. This rule works best if the player knows exactly how many points will be needed to succeed at the Test. After all, nobody likes to spend valuable Spirit Points on a guess that may not work.*

Spirit as an Interrupt: *By spending a single Spirit Point, a player may "interrupt" the GM's current narrative. In a social situation, this can represent a PC's "force of personality" to take control of the conversation. During combat, spending a Spirit (or Fury) Point in this way can allow a character to immediately respond to an opponent's action, but only if the PC has not yet taken an action this round.*

These rules, especially if used together, will create an experience in which Spirit Points are a considerably more versatile and valuable commodity. You may find yourself with a lot more Shatters (always interesting!), and you may want to pay close attention as you dole out Spirit Rewards to players, making sure to keep everybody happy and engaged.

Wealth and Valuables – Overlight is not a game that is driven by the desire for gold coins or tangible rewards. But giving Wealth Points as an in-story motivation for your characters to complete deeds is easy storytelling shorthand. Even the most honored Skyborn must eat, and not every community will happily feed them in their roles as traveling do-gooders. Wealth Rewards can be relatively common, something to wrap a new story around. We suggest that three to six Wealth Points for each character is appropriate for most simple stories.

Valuables, on the other hand, should be relatively rare. They should never be given in lieu of Wealth Points as just another commodity — only at appropriate moments in the narrative. They might function as payment, but they are more likely honorific rewards given by grateful or influential people.

If you find yourself wanting to give a character a Valuable that is simply a stand-in for lots of monetary wealth, you're not really using the system as intended. *Every* Valuable should have a story, even a name. While not every Valuable has to provide an in-game bonus, earning a Valuable should be a character-building moment, the sort of thing that would require a brief (or lengthy!) retelling of some deed or tale to properly explain to someone who did not witness the origin of the item themselves. Trading away a Valuable to fulfill a Wealth Test should *hurt*, every time.

Finally, in very rare instances, you can upgrade a character's Wealth Rating by one level as a Wealth Reward. This should only occur if the character has managed to increase their standard of living or regular access to wealth — or, more abstractly, increased their social standing in such a way that every person who encounters them sees their worth or influence.

An upgraded Wealth Rating could be the result of an event such as the bestowal of an honorific title or badge, the gifting of an unusually large quantity of coins or jewels, or even betrothal to an important personage.

How do my players buy stuff?

Not having currency in simple denominations might be a bit confusing for some players. Yes, we have Wealth Points, but they're not simply "spent" on gear and equipment; instead, they represent a more abstracted take on money. So what is an Overlight GM to do when a player wants to buy some new gear?

Buying typical goods should be seamless, but require Wealth Tests if the goods are commodities. For items that are relatively common or inexpensive, feel free to adjust the final cost down by a point or two if it's in keeping with the tone of your game. Since there are no real game mechanics for the vast majority of items anyway, those sorts of mercantile transactions should really be about role-playing little scenes.

Travel, especially if we're talking about travel between shards, should always be quite expensive, requiring Wealth Tests and a fair amount of role-playing.





CHAPTER 7

MYRIAD BEINGS

The world of Overlight is filled with an inexhaustible array of colorful plants, animals, and enemies. As GM, you're tasking with bringing these myriad beings to life — it's up to you whether they are dangerous opponents or merely layers of detail applied to the vision of the world that you portray to your players.

Facing opponents in combat is an exciting and inevitable part of any role-playing adventure, and knowing how to effectively orchestrate physical combat is an invaluable instrument in the GM's toolbox. There are also unique and specific game rules required, which you will need to be familiar with. For the purposes of combat, we shall collectively refer to all these different creatures as *enemies*.

ENEMY STATS

An enemy's game characteristics are defined by five stats: *Physical Dice*, *Mental Dice*, *Health*, *Surges*, and *Zeal*. Some enemies have additional special characteristics.

Physical Dice

This stat represents a pool of dice rolled whenever an enemy makes an attack against a PC or when required by an Open Test. The Spirit Die is *always* added to a Physical Dice pool. Each enemy will have a specific quantity and type of dice in their pool, but the quantities and types used by different enemies will be distinct. Unlike other parts of the game, this will rarely result in a hand of seven dice being rolled.

Physical Dice are used for most any Test that deals with the physical, tangible world: combat, feats of the body, or general constitution. To put it another way, Physical Dice apply very broadly to any situation in which a PC would use the Virtues of Vigor or Might.

Mental Dice
This stat is similar to Physical Dice in that it represents a pool of dice, different for each enemy, that is rolled when required by an Open Test. Rarely, there may be instances when Mental Dice are rolled as an attack, but this will be clearly outlined in the enemy listing. As with Physical Dice, always add the Spirit Die to the pool.

Mental Dice are used in instances of mental or spiritual fortitude, wit, charisma, negotiation, and more. Any Test which tests knowledge or strength of character, will, or charisma. In a very general sense, Mental Dice apply any time a PC would make use of the Virtues of Wisdom, Logic, Compassion, or Will.

More about Physical Dice and Mental Dice can be found in the "Using Open Tests" section of *Chapter 6: Secret Wisdom* (see p. 255).

Health
This stat indicates how many wounds an enemy can sustain before it is killed. Unlike PCs, enemies cannot sustain Dramatic Wounds. Each point of damage an enemy is dealt in combat causes a wound, reducing their current health by one. When an enemy's health is reduced to zero, the enemy is killed.

Surges
Surges are unique to enemies. When an enemy rolls the Spirit Die during an Open Test, it is resolved in the normal way — with a result of "4" adding one to the result of the Open Test. However, during an enemy's attack rolls, the Spirit Die works differently.

When an enemy makes an attack, a result of "4" on the Spirit Die triggers a Surge. Each Surge is a special ability and will have specific instructions. Some enemies, particularly powerful or important adversaries, may have more than one Surge, and so will trigger on Spirit Die results of "3" or even "2."

Just an animal after all.
"Just an animal after all" is the name of a special

Open Tests for Initiative
Depending on the situation, the GM may choose to use either Physical Dice or Mental Dice as part of the Open Test to determine initiative. This will largely depend on the circumstances of the encounter and the choice of Skill used by the PC for the initiative roll. Read more in the "Determining Initiative" section of *Chapter 4: Shard Law* (see p. 120).

Surge that only triggers when the enemy's attack roll generates a Spirit Die result of "1" *and* the enemy has 25% (round up) or less of its health remaining. (The success or failure of the attack roll is irrelevant.) Only enemies that are simple animals at heart have this special Surge, which is indicative of the fact that very few animals will fight to the death. When this Surge triggers, the animal flees the combat, unless the GM deems that the animal is defending its young or some other such special circumstance.

Zeal

Zeal is finite pool of points. Each enemy starts with a certain amount of Zeal, which they can spend. Some enemies can gain more Zeal (and may go above their starting amount). Zeal can be spent in three different ways.

1. Spend one Zeal at any time to add 1d12 to a roll.
2. Spend one Zeal after a successful attack roll to automatically trigger a Surge.
3. Spend one Zeal to automatically negate the effects of a Chroma power used against that enemy.

The third way to spend Zeal — negating the effects of a Chroma power — is available exclusively to *named adversaries*. Any enemy with a unique name is a named adversary. For example, not every member of the Haarkeen City Watch could spend Zeal this way, but *Simun, Watch Veteran* would definitely have that option.

Beasts, not monsters. Think outside the monster handbook. Go beyond the zoo.

Many of our favorite fantasy worlds in film and fiction have one thing in common: you rarely see real-world animals. (Never simply a raccoon in the space station's garbage compactor! No mere horses that we'll ride to the vulture-dragon-things' castle!) These strange animals are not usually adversaries for our heroes, so we're not going to fill a chapter with stats for all these little things. But they do contribute a great deal to the sense that we are truly in an alien world, so the idea merits a short discussion.

Overlight is a *weird* setting. And with seven different shards, each with their many and varied biomes, landscapes, cultures, and people, it seems a disservice to populate it with dogs and rats and cats. It's your game, of course! If you want stray dogs roaming the streets of Haark, go for it. But we encourage you to take a bit of time to manipulate classic animal tropes and create some of your own background creatures for the setting. Here's a few tips and examples.

Keep it real. The beasts of Overlight are more akin to bizarre and wondrous animals than to the monsters out of classic fantasy. In fact, our use of the word "beast" instead of "monster" is very deliberate. Make your

beasts fabulous animals. Have a need for a dragon-like creature? Consider using a real-world monitor lizard or even prehistoric reptile as your blueprint to build a beast upon. Texts on modern extinctions, Paleolithic megafauna, and tetrapod zoology are all wonderful resources for inspiration. Your beasts should still feel like *animals*. Dangerous, strange, exotic, almost magical animals, yes — but still animals. Always ask yourself, "What would this animal be doing if it weren't interrupted by a group of meddling Skyborn?"

Beasts should be chimerical. One of the easiest ways to accomplish this feeling is simply by smashing together a few real-world animal traits. Does one of your scenes require a rabbit? Give the rabbit curved ram's horns and reflective cat's eyes. Give it an unusual behavior (borrowed from another real-world animal) ... let's say it's a scavenger that eats trash. Call it a Junk Thumper and have the things be like so many pests running around the gutters of the Great Market of Haark. Just like that, you've got a bit of background detail that you can infuse into appropriate scenes for the rest of your campaign.

The Overlight infuses everything. While the Skyborn excel at manipulating them, mystical powers and even Chroma-like effects can be used by other beings. (See "What Are the Chroma?" in *Chapter 1: Introduction*, p. 13.) What would be an unusual behavior in the real world could be a nearly miraculous Overlight-fueled power in this setting. When in doubt, add intense, almost neon color which may be tied to a Virtue. A little goes a long way, and not every critter needs something, but maybe our Junk Thumper thumps one of its big hind feet — not just in warning to other Junk Thumpers, but to create a visible orange ripple in the air, the sound of which unnaturally bounces off surfaces and sonically obfuscates the animal's hasty retreat.

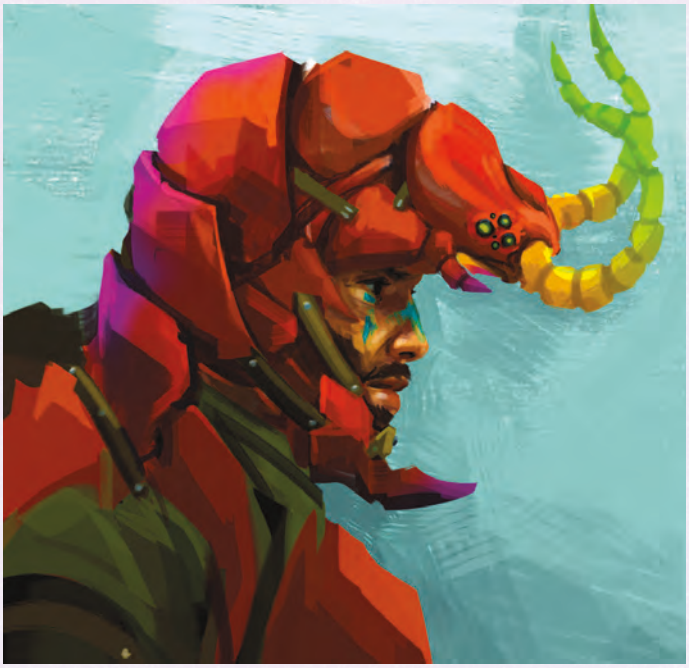
Here are a few more examples of real-world animals or ecological niches made more Overlight-y:

- Instead of feral dog packs on the streets of Haark, let's keep them as dogs but give them a hide of patchy fur intermixed with scales like a lizard, especially on the face. Maybe a leathery wattle or crest. And a forked tongue too, which they use to scent their prey like a reptilian bloodhound. No howls from these dogs, who are completely silent except when excited by the prospect of a fresh kill. When this happens, the entire pack will rattle their scaled and hairless tails.

- We've mentioned the Yakirin of Zenith in passing. We imagine them to be the size and shape of yaks or Highland cattle. They have long blue-black fur, and barbels sprouting from their snouts like a carp or Chinese dragon would have. Their horns split and branch to look more like strange antlers. The Monks of Zenith breed them for their milk, which is high in fat, and their flesh, which is prized by the Hamanu.

- Here's an easy one: pterodactyls. Overlight *begs* to have pterodactyls. There was a lot of variation in real-world pterosaurs, so let's start with one of the big iconic species like *Pteranodon longiceps*, but even bigger — let's say, just big enough for a man to ride. And give the thing tiger stripes in bright, almost neon shades of blue and deep red. They're still fish eaters, but what if they dove down into the Sea Below to catch their prey? And what if this unusual behavior means they are viewed either as omens of doom or as near-holy beings that exist in the space between life and death?

BEINGS OF NOVA



HAARKEEN CHITINEER

There are those among the Haarkeen who believe that the Novapendra have a hidden agenda, concerning the subjugation and consumption of the other Folk. While many of these Haarkeen keep this belief to themselves, only whispering their distrust of the giant centipedes when they know sympathetic ears are listening, their numbers are growing. Their numbers bolstered by thrill seekers and trophy hunters, these humans now form a loosely organized group of malcontents called "the Chitineers." Many of them, adorned with carapace armor and other gruesome trophies of their kills, will even travel to Nova itself to hunt down and kill Novapendra. Some Chitineers, having made the kill of a lifetime, move on to other targets: Shovel-Tusks, Pyroi warriors, even Skyborn.

Physical Dice	5d8
Mental Dice	5d8
Health	10
Zeal	3

Surge: *Deadly Marksman* (4). If the Chitineer is attacking with a ranged weapon, all damage that would be dealt to the target is instead converted into a single Dramatic Wound. If it's not possible for the target character to suffer a Dramatic Wound, this attack deals three extra damage instead.

Special: *Expert Hunters.* Chitineers are both expert trackers and hard to catch by surprise. They may add 2d12 to all initiative rolls.



NOVAPENDRA

The Novapendra are an enigma. While it is true that one of their kind sits on the Council of Seven, and that Novapendra ambassadors and advisors can sometimes be seen surrounded by Council Guards upon the streets of Haark, the exact nature of their relationship with the rest of the Folk is anyone's guess. Are they noble and introspective insect herders? Perhaps. But there are at least as many stories about the Novapendra having a taste for human flesh, live and trembling.

What is indisputable is that they are mighty creatures. Enormous centipedes at least twice as long as a Haarkeen man is tall, with pointed legs, a strong carapace, and terrifying venomous fangs. The statistics below represent a typical member of the species, an "average citizen" if you will. There should be a great deal of variation among individual members of the Folk, particularly in the form of unusual appetites.

Physical Dice	5d8
Mental Dice	4d10
Health	14
Zeal	3

Surge: *Paralyzing Venom* (4). The target of this attack has been bitten badly and injected with the Novapendra's paralyzing venom. That character must succeed at an Open Test (Resistance vs. Physical) or lower all their Vigor and Might dice by one level until the end of the combat. Similarly, if they fail the Open Test but survive the combat, the character must perform a Hazard Test (Poison D10 vs. Resistance) unless treated as if for a Dramatic Wound within a short amount of time.

Special: *Born of the Overlight*. Novapendra have an instinctive understanding of the Overlight. For this reason, all Novapendra count as named adversaries.

BEINGS OF ZENITH

HAMANU SCOUT

Zenith Order Monk training only goes so far. When it comes to the truly wild and deadly features of Zenith's landscape, there is no better companion than a Hamanu Scout. Well versed in the limits of human endurance, Hamanu can provide support for human convoys and pilgrimage detachments like no one else can.

