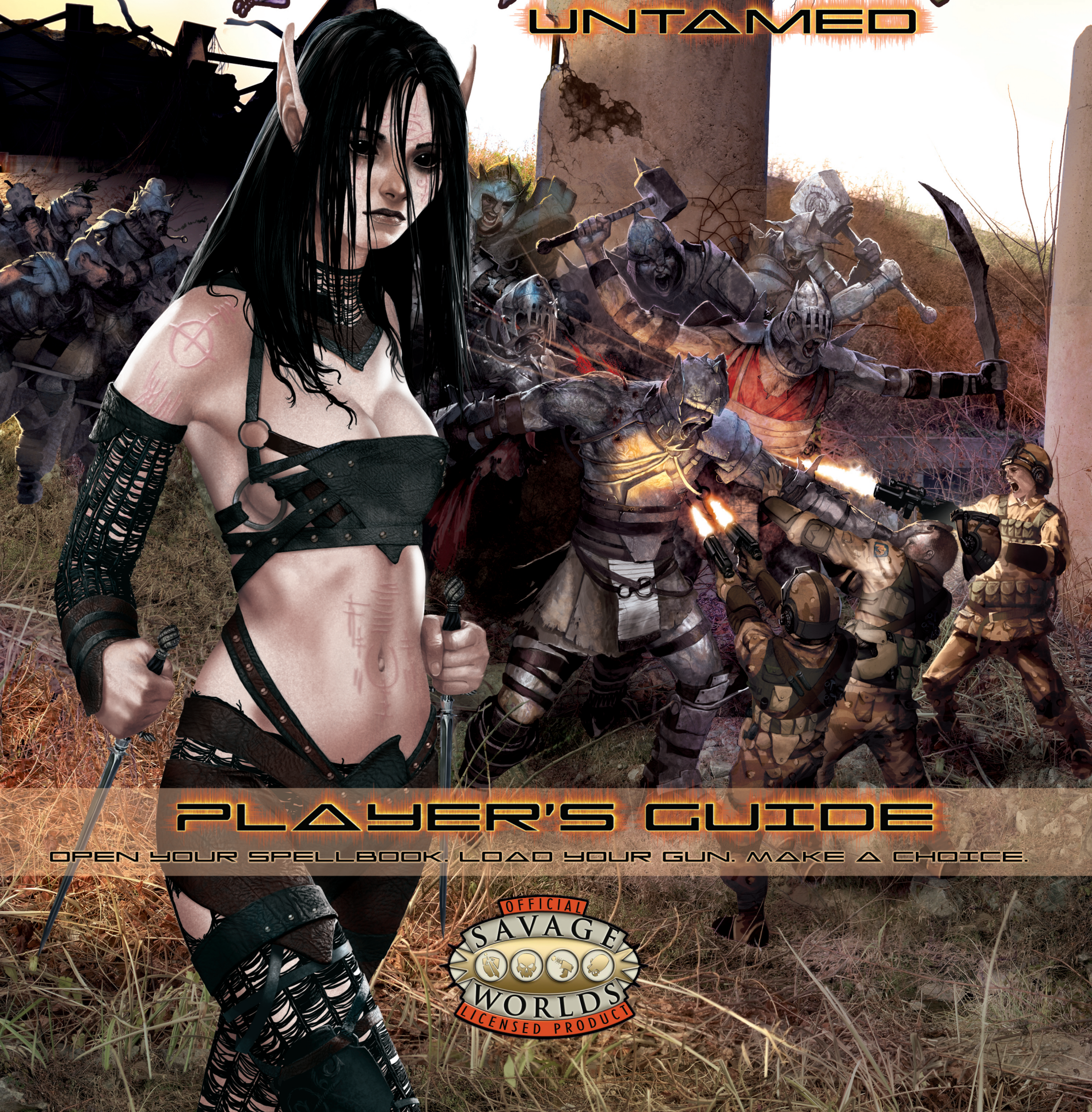


CHRIS DIAS

AMETHYST

UNTAMED



PLAYER'S GUIDE

OPEN YOUR SPELLBOOK. LOAD YOUR GUN. MAKE A CHOICE.





UNTAMED PLAYER'S GUIDE





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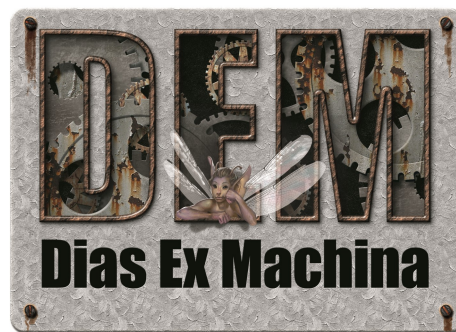
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CHAPTER ONE: FUNDAMENTALS





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was a Sunday.

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

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

Except Aiden and his stopped watch.

* * *

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

The Codex Dracontis.

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

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

"Is it good?" his mother asked.

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

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

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

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

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

"Mom?" he pushed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Sorry, go on."

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

"You read that part."

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

"Niece—" his mother interjected.

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

"What are you doing?" his mother asked.

"Skipping."

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

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

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

"Girl stuff," Aiden answered.

"I think I'd disagree with that—"

"Can I continue?" Aiden interjected with a smirk. His

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Aiden closed the book. He looked to his mother.

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

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

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

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

"But they sounded real coming from you."

"Well, stories don't need a voice to be any more real."

She patted his lap. "They don't even need a reader."

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

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

Aiden opened his eyes moments later and stared through the open drapes to the night sky where a thin film of orange pollution garnished the skyline. The view, half way up a strata juggernaut of a thousand apartments, the city appeared to spread to the vanishing point. Aiden couldn't see the city wall.

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

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

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

"Where?"

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

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

"Mom said I had until 5:00."

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

"Last save was sixty five."

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

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

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

"Honor roll. How are your grades?"

Aiden's hero's clothes were always comfortable, the romance always willing. The woman the champion had won was a meagerly decent falsehood with long lines of exposed skin and the brassiere of a medieval dominatrix.

She never complained of the cold and fell at the hero's feet when the programmer deemed it appropriate. Death was as quickly resolved as one's finger moved to the hot-key. Castles were a minute's walk apart. Money was easily acquired from the bellies of wandering beasts.

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

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

* * *

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

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

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

* * *

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

Aiden asked for bubble-gum at a passing vendor. His mother relented. Between cherry, apple, watermelon, long-lasting, sugar-free, and extrachewy, there were a hundred varieties. Eventually, his mother stepped in and snagged a cinnamon and paid with a bank card. He didn't want cinnamon but didn't object.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What's going on?" he asked.

"Let's just avoid it."

Aiden spotted the falling shreds of paper.

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

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

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

* * *

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

"Gotcha."

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

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

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

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

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

"He can see us all the time?"

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

"How can he know that?"

"He knows everything."

"But he can't control everything."

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

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

She thought about it. "Because he knows you so well, he knows where you'll go, what you'll do and what you'll see. We all have a place."

Aiden looked at the pendant again and whispered, "But

what if I want to do something else?"

"All right, enough of that." She eased him past the gate.

"Off with you and for everything you learn, teach something."

* * *

"Camus-kun," interrupted the teacher.

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

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

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

"I was following," Aiden lied.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For one, the world is big. You halt the progress of a civilization on this part of the planet; it won't stop another civilization on the other side.

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

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

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

"Magic?!" William mocked.

"What do you mean?" Leach asked calmly.

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

"That's stupid--" William barked

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

"Why?" Aiden asked.

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

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

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

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

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

Leach called out, "Aiden?"

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

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

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

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

"I don't understand," Aiden replied.

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

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

"Why?"

"Because he's not real."

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

William expressed his dissatisfaction with Aiden after school, only feet away from the exit. "Don't waste the class's time, Aiden!" he snapped. He loomed inches over

Aiden's face, ensuring a moderate amount of spittle landed in the boy's eye.

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

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

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

"Magic isn't real!"

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

"Bill!" Martin barked. "You're smart. Smarter than me.

So, I'm going to start hitting you until you talk me out it. Good?!"

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

"Okay?" Martin asked.

"Thanks," Aiden muttered.

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

"I didn't say anything!" Aiden snapped

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

"So that's why?" Martin said.

"What?" Aiden replied.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

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

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

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

"Yes."

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

She stopped loading and turned to him. "Yes." She never

lied. "Yes, someone died."

"Why'd he do it?"

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

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

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

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

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

"Just checking," Aiden said as he left.

* * *

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

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

The church of the Sacred Mary was a five-storey wooden A-frame as old as the city. No ration was given to

parking and every curb was filled with a variety of electric vehicles.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Aiden! Come on!" his mother snapped.

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

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

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

"Is that Zmey, mom?" Aiden shouted.

"Shut up!" Martin snapped.

"Mom?!"

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





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

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

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

As Aiden fell, he cut his hand on a shard of glass. The

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

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

No one had seen the other beast slam into Zmey.

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

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

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

The dragon smirked back. It winked.

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

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

She was gone.

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

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

* * *

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What?" Martin responded, quickly and cold.

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

"Mom's dead, Aiden."

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

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

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

"Leave the book," he said.

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

"Aiden--"

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

"Please Aiden," Martin answered.

"You knew."

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

"And what's past it?"

"I don't know."

"Has anyone left?" Aiden asked.

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

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

"They killed mom--"

"And saved us--"

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

"You never wanted to look?"

"Don't have to."

"Why not--"

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

"But the other dragon?"

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

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

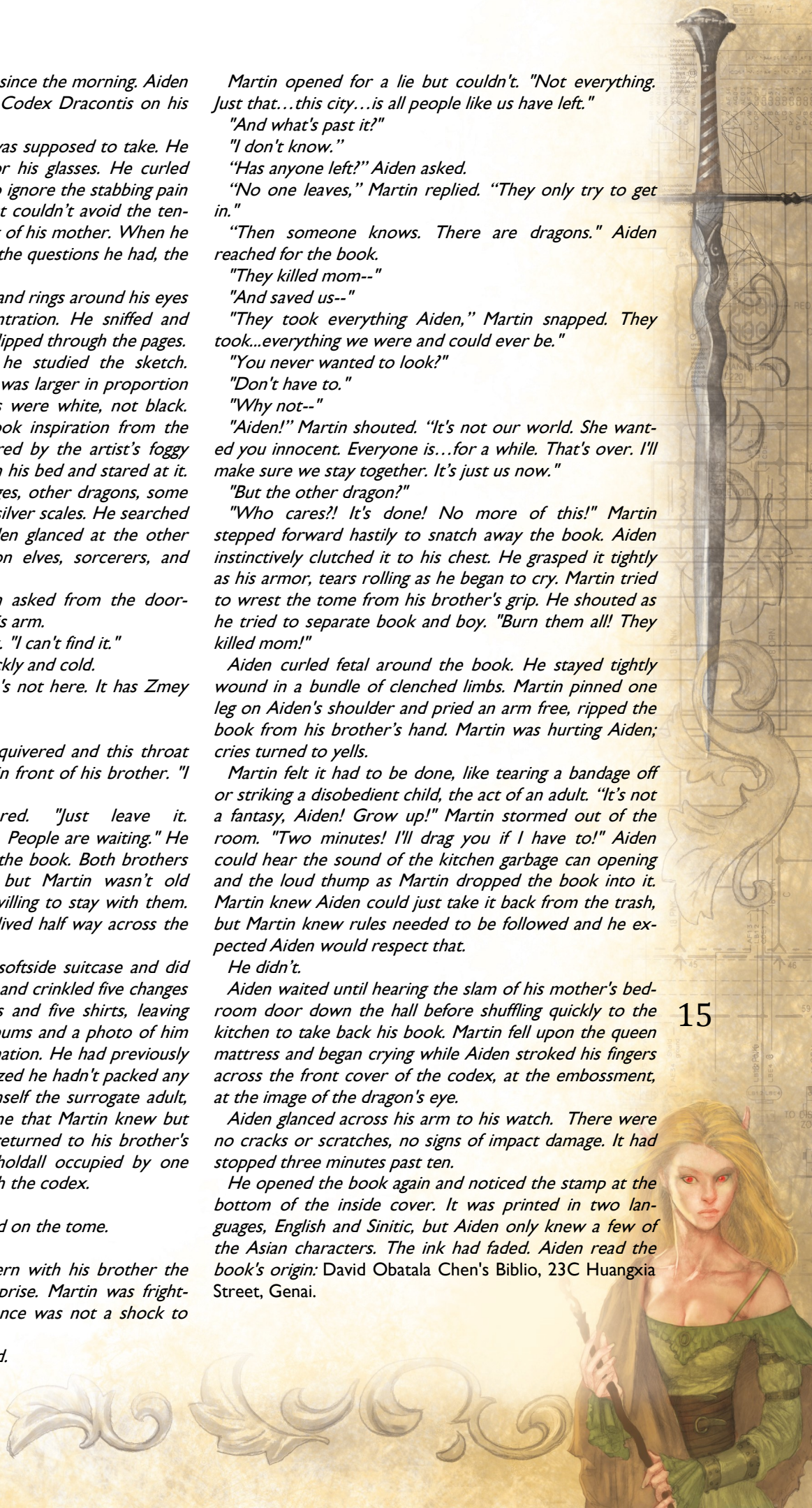
Martin felt it had to be done, like tearing a bandage off or striking a disobedient child, the act of an adult. "It's not a fantasy, Aiden! Grow up!" Martin stormed out of the room. "Two minutes! I'll drag you if I have to!" Aiden could hear the sound of the kitchen garbage can opening and the loud thump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

He didn't.

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

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

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





A STORY

Don't check your brain at the door.
Don't settle for the dream.
This is real.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Or is this world better than the one mankind squandered?

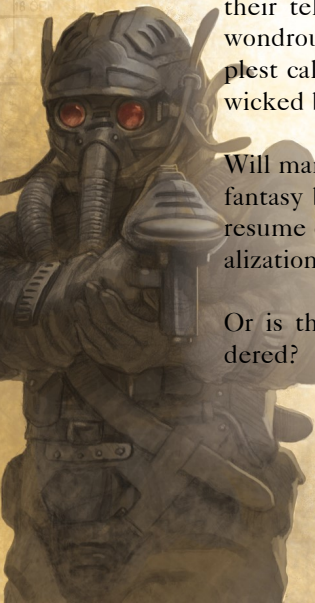
From the fantasy world rises a mythology suggesting that there are two realms of magic: one dark, the other light. The source of this energy originates from two powerful gates, the white star of Attricana and the black gate of Ixindar. The main axis between evil and good is not one where the law-abiding,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

AMETHYST EVOLVES

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

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

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



THE HISTORY

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

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

But what opened the gate?

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

Some proclaim him a god, but gods cannot die.

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

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

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

This changed when Ixindar arrived.

Unlike Attricana, records on the black gate's arrival are

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

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

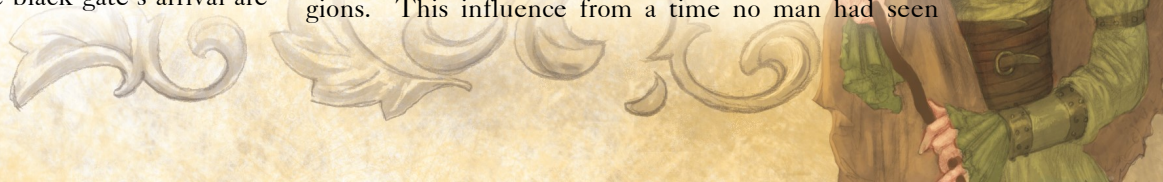
Mankind knew this incident at the K-T Extinction event—when a ten kilometer bolide impact off the Yucatan Peninsula created the 180 kilometer Chicxulub crater, wiping out the vast majority of plant and animal life on the planet. The fae called it the Hammer of God. Both sides of fantasy agreed separately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


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

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

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

These stories became myths, books, films, and religions. This influence from a time no man had seen





carried onto crests, flags, and banners. Their origins were explained, connected to other stories and faiths. Some were tied to science—seeing a manatee and believing it to be a mermaid. Fantasies remained locked in the dreams of a real world. Pushed aside as fancy, mankind continued his evolutionary drive to build, understand, and conquer. Society advanced as did the machines in servitude. Gaining a full understanding of science in all its unchanging rules, there was nothing man could not achieve given enough time.


History unfortunately would repeat itself.

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

The following events are muddled, another case of a chicken and an egg. Ixindar opened, and some indeterminate time later, Attricana followed – but did Attricana's first stirrings perhaps provoke Ixindar's reemergence, or was some mechanism in place to open the white gate if Ixindar were ever exposed? By the time of the white gate's reappearance, mankind had already been reduced to less than a tenth of its peak population, though whether due to disasters born in the wake of the Second Hammer or through wars over resources or ideologies, no one is truly certain.

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

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

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

And, ultimately, will it be worth the cost?

THE CONFLICT

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

MAGIC AND FAITH

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

- **The Language of Dragons.** The power of these god-like creatures is to create something by naming it—the magic possessed in the language of the greatest species. Even the script extends itself into multiple dimensions. Wizards utilize this for all their magic. This language is called Pleroma.
- **Magical Reactivity.** There are thousands of elements and combinations of elements that produce different magical results. The practices of alchemy and metallurgy have returned. Those with such knowledge forge items of enchantment by simply being aware of the exacting ratios of components required. Fae iron, coruthil, and angelite are such examples as well as the myriad forms of magical

potions. Nearly every magic item features this to a degree.

- **Inborn Magic.** Fae beings and monsters are magical by their very nature, even if they cannot consciously wield magical forces. Some, be they fae, monster, or even human, possess magical abilities on their own from birth. A few claim this power as divine, but many others refute that. Just as it was with man's time, god or gods are as silent as he, she, or they always were. There are no proven sanctified or blessed users of magic in a world with a silent and unproven god. Still, the rare priest or druid often finds no other reasonable explanation.

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

REAL MAGIC

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

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

Mages disregard channeling and mysticism, approaching the gate with an almost scientific eye. They claim while clerics and druids blind themselves to the mysteries of the gate, mages dive head first, taunting the cos-

mos to reveal its darkest secrets. Long before man or even elves, the first power from the gates was channeled through the immense capacity of the draconic language, known as Pleroma. This practice continues today and remains the most popular form of spell casting. Only with lifelong persistence and an innate gift for understanding such intricate mysteries can the extremely rare few channel anything more than cantrips.

GLOSSARY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chaparran: One of the oldest species of fae, who inhabit the woods and wild places of the world and are



known as peerless archers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Echological Influence: The belief that the history of the fae and dragons inspired human fiction through an immeasurable, unproven, undetectable echo which

somehow resonated through sixty million years of evolution until minds advanced enough to understand that echo listened.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Experts in dressing death had reconstructed what was left of her body. They placed a plastic smile on her face. The waxy finish of the skin convinced Aiden this was less his mother and more an imitation. Friends of his father, military veterans, brought the closed casket up. Father Tom, like the church, was new. One by one, friends neither he nor Martin knew offered hands and hugs. The mass was long with prayer passages reminding the mournful of god's grand purpose. Aiden ignored them. He never paid attention during regular mass; the words felt equally hollow now. Aiden hoped the blue eyed and golden scaled dragon would rip off the roof and whisk him to a new life. The church's packed capacity marched to the casket, touching, praying, crying.

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

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

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

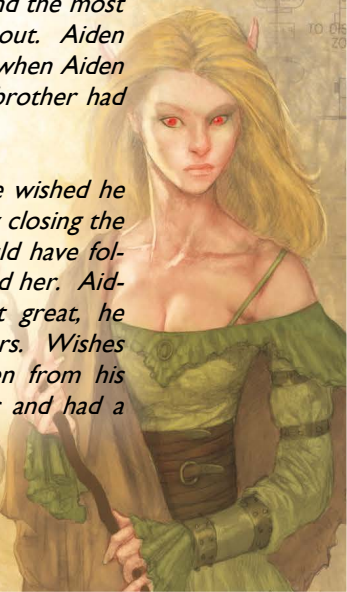
"Men pale in the wisdom of God," he said to Aiden. "Not even I can understand why things happen when they happen. There is a reason for everything, Aiden. God has placed you on a path; there is something to learn from this. Even the worst of times are intended, by his will, to guide us. Occasionally,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

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

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

He lied.

Aiden wished he had asked his mother. He wished he had discovered the truth by her telling him, by closing the codex and whispering, "It's all real." He should have followed what Leach had suggested and just asked her. Aiden wished that if the cost was to be that great, he would've preferred ignorance a few more years. Wishes kept Aiden a child. Wishes separated Aiden from his brother. Wishes were magical and romantic and had a



peculiar tendency of coming true. Aiden wished his mother would come back, but that could never happen.

* * *

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

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

What about magic and Elisa the elvish princess?

Aiden pondered what other fictions could invade his life.

Martin reached over and began to coddle his brother's hair.

* * *

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

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

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

He finally stopped at the concrete barricade that sealed Genai from the rest of the city. Every road had a gate any

card-carrying member of the city could cross. Pedestrian walkways were seldom watched with turnstiles installed to monitor traffic. Aiden wondered if the gates were meant to keep out or in. He dodged under the ratchet bar as there was no guard on hand to prevent him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Aiden could make out most of the words though a few were hidden in the shadow of the gutter. He was apprehensive about touching anything but fought through it to

turn the nozzle on the lantern. The light grew bright and Aiden shifted his attention back to the book.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What?" Aiden asked.

Tap. Tap.

"You want me to read?"

Tap.

Aiden's heart started to temper. The light drifted up over the book. Aiden stepped back to the desk. "If... you... insist."