Scouts wear white sashes edged with white Snow Lion fur, so as to give them greater concealment in the snow. They prefer to avoid the use of weapons in combat, but carry large knives for skinning, carving, and other non-fighting uses. Although Hamanu Scouts abound in the monasteries of Zenith, they are also found at wayfarer lodges and in Konchog City, where they assist newcomers to Zenith when they arrive or are in need.

Physical Dice	6d8
Mental Dice	5d8
Health	12
Zeal	3

Surge: *Silent as the Snow* (4). Through a trick of the Overlight, Hamanu Scouts create an aura of peace, with only the soft hush of snowflakes hitting the ground or the gentle whisper of fresh mountain breezes reaching the battlefield. Combatants struggle to do anything other than wonder at the natural glory of their mountainside environs. For their next attack, any opponents engaged with the Hamanu Scout must lower their Skill dice by one level. Before their *following* action (and each subsequent action if necessary), targets of this Surge must succeed at an Open Test (Windlore vs. Mental) to cancel this effect. This effect lasts until the end of the combat, until the Hamanu is defeated, or until the target succeeds at the Open Test. This Surge may only be triggered on Zenith or upon snowy or windswept mountains on other shards.



IRON HAMANU

For those who have met the wise Hamanu Folk, one of the Iron Hamanu is as easy to spot as blood upon the snow. When the rest of their

Folk formed a pact with the Zenith Order Monks, a large faction of Hamanu refused to leave their valley and considered the monasteries to be a blight upon the great mountains of their shard. Rejecting the qualities of the Hamanu who joined the Monks, as well as the Monks themselves, the Iron Hamanu began a dizzying degeneration into their current form.

The Iron Hamanu are dumber and slower than other Hamanu. They are also stronger, meaner, and tougher. Although the Iron Hamanu subsist on a meat-heavy omnivorous diet, their favorite food is the flesh of the Zenith Order Monks who they believe destroyed the solidarity of their kind. They kill the "pet" Hamanu (as they call those spirit-bonded to Monks) on sight, for they consider them a walking violation of honor and blood.

Physical Dice	4d10
Mental Dice	4d8
Health	14
Zeal	4

Surge: *Raging Defiance* (4). The Iron Hamanu are fiercely independent and quick to become incensed when confronted. This attack deals one extra damage. If the target is a Zenith Order Monk, this attack deals two extra damage instead. If the target is a Hamanu, this attack deals three extra damage instead.

SNOW LION

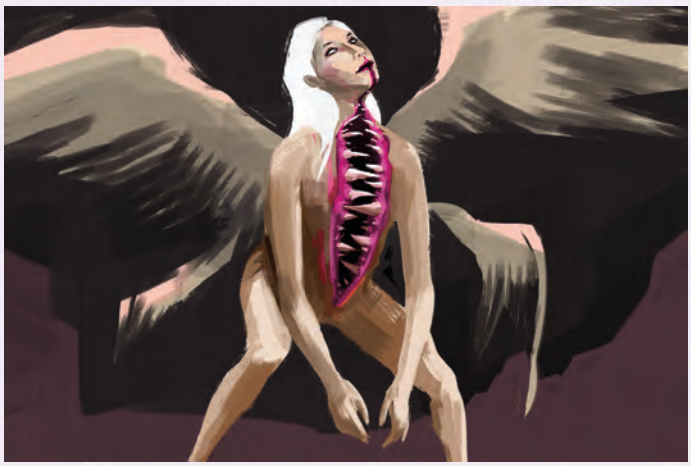
Best viewed from a distance, these beasts gracefully walk the snowdrifts and cliffs of Zenith in search of what food exists there. Monks and visitors to Zenith who get too close to a Snow Lion pride quickly learn the deadly capabilities of these muscular predators. Inattentive travelers may find themselves in a deadly situation if a Snow Lion perceives that its den or its young are threatened.



Stout and thick bodied, Snow Lions stand about three and a half feet at the shoulder. Both females and males have brightly colored manes and tails, ranging from a deep indigo to a brilliant turquoise. Although not believed to be intelligent, they nevertheless have a complex communication method, consisting of a range of purrs and growls that allows them to coordinate both defense of their homes and attacks on unsuspecting prey.

Physical Dice	5d10
Mental Dice	4d6
Health	18
Zeal	2

Surge: *Just an animal after all* (1). See description on p. 264.
Surge: *Pounce!* (4). If the Snow Lion dealt at least three damage in this attack, its target is knocked to the ground. That character must replace two Skill dice with d6s during their next action, as they struggle to their feet.



YAMARI

A study in contrasts, the Yamari (also known as the Kir-oi or Mothfolk) are simultaneously the most monstrous and most beautiful of Zenith's beasts. At first glance, the Yamari appear as androgynous, graceful things with powder-white skin, gauzy wings, and soft, lowered eyes. Their voices are smooth and compelling. If not standing in high wind, they are wreathed in a fragrance more exquisite than a bouquet of honeyed orchids. But they are ancient, they are cunning, and they are monsters. This is revealed the moment a Yamari begins to feed. From the dimple below the nose to the bottom of their featureless groin, a delicate crimson line can be traced. When a Yamari raises its eyes, the scarlet line weeps blood and the entire body opens to reveal a massive rack of teeth running the length of a huge red, wet mouth. It is with these massive rending jaws that they latch themselves to defeated prey and extract the entire spinal column in a series of sawing, ripping bites.

The Yamari are everywhere on Zenith, but concealed just beyond sight. They largely stay in their subterranean tunnels, only braving the Overlight under intense snow conditions. Entirely immune to the punishing winds and cold, the Yamari are consummate predators, able to lie in wait in perfect stillness for grueling periods of time on the roads between Konchog City and the monasteries. Some Yamari aggressively attack in packs while others use deception to win the trust of their prey. Many have met their doom after being lured by a pale person in distress, or by the imagined thrills of an exotic companion-for-hire in a pleasure house.

Among the Zenith Orders, initiates are taught from a young age how to identify the Mothfolk and the places they hunt. But the Yamari have been on Zenith a very long time — and they have not once gone hungry.

Physical Dice	5d6
Mental Dice	5d10
Health	9
Zeal	2

Surge: *Spinal Extraction* (4). The Yamari's scarlet line gapes open in an attempt to extract its victim's spine. The character must succeed at an Open Test (Athletics vs. 6d8) to avoid having the Yamari latch onto their back. If the character fails the Test, on each of the Yamari's subsequent actions the character must perform an Open Test (Resolve (Wisdom) vs. Mental). If successful, the character escapes from the Yamari, only suffering a single Dramatic Wound. If three such Open Tests are failed in a row, the character is killed outright — the Yamari rips their spine from their body. All other characters must lower two Skill dice by one level when they attack this Yamari, as they try to avoid wounding their friend. Alternately, half of all damage dealt to the Yamari (rounded down) is instead applied to the Yamari's victim.

Special: *Expert Hunters.* Yamari have legendary patience and are capable of springing into action with nightmarish speed. They may add 2d12 to all initiative rolls.

ZENITH ORDER MONK

Despite the Hamanu presence on Zenith, an undue amount of scholarship and attention is paid to the shard's monastic Orders. Although each monastery has its own traditions, customs, methods, and fighting styles, most freshly initiated Monks tend to have a well-rounded set of skills and are well above average when it comes to close combat.

Zenith Order Monks can be found on almost every shard due to the Orders' tendency to send students abroad to spread teachings and learn tolerance. Due to their rigid discipline and unbreakable vows, it is not unheard of for Zenith Order Monks to find themselves in unworkable circumstances where violence may well be the only answer.

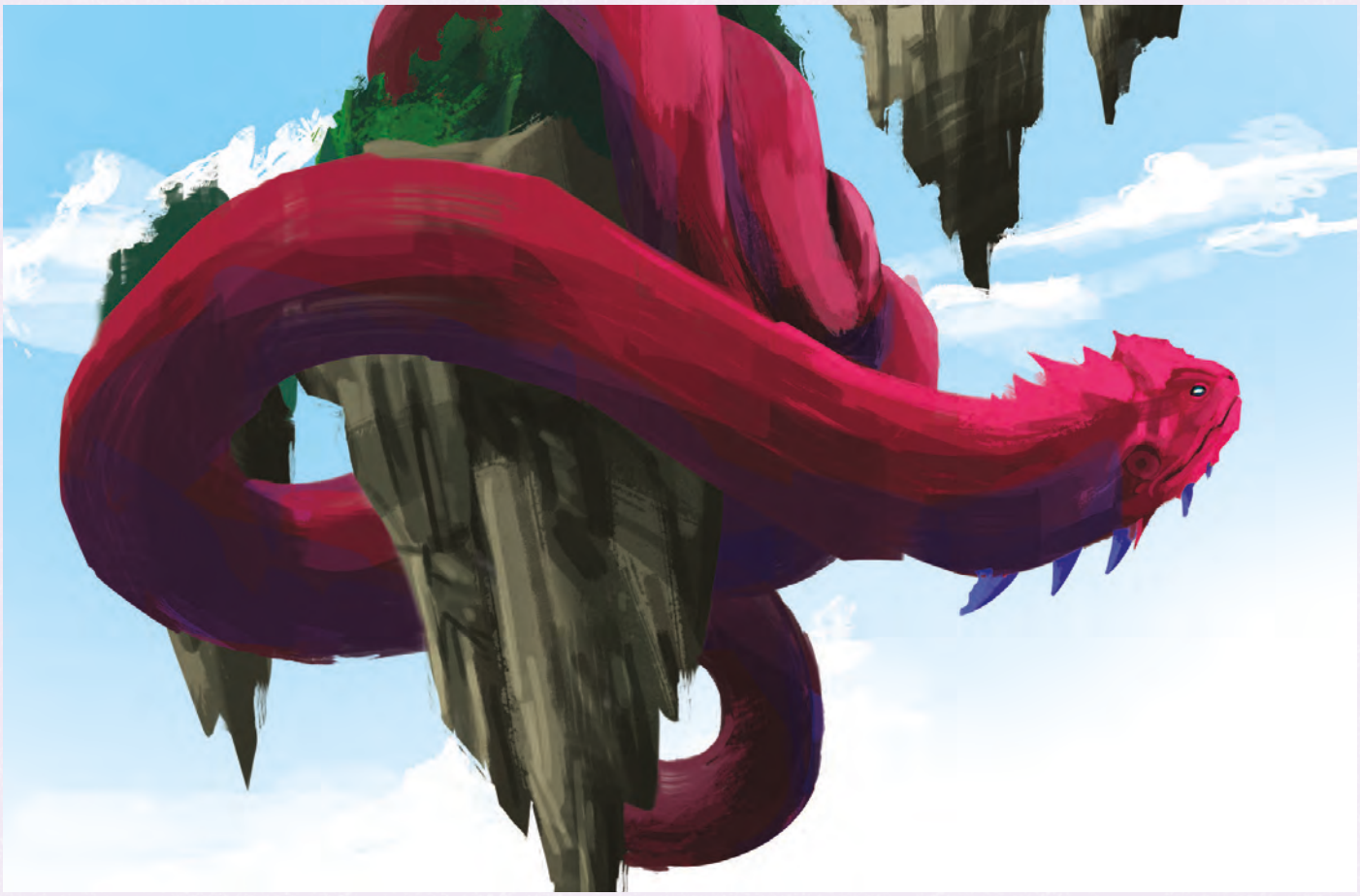
Physical Dice	6d8
Mental Dice	3d12
Health	10
Zeal	3

Surge: *Wind Leap* (4). By integrating with the element of air, a Zenith Order Monk may briefly walk upon the air as if it were a solid surface, propelled along by an unseen wind. With their next action, the Monk may choose to engage any opponent, regardless of distance or who they are currently engaged with. Alternately, the Monk may escape combat, leap an inhuman distance, or even strike a flying Teryxian.

BEINGS OF QUILL

CLOUD SERPENT

These utterly massive, wingless serpents glide through the skies above every shard, but are most common near Quill. Here the Cloud Serpents serve a very important role in the cosmology of the Teryxians, who view them as avatars of their creator deity, called Tzahintli. Very little is known



about the ecology of these creatures, except that certain individuals have developed behavioral symbiosis with the Teryxians, and are sometimes called to feed upon the bodies of the ritually sacrificed. Other than these unusual offerings from Quill, it is unknown what could possibly sustain creatures of such immense size.

On rare occasion, adults have been known to attack and eat air travelers, sometimes even small airships. Cloud Serpents are snake-like in form, but with external ear openings and eyelids. Their shimmering scales can be blinding in the light, and individuals have been seen in every imaginable color. (The statistics here are representative of a juvenile specimen.)

Physical Dice	6d10
Mental Dice	6d8
Health	42
Zeal	2

Surge: *Just an animal after all* (1). See description on p. 264.
Surge: *Swallow Whole* (4). The target of this attack must succeed at an Open Test (Brawl or Athletics vs. Physical) or be swallowed whole by the Cloud Serpent. If swallowed, during each subsequent round the character must succeed at an Open Test (Survival or Beastways (Logic) vs. Physical) or be killed outright — via either suffocation or the unpleasant effects of the

Cloud Serpent's acidic insides. While inside the belly of the beast, the character is allowed to take actions, but with all Skill dice lowered by one level.

GRYMALKYN

The Grymalkyn, also known as the Ocehualli or Shadow Jaguars, have always been the natural predators of the Teryxians. Large black jaguars with a taste for Teryxian hatchlings (and adults!), they were less of a daily concern during Quill's cultural peak. After the Fall, and the loss of so many of the protections of a great society, these ancient enemies of the Teryxians became a more immediate threat, and old stories about lost hatchlings, dark jungles, and slavering jaws suddenly became very tangible and very present.

Despite the Grymalkyn's sharp claws, huge fangs, a frighteningly canny animal wit, and the hunting aptitude of an apex predator, their most terrifying aspect is surely their ability to shadow walk. This is a power that is greatly feared and not remotely understood. For these hunters are capable of walking *into* and *through* naturally occurring shadows as if they were portals or doorways, connecting to other shadows and… somewhere else? Often a Grymalkyn will emerge from a different patch of darkness, surprising its prey with a flanking attack, but other times the big cat will simply not return at all. Being able to manipulate the *unlight* in this manner feels in direct opposition to all that is good and just about the Overlight, an affront to everything the Folk hold dear. So the Grymalkyn are often spoken of as if they are somehow unnatural, or simply *wrong*.

Perhaps due to the popularity of Teryxian tutors across the Seven, tales of the Grymalkyn are known to almost all the Folk. They have taken



on an almost legendary aura. *Eat your vegetables so the Grymalkyn won't get you!* Despite persistent rumors to the contrary, there have been no reputable claims of Grymalkyn sightings on shards other than Quill.

Physical Dice	4d10
Mental Dice	5d8
Health	11
Zeal	5

Surge: *Shadow Walk* (3). Provided there are natural shadows available, the Grymalkyn can literally walk into the shadow. By doing this, it may either freely escape the combat (without having to perform a Test of any kind) or re-emerge from a different shadow on its next action to attack an opponent. The target of this attack performs an Open Test (Intuition vs. Physical). If the character fails, the Grymalkyn may add 2d6 to its next attack roll. The current attack roll is unaffected, and the shadow walk occurs immediately after the current attack is resolved.

Surge: *Hunt the Weak* (4). With a predator's natural instincts, the Grymalkyn leaps about the battlefield and immediately targets (with the results of *this* attack roll) what it perceives to be the most vulnerable among its foes. This is often the smallest character, usually a Teryxian or a member of the Banyari tribes, or that character who currently has the lowest Spirit Pool. Once a target is selected, the Grymalkyn will harry that opponent until it is dead. Future Surge results of "4" will instead add 1d10 to the attack roll.

JEWELED DRAGONFLY

Bred for generations by the Teryxian Brood Masters, the Jeweled Dragonflies of Quill are perhaps the only domesticated animals still maintained in any numbers since the Fall. Though just large enough for a bold Haarkeen man to ride upon as a mount, they rarely appear on any shard other than Quill, as the Brood Masters guard their wards and their training techniques with great jealousy. Not especially dangerous in combat, the Jeweled Dragonflies are mostly employed by the Teryxians to travel to other shards, as the distance is often too far for even the hardiest Teryxians to fly themselves.

Physical Dice	3d6
Mental Dice	2d6
Health	10
Zeal	1

Surge: *Just an animal after all* (1). See description on p. 264.

Surge: *Scintillating Colors* (4). As part of their bizarre mating display, the Jeweled Dragonflies have been known to fly in odd patterns, creating a shimmering cascade of light behind them. The effect is as if miniscule crystals were floating upon the air, reflecting light in sparkling display. Some Teryxians have trained their mounts to perform this unusual display on command, which has been known to interrupt the rays of the Overlight and the channeling of Chroma. The GM rolls 1d8 to see which Virtue will be affected: "1" affects all Virtues, "2" affects Wisdom, "3" affects Logic, and so on. A result of "8" allows the GM to choose which Virtue is

affected. For the duration of this combat, any character using an affected Virtue must replace one Virtue die with a d6. If this Surge is triggered multiple times in a single combat, the effects are cumulative.

PITZOQUITL

The origins of these immense beasts, which are also known as Mud-Hogs, are lost to time. Engineered by the Brood Masters at the height of their abilities, these powerful creatures, with their upright stance and grasping, digging hands, were used to shape mud and haul stone for the construction of the buildings and spires that were once the jewel of Quill. After the Fall, without the Teryxians' daily psychic guidance of their behavior and physical evolution, the Pitzoquitl very quickly became feral.

Now they dwell deep in the jungles, living in small family groupings. They'll eat just about anything, plant and animal alike. While typically rather placid, they are capable of violent bursts of activity as they are driven by their ravenous appetite.

Physical Dice	6d8
Mental Dice	3d6 (5d10)
Health	24
Zeal	1



Surge: *Just an animal after all* (1). See description on p. 264.
Surge: *Monstrous Strength* (3). Roll 2d8 and add the results to the current attack.
Surge: *Volatile Hunger* (4). If this attack deals at least three damage, the Pitzoquitl may immediately make an additional attack against the same target. This Surge cannot be triggered again during the additional attack.

Special: *Bred for Obedience*. The simple-minded Pitzoquitl may roll 5d10 Mental Dice when performing an Open Test to resist any sort of mind-control or beast-communication Chroma, unless coming from a Teryxian character. This even applies to standard Beastways Tests, if a character is trying to reason with, calm, or otherwise communicate with a Pitzoquitl.

BEINGS OF BANYAN



FELLGAT

Many Banyari demonstrate a greater awareness — an instinctual caution — when moving through the undergrowth of the deepest forests. With so many varieties of lethal flora and fauna on Banyan, this behavior makes sense in a culture that largely hunts and gathers. But where did that deep, pre-existing fear of the lower wood come from? Who can say? But the nightmare creatures known as the Fellgat entirely justify such primordial terror.

The Fellgat are said to be a cursed herd, pushed from their territory during the War of Leaves. According to Banyari fables, the Fellgat fled in terror to the edge of Banyan, one after the other, hurling themselves into the vastness below. Then the last bull reached the edge with his herd and stopped short, as if ensnared by something terrible. Something terrible that chased them from the forest. Those last Fellgat did not leap. Instead they turned back, and a shadow cast from nothing fell upon them, changing them to beasts of fear and predation for all time.

Fellgat are monstrous hoofed beasts like goats or elk, standing eight and a half feet high at the shoulder and with long curved horns. Their coat

ranges from dark gray to black, with the occasional pure white animal said to be born of the very worst of their kind. These albino Fellgat are slightly larger and believed to be more intelligent than their bestial kin. The eyes are always black, but flare with redness when they are preparing for a kill. Their teeth, horns, and hooves are all razor sharp. (Some Fellgat actively sharpen their horns and hooves on stones when they are idle.) Worst of all, the Fellgat are terribly silent until they attack.

Physical Dice	5d10
Mental Dice	4d10
Health	30
Zeal	5

Surge: *Monstrous Strength* (3). Roll 2d8 and add the results to the current attack.
Surge: *The First Fear* (4). There is something about the presence of the Fellgat that draws forth feelings and thoughts of horror from deep within a being's evolutionary wiring and cultural memory. The target of the Fellgat's attack, or any other PC of the GM's choosing, is overcome with waves of primeval terror. They must perform a Hazard Test (Fear D10 vs. Resolve). If the character fails the Test, the number of wounds they would suffer is instead lost as points from their Fury Pool. If their Fury Pool is depleted, the character loses half of the remaining point loss from their Spirit Pool instead. In addition, the character may no longer voluntarily choose to spend or channel Spirit Points in any way until the end of the combat or until the Fellgat is defeated.

NITANSIEN VANGUARD

There are some Nitansien who have chosen to support the Verthod Rootlords in their efforts in the War of Leaves. These Nitansien Vanguard act as scouts and outriders, reporting on enemy positions and eliminating Teryxian spies. They are quiet and alert, and rarely seen before it is too late.

Physical Dice	3d6
Mental Dice	6d8
Health	9
Zeal	2

Surge: *Poison Blowgun Dart* (4). The target of this attack must perform a Hazard Test (Poison D8 vs. Resistance).

TERYXIAN OUTLANDER

Most believe the Outlanders to be single-mindedly dedicated to the eradication of the Banyari. Indeed many are, hoping to eventually claim Banyan for their own, as they still blame the Banyari for the destruction of Quill. But most of the Outlanders have lived upon Banyan for many, many generations at this point, and some of the younger Teryxians there, while doubting the justness of their cause, nevertheless view Banyan as their rightful home.

The Scholar-Priests of the Last Spire have long since ceased commenting on the war effort on Banyan, and many have taken that as a sign that the ruling power of Quill is no longer officially invested in the outcome of the War of Leaves.



But Outlanders continue to get support in the form of food and supplies from Quill, so it is very likely that they have sympathizers at all levels of Teryxian society.

Outlanders rarely move in anything other than large patrols, and it is not uncommon for them to have temporarily bonded with some beast of Banyan's forest to take advantage of the animal's strength or senses. One never knows who or what may be spying for the Outlanders in the Great Forest. There are even rumors that some of the Outlanders have learned the techniques that allow the Grymalkyn to shadow walk.

Physical Dice	6d6
Mental Dice	6d8
Health	8
Zeal	4

Surge: *Hunter's Talons* (4). The Teryxian Outlander may reroll all failed dice in the current attack roll.

VERTHOD DEFENDER

These are stalwart warriors who have turned their innate Compassion into the passionate defense of their way of life. Turning aside from their traditional ways, the Rootlords of the Verthod tribe will meet invaders and trespassers — Teryxian or otherwise — with the indomitable strength of root and soil.

Physical Dice	4d8 (6d8)
Mental Dice	5d8
Health	10
Zeal	3

Surge: *Strangle-Vine* (4). With startling speed, the target is entangled in a stout length of root, erupting from the Verthod Defender's body. The target must succeed at an Open Test (Athletics or Brawl vs. 6d8) or become ensnared. On subsequent actions, an ensnared character must succeed at an Open Test (Athletics (Might) vs. Physical) or miss their action and suffer the

effects of a 6d8 attack from the Verthod Defender. The Verthod Defender may continue to attack other opponents as normal. Normally, the Verthod Defender may only ensnare one victim at a time in this manner, but at the GM's discretion, they may attack multiple opponents with future *Strange-Vines*, but only by spending Zeal to trigger the Surge.

BEINGS OF HAARK

DOCKWORKER

The skydocks are the lifeblood of Haark's economy. Without a steady flow of imports, Haark would starve and living conditions would deteriorate immediately. The Dockworkers who man the cleats and lines of the skydocks are generally good, hard-working types, but there are certainly those who take bribes and facilitate some of the worst smuggling activities within the City Magnificent.

Either way, Dockworkers tend to arm themselves with whatever is lying around: hafted hooks, lengths of chain, and a variety of iron tools. They are accustomed to brawls — even the occasional attempt at theft — and are not unprepared to defend themselves or the merchandise under their care. They usually don the heraldry of the city of Haark or some private enterprise, and do not wear armor.

Physical Dice	4d6
Mental Dice	3d6
Health	8
Zeal	1

Surge: *Part of a Crew* (4). If this encounter is taking place on the skydocks of Haark, another Dockworker rushes in to help their comrade.



HAARKEEN CITY WATCH

Even at the Edge, Haark's City Watch can be found. Although their equipment, demeanor, and training varies from district to district, the City Watch is effectively the military force that defends Haark. Sworn to serve the council and the needs of the people, the Watch generally

does what it is supposed to, although extreme examples of both kindness and cruelty surely can be found within its ranks.

As members of the City Watch must be born on Haark, the vast majority are human, although other Folk certainly serve as well. (The stats below represent a Haarkeen member of the City Watch.) The City Watch are usually encountered at checkpoints or out on regular patrols. They also assist in protecting the skydocks and are found in great numbers throughout Haark's commerce districts, especially the Great Market.

Physical Dice	4d8
Mental Dice	4d8
Health	8
Zeal	1

Surge: *That armor is stronger than it looks!* (4). The City Watch regains one health. This is ignored if the City Watch is at full health.

Special: *Halt!* When being pursued by City Watch through any district other than the Edge, characters must lower their Skill dice for Athletics Tests (or other applicable Tests) by one level in their attempts to escape.

HAARKEEN COUNCIL GUARD

The elite protection of the Council of Seven. The Council Guard are the best of the best, appointed from a variety of backgrounds for a number of purposes. They tend to be well-armored, wielding either sword and shield or a hafted, serrated axe — called a "shardcleaver" by criminals, assassins, and other sorts who stand to fear a Council Guard's combat savvy.



Note for the GM: Council Guards should be placed far more sparingly than the City Watch. As a guideline, only involve them in situations where the council's will must be enforced or protected, or when an extremely revered guest from off-shard needs an escort.

Physical Dice	6d8
Mental Dice	4d12
Health	12
Zeal	3

Surge: *Desperate Display of Arms* (3). Immediately add 2d10 to the attack roll. This may only be triggered when the number of Council Guards in this encounter has been reduced to two or fewer.

Surge: *That armor is stronger than it looks!* (4). The Council Guard regains one health. This is ignored if the Council Guard is at full health.

HAARKEEN CUTPURSE

Many of those who call Haark home do not have a wide variety of choices available to them. A great number of them end up scraping and stealing to survive, and this is especially true in the Great Market and near the Ring of Silk, where the pickings are good.

Then there are those who live near the Edge. Many of the inhabitants of this forsaken place are simply impoverished people with no other options, although there have always been those who choose the Edge because it is a lawless and dangerous place, where violence and crime solve more problems than they should.

The Haarkeen Cutpurse is a common street tough or ne'er-do-well. (These stats are also a good stand-in for many basic Haarkeen combatants.) The more organized Edge-Dweller gangs of Haark have a list of agendas and strange customs as long as the list of gangs itself. Gang members should be weirder, more dangerous, and very thematic.

Physical Dice	3d6
Mental Dice	4d6
Health	6
Zeal	1

Surge: *Dirty Fighter* (4). If this attack is successful, it deals one extra damage.

IRON WASP

How often does a person think about what's on the underside of the shards? Beneath Haark, where the vast ironworks that create the chains and planks and cages of the Hanging Prison are constructed, there lives a species of enormous stinging insect that has adapted its lifestyle to use the abundance of iron at its disposal.

An unusual substance in the Iron Wasp's saliva allows it to chew and reconstitute the metals that surround it, forming huge multi-chambered nests which look to be made from a bizarre variety of ferrous concrete.

The Haarkeen Chain-Walkers would have long ago taken strides to eradicate the Iron Wasps, if not for an elite squadron of the Haarkeen Navy which has managed to train the insects as war mounts. For now, an uneasy peace exists between the Chain-Walkers Guild and the Iron Wasp Navy.

Physical Dice	5d6
Mental Dice	2d6
Health	12
Zeal	1

Surge: *Maddening Sting* (4). The target of this attack must succeed at an Open Test (Intuition vs. Physical) or find themselves overcome with dazzling technicolor hallucinations. More than just a light show, this venom is doubly dangerous to Skyborn, as it interferes with the way in which the Overlight is channeled. Until the end of the combat, the target character must roll two Spirit Dice for every Chroma Test, the sum of which is the Spirit Point cost for the channeling.

BEINGS OF VEILE



AURUMEL PIRATE

The airships of the Aurumel are a wonder across the shards. Beyond the spectacle, they are the lifeblood of the most populated areas, carrying trade goods and needed supplies to the world's most remote corners. Amidst those distant locales lurk the most disenchanted of the Aurumel Folk — sky pirates who feed on those supply lines like Grymalkyn prey upon Teryxian hatchlings.

The Aurumel Pirate is a disgrace to their native society, and to further justify this disgrace, they abandon their mask of station, tossing it into the remote Sea Below. Aurumel Pirates tend to wear hoods or cloth masks that cover their entire face, save the eyes. In those eyes can be seen the deadly intentions of a creature that truly has nothing to lose.

Pirates tend to fight with light weapons and dress themselves in a fashion that allows them to bound about their airships with grace and speed. It is not uncommon for these Pirates to also carry long daggers tucked into their sashes. These daggers are not backup weapons, but instead a last resort for those Pirates who fall from the deck and plummet into the Underfathom — for death by one's own hand is preferred to that fate. An odd custom indeed, but elder Pirates say that to fall to that dark place is a death beyond death, to be avoided at all costs.

Physical Dice	4d8
Mental Dice	5d6
Health	11
Zeal	2

Surge: *Dirty Fighter* (4). If this attack is successful, it deals one extra damage.

Special: *Live Only for Today!* Aurumel Pirates revel in walking the thin line between life and death, taking their life's meaning from the rushes of adrenaline that come from crazed feats of acrobatics and insanely risky physical stunts. Given opportunity to risk life and limb for the glory of a killing blow, an Aurumel Pirate may spend health as though it were Zeal, for the purpose of adding d12s to their rolls. Only one die may be added to any given roll this way. On its face, this is a pretty simple ability, but it shouldn't become an excuse to just pile on d12

after d12. This ability should be a tool for the GM to add drama and tension to an encounter.



AURUMEL ROGUE

Outside of art and immortality, the sustenance of the Aurumel people is intrigue. With ancient pacts, truces, rivalries, and oaths as the expected arsenal among social rivals, the straightforward method is rarely the best choice. So, it is not uncommon for young Aurumel to choose a life at the edge of those courts and guilds, as rogues. Gliding from one clique to the next, the rogue kills and steals that which they cannot rightly earn by their own merits.