He was about to look back down, then it occurred to him that a flame with no fuel source was floating in the air in front of him. "You can't be real," Aiden whispered. It bobbed in the air, floating on an invisible ocean. Aiden didn't know if that was an answer. "You shouldn't... exist."

"Its life has no meaning unless it can light the way for others," spoke the tall figure approaching from the shadow. Aiden jumped upon hearing him. "If only all things had such simple ambitions."

The man wasn't a dumpy figure with almond eyes and shriveled skin. This stranger towered over Aiden by several feet. His eyes were a radiant blue, skin darker than the room. He had fuzzy grey hair with matching whiskers under his chin, thin with a granite physique.

Aiden backed away from the desk into the shelf behind him, jostling the heavy books resting upon it. The youth

glanced back and noticed a hefty volume toppling over. It had a cover of obsidian, parading gold bosses of the gaping maws of dragons. Their front claws reached across the outer edge to the single oversized clasp keeping the book closed. Aiden righted it quickly—with considerable strain—and turned back to the man.

"I'm sorry," Aiden started, "I was just--"

"Quite all right, Mr. Camus," he answered. The spark orbited the two of them. "It likes you." His voice was deep and rough, with a heartening charisma in the way he addressed the child. Aiden couldn't place the accent but he had no problems understanding him. The man stopped opposite of the desk and looked down to the book. "The memoirs of Renar Alkanost, laudenian council leader, written 300 years ago." Aiden offered only a blink. "Though personally I think the fae is arrogant in his opinion. Most laudenians are like that."

"I just wanted to look..." Aiden trailed off. "You know my name--"

"I knew your mother. I sold her the books. She talked about you at length. Sorry about..." he paused to choose an appropriate word, "everything."

"Who are..." Aiden's voice faded and he mouthed the last word formed.

"I'm a collector. You may call me David...or Chen."

"You collect books, Davidorchen?"

"I share them," Chen corrected. He opened his palm and the spark flew obediently to it. A whisper from his lips and it leapt from his hand. It bounced and fluttering across the room, igniting every candle and lamp.

Aiden's eyes followed the spark as it made its journey. Aiden's mouth fell open as he took sight of the forty rows of books that encircled the chamber, every wall, floor to ceiling. Each volume looked as old as the book on the desk, like the books Aiden owned. They were magnificent. The only break in the books came from a glass showcase of old weapons modern man never used. They were obsolete devices and implements from a time Aiden delighted to remember. They gleamed with polish as if forged and shaved into shape yesterday--broadswords, throwing axes, and a single longbow shaped from black wood. The flame finally returned to its home and closed the door behind it.

"How did you..." Aiden started.

"I asked it to."

"But it's not alive."

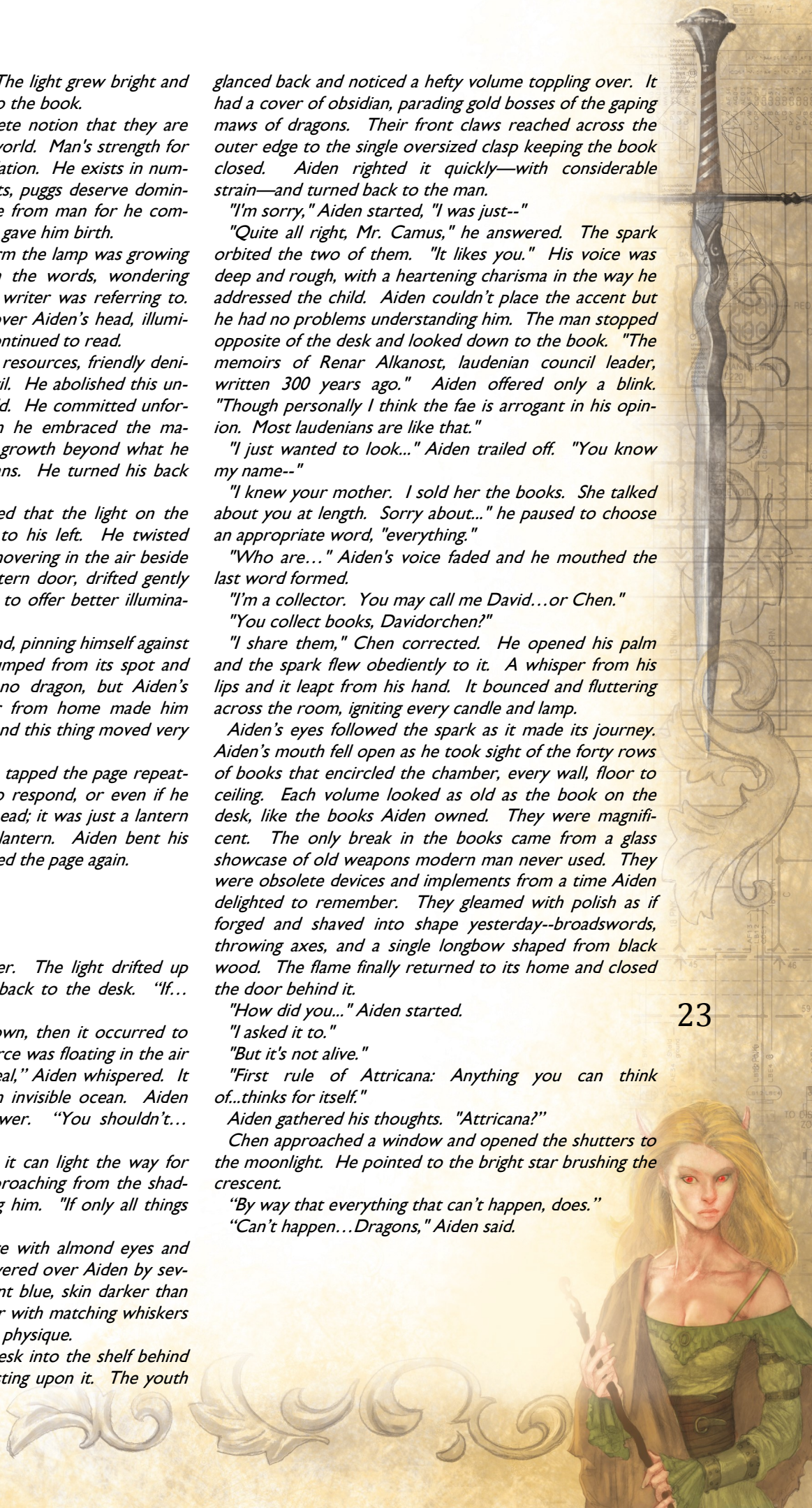
"First rule of Attricana: Anything you can think of...thinks for itself."

Aiden gathered his thoughts. "Attricana?"

Chen approached a window and opened the shutters to the moonlight. He pointed to the bright star brushing the crescent.

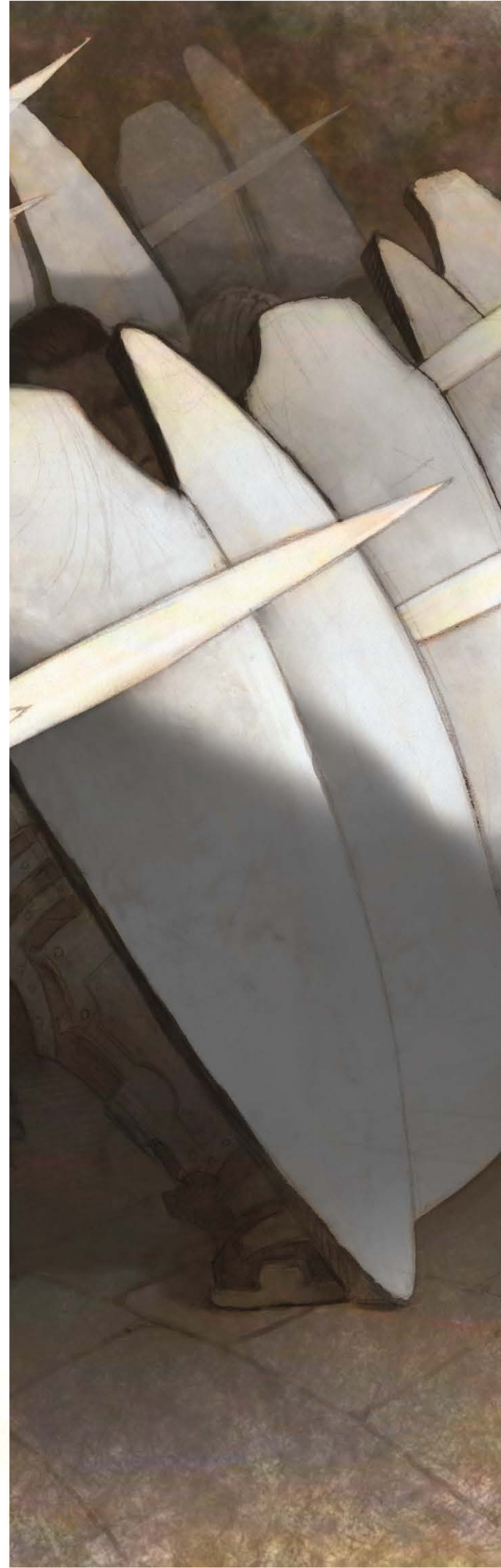
"By way that everything that can't happen, does."

"Can't happen...Dragons," Aiden said.





CHAPTER TWO: SAVAGE AMETHYST



A*methyst* has seen many revisions and adaptations since its original appearance as a campaign setting for the third edition of the *Dungeons & Dragons* game. This rendition uses the *Savage Worlds* system as its basis. *Savage Worlds* provides an edgy, dangerous experience well-suited to pulp adventures of all sorts, from military thrillers to horror stories to classic sword-and-sorcery. Most of the rules in the *Savage Worlds Deluxe* book are applicable to this rendition of *Amethyst*, with the addition of a few special setting rules.

This book contains all the additional rules specific to the *Amethyst* setting, but you will require a copy of a *Savage Worlds* core rulebook in order to create characters. For more details on the setting itself, you will also need the *Amethyst: Untamed World Guide*.

CHARACTER CREATION

Building characters for *Amethyst* follows the same five-step process as detailed in the *Savage Worlds* core rules. Alternatively, you can just jump to Chapter 3, 4, or 5 and choose an archetype if you want to get into the game right away.