Aurumel Rogues are generally dandies with clothing, jewelry, and weapons well beyond their means. It is appearance that matters. Once the persona is established, it is fortified with scams and cons and the occasional well-placed assassination. They can be found in any court, any cadre, and any entourage in which the Aurumel take part, feeding their unending resentment of the upper classes with their dripping blue blood.

Physical Dice	3d8
Mental Dice	4d8
Health	6
Zeal	2

Surge: *Blade of the Mountebank* (4). The sleight-of-hand stunts perfected by the Aurumel are without equal. When this Surge is triggered, the target must perform an Open Test (Perception vs. Physical). If the character fails, then the Rogue pilfers one appropriately sized Valuable from the character without their noticing. If the character has no suitable Valuable, the Rogue takes five Wealth Points from them instead. (The GM may decide if the Valuable can be recovered when the Rogue is killed, or if the Rogue has used some sort of Overlight trickery to hide the item away — potentially generating further adventures!)

GUILDED LABORER

The Aurumel guilds are the skeleton of Aurumel society, and the laborers enlisted by such organizations are as essential to Aurumel society as gold. Forgoing their own legacies, Guilded Laborers enable the projects and masterpieces of renowned artists and crafters. Lasers, airships, and fine Aurumel wine are all finished by the blood and sweat of these workers.

The average worker just wants to get home to their family after a long, grueling day under the

gaze of their harsh and discriminating masters. This may often lead to a stop at a drinking hole on the way, and fights between tourists and drunken belligerent laborers are not uncommon. (Please note that Guilded Laborers are *not* slaves, and do wear masks of their own, albeit simple ones, like the rest of Aurumel society.)

Physical Dice	3d6
Mental Dice	4d6
Health	7
Zeal	1

Surge: none

PRAETORIAN

The Praetorians of the Aurumel are the veterans of many battles. Some are former military, some are the privileged sons and daughters of the houses and guilds, and others come from more dubious lineage. Nonetheless, they are the finest warriors of the Aurumel Folk, and their reputation means that hiring them to one's cause comes at high cost.

Among lesser warriors, Praetorians stand out like a sore thumb. They sport the best armor and heirloom weapons and are adorned gaudily with decorations and honors. Unlike a normal house guard, they do not wear uniform masks, and instead wear a Praetorian mask which is stylized to reflect the warrior's living legend.

With reputation and honor being the basis for their wages, most Praetorians are law-abiding — or at least belong to houses that can grease the wheels if such a person were to create trouble for themselves. Off-duty or unemployed Praetorians, however, sometimes grow restless — and in turn, combative with insecurity. Such mercenaries are often easily offended, using insults and misspeaking as grounds for fighting and robbing the offenders.

Physical Dice	6d8
Mental Dice	3d12
Health	13
Zeal	3

Surge: *Master's Riposte* (4). If the *next* attack against the Praetorian deals at least two damage, the Praetorian may then immediately make a free attack against that attacker.

BEINGS OF PYRE

CEMETERY CRAB

Large, heavy-bodied land crabs live near the channels carved by Kushir, the greatest of Pyre's magma rivers. They thrive in the extreme heat and noxious gases of that harsh environment, and they are well documented as far-ranging creatures that will often drag their prey back to



the river to be cooked alive in the heat. Far too many times, wanderers have been drawn to the river's edge by the sight of perfectly clean charred bones slowly turning to ash — only to find themselves the next victim.

Physical Dice	5d8
Mental Dice	3d6
Health	16
Zeal	1

Surge: *Just an animal after all* (1). See description on p. 264.
Surge: *Down Into the Fire* (4). The target of this attack must succeed at an Open Test (Might vs. Physical) or find themselves dragged back toward the magma river, requiring additional Open Tests to escape the Cemetery Crab's claws. Ultimately, if the target does not escape, they must perform an extremely dangerous Hazard Test (Hazard D12 vs. Resistance), representing the river's poisonous gases and unbearable heat.

PYROI HUNTER

Casting aside the prestigious headdress and tribal titles that much of Pyroi society holds dear, the hunting parties of the Pyroi long for simpler

times, when one's mettle was measured in the meat taken for one's family and in the hides and furs that held back the tundra's wrath and could be traded to other settlements. It was in these primordial days that the hunter performed rites that directly tied one's heart, honor, and land, smelting them together in the heat of the hunt. The Pyroi Hunter is quite simply the purest manifestation of Might as need.

Physical Dice	5d8
Mental Dice	4d8
Health	14
Zeal	2

Surge: *The Might of Ages* (4). If this attack is successful, it deals two extra damage.

PYROI FIRETHANE

Many are the proud sons and daughters of Pyre who count themselves members of the many warbands that claim dominion over their relentlessly brutal shard. Each band has its own rites, markings, weaponry, and traditions, although they all share a sacred reverence for violence and war. The skirmishes and grudges between warbands are the stuff of tales told over the course of many weeks in grand gatherings, played out in ancestor shrines or upon ruined daises set at the base of erupting volcanoes. To an outsider, this constant need for warfare and conflict seems downright barbaric, but it forms the core of what it means to be Firethane. Tested, blooded, and sung, these Pyroi knights are devastating in combat and devout in their service to the great warbands of Pyre.

Physical Dice	4d10
Mental Dice	4d8
Health	18
Zeal	2

Surge: *Unrelenting Fury* (3). Add one Zeal to the Firethane's current pool.
Surge: *The Might of Ages* (4). If this attack is successful, it deals two extra damage.

Special: *The Fire of Ages.* After being targeted by a successful attack, a Pyroi Firethane may spend Zeal to reduce the damage they are dealt. For each Zeal spent this way, reduce the damage by one.

SHOVEL-TUSK

These gargantuan creatures are one of the most enduring images of the wilds of Pyre. With thick hides, sword-like tusks, and a territorial disposition, the Shovel-Tusks are best given a wide berth.

Physical Dice	4d12
Mental Dice	4d8
Health	50
Zeal	3

Surge: *Just an animal after all* (1). See description on p. 264.
Surge: *Behemoth* (4). Tusks are one thing, but a creature the size of a Shovel-Tusk can trample most any person into the dust. The target of this attack must succeed at an Athletics Test or else suffer an additional 5d12 attack roll from the Shovel-Tusk.





CHAPTER 8

THE SAGE OF THE HANGING PRISON

STOP! If you are not serving as the GM for your group, you should stop reading now. What follows is for the GM's eyes only — unless you'd like the story spoiled for you!

This introductory adventure is designed as an easy entry point for new characters, right at the heart of the Overlight setting — upon the city-shard of Haark. The adventure will guide players through a mix of action, investigation, and role-playing, while also serving them bite-sized chunks of the setting and its tone. An assortment of pre-generated characters has been provided in *Appendix A*, or your players can create their own using the rules in *Chapter 3: The Skyborn*.

It would be prudent for you, the GM, to re-read the Haark section of *Chapter 2: The Shards* (see p. 46) before running this adventure.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

PART ONE: Well Met in the Market
The characters meet one another and are approached by a mysterious but friendly stranger, who asks them to find his missing Banyari teacher. After a bit of poking around the streets of Haark, the party finds out that the teacher has been arrested and is being held in the Hanging Prison of Haark. One way or another, they find out that there is only one viable entrance to the prison, and only one key to that entrance.

PART TWO: The Revelry of the Matrux Invico Karamag
The key hangs about the neck of one of the richest and most perverse of the Aurumel nobles in Haark. His ancestor built the place ages ago. Luckily for the party, this Aurumel noble hosts enormous decadent parties nearly every evening, which will get them in the same room as the key. How they acquire the key is up to them, although the circumstances certainly favor a cunning approach. Once the key is acquired, the party locates the old passage into the heart of the Hanging Prison.

PART THREE: With Nothing but Sky Beneath
After a daunting descent through the shard itself, the characters find themselves braving the gangplanks, rope bridges, and rattling iron cages of the Hanging Prison. The party will have to navigate the prison, survive confrontations with guards, and find the old Banyari sage. Then they will be confronted with an unthinkable decision that will guide the course of their future adventures beneath the Overlight.

PART ONE
WELL MET IN THE MARKET

If this is the group's first story, then the Great Market of Haark is a perfect setting for these unusual characters to find themselves thrown together. Having been drawn to Haark by the teeming masses of people, the party's origin can be as simple as having the characters recognize each other as Skyborn and then share tea in one of the market's bountiful cafés or teahouses, as they relate their personal Skyborn experiences. With this method, you can give your players the opportunity to introduce their characters to one another, describing their appearance as well as any personality traits that would become obvious over the course of an afternoon spent with new friends. As GM, you may also like to intimate that for a small group of Skyborn to have serendipitously found each other on the streets of Haark is beyond uncanny.

Alternately, as the Great Market of Haark is a bustling transportation hub with shipments and people coming and going at all times, it is an ideal location for a previous story to have ended, or where the characters might have had some rest and recovery time between stories.

Setting the Stage

If *The Sage of the Hanging Prison* is indeed the first story for these characters, and your players are brand new to Overlight, you might consider reading the following aloud as a way of setting the stage:

We begin in the sky. Vast, with no visible horizon. We look down through overlapping clouds, layer upon layer, iridescent bands of color permeating everything, as if lit by a great light from above.

Now we come upon a colossal shard of a planet long broken and gone. Impossibly huge and hanging in the sky, it is covered in brown shapes and teeming with buzzing black dots.

It is an endless city of people. Stone cubes stacked upon stone cubes, the architecture is efficient and ancient. Everyone needs to be somewhere. This metropolis sprawls in every direction, to every edge of this floating continent.

And here, at the center, is the Great Market of Haark. It is spread out over countless rocky outcrops, with tents and stalls connected by complicated suspension bridges and gangplanks, or nestled into dark grottos deep beneath the surface of the shard. Fabric, fruit, exotic animals, jewelry, incense, people… all is for sale in this grand bazaar.

SCENE: THE MUSICIAN'S REQUEST

No matter how the characters found their way to Haark, they should ultimately find themselves drawn to watch a musician, performing in a small amphitheater tucked away in some forgotten part of the Great Market.

Here, amidst the scurrying of children running errands for merchants and shoppers alike, and the small sounds of nameless rodents busying themselves beneath one's feet, sits a Haarkeen man in ragged monk's robes, plucking at the strings of a simple instrument with his eyes closed. The sounds clarify the air and add a single note of serene order to a world boiling in chaos and wild, ceaseless change.

Other than the musician, the characters are the only people in the amphitheater. Once the musician finishes his song — or if the characters think to offer a Wealth Point to the musician's worn, wooden alms cup — the man opens his eyes and directly addresses the characters. It is immediately obvious by the shimmer in his eyes that the man is Skyborn.

He introduces himself as Faradon Lux, a Skyborn vagabond. He has the look of one used to sleeping

without a roof, and he wears a startling array of bangles, buckles, and baubles, all sewn into or dangling from his threadbare silks and leathers.

"Thank you for your patronage! It is an auspicious occasion when I can count Folk such as yourselves among my audience. Clearly, we share a common light, and it is to that light that I make an appeal regarding my current predicament."

And here Faradon pauses, gauging the party's reaction before continuing.

"My teacher has gone missing. I suspect the worst and I cannot trust true strangers to this deed. I say you are not true strangers because you are Skyborn and know in your hearts when a wrong has been done or when someone requires your aid. Please, help me and my teacher, and I will bring you to mysteries that will unlock your greatest potential — for I can see that you are but a few steps along your rightful path. Please. Will you help a brother in need?"

If the characters do not immediately accept, Faradon will make appeals to their cultures, referencing any small, noticeable detail



upon their persons or among their effects. He is extensively traveled and conversant in all manner of rituals, beliefs, customs, ceremonies, and geography.

Any character who wishes to more closely examine Faradon may perform a Folklore Test. Any success will allow them to identify one or more of the unusual accessories that he wears upon his person, many of them symbols of great esteem. These might include:

- dignity feathers, as worn by Banyari Verthod heroes
- a small, carved wooden mask sewn into his robes, which are given to honorary guild members on Veile
- Pyroi tattoos, of the sort applied by the warbands of Pyre

We encourage you, the GM, to add your own artifacts or details about items in Faradon's possession, perhaps to seed future stories or reference stories that the players have already played through. Again, Faradon is *very* well traveled.

FARADON LUX: *HAARKEEN SKYBORN VAGABOND*

Faradon is a Haarkeen man with a willowy build and many lifetimes of journeying behind him. He is young looking for his age, but is older than you'd think. He wears the honors of many Folk — Banyari, Pyroi, and Hamanu among them — but has twice as many enemies as he has admirers. Always friendly, always in trouble, and always with a story to tell, Faradon Lux is Skyborn through and through.

The problem with Faradon is that he has plans — big plans. Plans to set everything aright, with the pace and savvy of a Konchog City street hustler shuffling nutshells under the nose of a clueless mark. He is lovable, but he is trouble indeed. If not for the Skyborn Order's patronage, he would be a story fading from memory. Luckily for Faradon (and Faradon is *always* lucky) that is not the case.

These days, Faradon has slowed down a bit and spends time zipping from shard to shard in the interest of spending time with his oldest and most beloved teachers. It is only most recently that Faradon has stirred from the serene presence of his masters to the vague sensation that *something* is changing. He believes he can sense subtle differences in the resonance of the Overlight, and he is convinced that the Skyborn Order needs to start doing something. But *what?* Even he cannot say. There are many, even now among the Skyborn Order, who are beginning to view Faradon Lux as a rambling madman at best, perhaps a dangerous troublemaker at worst.

Tips for the GM

Faradon should be two parts wise mentor and one part distracted crusader. He just isn't quite capable of elucidating *why* and *what* he is crusading for. But he's always got some errand that needs urgent attention.

Faradon Lux is an ideal NPC to have make recurring appearances in your campaign. The trick is using him infrequently enough that his serendipitous appearance is treated as a surprising revelation by your PCs. Imprisoned on a liberated slave ship, gambling against naïve Banyari at a celebration in the deep wood, or talking his way out of a fight with an offended Pyroi Firethane — all of these work for Faradon Lux.

For you, the GM, Faradon is a means to insert overarching plot out of nowhere. It is best to be conservative in your use of this storytelling tool, as its overuse will cheapen the mythic and epic themes of your game and potentially reduce it to "Faradon's assignment of the week," which would be a failure of imagination.

The characters are likely to have many questions for Faradon, either before or after they have agreed to help him. Use the information below as a guide for how he might answer their inquiries.

Why can't Faradon do this himself?

Faradon has spent a lot of time on Haark, much of it being pursued, investigated, and harassed by the local authorities. He is viewed as a meddler and an agitator, bent on creating chaos and uncertainty where there need not be.

Who is Faradon's teacher? What do they look like?

Shatu Hak, Master of the Green Heart, is a Banyari of the Aeworn tribe who has accomplished complete mastery of the green Chroma. She is viewed as a mystic and a shaman by her people, but would be seen as nothing more than a confused hobo with a stupid grin by those unaware of her wisdom and gifts.

As an Aeworn, Shatu Hak is more squat-bodied than a Verthod and is accompanied by her resident colony of Root Shrews. "Shatu" is actually a title, representative of her respected role as a spiritual leader to the Skyborn.

What happened to Shatu Hak?

All that Faradon knows about Shatu Hak's disappearance is that, when she landed via airship a short while ago, she was set upon by members of an extremist gang called the Unlighters. Both the dockworkers and the City Watch got involved in an extended conflict, and Shatu Hak never made it to her agreed-upon rendezvous point with Faradon. He only knows all this thanks to gossip about an Aeworn involved in a fracas near the skydocks.

Eventually, the characters should offer to find Shatu Hak for Faradon. Faradon is not a wealthy man, but in addition to his promise of wisdom and knowledge, he assures the characters that he might

be able to assist with some of the more tangible necessities of a life spend wandering.

Faradon, for his part, can be found in and around the old amphitheater for the foreseeable future, and will be easy to find in this part of town. He will not elaborate on where precisely he is staying, but he asks that, when the characters have further news or additional questions, they report back to him.

THE GREAT MARKET OF HAARK

The market at the center of Haark is a wonder unto itself. It is one of the few places upon the shard where a person can see, with their own eyes, the damage that has been done to the shard by the insatiable quarrying and mining from the center of the continent. Here, one is frequently confronted with the strange image of flagstones and cobblestones split by deep fissures and criss-crossed by a chaotic assortment of suspension bridges — some made of stone, others rope-and-plank affairs. Parts of the market are even situated upon veritable islands of rock, surrounded on all sides by deep chasms that descend into unknowable darkness.

The brightly colored awnings, carts, and stalls of the various merchants and vendors display all manner of goods for sale, including fruits, meats, unusual livestock, handicrafts, fabrics, and crystals. Exotic street performers ply their trade next to slave auctions, bolts of amethyst-colored Zenith silk are sold beside contraband flora from Banyan, and the shouts of Pyroi rickshaw operators carry above the noise of the crowds.

As the characters set about their investigations into the disappearance of Shatu Hak, you will undoubtedly want to pepper your narration with the sights and sounds of the gigantic marketplace. Here, we offer a few suggestions for interesting vignettes.

- One of the Novapendra being carried on a palanquin by pilgrim-servants. The wind-tossed veils that surround the creature allow a silhouette of its form to be seen — an articulated centipede no less than twelve feet long. As on most of Haark, these creatures are considered holy and terrifying.

- An obese Haarkeen merchant arguing over the cost of a jeweled bangle, as children harvest his coins from a sloppily buttoned waist pouch.

- A white-eyed fortune teller auguring in the guts of something resembling a giant pillbug. When his ichor-covered hands extract themselves from its guts, he holds aloft a bulbous red cluster of spheres. The Overlight causes it to shine, and he smiles with happy, blind eyes.

- A Banyari Verthod performer singing a poem with no words. As she expresses each syllable, she pantomimes a person, a beast, a flower, a tree, the sky. And, with a mercurial shapeshifting, her vines and leaves assume the shape or semblance of that subject. The green light of Compassion bathes her audience in its glow.

- A Haarkeen child drinking from an enormous nut while watching another child paint strange rainbow mandalas on a stucco wall.



So what really happened to Shatu Hak? A short time ago, she arrived on an airship from Banyan to meet with her student Faradon Lux. Upon arriving, she was attacked by members of the gang called the Unlighters. Although the gang normally claims part of the shard's edge as its territory, this particular crew happened to be wandering the streets beneath the skydock at which Shatu Hak arrived. Upon disembarking, Shatu Hak was set upon by the gang members, who saw the Banyari as an easy target. They severely misjudged her.

Shatu Hak is not lacking defenses of her own, and once the fight escalated, many of the Haarkeen dockworkers rushed to protect their turf from the invading gang. Not long after, the City Watch arrived. The Unlighters fled the moment the guards' whistles could be heard, and Shatu Hak was left to account for the damages. Traveling with no possessions but a walking stick and a small bag of grubs to feed her Root Shrews, she was unable to pay for the damages or the fines levied against her by the City Watch. Shatu Hak now finds herself in a lonely cage in a remote arm of the infamous Hanging Prison of Haark.

There are four primary routes of investigation that could reveal to the party what has happened to Shatu Hak. Please note that some groups may

find themselves exploring only one or two of these options, while others may explore all four. They are in no way required to be played in any specific order, and each one of them can lead to the answers the characters seek. Each option can be a scene in its own right, as simple or as involved as the group's tastes for investigation-style stories allow. As GM, you should require frequent Skill Tests involving Folklore, Intuition, Performance, and Persuasion, varying with the party's approach and the NPC involved.

SCENE: THE SEARCH FOR SHATU HAK

Route #1: Investigate the Skydocks and Make Official Inquiries

The characters might opt to take the official route and question authorities, city clerks, or dockworkers about the fight at the skydocks. This is a laborious and tedious route that can lead to a dead end at the desk of a soulless bureaucrat. If, however, the right egos are stroked, and the characters are persistent, this route can provide a definitive answer about Shatu Hak's current location: she's in the Hanging Prison. (As detailed below, most of the other investigative routes will touch back here in some manner.)

This route *should* feel tedious, but you can make it fun if you play it for some humorous moments and get the players to stretch their role-playing skills as they interact with the almost senseless bureaucracy of Haark. Non-Haarkeen characters could very well view this as the horrible effect of excessive civilization, although a Teryxian character might admire the attempts at extreme order, even as they cringe at the terrible implementation.

The trail can lead from the skydocks to the City Watch and, eventually, to a small City Watch post on the outskirts of the Ring of Silk. This should involve a rigorous gauntlet of Skill or Wealth Tests as the party attempts to cajole, bribe, or persuade citizens to part with information. Persuasion and Performance will be most important here, but creative players might also find ways for Inspiration or Perception to be helpful. As GM, you should almost always say "yes" to players who are trying to find new and interesting ways to apply Skills to situations.

City Watch, politicians, dockworkers — all of these are possible sources that can lead the characters farther along the trail to the nameless City Watch post, where they will find an old and frustratingly slow-moving clerk named Ulvis. With the right motivation and prodding, Ulvis will check the records to discover that, yes, Shatu Hak was sent to the Hanging Prison beneath Haark after the conflict at the docks. She is not scheduled to have her case reviewed for some time.

The party will have to stage a rescue. Ideally, they should report back to Faradon Lux at this time. Continue to PART TWO.

Route #2: Visit the Banyari of Haark

While the majority of the Banyari upon Haark live within the Verdant Ring, there is a Banyari garden community in the city center. This garden is like a small jewel, cut from the larger beauty of the Verdant Quarter. Rooftop

terraces overflow with greenery, spilling down the walls into fern-filled nurseries, while pools sprawl with water orchids and lotuses. The characters can reach this area, called Little Banyan, after a short walk.

Most of the Banyari citizens here are quiet and insular. They work their gardens and produce their bounty for the markets, but are sometimes the target of cruel jests from the Haarkeen street children. The compassionate nature of the Banyari prevents them from lashing out or even sternly rebuking the little ones, simply allowing that "children will be children."

However, there is one individual here who may be of assistance to the characters. Sitting on a broken bit of masonry, in the far corner of a walled garden, is a Banyari named Haegu. And he is one of the Worulthing tribe, with blackened bark covering his body and a manner which seems detached from the world around him. Successful Inspiration or Intuition Tests are suggested before Haegu will speak to the characters, although a Banyari character should have an easier time of it.

Speaking in a quiet and scarred voice, Haegu will tell the characters that, yes, he knows of Shatu Hak, and can attest that she never made it as far as Little Banyan, let alone the Verdant Quarter. In speaking with a Banyari member of the City Watch, Haegu did hear that an Aeworn had recently been apprehended and taken into custody.

From here, the characters may question members of the City Watch, and their search should continue as in Route #1.

Route #3: Use Local Contacts

A Haarkeen character, or any PC with a merchant-like background, might use their local contacts on Haark to suss out information about Shatu Hak's arrival and disappearance. A successful Folklore Test, or the use of a Gift such as *Allies in the Gloom*, might lead the characters to Vora, a Haarkeen woman who owns the Manifold Elixarium.

The Elixarium is a specialty shop which offers up for sale a dizzying range of unguents, drugs, poultices, herbs, and poisons. The shop itself is a series of round domes lit by oil lamps and perfumed with rare incense. Veils of silk separate the rooms. Vora, more importantly, was standing in her doorway when the Unlighters attacked Shatu Hak, and she can describe the Banyari and the gang that attacked her. She dipped back into her shop before the Unlighters fled, so she did not see the guards arrive, nor Shatu Hak's arrest.

Successful Persuasion, Folklore, or even Inspiration Tests will convince Vora to relate her experience, as will a Wealth Test if a character decides to engage in a bit of shopping to get Vora to share what she witnessed. If the party thinks to ask, Vora can also reveal that this particular group of Unlighters has been trouble for this part of the market before. They and the other members of their cult can be found in a place called the Windshine Plaza, out near the edge of Haark.

Depending on the information gained from Vora, and the desires of the party, from here the investigation can easily move to Route #1 or #4.



VORA: *WISE HAARKEEN PROPRIETOR AND CONTACT*

Setsag was the name of the Pyroi Embertongue targeted by a corrupt merchant prince who found her edicts on slavery too difficult to swallow. Hounded by assassins, Setsag barely escaped with her life. Wounded and dying, she was found in a Haarkeen alleyway by an orphan beggar girl.

The girl kept Setsag alive and hidden until the assassins were apprehended by the City Watch some time later. As a show of gratitude, Setsag gave the Haarkeen child a life that she would never have otherwise. She was well educated and taught the cunning ways that so many from outside Pyroi Embertongue circles seek to emulate. She grew into a forceful young woman that the denizens of the city center of Haark now know as Vora.

Born of pain and poverty, Vora took full advantage of Setsag's patronage, using the Embertongue's resources to travel among the shards, becoming knowledgeable by way of self-guided discovery and education. She has visited every shard but Nova and has earned many well-placed friends and allies.

Now nearing middle age, Vora can be found at her shop at the edge of the Great Market on Haark. One might think the humble life of a shopkeeper to be beneath Vora's education and life experience, but the Manifold Elixarium is like no other shop in the City Magnificent. Her shelves are full to bursting with every imaginable drug, poison, paint, make-up, medicine, curative, and tincture.

Tips for the GM

Vora knows a lot. She has studied with historians and mystics across the Seven. She is extremely well connected and has the goods and charisma to extend her influence and gallery of contacts, with the only limit being her sometimes short attention span.

In Setsag, a powerful Pyroi Embertongue with ties to the Council of Seven, Vora has a friend who is not only a prominent citizen, but also someone who owes her a life debt. Setsag visits the Elixarium regularly and often feeds Vora bits of gossip and interesting political news.

For her part, Vora is primarily concerned with her own survival, and though she still carries memories of poverty and hunger, she is neither loose-lipped nor exceedingly mercenary. She is a good soul and has a somewhat warped sense of comeuppance when it comes to those she considers corrupt or cruel. She can become a very useful ally to the characters while on Haark.

Route #4: Track Down the Unlighters

If your group is more fond of the direct approach, they may wish to track down the Unlighters. Talking to guards or local contacts (including Vora) can reveal the territory of the Unlighter cult. They can be found in the ruins of an old city square near the edge of the shard, called the Windshine Plaza. Locals know to stay well clear of it.

It will take the characters several hours to travel to the shard's edge and will require an exhausting journey from the city center through the outer rings.

THE UNLIGHTERS: *FANATICAL RELIGIOUS CULT*

It is common knowledge that those known as Skyborn can wield the Overlight to spectacular effect. Using these powers, the Skyborn venture out into the world and do their best to set right what they perceive as wrong. They are, in the eyes of many, heroes. But that is not how the Unlighters see the matter at all.

The Unlighters believe that the Overlight is a pure manifestation of the divine. To absorb, manipulate, or otherwise contrive or "break" its light is a crime against nature that is worthy of disgrace, pain, and death. And so the Unlighters instead refer to the Skyborn as "the Shattered," an epithet they hurl at those who they feel deserve nothing less than to be harassed and hunted everywhere they go — for the Unlighters have infiltrated every social stratum of the Seven.

Not content to lurk in the shadows, becoming one of the most feared and reviled gangs of Edge-Dwellers on Haark, the painted and hooded thugs of the Unlighter cult can be found from Konchog City to the seven cities of Veile. What's worse, there are many more "respectable" citizens who secretly support or fund the causes of the Unlighter cult.

Tips for the GM

With many members of the cult and their sympathizers spread across the shards, the Unlighters and their ultimate goals could form the basis of a grand campaign. For now, their street gang-level operatives serve as a band of bad guys with a foolproof rationale for causing all sorts of trouble for your PCs. By default, all Skyborn have at least one Chroma power, and that is reason enough for an Unlighter to view them as heretics.

It is also important to remember that the Unlighters have secret identities. Any NPC could potentially be one of them. Using an Unlighter unmasking as an opportunity to reveal the complicity of a well-known NPC is a potentially powerful role-playing moment and could be a pivotal scene in your plots.

Unlighter Cultist

Physical Dice	4d6
Mental Dice	5d6
Health	6
Zeal	1

Surge: none

Babaak Raab, Unlighter Nulpriest

Physical Dice	4d6
Mental Dice	5d8
Health	8
Zeal	1

Surge: *A Trick of the Light* (4). There are some who believe that the Nulpriests of the Unlighter cult have learned to shadow walk in a manner akin to the Grymalkyn of Quill. While surely these are merely stories, probably perpetuated by the cult itself, the Nulpriests do seem to have the ability to trick people into *not seeing* something right in front of their faces. When a successful attack roll triggers this Surge, a new, *previously unaccounted for* Unlighter Cultist enters the combat and may immediately attack the character targeted by Babaak Raab. This new Unlighter Cultist participates in the rest of the combat.

SCENE: THE DESOLATE PLAZA

The Windshine Plaza is a bleached-out shell of its former beauty. The architecture is some of the simplest in Haark: large, pale grey-and-white stones with rounded arches and flat roofs, and a floor of similarly colored large flagstones. At the plaza's center sits a huge stone pyramid — once a city landmark and meeting place for business associates or young lovers, now a crumbling relic, painted over with the graffiti of many lifetimes. However, between the plaza center and the party stands a thirty-foot cliff, carved with precarious stone steps leading down the open stone paving and the pyramid. The cliff is the result of a shard-shifting earthquake many lifetimes ago.

The far side of the plaza is the shard's edge itself, where cruel winds blow up over the side, keening with a low-pitched wail. And beyond… there is only oblivion.

The cultists are engaged in a heated discussion at the base of the pyramid. There are two cultists for each character in the party, plus one so-called Nulpriest. With their cracked and heavily applied white face clay and black robes, these individuals are clearly part of the cult cell involved with Shatu's attack.

The party will have to navigate down the uneven steps of the cliff, which should require an Athletics Test, if they wish to approach the Unlighters. If they manage to stealthily make their way close enough to eavesdrop (or use a Chroma to listen in), they can hear the cultists arguing about an upcoming rally they had planned for the market. The recent tussle with the City Watch while harassing the Banyari sage has caused them to reconsider their agenda. The argument is about whether it's safe to proceed as planned. (If nothing else, this serves to confirm to the characters that these are in fact the cultists they seek.)

If approached, the Unlighters are entirely uncooperative. They do not wish to parlay with Skyborn and will very likely threaten the characters with violence after a short conversation. They will only respond to force, although a spectacularly intimidating use of Chroma might get them to back down, requiring both an impressive channeling as well as a Performance Test with at least a Luminous success. There is also an opportunity here for a well-played Chroma such as *Speaker's Fire.*

If defeated or apprehended, the cultists will confess that they fled the market at the first sign of the City Watch, but that their own agents have confirmed that Shatu Hak has been taken into custody and secured away in the Hanging Prison. The Unlighters themselves know all too well how unlikely an escape from that dark place is. Unless every last one of this group of Unlighters is killed, the party will be remembered and will have made themselves permanent enemies of the Unlighter cult upon Haark.