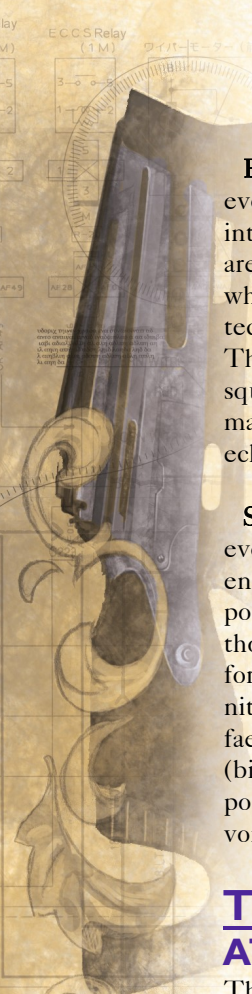
SPECIES / REGION

There are eleven canon playable species in *Amethyst* (including humans). As your choice of species and region will greatly impact your character's experience within the setting, you should look over the detailed descriptions of each species in **Chapters 3-5**. The available species are divided broadly into three categories:

Fae: These are species naturally born from magic, with no original primordial form to track evolution back to. They began as the original fae, but have been continuously slaves to magic's whim. As time progresses, they continually "devolve" into more tribal, animalistic forms. It is believed the initial fae have long since vanished. The modern 'civilized' fae races are:

- The chaparrans (tall, muscular woodland fae adept in archery and natural magic, akin to the wood elves of legend),
- Damaskans (short, vaguely Asiatic fae with a gift for knowledge and a laissez-faire attitude toward gravity),
- Gimfen (pint-sized, technically-minded or pastoral folk reminiscent of both the fictional halflings and gnomes),
- Laudenians (faintly alien, xenophobic fae who weave magic into their entire lifestyle, akin to the high elves of myth),
- Narros (short, stocky warriors and crafters, mostly similar to dwarves),
- Pagus (brutal warriors of Ixindar, similar but not identical to orcs),
- Tenenbri ('dark elves,' a subterranean culture of blind religious zealots),
- Tilen (a rare people descended from ex-vampires).

In truth, there are dozens of fae species and subspecies and only a few of the oldest fae actually know them all. Other variations are dealt with later as monsters, such as the three species of goblinfolk known collectively as 'kaddog': boggs, puggs, and skeggs. All fae are echan (they can't use technology and certain skills, with a few notable exceptions).



Evolved: Humanity stands as the only example of an evolved species (at least on Earth) that has achieved intelligence without the assistance of magic. Humans are broadly categorized in two groups: echans (those who have accepted magic into their daily lives) and techans (those who reject magic in favor of technology). The vast majority of humanity actually does not fall squarely into either position, but as they live in the magic-saturated world, they are lumped in with the echans.

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

TRAITS

ATTRIBUTES

The standard five attributes are used in *Amethyst*.

Agility: Agility is especially important to warriors of all sorts, but particularly to techans. High-tech weaponry is the great leveler that enables the soft city-dwellers to survive in the magical wilderness, and no techan will survive long in the outside world without being able to shoot effectively.

Smarts: Smarts is essential to be able to distinguish truth from legend. A foolish wizard who mistakes a book of fairy tales for a treatise on real fae behavior is likely to blow himself up with a fireball before he ever has a chance to get riddled with arrows for offending a chaparran chieftain.

26 Spirit: Spirit is of paramount importance for those techans wishing to avoid the lure of fantasy, and for anyone who must resist the call of the dark forces that desire nothing more than the undoing of life itself. A strong soul enables those who channel the power of the gates to impose their will on the world.

Strength: Strength is a common thread in tales: a strong young hero with a magic sword always seems to be at the center of such fables. It is valuable to real adventurers as well, whether they heft a magic blade or a massive minigun.

Vigor: Vigor not only enables a person to resist pain, but also to fight off the myriad afflictions both mundane and magical that may be bestowed by hundreds of different monsters of legend. Even the fae, immune as they are to nearly all disease, must be wary of the

breath of the cancer dragon and the poisonous sting of the dojenn.

SKILLS

The skill list for *Amethyst* is unaltered from the core rules, but not all skills are equally applicable to all characters.

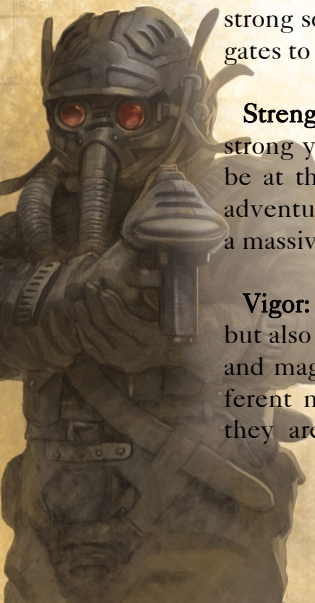
Echans: Echan characters (except gimfen) cannot take the Driving, Piloting, and Repair skills. A techan character with these skills who becomes an echan character later may, at the GM's discretion, exchange them for other skills more appropriate for their new lot in life. High-tech applications of other skills are not explicitly prohibited to echans, but attempting to actually use the technologies that those skills rely on inevitably results in failure as the device instantly disrupts if an echan attempts to use it. For instance, a damaskan scholar may have the Knowledge (Computers) skill, but if she tries to actually use a computer, it will short out as soon as she touches it.

Techans: Accustomed as they are to the conveniences of technological civilization, techan characters are considered unfamiliar with most low-tech applications of skills. The Boating, Riding, Survival, and Tracking skills in particular are going to be unfamiliar to most (though not all) techans, at least at the start of their careers. The exception is military and paramilitary personnel, who are expected to have at least rudimentary familiarity with the outside world by the time they finish basic training. Techans' knowledge of open echa is also suspect at best: until such time as they actually encounter a given culture, monster, or other echan phenomenon first-hand, all techans' common knowledge rolls related to those phenomena suffer the -2 non-familiarity penalty.

Healing Skill: Fae and human physiology may look similar on the outside, but inside they are vastly different. When you take the Healing skill, you must choose a particular species as a focus. If you take humans as your focus, you cannot use the skill at all on fae patients unless you also take a fae species focus. If you take a fae species, you cannot use the skill on human patients unless you also take the human species focus. Additionally, if you attempt to treat a fae of a different species than the one you chose as your focus, you suffer the -2 non-familiarity penalty (fae in mixed communities tend to rely on magical healing for this reason).

DERIVED STATISTICS

Derived statistics are calculated as normal, but particular note should be made of Charisma. Most characters have at least a situational penalty to Charisma, due to how insular societies can be in the harsh and ideologically patchwork world of *Amethyst*. Trust should be hard to come by in all but the most open and permissive communities. This is not to say that everybody should



be automatically suspicious of anyone they don't know, but the pervasiveness of bigotry is a major theme of the setting and it is hard for anyone to escape that unfortunate fact. Any party that contains more than a handful of characters with a Charisma penalty will likely draw unfriendly stares whenever they enter a new locale.

EDGES & HINDRANCES

Most edges and all hindrances from the core rules are applicable to *Amethyst* characters. There are also a few new ones that you can take.

RESTRICTED EDGES

These edges are not allowed by default: **Adept**; **Arcane Resistance/Improved Arcane Resistance**; **Elan**; **Healer**; **Holy/Unholy Warrior**; **Linguist**; **Liquid Courage**; **Mentalist**; and **Soul Drain**.

All basic arcane backgrounds have been replaced with ones tailored to the setting.

Additionally, some edges are designated as being Supernatural. Only one character per party can have a supernatural edge without special dispensation from the GM. All Supernatural edges automatically give the character the Echan hindrance for no points.

ALTERED EDGES

The following edges have special rules in the *Amethyst* setting.

Arcane Background: See **Chapters 3, 5, and 6** for allowed arcane backgrounds. Some arcane backgrounds are considered Supernatural, and are subject to the above restriction on such edges. All arcane backgrounds, except **Experteeing Engineer** and **Nihilimancer**, come with the Echan hindrance for no points.

Beast Master: By taking this edge as a supernatural edge, the animal companion can be a spirit animal (identical to a normal animal, but insubstantial and invisible to others unless called for). A spirit animal has -2 to all trait rolls when interacting with the corporeal world other than its master.

Berserk: Requires **Chaparran**, **Echan Human**, **Kodiak**, or **Pagus**.

Champion (Supernatural): Requires **Arcane Background (Paladin)** instead of **Arcane Background (Miracles)**.

Gadgeteer: Requires **Arcane Background (Experteeing Engineer)** instead of **Arcane Background (Weird Science)**, and **Knowledge (Technology)** instead of the **Weird Science** skill.

Luck/Great Luck (Supernatural): Although these are Supernatural edges, you only disrupt technology when you actually spend a Benny (even a normal one, not granted by the edge).

Mr. Fix It: Requires **Gimfen** instead of **Arcane Background (Weird Science)**, and **Knowledge (Technology)** instead of the **Weird Science** skill.

Noble: Requires **Damaskan**, **Echan Human**, **Half-Fae**, **Laudenian**, **Narros**, or **Tenenbri**.

Wizard: Requires one of the following **Arcane Backgrounds** instead of **Arcane Background (Magic)**: **Darawren**, **Gneolistic**, **Incarnate**, **Koana Scholar**, **Laudenian Magos**, **Logian**, or **Mage**.

NEW EDGES

Only new edges available to all characters are detailed here: for edges unique to specific species and regions, consult the appropriate section in **Chapters 3-5**.

ARMORED SYMPATHY

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Strength d8+

Whenever you wear armor with a base Armor rating of +3 or better (not armor that has a higher rating against certain kinds of attacks), that Armor rating increases by 1 for you.

CARAPACE

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Strength d8+

As long as you and up to four allies in a line lock shields, every member of the line gains +2 to Toughness, and enemies have -2 to any trait roll that would result in breaking your shield wall. Each member of the shield wall can move up to half their pace on your turn as long as you all remain in a line. The effects end as soon as any member of the wall breaks the shield lock (although you can reforge it on your turn).

CLEAVER

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, Strength d8+, Fighting d10+

Any melee weapon you wield has its AP rating increased by 1 for you (if it doesn't normally have AP, it becomes AP1).

DISRUPTION RESISTANCE

(Weird Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8+

The first time in an encounter a disruption roll is made for you, the GM rolls twice and takes the result that is

more advantageous to you. If you are an echan and attempt to use a device, the item works properly once, and then automatically disrupts at the end of your turn.

ECHALOGIAN

(Professional Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6+

An echalogian is an expert at teasing out the facts about the fantasy world from the fiction, and framing the unfamiliar in a way that makes sense to everyone. You reduce any Charisma penalties you have for dealing with unfamiliar cultures by 1, and you gain +2 to common knowledge rolls made to relate an aspect of the fantasy world to myth and literature, and vice versa.

SWORN HAND OF VENGEANCE

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, Smarts d6+

You have special enmity for a particular type of creature that has caused you considerable harm in the past. Choose one type of monster: you gain +4 to common knowledge rolls regarding that monster. Additionally, you can make a Smarts roll to identify a weak point of the monster: if you succeed, you and each ally that can see or hear you gains a +2 bonus to damage rolls against that monster (with another +2 for each raise you make).

YOJIMBO

(Professional Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, Strength d8+, Notice d8+

At the start of combat, you designate one character as your charge. As long as you remain within your Pace + 2" of your charge, you can always move adjacent to them in time to intercept an attack against them – you become the target of the attack instead. This counts as your movement for your next turn (so if you move again on your turn, you are subject to the normal multi-action penalty as if you were running).

NEW AND ALTERED HINDRANCES

BIGOT

(Minor or Major)

You are utterly intolerant of a specific group of people. You never give aid or succor to any member of that group, and always refuse any assistance they or anyone who associates with them may offer you. You may even go out of your way to do them harm. Your Charisma suffers a -2 modifier when dealing with people from that group and their known allies. This can be either a minor or a major hindrance depending on the size and influence of the group: for instance, being bigoted against all fae isn't a hindrance at all if you never leave Baruch Malkut, and is only a minor hindrance if most of the campaign involves traveling along the Continental Cross, but would be a major hindrance if you're meant to be an undercover agent in Limshau.

DOUBTING THOMAS

(Major or Minor)

Even among echans, there are those who prefer not to place their trust in magic, capricious as it is. An echan can take Doubting Thomas as a major hindrance: it isn't that they don't believe in the supernatural, but they are more wary of it than most and prefer not to rely on magic if there is a non-magical alternative. Such a character will eschew any beneficial magic, even magical healing, unless there is absolutely no alternative. All other effects of the hindrance are the same.

ECHA-BAKA

(Major)

Requirement: Human

Your view of the world is irretrievably skewed by exposure to fantasy literature and lore. You always treat fae species and other magical creatures as if they were the fantasy stereotype they most resemble, ignorantly use words like ‘elf’ or ‘dwarf’ which most species find offensive, and your understanding of magic is idiosyncratic at best. You have a -2 penalty to all common knowledge rolls related to the fantasy world, -2 Charisma against all non-humans except damaskans and gimfen, and if you have an arcane background, you suffer your negative effects on a roll of 1 or 2 on your main die instead of a roll of 1.

ECHAN

(Minor or Major)

You disrupt technology on and around you. If you attempt to use a technological device, it instantly disrupts, and your mere presence increases the likelihood of a disruption event occurring. This is a minor hindrance if there are two or fewer techan party members, and a major hindrance if there are more than two techan party members. If there are no techan party members, you do not receive points for this hindrance. This hindrance does not count against your normal limits on hindrances.

Note: All archetypes in this book that have this hindrance are assumed to have it for no points: if you take one of these archetypes, determine whether you gain extra points per the conditions above (unless stated otherwise in the archetype).

IXINDAR-BOUND

(Major)

You are fully corrupted by the whisper of Mengus and have given your soul over to syntropy. You are considered an evil being, and you radiate an aura of evil that gives you -2 Charisma against echans, although they have no means of determining your allegiance (your presence just makes them uncomfortable), and you do not disrupt technology even if you normally would (this may give you away if you aren’t careful). Additionally, once per session, the GM can compel you to do anything that is not obviously harmful to your immediate well-being (such as walking off a cliff or shooting an ally in full view of the party, although shooting an ally when there are no other witnesses is acceptable).

OTAKU

(Minor)

Requirement: One knowledge focus at d8+

You are obsessed with your particular area of expertise, to the exclusion of all else. You will ignore even imminent danger if it means you can learn something new about your favorite topic, you frequently forget that

other people don’t know all the same things that you do, and you are unable to meaningfully communicate with anyone on any subject that you can’t in some way relate to your obsession (and what may be a meaningful communication to you can be totally incomprehensible to your interlocutor). You suffer a -2 penalty to most social tasks as a result, unless you can find a way to make common ground (if the other person has a different but tangential interest, for example). One major exception: if you are interacting with someone else who also has this hindrance, even if they have a different obsession, you gain a +2 bonus to most social tasks instead, as you each recognize the other’s kindred spirit.

TECHAN

(Minor or Major)

Requirement: Human

You have -2 Charisma against echans, except individuals (and occasionally groups) who have an established positive relationship with you or your home bastion. This is a minor hindrance if there are two or fewer echan party members (even if there are no echans in the party), and a major hindrance if there are more than two echan party members. This hindrance does not count against your normal limits on hindrances.

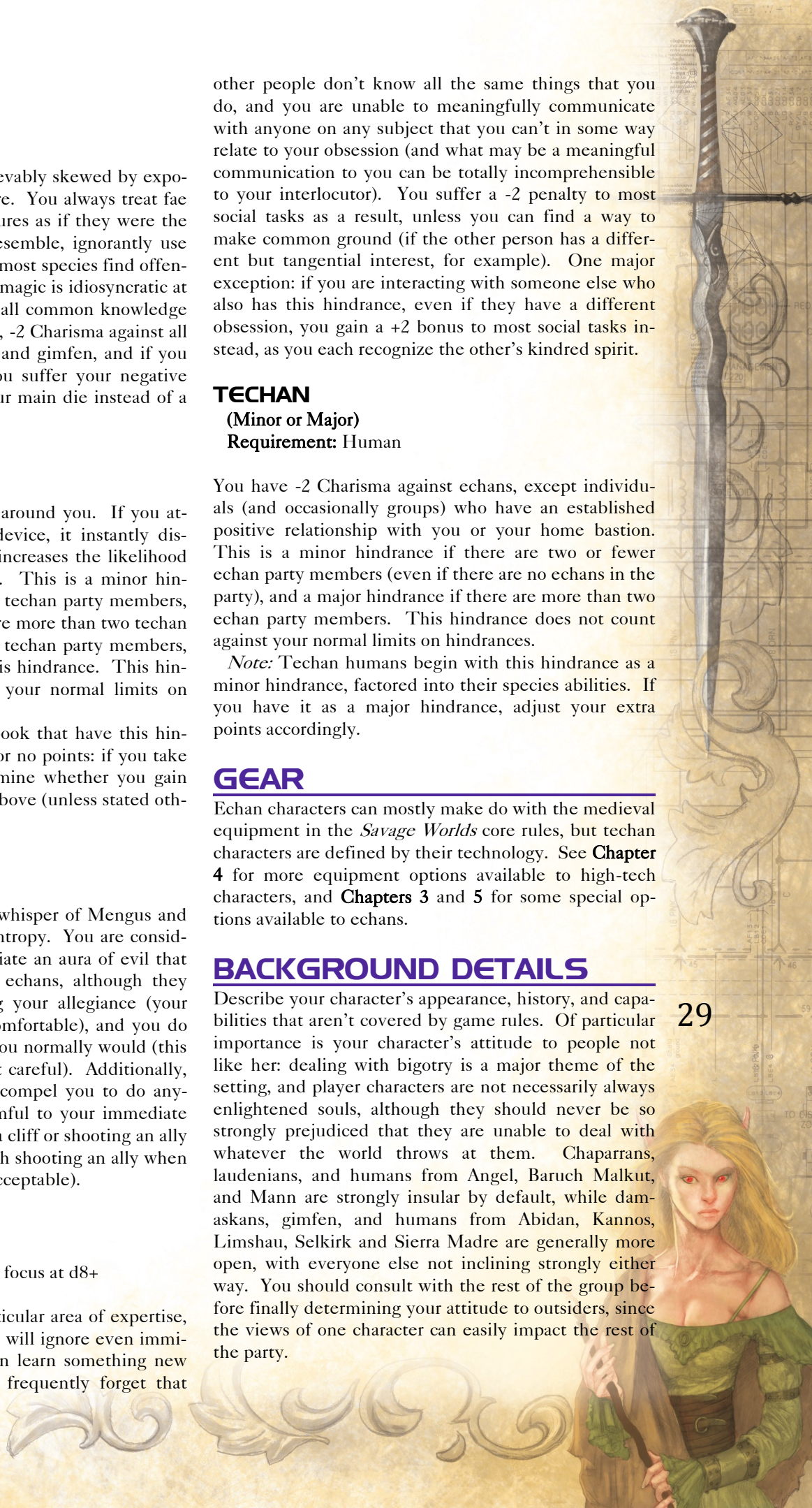
Note: Techan humans begin with this hindrance as a minor hindrance, factored into their species abilities. If you have it as a major hindrance, adjust your extra points accordingly.

GEAR

Echan characters can mostly make do with the medieval equipment in the *Savage Worlds* core rules, but techan characters are defined by their technology. See **Chapter 4** for more equipment options available to high-tech characters, and **Chapters 3** and **5** for some special options available to echans.

BACKGROUND DETAILS

Describe your character’s appearance, history, and capabilities that aren’t covered by game rules. Of particular importance is your character’s attitude to people not like her: dealing with bigotry is a major theme of the setting, and player characters are not necessarily always enlightened souls, although they should never be so strongly prejudiced that they are unable to deal with whatever the world throws at them. Chaparrans, laudenians, and humans from Angel, Baruch Malkut, and Mann are strongly insular by default, while damaskans, gimfen, and humans from Abidan, Kannos, Limshau, Selkirk and Sierra Madre are generally more open, with everyone else not inclining strongly either way. You should consult with the rest of the group before finally determining your attitude to outsiders, since the views of one character can easily impact the rest of the party.





ARCHETYPES

The easiest way to see the rules in action is to look at a sample character. In the following chapters, you will find a number of pregenerated characters that you can use as they are or modify to suit your tastes. For these characters, edges and hindrances designated with a * are new options from this book. All archetypal characters also have the Echan or Techan hindrance: the points (if any) for the Echan hindrance are not factored into the archetype's statistics, and the point(s) for the Techan hindrance are assumed to be spent on extra funds for equipment unless otherwise specified.

GAME RULES

All the normal rules of the game apply, plus a few extras as detailed below.

STANDARD SETTING RULES

Amethyst assumes that you are using the following setting rules from the *Savage Worlds Deluxe* rulebook:

Heroes Never Die: While Canam is a dangerous place, it makes for a more interesting game if death is not the default assumption in combat. This is particularly important in the case of techan parties, which might spend entire adventures away from their home bastion and have no way to replenish lost personnel. To maintain tension, when a character is defeated, the person who dealt the final blow gets to decide what happens to her – which could be death, but perhaps a monster would rather drag her unconscious back to its lair to eat later (fresh meat is better, after all).

Joker's Wild: *Amethyst* takes place in a magical world, and magic is inherently unpredictable. This rule goes some way to modeling the inherent randomness of the world.

Multiple Languages: There are three primary dialects of English alone in Canam, as well as five major fae languages with innumerable less common tongues, and the remnants of dozens of old human languages. In the general atmosphere of distrust that pervades the setting, fluency in a given language might make the difference between a warm welcome and being run out of town.

Skill Specialization: Especially in a techan group, characters are expected to fill a certain niche. Skill specialization not only encourages more flavorful skill choices and clearer distinction between characters, but it makes enchanted and high-tech items more important (see below).

ENCHANTMENT LEVELS (EL) AND TECH LEVELS (TL)

Magical items and high-tech gear are ranked by one of six levels, each corresponding to a die type (d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, d12+2). A hero wielding such an item can use

the item's die in place of her own trait die if hers is lower for any applicable function of the item (if the user is unskilled, it allows her to use it at d4). An enchantment level 3 shield, for example, grants a d10 in place of the user's Fighting skill for purposes of calculating Parry and defensive actions, unless the wielder has no Fighting skill or has it at d12 or higher.