If the characters have learned of Shatu Hak's incarceration, they should return to Faradon Lux to share the news. Continue to PART TWO.

PART TWO

THE REVELRY OF THE MATRUX INVICO KARAMAG

When the characters report back to Faradon, he expresses deep sadness upon hearing of his teacher's fate. The Hanging Prison is where people are put to be forgotten and eventually die, hungry and alone. The prison is deemed impenetrable, by the reckoning of most people.

But *most people* are not Faradon Lux. And Faradon is nothing if not lucky — lucky and incredibly knowledgeable about the tiny details and obscure bits of lore that populate the history of Haark.

Faradon tells the party about the Matrux Invico Karamag, an infamously decadent Aurumel aristocrat said to be the last descendant of Pelagius Karamag, the fabled architect and builder of the Hanging Prison. It has long been rumored that Invico wears a copy of the key to the prison around his long neck. And he is well known to get profoundly intoxicated at the gala balls that he frequently hosts at his palace.

One of these elaborate indulgences is happening soon, and a sufficient caper could acquire the key.

SCENE: THE KARAMAG PALACE

Located in the wealthiest of Haark's districts, the palatial estate of House Karamag has hosted some of the most infamous parties the shard has ever seen. The manse itself is a terraced monstrosity with countless balconies, courtyards, ballrooms, and chambers arranged as though orbiting around the central garden of Invico himself.

From the street, the entrance is a terrace lined with hammered brass braziers, dancing with thick blue flame. Three massive sets of double doors are punctuated by golden-armored Aurumel guards, who scan the guests swarming into the main hall ballroom.

The party itself is invite only, although the security in the ballroom is lax in that regard. The characters may wish to forge printed invitations, sneak into the estate, or just simply walk in. Any of these options should be sufficient to get them into the ballroom. However, *all* the attendees of the ball — Aurumel or not — are masked. Unless they wish to appear as slaves, the characters will have to make or acquire masks of some sort in order to fit in.

Upon entering the ballroom, the characters will notice a second tier rising above the main room. This terrace level seems to host a more select group of guests enjoying the next level of luxury, with stricter review by the guards.

It's a more difficult proposition to gain access to this second level, although a well-placed bribe, or a leveraging of social status, can be used. Require Wealth or Skill Tests as appropriate. Here, the guests are more elaborately masked, and the clear majority appear to be Aurumel. The revelers here are more relaxed and enjoying their respective vices, from flesh to food to smoking. The space itself is filled with a wide variety of exotic floor pipes and hookahs, as well as copious pillows for reclining. The air is thick with smoke.

From the front of the terrace, where it overlooks the ballroom, this level extends back further into the palace. The characters may notice that there is a shallow pit at the center of this area, sectioned off with silk hangings. The layout of the terrace is such that it channels its intoxicated merrymakers into this shrouded room. This is the Matrux's personal orgy hall, a twisted playground where vice and debauchery reach new heights with each party. Curious guests imbibe potent hallucinogens and aphrodisiacs and, as their inhibitions slip, they float toward the center of Invico's web.

If the characters question any of the guests about what goes on beyond the silk barrier, they will be met with everything from lascivious sighs of affirmation to eyes dropping uncomfortably to the floor, complete with stuttering and blushing. One way or another, the characters will have to brave this silk orgy hall if they want to get close to the prison key. We will leave the descriptive details of this inner sanctum up to you, the GM, guided by the tastes and comfort level of your group. The Matrux, at least, should be found reclining upon a massive chaise, surrounded by slaves feeding him all manner of curious liquors, drugs, and morsels of food.

Invico's mask is a lewd, sneering thing with skull-like eyes and elongated features. His lower body is wrapped in a skirt of golden plates and black silk, and the prison key hangs conspicuously around his pock-marked neck. When the characters arrive, he has only just begun his festivities, and still has full control of his mental faculties.

There are three approaches to getting the key from Invico:

1. The characters can encourage Invico to get profoundly drunk or high on drugs, maintaining his interest with discussions of carnal excess and perverse pursuits. There are some interesting substances floating around the party, perhaps some new ones that Invico has yet to sample. Maybe the characters have some enticing new fluid or powder from the Manifold Elixarium? Invico *wants* to go out of his mind with intoxicants, so if he takes the bait, no Test should be required for it to take effect. Once he's passed out, it should be relatively easy to slip the key from around his neck.

2. Some sort of trade or favor can be offered in place of the key. Invico loves having debts that are owed to him. He trades them and passes them around with his inner circle, like so many bonbons at one of his parties. He enjoys the sort of petty power that comes from lording a debt over a person whom he perceives as lesser. What can the characters offer the Matrux? A favor to be called in later? Some defined task? An exotic animal for his menagerie? At the very least, an Open Test (Persuasion or Inspiration vs. Mental) should be required. A Wealth Test, even with a Valuable, will not suffice, although you might allow attempts to use certain Chroma like *Splendid Preening*.

3. Invico is vain and arrogant. He can be persuaded to part with the key if one of the characters flatters his titanic ego or lays on the charm. This should also require a Skill Test, probably with Performance. But this approach is dangerous. Invico will develop a bit of an obsession with the character doing the charming. Invico's tastes are… varied and voracious, and the while the target of his affections may find the situation humorous at first, it should quickly become deadly serious. Because whatever Invico desires, he desires to *possess*. If Invico's villainy takes a turn in this direction, it should be played out over the course of the campaign, as he steps up to fill the role of a dangerous and powerful adversary for the party. Think of your favorite tales of lustful vampires and possessive faerie kings — but turned even darker and crueler.

If things go especially poorly, and the characters find themselves in the unenviable position of having to fight their way to the key or out the door, use the stats for Aurumel Praetorians in *Chapter 7: Myriad Beings*. There are at least thirty of these soldiers scattered throughout the palace. The party must have seriously misplayed the events of this scene for this to happen, but an ambitious group might conceivably have tried to clandestinely take out a guard or two as part of their plan.

MATRUX INVICO KARAMAG: *MONSTROUS AURUMEL LIBERTINE*

Upon Haark, Invico Karamag is the sole representative of the illustrious Karamag line. He is, in his own words, an irredeemable individual, and he seeks only to delve more and more deeply into reckless excess and carnal extremes. During most of his waking hours, Invico is generally afloat upon a cloud of intense intoxication and will often exalt in expressions of his personal weaknesses as a testimony to the almighty strength of his

desires. It is during these windows of flagrant honesty that he will tell tales of his failed attempts at immortality, affirm rumors concerning the betrayals between he and his equally rotten siblings, or otherwise elucidate any number of other schemes and passions that have directly endangered his interests during his lifetime.

The truth is that Invico was doted upon as a child of one of the wealthiest houses on Veile and, due to his disproportionately cruel and entitled nature, he used the privileges of his station to create a firestorm of scandal and disgrace for his house. Rather than concede the foulness of her son's heart, Illicia Karamag sent him to live in the family's palace on Haark, where he could waste away in his own filth, far removed from the halls of power on Veile.

Once relocated, Invico considered his extremely merciful exile on Haark to be entirely unjust. Although his initial endeavors were self-perpetuating — as Illicia had largely made his duties and obligations a formality, involving only very occasional contact with the Council of Seven — he has now shaped his own power structure outside the perimeter of his family's direct control. As such, the affairs of the Karamag estate on Haark have become drenched in drugs, slavery, and blood. Though he bears no official rank within his house, he has claimed the title of Matrux as his own.

Tips for the GM

Make no mistake: Invico is a villain, not a misunderstood derelict or someone who was traumatized and forced into the role of monster. He is a self-made abomination. While in the throes of drug-addled histrionics, the Matrux will openly profess his inability to change his ways, all while drenched in crocodile tears. When sober, Invico is the very image of the cold and unfeeling Aurumel imperiousness that so many have come to associate with his Folk. For he has both a heartless nature and a perpetual hangover.

Among his many other horrific personality traits, Invico is also heinously vindictive. If the characters successfully steal the key after penetrating his inner sanctum, thus depriving him of a family heirloom, he will become their eternal enemy. After such a trespass upon his fragile vanity, Invico finds that the only way he can persevere is through endless vendettas and plots of punishment for those so arrogant that they would dare transgress against the will of House Karamag!

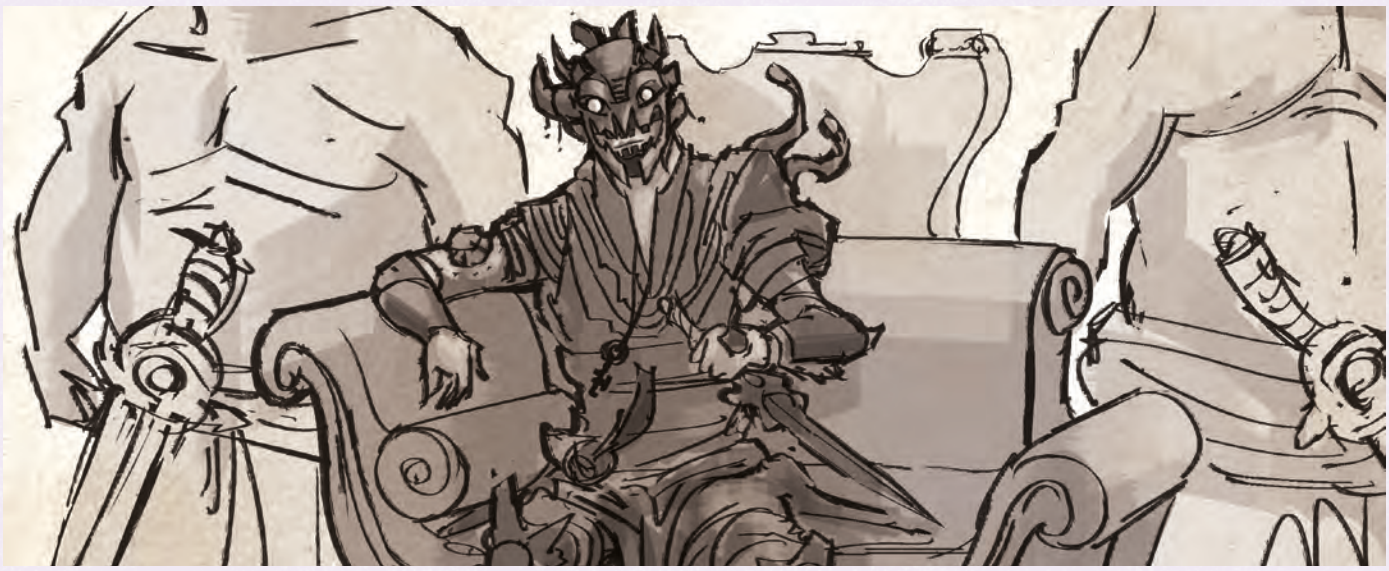
In fact, most every option for getting the key from Invico will end poorly, even if the ultimate price will not be paid until after the conclusion of this story. If the key is stolen, Invico will demand justice, and it will not be merciful or swift. If one of the characters flattered their way into possession of the key, then the Matrux's obsession will become a thing of terror. The best possible outcome is if the characters bargained for the key — but even then, they will owe a debt to this most heinous of personages.

Matrux Invico Karamag

Physical Dice	4d8
Mental Dice	4d12
Health	11

Surge: none

Invico relishes his position as the grand host and center of attention, and will in most cases go along with whatever schemes the characters concoct, as long as there's the promise of a new high, a new physical experience, or a new debt to be collected at a later date. And so, provided the characters have not made fools of themselves or blown their cover, there is no reason that Invico would have cause to use Zeal or trigger Surges. If absolutely required, Invico can be considered to have six Zeal.



INVICO'S GUESTS

While the most horrid debauchery plays out behind the silk curtains of the Matrux's inner sanctum, interactions with the guests at the gala can run the gamut from light-hearted humor (with guests who don't quite understand what's going on here, present mostly to score social points) to despicably dark moments that only serve to underscore Invico's appetites.

If your group is the sort that appreciates an extended role-playing encounter, here are a few individuals that they may find themselves speaking with over the course of the event:

Merchant Prince Bakir, a Haarkeen trader, is in attendance with his three brothers. He has nothing nice to say about the master of the house, but will not come right out and openly speak ill of Invico either. Bakir peeks around in paranoid fashion any time he or anyone else says something remotely derogatory about your host. All four men are rather well armed, which betrays their original intention: to collect a debt from the Matrux. After spending some time in the palace and seeing both the number of guests and the number of guards, they are seriously rethinking that plan.

Erois Domitius, an Aurumel entertainer, has traveled the shards studying all forms of dance, both profane and sacred. Considered both a living master of the art as well as the medium by which he conveys said art, Erois is outrageously wealthy. While he lacks the stomach for the crueler pursuits of his host, and in fact keeps his distance from him, Erois will nevertheless spend the party enjoying the intoxicants available on the terrace level, as there are few things better for allowing him to escape the perpetual bodily pain that he has earned through the lifelong pursuit of his craft.

Ixilochl, a Teryxian poet, is holding court near a massive flower arrangement which stands behind him like a peacock's display. Although he is articulate and engaging, the vapidity of the guests encircling him is palpable. If one of the PCs can provide earnest and interesting discourse, Ixolichl can be guided toward a number of subjects about which he knows clever and sometimes informative stories.

Pontius and Portia, an incestuous twin pair of Aurumel Praetorians, are playing cat-and-mouse with a confused Haarkeen teenager, who seems terrified to disappoint them. Pontius puffs his chest and says crude things to the lad, implying sexual acts with Portia, while Portia gently whispers the outrageous tortures that will be visited upon the boy by Pontius if the poor lamb fails to satisfy her.

The Queen of Sapphires, a Haarkeen slaver, is a dear friend of the Matrux. She is perhaps the only person on the shard who Invico has any respect for. To her credit, the Queen has no such love for the Aurumel creature, and she constantly acts to undermine his trust, betraying him in small ways to siphon off what coin she can from the unsavory dealings he expects of her. The Queen was once a slave-prostitute in service of another slaver, who also bore the title "Queen of Sapphires."

Gansukh, a Pyroi Firethane, came to Haark a week ago to visit the Pyroi representative holding his shard's seat within the Council of Seven. He is conservative and well-groomed, and he seems to be contending with social discomfort by carrying himself as a brave warrior — which of course he is. But Gansukh appears stiff and childlike in the midst of the gala.

The Lady Pomponia, an Aurumel courtier, is butterflying around the room leaving a wake of confused, offended, and amused acquaintances in her wake. In fact, Pomponia is not a lady of any notable standing, but rather one of Invico's pets who has gone entirely insane. Her strange, flat mask was crudely fashioned from a golden tray at Invico's bedside. After the Matrux mutilated her face out of some bored impulse, he insisted she wear the tray so that he would not have to look at the mess he made.

Aggrana, an Aurumel airship captain, stands with two of her mates at the bottom of the grand stairwell. Her mask has an asymmetrical, wave-like shape, and from the mouth of the mask she occasionally puffs a delicate curl of smoke put there by the long metal pipe in her right hand. The three of them look comfortable but bored, having attended more of these soirées than they'd care to admit.

Holrend, a Banyari of the Verthod tribe, is a strange and isolated presence among the guests. He is a naïve and difficult creature who maintains a willfully ignorant relationship with the Matrux, as he orchestrates a dubious trade relationship with his disillusioned kin on Banyan. He looks entirely spaced out and disoriented.