Tech levels have a few additional properties, which are described below and further in **Chapter 4**.

ECHAN DISRUPTION FIELD (EDF)

Magic retards the progression of technology. It breaks down lubrications. It jams gears and shorts out electronics. It overloads batteries. Everything more complicated than basic clockwork is vulnerable, given enough exposure, but the more advanced the technology, the more susceptible it is: in most places, anything up to a simple combustion engine can manage with minimal difficulty, but even something as basic as a bicycle will break down if caught in the backblast from a dragon's breath (of course, at that point, you have bigger things to worry about). Because magic grows as more people use it, bastions are relatively safe within the confines of their walls or city limits. The moment they leave their borders and brave the outlands, their machinery and electronics begins to degrade. As technology comes into contact with higher concentrations of enchantment, it becomes prone to interference. This leads some machines to become less efficient, cease working altogether, or – in some rare cases – violently destroy themselves. Whenever technology is outside of a bastion, there is little anyone can do to impede this disruption. At best, they can slow or delay the effects for a short time.

Magical energies and creatures generate what is called an Echan Disruption Field (or Enchanted Disruption Field), or **EDF**. Some bastions even rate an ED-I, or ED Index, which charts the hot spots in the world which users of technology need to avoid. The low level EDF saturating the entire world interrupts radio waves and nullifies the ability of anything other than gold wires to channel electricity over long distances, preventing communication between the bastions and limiting the lifespan of batteries.

DISRUPTION EVENTS

Disruption is a constant threat, even within bastions, but the rules applying to it usually only occur when they are the most inconvenient. Disruption events can occur under the following circumstances:

- The first time in an encounter that someone attempts to use the device;
- Whenever a creature that generates EDF touches the device (echans attempting to use the device always results in disruption of TL1 and higher devices, no check required);

SHIELDING

Shielding does not make an item immune to disruption, but it does make it harder to affect. Unlike gimfen shielding, which does immunize against EDF at the cost of becoming bulky and awkward, techan shielding keeps the overall shape of the original object and does not add significant weight to the final design. If an item has the shielded property, it is treated as one TL lower for purposes of disruption rolls.

Shielding can be added to any TL1 or higher device at a cost of 20% of the item's base price. Some items are shielded by default: if so, the cost of the shielding is folded into the base price.

- Any time the device or its wielder is directly affected by magic (any attempt to enchant the device always results in disruption, no check required);
- Whenever the device or its wielder is hit by an attack with a raise from a magical creature;
- If the device or its wielder is hit by an attack from a pincher weapon;
- At the end of each round;
- Any time that the GM judges appropriate.

At this point, the GM rolls a d12 and adds the TL of the highest-tech item on the character (or in the party, for a general disruption event) or the EL of the item used to make the attack, if any (whichever is higher). On a 4 or higher, a disruption event occurs, plus an additional disruption event for each raise on the roll.

A targeted disruption effect (such as from a spell or being touched by a magical creature) always affects the item or character targeted. For general disruption events, the order of disruption events is determined by the first undisrupted item with the highest TL in the following sequence; weapons, tools/utility items, armor, vehicles, with items actively in use being disrupted first. If there are multiple items, determine the affected one randomly. No player can be affected by another general disruption event per scene until each player has been affected by one. TL0 items (that are not designated as being immune to disruption) are only affected by general disruption events if there is another modifier to the roll.

There is a dire exception, however. If the disruption roll aces, something sinister occurs. A cataclysmic pulse courses through the unfortunate subjects of the disruption, causing more than a simple inconvenience. Every party member carrying technology suffers a disruption event affecting the highest TL item they have. This critical collapse can affect even TL0 items, including those designated as being immune to disruption.

EFFECTS OF DISRUPTION

A disrupted item does not grant its TL as a substitute to the wielder's trait die. Additionally, the item malfunctions in the most perverse ways and times imaginable: weapons jam at inconvenient moments; powered armor loses power and immobilizes the wearer; utility devices short out, usually in the middle of attempting to use them. As a general rule, any time the wielder fails a roll using the item, it can't be used again until the end of that player's next turn. Once the wielder fails three rolls, the item breaks entirely and can no longer be used until it has been properly repaired.

You can spend a Benny at any time to restore a disrupted item to full functionality, but not a disabled item.

SCALING DISRUPTION

The basic rules above assume a low impact of disruption on your game. This is not entirely reflective of the setting but does keep the dangers of disruption low to streamline game flow. Disruption events can be made more severe in one of several ways (which can be used separately or combined, but which should remain consistent throughout the game):

Absolute Disruption: By default, disrupted items continue to work, but at reduced efficiency and in unpredictable ways. Optionally, when the item becomes disrupted, it cannot be used at all unless someone takes an action to make a Repair roll on it, which restores it to basic functionality but does not allow its TL to be used in place of the wielder's trait die, and leaves it prone to malfunctions (as normal).

EDF Ratings: EDF is not uniform across the planet. Using this option, instead of just using the item's tech level as the target for the disruption roll, the GM also adds the area's or attacking creature's EDF rating (from +0 to +5). Bastions have a base EDF rating of +0. Any echan creature within 10" of the item inflicts a minimum rating of +1 per 2 creatures, or per 1 creature if it is especially large or magically saturated (cumulative up to +4). Wilderness areas without significant magical saturation are also +1. The average echan settlement or magical wilderness area is +2, +3 for significantly magical areas. +4 and +5 should be reserved for areas containing artifacts or fundamentally magical creatures such as dragons.

Wild Surges: To make disrupted technology especially unpredictable, whenever you ace on an action with a disrupted item, you are treated as if you got one more raise than you normally would – but the item breaks immediately.



ECHA-SAFE TECHNOLOGY

Not every technology is subject to disruption – only technology above a certain threshold of complexity. The maximum level of ambient complexity required to make an item immune varies from place to place. Various technological items are also more resistant to disruption: either the technology is so basic that there is nothing for magic to latch onto, or it is so heavily shielded that the EDF cannot affect it. The following cannot be affected by a routine disruption event:

- Items with the 'immune' property;
- Any gimfen thingamajig;
- Any armor not requiring a battery cell for operation;
- Boosters and medical injections;
- All TL0 gear except TL0 weapons.

This does not mean that the item can never be disrupted, but doing so requires a targeted disruption event. Magic can get at anything that depends on moving parts or variable energy states, even something as simple as a windmill or waterwheel, so it's best not to invite it in.

HEALING

The world of *Amethyst* is a dangerous place, but there is one advantage to being constantly saturated by a raw force of life itself: you heal faster. Outside of a bastion or any other magic-resistant zone, wounded characters may make a Vigor roll each day instead of every five days to reduce their wound levels.

As mentioned above, multiple different species with profoundly different internal structures makes using the Healing skill to treat an unfamiliar life form hazardous at best – someone without experience treating a patient of a given species suffers the standard non-familiarity penalty. A patient treated by a medic unfamiliar with her physiology suffers a -1 penalty to her natural healing roll.

High-tech healing options are available to techans and gimfen (subject to the above unfamiliar physiology penalty), and while standard first aid, basic surgical techniques and some medications will work on other echan creatures, only those from lower-tech bastions or trained in archaic medical techniques are able to manage complex healing without modern machinery. For purposes of Healing rolls, TL0 medicine counts as basic medical attention (no bonus or penalty to the roll), TL1 medicine grants +1 to the roll, TL2-3 grants +2 to the roll, and TL4-5 grants +3 to the roll.

Magical healing, of course, works regardless of the practitioner's or patient's species, and thus is far more prevalent in echan communities than mundane doctoring. Although magical healing is less effective in general than high-tech options (being the equivalent of basic medical attention rather than advanced medical attention), it has the advantage of working on everybody equally.



"How did you..." Aiden started.

"I asked it to."

"But it's not alive."

"First rule of Attricana: Anything you can think of...thinks for itself."

Aiden gathered his thoughts. "Attricana?"

Chen approached a window and opened the shutters to the moonlight. He pointed to the bright star brushing the crescent.

"By way that everything that can't happen, does."

"Can't happen...Dragons," Aiden said.

"Quite right. Hard to miss when they appear as they did."

"They aren't real," Aiden forced himself to say, "Can't."

"So says the normal world," Chen replied with a shadow of a smirk. Aiden was not smiling. Desperation had set in.

"I don't understand."

"Should you?"

"Was it Zmey?"

"Zmey?" Chen pondered the sudden question. Aiden could see the man rifling through old thoughts. "Zmey is a myth, based on several stories. What attacked you...was a death dragon."

"I couldn't find the other one in my book."

"Book?"

"Codex Dracontis—"

"Oh yes. I remember that one. There are better resources."

"That show the other dragon? The one with gold and blue scales, blue eyes, white whiskers and white talons. A long snake body. Four arms, four talons."

Chen circled around the desk, rolling his fingers across the spines on the shelf behind Aiden. "You know, they say spotting a Yok-ani is a good omen. Seeing two portends a blessed life." Chen found the book in question and pulled it out. It was almost as large as the one already on the desk, but with no cover art. There was only a single large Asian-sinitic letter and the English words underneath Myths of the Kuraukou-Puru.

"Yok-ani? Are they good?" Aiden asked.

"Some people certainly think so," Chen responded as he placed the book gently on the table. He respectfully slid the other to the side. "What do you think?" He unclasped the latches at either end of the new book.

"I think it was good."

"You sure it had four talons?"

"Yes."

"Good eye for detail, considering. They grow more as they age. Three to four to five." He opened the book. The heavy-stock pages were rough on the leaf, a hemp-pulp hybrid. The letters were pounded heavily into the stock. "This one talks of them. They are quiet, reserved, renowned for wisdom, and worshipped for the humility of their power. Under their guidance, lands see no war, famine, or grief. At least that's the claim. Reality, well...I guess they try their best." Aiden broke from the book to look at Chen. "Read it," Chen added. "Stay if you wish."

"My brother will kill me if he finds out."

"Yes, I imagine he will."

Aiden smiled and reassured himself. He thought of Martin's shoulder punches and whatever punishment his new guardians

would inflict if he got caught. "I'll stay," he said.

"I'll make tea," said Chen as he walked to his kitchen.

"Uhh, Mister?" Aiden still wasn't ready to call him by name. "How much is true? Dragons? Elves?"

Chen looked back at the young boy. A quiver of a smile crept on his face. "All of it."

* * *

The other dragons grew to power and passed the Yok-ani in number. By the closing of the gates, only nine Yok-ani had been born (or perhaps created). None of them died by natural causes or fell by the hands of an enemy. Nine still remain today. In the five centuries since the re-opening of the gate, the Yok-ani made no attempt to increase their numbers. Although few, they are the most powerful dragons in the world, rivaled only by the remaining dragon kings, of which Shaka, a Yok-ani, is counted as a member of.