As almost everyone is elaborately masked, here are a few ideas for the sorts of designs to be seen at the revelry:

- An elongated oval, carved all over with arabesques, the eyeholes placed asymmetrically within the swirls
- A mask of wrought iron riveted together, with rough features
- A stylized Novapendra face, cut from nearly clear crystal
- A mask made to look like an exotic orchid or iris
- A veritable helmet, covering the entire head, with a different face on each of three sides: a child, an adult, and an elder
- A moon-like round mask, with round mouth and round eyes
- A tall rectangle, like a standing stone or burial marker, with a ghost's features cut at the top
- A leering imp
- The plain masks of servants and assistants: full masks for the Aurumel, half masks or quarter masks for the Haarkeen
- The unremarkable fabric hoods and chains of the slaves

Once the group acquires the key from Invico, and returns to Faradon Lux, he can direct them to the long-shuttered ancient entrance to the Hanging Prison. Faradon, ever full of surprises, has a leather map, worn thin with age, of the prison's layout. The characters will be able to quickly identify where in the prison the new inmates are kept, hoping that the maps details are still relevant (they are).

The entrance itself is peculiar. A massive obelisk, unremarked in an old part of the Great Market. On each of the obelisk's four sides is an inert iron door, set with four iron panels. The doors are patterned with etched concentric rings, which upon closer inspection seem to pulse as light plays over their metallic surface. One of the panels has a hole at its center which will perfectly fit Invico's key. This key turns the tumblers as if the lock had been oiled very recently. The rings then retract into themselves, one at a time, revealing a dusty passage that leads to a landing at the top of a flight of stairs. Given the amount of grime and earth, it appears this passage has lain undisturbed for a very, very long time.

These stairs cut straight through the heart of Haark itself. The party faces a week-long journey through pitch-black conditions, with no real way to replenish their supplies. They should perform a Hazard Test (D10 vs. Survival) unless a clever idea, wise purchase, or some Chroma prepares them for the hardships ahead. Failing that, as GM, you should seriously consider using the optional "Spirit Boosts on Open Tests" rule from *Chapter 6: Secret Wisdom* (see p. 260). Use of Spirit Points to counteract the misery and fatigue of this descent would be especially thematic.

Once the characters reach the bottom, it is time for them to face the Hanging Prison itself. Proceed to PART THREE.

PART THREE
WITH NOTHING BUT SKY BENEATH

THE HANGING PRISON OF HAARK

The city-shard of Haark is a continent's worth of buildings, parks, streets, and monuments — a city that exceeds all others beneath the Overlight. Despite its sprawling mass, each plot of land upon its surface is enormously precious. Haark is densely populated, and the acquisition of property is next to impossible without ample coin or highly placed government connections. So it is that Haark cannot afford to route money into urban projects unless they find a way to actually create additional space. Which is why the greatest prison in the world hangs from Haark's underbelly, suspended over a blue sky that is all but bottomless.

The Hanging Prison was a joint project of the Council of Seven and Pelagius Karamag, an Aurumel master architect celebrated across the

shards for his works. From Zenith to Pyre, there is at least one structure of his design on every shard. It was due to this fame and reputation that he was given the opportunity to unravel the puzzle: how to build an effective prison for a shard so urbanized that not a single acre could be spared for the purpose?

The original entrance of the prison was a single shaft leading down a seemingly interminable length of stairs, which ultimately emerged from the center of Haark's underside. Later, lifts were installed in shorter shafts to permit a quicker journey. There are no fewer than ten thousand cells and cages within the prison. A nightmare of chain suspension bridges, wooden planks, and swinging ropes connect these to a central guard post, which acts as a hub from which four of the sturdiest walkways extend to four small guard rooms.

Although there is sufficient housing for a veritable army of prisoners, the very worst prisoners are not even given the mercy of a cell. For these unlucky souls, no comfort of a floor, however small. No, they have their ankles shackled, and they are hanged upside down above that maddening abyss. There are some who are instead encased in a sort of stone pillory, legs and feet dangling. Sustained subjugation to these kinds of tortures often results in a complete psychotic break, long before the physical abuses play out to their inevitable conclusion.

SCENE: THE LIBERATION OF SHATU HAK

Exhausted from their descent, the party arrives at a wooden door, which, when opened, immediately unleashes powerful winds that toss the clanking iron cells. Being literally *beneath a continent*, the prison is both exceedingly dark, and yet not. The glow of the Overlight in the sky below, reflecting off the clouds and the distant seas and lakes of Veile, creates a sort of ambient twilight, with everything lit from underneath.

The prison itself is a web of chains connected by makeshift bridges and planks, turning the entire place into a maddening labyrinth, a veritable nightmare version of a spider web or birds' nest of steel and wood, suspended in a world turned upside down. Exposed from below, the unimaginably huge contraption is pounded by brutal gusts that create a haunting cacophony of metal and howling wind. The guards wear massive iron boots that cause them to shuffle along in a plodding rhythm, their feet weighted to avoid being tossed to their deaths by errant gales.

Your group's experience of the prison should play into a fear of heights, dangerous criminals in cages, and confrontations with patrols of metal-booted guards. As GM, you should allow the PCs to navigate the prison easily (they have a map after all), requiring a few Science or Perception Tests to find their way around. Failure on these Tests could result in a brief encounter with a Chain-Walker guard or two. With the hazardous footing and frightening winds, the occasional Athletics Test should be called for, if only to give the players the sense that things could go very badly for them very quickly.

Ultimately, the party should come to a solitary plank, at the end of which hangs a lonely cage. Inside is Shatu Hak. She almost visibly radiates a supernatural aura of Compassion and emotional

warmth. Shatu Hak stands at the party's approach, and her Root Shrews greet them with a chorus of tiny squeaking. There is such a look of comfort and benevolence in her gaze that the characters may each immediately gain one Spirit Point.

It is while transfixed in their satisfaction at the thought of finally reaching their goal that they hear a terrible shuffling rhythm — the sound made by one of the massive Chain-Walker Lieutenant Wardens and a pair of his underlings as they approach. There is no choice but to fight. Initiative should be determined with Athletics.

CHAIN-WALKERS

The guards that serve in the Hanging Prison of Haark are a breed unto themselves. Having lost much of their humanity, these grizzled sadists spend their lives suspended beneath a crumbling shard, in a man-made hell of iron cells filled with forgotten souls.

Their job, ostensibly, is to patrol the endless miles of bridges and catwalks, ensuring not one prisoner escapes. Seeing as how that is exceedingly unlikely, the Chain-Walkers often spend their days verbally and physically abusing the prisoners, or encouraging them to jump to their deaths, sometimes offering up a few moments of an unlocked cell as bargaining chips in cruel games of chance. The majority of those employed as Chain-Walkers are lesser criminals themselves, or even disgraced City Watch members.

The Chain-Walkers are each armed with a two-foot-long iron cudgel, or a sharpened hook at the end of a long pole, used for jostling and accessing the cages. The most curious piece of their equipment is surely their oversized iron boots. These are used mostly to keep the guards sure-footed in the extreme winds, but some of the Chain-Walkers have been known to use them in a more aggressive capacity against their wards.

The Chain-Walkers have learned to use their environment to their advantage. On the few occasions that a prisoner slips through their grasp, the guards have found that violently swaying a gangplank or forcefully stomping with their iron boots can send their quarry careening out into open space. Problem solved.

Physical Dice	4d8
Mental Dice	4d6
Health	9
Zeal	1

Surge: *Rattle the Cages* (4). Each opponent on the same platform or bridge as the Chain-Walker must make an Open Test (Athletics or Brawl vs. Physical). If the PC fails, they stumble and lose their footing, nearly plummeting to their death. Their next action may only be a Full Defense maneuver (if they can afford it). If the PC fails the Open Test by a margin of four or more, then they will fall. (Merciful GMs might allow an Athletics Test for PCs to catch themselves at the last minute, or for creative use of Chroma. The "Spirit as an Interrupt" optional rule can also be a lifesaver here.) This Surge may only be used while in the Hanging Prison of Haark. Please note that Teryxians are immune to this Surge, for obvious reasons.

TAHVOTUS, CHAIN-WALKER LIEUTENANT WARDEN

The Lieutenant Warden is a bald, scarred man wearing a thick iron gorget. In his hands he capably holds a two-handed hammer, and he wears a gigantic pair of spiked iron boots.

Physical Dice	5d8
Mental Dice	4d10
Health	12
Zeal	3

Surge: *Rattle the Cages* (4). See description above.



SHATU HAK: *BANYARI MASTER OF THE GREEN HEART*

Shatu Hak is an anomaly even among the wondrous and variegated Banyari. From a very young age, she experienced an empathy and connection with the flora and fauna of her shard that exceeded all accounts, save those from a fabled time.

Recognized by the elders and the speakers for her tribe's Hearthwood Tree, she was tested and subjected to a gauntlet of initiations. Upon emerging from her ordeals, Shatu Hak separated the knot of roots surrounding her heart, and the Green Heart shined its emerald light into the world for the first time.

She is absolutely ancient, and this may be due in no small part to her isolated life upon Banyan. Although she was once escorted to and from Zenith by monks wishing to hear her simple but profound teachings on Compassion, she has not left Banyan since. Only recently has her beloved student Faradon Lux convinced her to meet on Haark, where he hoped to rally other Skyborn to a cause she holds dear.

Shatu's powers should be somewhat nebulous. She has demonstrated far-ranging telepathy and empathy, and there exist rumors that she has the ability to enhance the lifeforce of fauna and renew flora.

Tips for the GM

Shatu is a strange sort of mystical contact. It is best to leave Shatu somewhat cryptic, letting the PCs interact with her primarily through her student, Faradon Lux. Shatu Hak herself is infinitely understanding, patient, and helpful. She is virtually incapable of cruelty and should be held up as a symbol of pure kindness that the PCs should have no trouble connecting with.

Once this relationship has been formed, as the GM you can use Shatu as leverage. If they trust Faradon, they should doubly trust Shatu, and if Shatu calls them to a cause, they are likely to oblige the sage in her endeavors.

Once the Lieutenant Warden and the two Chain-Walker guards are defeated, the party can easily smash the lock (with a suitable Brawl Test) or pick it (with a Machinery Test). Shatu will step from her cell and open her arms wide. A pulsing emerald light will pour from her chest, emitting waves of glittering phosphorescence into the air to cascade all around the characters and down into the sky. All the characters will feel a kind of warmth in their chest as Shatu speaks.

"My thanks to you, blessed Skyborn. If you ever wish to become what you are, you must follow me. Take my hand, and each other's hands, and leap from this place of captivity. What are you afraid of? Are you not born of the sky?"

As some of your players might have suspected, leaping from the platform is not a death sentence. Indeed, it is a literal leap of faith that Shatu Hak asks of the characters so that they may move on to the next phase of their lives as members of the Skyborn Order. Once the characters jump, they will fall for a moment, feeling the wind tear at their clothing and hair as the Hanging Prison grows smaller above them.

To their surprise, they land on the back of one of the Great Mist-Rays of Banyan. These flying leviathans resemble the manta rays or stingrays of Earth, but with their triangular wing-fins laterally bisected, allowing for almost finger-like grasping of the underside of the shards. Their tails are incredibly long, with multiple fronds that trail glimmering light behind them.

Piloting this enormous creature is none other than Faradon Lux, summoned by the Green Heart beacon of Shatu Hak. He calls back to the characters, but his voice is lost in the wind. Once the characters are settled onto the back of the Great Mist-Ray, huddled together, the grateful old Banyari mystic reaches out to touch them one by one.

"Faradon wishes to welcome you to the great circle of Skyborn. However, there is something I must first tell you. You are in ***grave danger.****"*

EPILOGUE

This is the conclusion of the story of *The Sage of the Hanging Prison*. The characters are now members of the Skyborn Order and may have potentially made some serious enemies during their search for the lost Banyari sage. What comes next could be anyone's guess.

Do they return Shatu Hak to her home on Banyan? Does the momentarily sober Matrux Invico Karamag realize the theft of his family heirloom and spare no expense in managing its return? Why is Faradon Lux recruiting Skyborn to the order? Do the Unlighters declare the party their primary adversaries? Is it time to unveil that great danger which lies before them? And *why* exactly are the characters in danger?

We leave the answers to the questions up to you, dear GM. This is a launching point for *your* campaign. Make of it what you will. As for rewards, we recommend the following for each character:

- One XP per play session (awarded at the end of each session) plus one bonus XP at the completion of this story.
- Two Spirit Points. The rescue of Shatu Hak is something to be celebrated. Add two bonus Spirit Points if the character made the leap of faith. Sure, four Spirit Points is probably a bit high for a typical story, but why not start on a high note? (If the characters didn't leap, then you've got a radically different kind of campaign on your hands!)
- If compensation was discussed with Faradon Lux, award two Wealth Points to each character. Faradon is not a man of means, but he can part with a few coins.
- You might also reward each character with a single Valuable: a carved wooden Banyari amulet representing either the Virtue of Compassion or the character's own Core Virtue — a gift from Shatu Hak herself, presented in a formal ceremony. You might also consider saving this for a further adventure which details the characters' initiation into the Skyborn Order.

APPENDIX A

CHARACTER SHEETS



ALGIR, BANYARI VERTHOD ROOTLORD

Even before he was named, the Verthod who would be called Algir was embraced by the strongest roots in his tribe's grove. Immediately recognizing him as one of the Skyborn, his people groomed him to understand his path and mystical purpose, for the Banyari are nothing if not accepting of the variety of life and life's experiences. By the time two cycles had passed, Algir was thicker and stronger than the other young Banyari, and the first demonstrations of his physical prowess were memorized by the storytellers of his tribe.

It was later in adulthood when his first Chroma manifested. When his vine-wrapped fists burst into bright red flame, the elders informed Algir that it might be best for him to travel to the shard that best understood such gifts. With a bravery that matched his physical strength, the Rootlord warrior agreed. Algir was deposited upon Pyre at the gates of Sukhaba Gol and waved his farewells to his tribe as they departed upon a Great Mist-Ray.

In very little time Algir found a place among the young Pyroi Firethanes and, though they called him names like "Firewood" and "Forest Fire," his fellows adored his strange nature and fighting spirit. Majuk, an old Pyroi Flameheart, even accompanied Algir to the Frostcoal forests where he communed with the strange flora of the shard, honing his grasp upon his Chroma.

On the day that he returned to Sukhaba Gol, he made the acquaintance of a curious Haarkeen girl named Davke. This young woman seemed to excel at all the subtleties of fast-talk and persuasion that he himself had largely ignored his entire life. The two became fast friends and have spent time together ever since.

Although anyone can see that Algir is Banyari true, the warrior is insecure about his ties to his Folk. As such, he overcompensates by emphatically embracing his native culture whenever the opportunity arises. This includes a disproportionate reverence for the flora and fauna of any wilderness and, unfortunately, a notable bigotry toward the Teryxians.

CHROMA: *Photosynthesize, Root!, Wrathful Strike*

OVERLIGHT

Name Algir

Folk Banyari

Core Virtue Might

Background Verthod Rootlord

Experience Points

SPIRIT

10 **Spirit Pool**

Fury Pool

WISDOM — D6

- **Folklore**
- **Intuition** D6
- **Perception** D6

LOGIC — D6

- **Windlore**
- **Machinery**
- **Science** D8

COMPASSION — D10

- **Beastways** D6
- **Inspiration**
- **Performance**

WILL — D6

- **Craft** D6
- **Persuasion**
- **Resolve** D8

VIGOR — D6

- **Athletics**
- **Blades**
- **Survival** D8

MIGHT — D8

- **Brawl** D8
- **Resistance** D6

HEALTH TRACK

X
X
X
X
X
X
X

GIFTS

BELONGINGS

Banyari water bladder
a small stone knife

WEALTH

Rating

Pool 0

VALUABLES

Hearthwood nut

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NIYA, PYROI EMBERTONGUE

The seventh Embertongue of her line, Niya was born into a promise of great reputation and station. Her proud father had arranged a meticulous regimen of societal grooming that exceeded even that of Aurumel princes. Long before she donned the crown of her position, she had mastered the forms of tribal debate and custom and composed sweeping poetries of love for her Folk and her shard. As Niya unfolded into a master of the Embertongue method, all of her teachers swelled with pride with each mark of her limitless potential.

After she began study under her final tutor, the Teryxian Xoctli, her future shifted. For Xoctli too was Skyborn, and with long hours of study spent looking into the mirrored gaze of another's iridescent eyes, the two found the inherent call of their kind harder and harder to resist. When Niya told her father of her intentions to leave the shard, the old Pyroi patriarch wept, for all his hopes and designs for his prodigal daughter evaporated like the rain upon volcanic stone. He at first thought to deny Niya her wishes, but in the end decided that Xoctli was now more her kin than he. With a heavy heart, he sent them away so that Niya could become what the Overlight had ordained.

Niya is the very model of an Embertongue. Despite her hulking Pyroi frame, she is a being of grace on all levels. Her personality is less a wildfire and more a dancing and smoothly shifting flame, while her patience exceeds what most would expect of a Pyroi noble. Knowing full well what it is like to be cast from comfort, she defends underdogs and outcasts alike with her razor wit and honeyed poetic words.

CHROMA: *Speaker's Fire, Survivor's Spark*

OVERLIGHT

Name Niya

Folk Pyroi

Core Virtue Wisdom

Background Embertongue

Experience Points

SPIRIT

17
Spirit Pool

Fury Pool

WISDOM

D10

Folklore D6
Intuition D6
Perception D6

LOGIC

D6

Windlore D6
Machinery
Science D6

COMPASSION

D6

Beastways
Inspiration D6
Performance D6

WILL

D8

Craft
Persuasion D8
Resolve D6

VIGOR

D6

Athletics
Blades
Survival D6

MIGHT

D10

Brawl D6
Resistance

HEALTH TRACK

X
X
X
X

GIFTS

Celebrant of the Open Flame

BELONGINGS

diplomat's robes
Seal of Court
tattoos and iron bands of acheivement

WEALTH

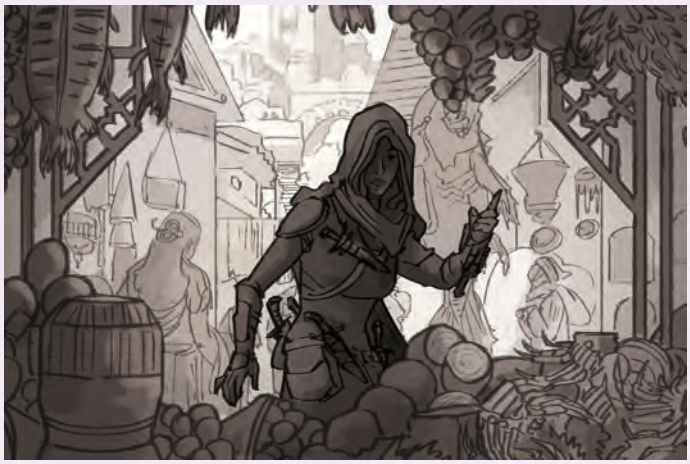
Rating D12

Pool 16

VALUABLES

helmet or headpiece, denoting the office of Embertongue

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DAVKE, HAARKEEN GRIFTER

Abandoned at birth by her parents, Davke has been a survivor from the earliest possible moment. Exploited by every guardian she ever had, Davke decided early in life that the only way she was truly going to thrive was if she managed to escape Haark, which she had come to view as a prison.

So Davke made her own way on the hard streets of Haark, deftly moving between the legitimate and the criminal, wheeling, dealing, and smoothly negotiating among the various gangs, guards, merchants, and other denizens of the City Magnificent. Bit by bit, Davke accumulated enough resources (saying she "earned" them would be generous) to buy passage out of the crowded city upon an old airship captained by an elderly Aurumel, who had also, long ago, fled the shard of his birth. During the long journey to Pyre, the captain shared with Davke many stories and talents that complemented the strangely well-rounded education and impressive array of skills that the young Haarkeen woman had developed during her life on the streets.

Once she arrived on Pyre, and despite her intentions of escaping urban existence, Davke spent much of her time falling back into old habits. Unlike the shady culture of backstreet Haark, she found the Pyroi easier to dupe. More frequently than not, honor and the expectation of honor prevented them from exposing her gambits and schemes. Davke knew this delicate situation would not last forever, so she began to consider alternatives while carefully navigating the conspiracies and plots that could so easily result in her death. It was when she met the Banyari called Algir that she found the confidence to break her patterns enough that she could examine the possibility of a brighter and more appropriate future for one so blessed with the Overlight's gifts.

Davke is cunning, charismatic, and extremely adaptive, and has very little fear — despite her life's experiences. She likes to think that she is a friendly person, but she is suspicious of anyone who promises to support or defend her. Algir is the notable exception, although she fears the Banyari is too direct to wade into the games of social subterfuge that she favors.

CHROMA: *A Voice in the Crowd*

OVERLIGHT

Name Davke
Folk Haarkeen
Core Virtue Vigor
Background Grifter
Experience Points

SPIRIT

5
Spirit Pool

Fury Pool

HEALTH TRACK

WISDOM — D6
- **Folklore** D8
- **Intuition** D8
- **Perception** D10

LOGIC — D10
- **Windlore**
- **Machinery** D6
- **Science**

COMPASSION — D6
- **Beastways**
- **Inspiration** D6
- **Performance** D10

WILL — D8
- **Craft**
- **Persuasion**
- **Resolve** D6

VIGOR — D8
- **Athletics** D6
- **Blades** D6
- **Survival** D6

MIGHT — D6
- **Brawl**
- **Resistance**

X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X

GIFTS

BELONGINGS

lockpicks
a good pair of leather boots

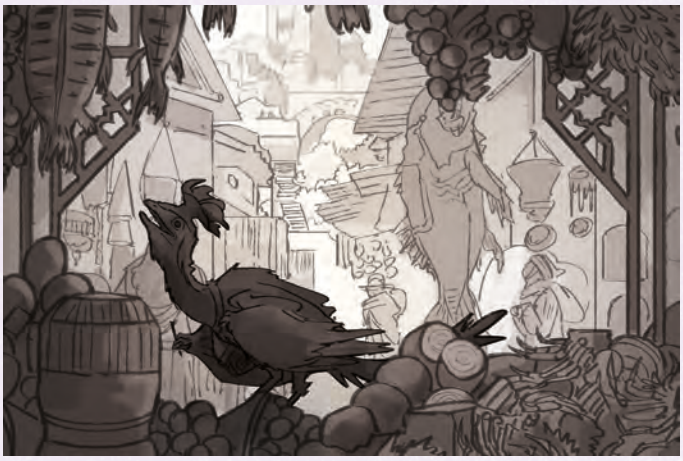
WEALTH

Rating D6
Pool 8

VALUABLES

a trio of well-balanced steel knives
an assortment of counterfeit coins

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XOCTLI, TERYXIAN TUTOR

Like any ambitious tutor of Quill, the Teryxian Xoctli had grand aspirations of discovery and revelation amidst the archives of the Last Spire. Alas, he lacked the required discipline of his studies and, as he began to embrace his Skyborn nature, his masters were fearful of the uncertainty his spiritual becoming would bring. So, after long deliberation, they sent the young pedagogue abroad unto the magma-scarred plains of Pyre. There, his intellect would learn rigor and force, despite his attunement to the green luminescence of Compassion.

Upon arrival, Xoctli was overwhelmed. The hardened ways of the Pyroi were new to him and scared him more than a little. Between his soaring intellect, pedantic method, and open heart, the social perils of Pyroi society were in some ways more challenging for him than the brutal terrain of the shard. If not for the notice of an Embertongue patriarch, it is unlikely that Xoctli would have acclimated to the ways of that strange society.

The Embertongue had a daughter named Niya and she was, in her father's words, a child of exceptional promise, expected to inherit his role and fulfill its obligations. Xoctli was hired to teach the young Pyroi woman the ways of the world and the Embertongue's traditional role within it. So it was with terror that, when Niya decided to heed the call of her Skyborn nature and leave the path her Folk had set out for her, her father disowned her, stripped her of her familial inheritance, and cast out the Teryxian tutor alongside her. The futures of both Xoctli and Niya are uncertain.

Xoctli is a kind-hearted Teryxian but can be as pedantic as any of the Folk of Quill. Nonetheless, he has a deep sympathy for other Skyborn (though a bit less if the Skyborn is Banyari) and, in his academic way, will help them whenever he can. Despite his soft exile, Xoctli still dreams of being a great master of his Folk's lore and history.

CHROMA: *Word of Authority*

OVERLIGHT

Name Xoctli

Folk Teryxian

Core Virtue Compassion

Background Tutor

Experience Points

SPIRIT

10
Spirit Pool

Fury Pool

WISDOM — D10

- **Folklore** D6
- **Intuition**
- **Perception** D8

LOGIC — D10

- **Windlore** D8
- **Machinery** D6
- **Science** D8

COMPASSION — D8

- **Beastways** D6
- **Inspiration**
- **Performance**

WILL — D6

- **Craft** D6
- **Persuasion**
- **Resolve** D8

VIGOR — D6

- **Athletics**
- **Blades**
- **Survival** D6

MIGHT — D6

- **Brawl**
- **Resistance**

HEALTH TRACK

X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X

GIFTS

Born to Fly

BELONGINGS

bark paper and writing quills
Writ of Passage (Pyre)

WEALTH

Rating D10

Pool 12

VALUABLES

a half dozen scrolls (detailing the trade routes and customs of the merchants of Haark, Veile, and Pyre)

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OVERLIGHT

Name

Folk

Core Virtue

Background

Experience Points



SPIRIT



Fury Pool

HEALTH TRACK

GIFTS

BELONGINGS



WISDOM



Folklore

Intuition

Perception



LOGIC



Windlore

Machinery

Science



COMPASSION



Beastways

Inspiration

Performance

WEALTH

Rating

Pool

WILL

Craft

Persuasion

Resolve

VALUABLES



VIGOR



Athletics

Blades

Survival



MIGHT



Brawl

Resistance

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Chroma

[Virtue] + [Virtue]

[ ] Shatter 1

[ ] Shatter 2

[ ] Shatter 3

Chroma

[Virtue] + [Virtue]

[ ] Shatter 1

[ ] Shatter 2

[ ] Shatter 3

Chroma

[Virtue] + [Virtue]

[ ] Shatter 1

[ ] Shatter 2

[ ] Shatter 3

Chroma

[Virtue] + [Virtue]

[ ] Shatter 1

[ ] Shatter 2

[ ] Shatter 3

Chroma

[Virtue] + [Virtue]

[ ] Shatter 1

[ ] Shatter 2

[ ] Shatter 3

Chroma

[Virtue] + [Virtue]

[ ] Shatter 1

[ ] Shatter 2

[ ] Shatter 3

Luminon Chroma

[Virtue] + [Virtue]

Point Bank

Threshold

Threshold

Threshold

Luminon Chroma

[Virtue] + [Virtue]

Point Bank

Threshold

Threshold

Threshold

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APPENDIX B

AUTHORS' NOTE

It takes about six hours to drive home from the Origins Game Fair in Columbus, Ohio to our friend Brian's place in Charles Town, West Virginia. In 2011, we found ourselves sharing the back seat of a 1997 Chevy Suburban as we made our way back. Somewhere along the way, George mentioned an old idea of his about an RPG setting called Overlight. Floating island-continents, spiritual virtues which corresponded to seven colors of light, visual cues taken from some very specific fantasy art styles while eschewing many of the Euro-centric fantasy tropes that had become so common. Paul was immediately intrigued.

Inspired by a world-building seminar we had just attended (a tip of the hat to Ken Hite!), we spent the rest of the trip concocting dreams of weird, forest-dwelling symbiote beings and giant sentient centipedes living upon light-scorched expanses at the top of the world. Some things, like the Pyroi and the Zenith bond-mates, have remained largely unchanged since those very early conceptions. Other details of what Overlight has become would be barely recognizable to us then, in the back seat in 2011.

We fiddled away at this crazy idea, on and off, for years. Maybe we'd self-publish, we thought. Maybe we'd use one of those open gaming licenses.

Then Scott Gaeta happened. As the story goes, when Scott hired Sara Erickson to work for Renegade, he told her that part of her job was to make sure he never published a role-playing game. Ah, but Scott's a role player at heart, and he likes to needle Sara. Fast forward to Gen Con 2016 when Scott and Sara came upon Paul, talking role-playing games with some other industry professionals, and asked, "So Paul, when are we gonna publish your RPG?"

Paul replied, "Well, I've got one." And so it began. There was a lengthy meeting with Scott, Sara, George, and Paul a few months later, where the whole crazy thing was spilled out in great detail. And eventually we would meet our artist. Scott thought that Kwanchai would be a good fit for the material, having no idea that Kwanchai was an avid role player himself! What should have been a twenty-minute handshake turned into a four-hour discussion, and we knew we had our man.

So here we are. We set out to make this weird little indie game, and somewhere along the way we ended up with a flagship property by one of the most important names in the industry. Our little "what if?" has become this brightly colored wonder. In fact, a lot of the powers aren't exactly "balanced," and that's intentional. We just want

to help you make cool things happen at your tables, hopefully in a way that feels fresh.

Thanks for coming along with us on this trip. We've got a lot more we'd like to show you, and we hope we get the opportunity.

Blessed Skyborn, the world is at your feet.

– Paul Alexander Butler and George Holland
April 2018, Baltimore

DEDICATION

Paul's Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to my wife Cayti, who stared with goggle-eyed wonder every time I would ramble on about neon-colored dragonflies and red-skinned warrior women riding enormous bats into battle. Thanks for getting it. And thanks for getting me.

And to my brother Scott: There is very little of me which you did not help to shape. For so much of my life, you were my best friend, my greatest teacher, and the person I most aspired to be like. If nothing else, you gave me my imagination and my curiosity about the world. I would not have the career I have today without me sitting in your lap, gleefully vomiting all over the Blink Dog in your Monster Manual. There is more of your DNA to be found in this book than I can possibly accredit.

George's Dedication

I am dedicating my work in this book to Virginia, my wife of over two decades. She has persisted with me through so many insane projects that we've both lost count. Her ability to navigate my frenetic interests is something that has made my life livable. I will never be able to sufficiently express my gratitude for your presence in my life.

I also want to thank my parents and Bill. Mom and Dad always gave my imagination a lot of space. Unfortunately, their attempts to temper it with pragmatism largely failed. Bill's letter to the editor of Marvel-Phile, concerning what he felt were inaccuracies in some character stats, made me realize that I couldn't take my hobbies too seriously. You guys are the best. Thanks for putting up with me.

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