The tea was no simple drop-bag of disheveled twigs and bark. Chen had brought a kettle of scolding water, a saucer and cup, and a smaller kettle. Inside the smaller kettle was a collection of dried herbs, flowers, leaves, and honey. Chen poured the hot water in the small kettle, and then emptied the small kettle into the cup. Aiden repeated that process and emptied the larger kettle before finally speaking to the man again.

"Do you have more?"

"Tea or dragons?" Chen replied.

"About everything outside."

Chen waved to the room. "They're all on that subject."

"I want to read them all."

"There will be time for that. It's getting late."

"Then I want to see it myself."

Chen raised a brow. "A zeal for adventure got you already?"

"It's just like the books. Just like the games I play." Aiden was getting excited. "I want to see it all, everything that they said wasn't real, castles, magic, fae."

"It may look the dream, child, but it'll carry the chill of reality. And what will it prove? Even if it feels like your fantasy, you're not the storyteller." Aiden didn't appear dissuaded. "How will you survive out there? Can you wield a sword, shoot an arrow?"

"Maybe," Aiden responded in reflex before realizing that the most strenuous physical activity he had ever done was avoid a soccer ball when playing goalie because he didn't want to get hit in the face. Chen saw through the boy's naivety.

"I don't mean to turn you away," he said, "just understand that many people claim that world as home, and you would not be any more special out there than in here. You may wish to be a character in your own fantasy, but this is no work of fiction. It's real. You're not chosen by fate. Your parents were ordinary. No gods kissed you upon your birth. What do you do well?"

Aiden scrunched his lips, shrugged, and sighed. "I read books. Don't suppose that means much." The sudden wash of insight over his face was unmistakable. "Magic. I could do that."

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

"If it's all real then magic can come from books! I can

learn!" he begged. "I can do that! Just give me the right books!" The wide-eyed appeal of the youth showed his commitment.

Chen reached out and grasped Aiden's wrist. He pulled the boy's sleeve to reveal the broken watch. Chen pointed to the timepiece.

"This world," he said, pointing to the east, "and that world do not mingle. What you have here doesn't work out there—no cars, no computers, no phones. Once you commit to that path, you can't come back."

"I..." Aiden trailed off. He was about to say *I understand*, but he didn't. Why was it that way? Why were there walls around the city? Why did the mere presence of dragon make his watch stop? Aiden remembered books about the kid that discovered he was a demigod, or an heir to a kingdom, or a member of a secret order, or a wonder child with a wand. That's what he wanted; those characters never had to give anything up. He wanted his fantasy. "I don't like this place. I prefer the world I read about."

"Why?" Chen answered.

"Because...I don't know...because it's different, because it's amazing. Because..." Aiden felt a drop run out of his nose. He sniffed it up quickly and swallowed. "Because my mother made it sound so wonderful." Aiden held back a tear. "And I want my dreams to be real."

Chen placed his hand gently on Aiden's shoulder and a tear finally broke free from his eye. "If you run from a life, running will be your life. A fulfilling existence is defined by moving towards something, not away from it. You can read about that world for as long as you like, but I can't let you make that decision."

"Isn't it mine to make?"

Chen nodded. "But you need to know why you make it...and now's not that time."

Aiden's shoulders slumped and he tried to hold back in his emotions. He threw Chen's arm away and bolted for the door. He didn't look back. Aiden wanted to abandon his normal life, the one filled boring classes, imposing bullies, overbearing brothers, and callous gods, a life commonplace in the real world. He wanted to be like the characters he read about, like the computer avatar he controlled, someone of consequence, with a life ending in a happily ever after, not a number on a marble cover wedged alongside hundreds of others in a mausoleum.

Aiden slammed the gate open, and it ricocheted off the concrete wall. He was too angry and confused to be frightened of switching stations or running down streets with inadequate lighting. He darted across intersections without alerting the crosswalks and ducked into darkened paths between buildings to shortcut his return home. All the while he thought of what could be out there. He imagined the dragons, the fae, the princesses, and the possibilities that, until now, had only existed in fiction. Out there was everything he could not be in here.

* * *

Aiden returned only minutes before sunrise. The door to the apartment didn't creak. He snuck into his room and navigated around the unpacked boxes. The moon was about to fall under the crown. Aiden slipped under the sheets and closed his eyes. Despite being tired, he opened them moments later and

rolled back to see Martin's still empty bed. Aiden moved his attention to the window, to the setting moon and its companion, to that one bright star floating near the lunar horn.

Attricana.

It wasn't a star but a hole in the cosmos, a door to another place. From it flowed the chaos that shaped a new world while destroying the old one.

Aiden closed his eyes and dreamt, though not of dragons and elves, of knights and wizards. He dreamt of his mother.

* * *

Aiden looked at the passing businessmen, politicians, policemen, and teachers. They all knew. Maybe not of magic and monsters, but they'd known enough and hadn't told him. They didn't care. They didn't want to know, to be reminded about what wasn't normal. Children played the games. They dreamt. The avatars they took on in the digital world offered them the role they could never fulfill in life. Aiden looked over his classmates and wondered how many of their dreams had been denied.

"Computer programmer!" William shouted. Aiden realized that the books given to him were old and worn for a reason. No one wrote these stories anymore. No one wanted to be reminded about what they had lost.

"Nice, Jeffery. Lara?" Mr. Leach asked. Aiden wondered why his mother had made the exception. Why did she tell him those stories, search for that rare freeware?

"An architect," Lara answered.

"Good, that's productive, Aiden?"

Weeks before, Aiden had been daydreaming of riding dragons and rescuing princess, engrossed in forgetting the world around him. Now he wanted to know everything, every why and every how. Leach didn't repeat himself; he leaned in to force Aiden's attention.

"Hmm?" Aiden responded, oblivious to the subject. The class never taught him what he really wanted to know. He learned it because society expected him to, because he was adept at it, because eventually childhood must end. But fantasies were now fact, and Aiden could learn of that without the mockery of embracing a dream.

Leach was about to scold him again, but stopped. "What do you want to do when you're older?"

"What I want?" Aiden almost mumbled.

"Yes...I mean we have an architect, programmer, doctor." He pointed to another child. "A janitor for some reason. What do you want to be?"

Aiden thought it over. He didn't care how the class would react. "I want...to be a wizard."

The students looked to him. A few chuckled. William gritted his teeth. He had been warned to keep quiet. "A...wha... Aiden." the teacher stuttered. Leach could piece together in an instant what thoughts had been circling like a maelstrom in Aiden's mind.

"Yes," Aiden answered.

"Why?"

Aiden tried to think of a better answer but his mind had been fixated on the how, not the why, so no better answer slipped out. "Because I can," he said.

* * *

Martin was leaning on a railing outside of Aiden's school as his little brother ran out.

"All good?" Martin asked. Aiden nodded. Martin led his brother away. He took the responsibility seriously, checking traffic and passersby.

"Aiden!" Lara shouted from a playground. The brothers noticed and stopped. "We're playing at the grounds, wanna come?"

Aiden looked back to Martin with his doe eyes on cue. "Yeah...it's ok?" Martin answered. Aiden smiled and hobbled with his heavy bag to the girl. "Be home by 4:00," he added. "Go nowhere else!"

Aiden finally turned back and waved. "Thanks, Marty!" he shouted. Martin watched them approach the swings with other children. Aiden placed his bag on the sand. When Martin was satisfied that Aiden wasn't walking into a bully trap, he continued walking. When he was out of sight, Aiden immediately turned to Lara.

"Thanks Lara," Aiden said, picking his bag back up and strapping it to his back for the long haul.

"You are invited," she answered.

"Thanks...I know." Aiden made for a nearby path that bisected two houses and led back to a main road.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

Aiden stopped and turned back. "Better you don't know."

"You're weird, Aiden."

"Thanks." He smiled. He stepped away to the path but kept looking at her. "Lara? Do you know about what's beyond the city?"

"Past the wall?" she asked. Aiden nodded. "It's wild and dangerous. Why?"

"No reason," Aiden replied, turned and upgraded his walk to a run as he reached the path.

* * *

David Chen held a paper bag of various fruits, purchased from Genai farms, grown under sunlight with rain fallen from clouds. They weren't genetically modified replicas designed to be cultivated in foreign environments. They weren't grown in atmospheric controlled multi-leveled greenhouses. The shop was still open, being tended by Chen's single employee, a fifteen-year-old Asian girl with trimmed straight black hair, oversized glasses, a long neck and a chest as flat as Ganymede-moon or myth. As Chen approached the open gate with his groceries, he heard Aiden's shout behind him.

"I don't want to be what they tell me!"

Aiden had gotten his attention. Chen turned around.

"Pardon?" Chen asked.

"I don't want to be like them, like my brother!"

"There are many things you can do to be different, Aiden."

"I want to be what I want!" Every sentence got louder. "Why do I have to settle for what they say I can be? I don't have to now! I don't want to be part of this! How can I go back, knowing what I know? I want magic! I want dragons! I want everything they said I couldn't have!"

Chen stepped forward. Aiden had also gotten the attention of Chen's employee, leaning in from her duties to see the commotion. "It will take a long time," Chen answered. "Not all the books were right. It'll be years before you're ready, and it doesn't always take."

"The sooner I start..."

"Even knowing what you'll have to give up. Cars?"

"Don't drive."

"Television?"

"Nothing good on."

"Computers?"

"I play games with magic." Aiden had an answer for everything, he thought ahead.

"Refrigerators?" Except that one. "Central heating?" Chen paused and emphasized the next one. "Electricity?"

"Can't I make my own?"

Chen smiled with nod. "Yes, you may actually." He nudged his chin in the direction of the door. "Enter then."

Aiden approached the entrance and noticed the girl staring at him.

"Aiden," Chen said, "this is Min Xia Wen, my employee." The girl waved and Aiden, suddenly revolted by his school clothes, responded bashfully with a nod. Chen motioned Aiden to a desk. "Have a seat."

Aiden followed, dangling his legs over the uncomfortable stool. A fifty pound book weighted with gold leaf and wooden toggles slammed onto the desk. Chen unlocked it and flipped a few of the metallic pages. There was no artwork and the phrases were complicated and convoluted, containing numerous syllables with meanings beyond a twelve-year old's comprehension.

"What's this?" Aiden asked.

"The first of many," Chen answered as he walked away. Aiden shared a look at Min, who shrugged back.

Aiden examined the intimidating hardback. "You're only trapped if you can't find the door," Aiden repeated his mother's passing comment.

Aiden leaned in and began to read.

* * *

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

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

Aiden had a dragon.

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

* * *

Aiden looked up at the long flight of stairs, up the side of the crown. To call the outer wall a crown implied to Aiden that everyone behind it thought of themselves as royalty, claiming supremacy over everything they saw.

He clambered clumsily upwards, glancing occasionally to gauge the length of the climb. The steel railing didn't feel safe. The stairs were draped in darkness from the sun setting behind the wall. A gust of cool wind struck Aiden as he reached the summit.

Aiden walked to the edge of the fortification. He stood between the jagged and uneven ramparts that topped it. Aiden would only have a few minutes before the next patrol. When standing on the peak of the crown, the city appeared to expand forever, over the horizon until heat radiating from concrete and iron mountains blurred to the sky. Skyscrapers, farms, manufacturing facilities and the last scraps of humanity's past. Aiden had seen such a view from his family's condo; anyone else would be amazed by it. But Aiden only offered it a passing glance, as much acknowledgement as traffic he wanted to cross.

He discarded one view for another, across the wall to a towering emerald forest of wild trees. They were alive and growing as tall as the city wall, without pruning or any arboriculture. Aiden had read that it was called Cyon, a dense pack of woods that encircled most of the south and east sides of the bastion. Aiden picked up noises from the forest—calls and yells from massive lungs. None of them sounded familiar. A high pitched screech resembled something a young girl could emit, though greatly amplified. A throaty bellow shook the trees and scattered birds. It was followed by something immense under the canopy shuffling leaves, shifting branches, and snapping undergrowth.

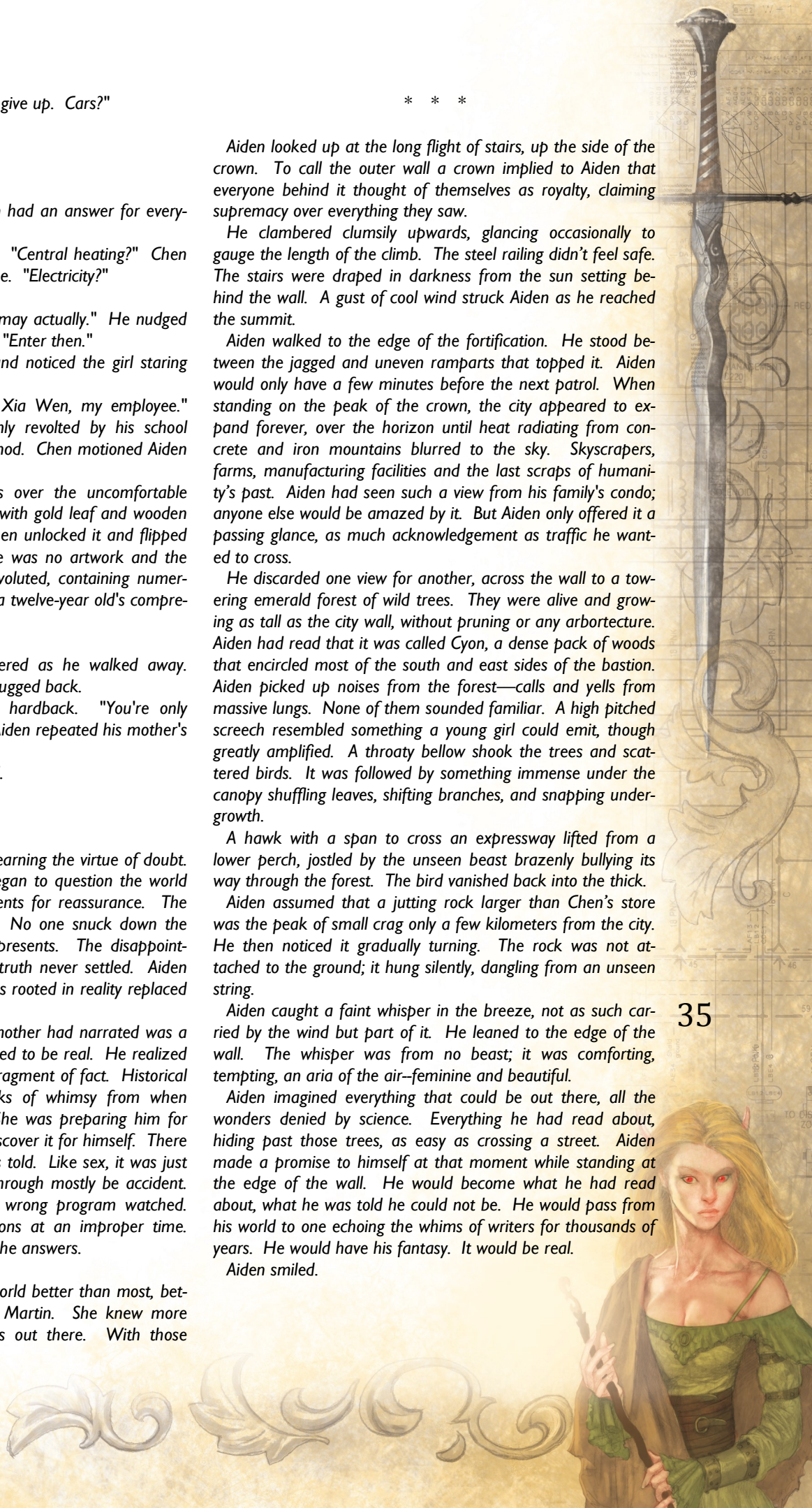
A hawk with a span to cross an expressway lifted from a lower perch, jostled by the unseen beast brazenly bullying its way through the forest. The bird vanished back into the thick.

Aiden assumed that a jutting rock larger than Chen's store was the peak of small crag only a few kilometers from the city. He then noticed it gradually turning. The rock was not attached to the ground; it hung silently, dangling from an unseen string.

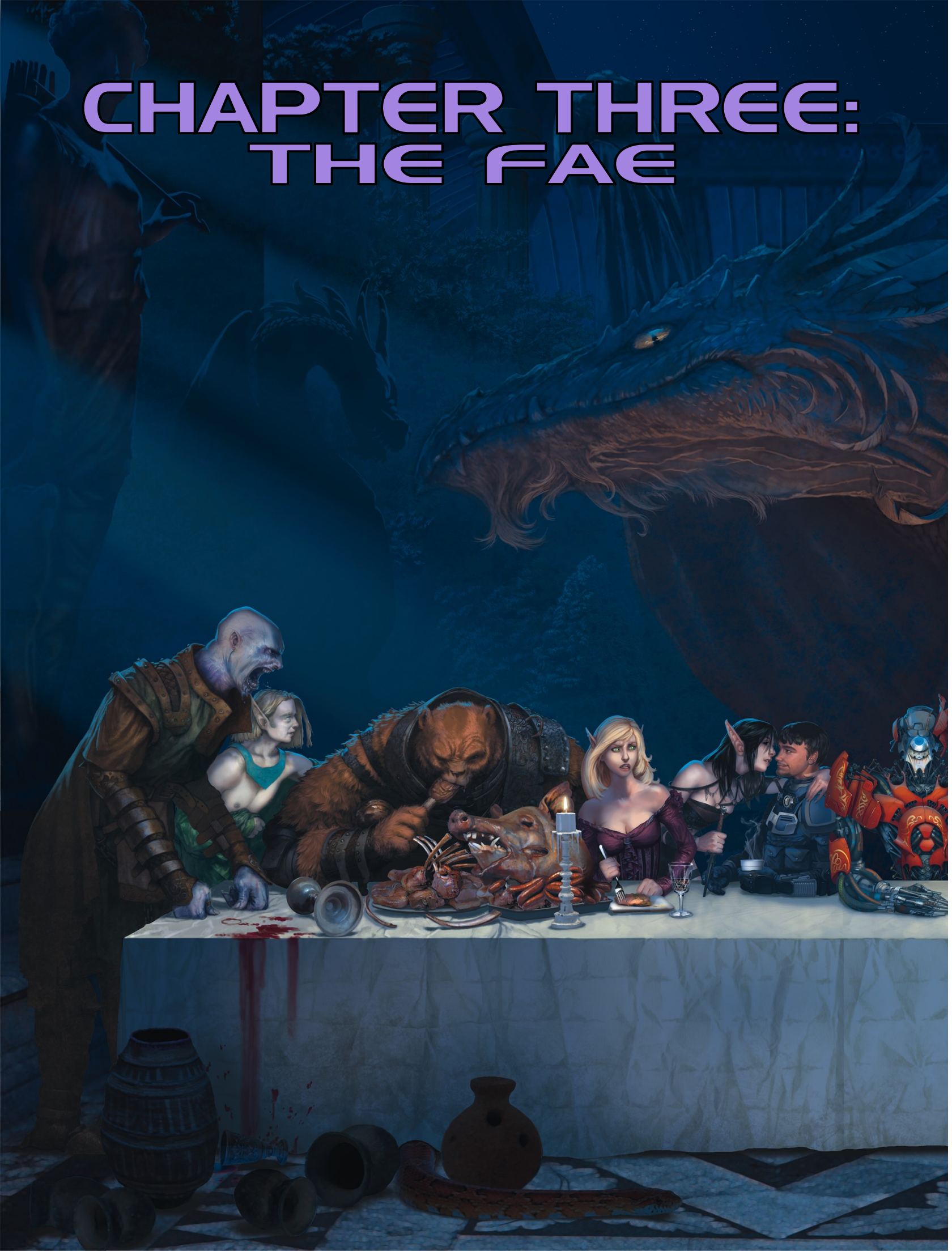
Aiden caught a faint whisper in the breeze, not as such carried by the wind but part of it. He leaned to the edge of the wall. The whisper was from no beast; it was comforting, tempting, an aria of the air—feminine and beautiful.


Aiden imagined everything that could be out there, all the wonders denied by science. Everything he had read about, hiding past those trees, as easy as crossing a street. Aiden made a promise to himself at that moment while standing at the edge of the wall. He would become what he had read about, what he was told he could not be. He would pass from his world to one echoing the whims of writers for thousands of years. He would have his fantasy. It would be real.

Aiden smiled.



CHAPTER THREE: THE FAE





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

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

ELDERS

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

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

Another popular theory claims it to be a coincidence; base ten appendages, binocular vision and stereoscopic hearing simply makes

sense and that all intelligent life will eventually move towards that end. Others cling to the prevalent theory that the fantasy world doesn't exist at all, only emerging because of man's desire for it to exist; thus, the appearance of man dictates the physique of fae, rather than the other way around.

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

These non-strictures apply when the fae cultures are allowed to govern themselves. In some locations, where fae are not in places of authority, they abide by the rules of the nation they inhabit, usually without complaint. As a rule, all fae abhor social conflict and will do anything they can to prevent it, though the extremes they will go to vary from type to type: laudenians

and chaparrans will generally remove themselves (or the offender) from the equation, damaskans and narros will attempt to mediate, the boisterous tenenbri will turn the conflict into a formal debate with clear parameters for victory, and the accommodating gimfen will quite happily concede anything to an intractable enough opponent and find some way of making up lost ground later.

UNIVERSAL FAE TRAITS

Echan: All fae (except pagus and gimfen) disrupt technology on you and around you. You have the Echan minor hindrance, but receive no points for it. If you take Echan as a major hindrance, you only gain points as for the minor hindrance. You can never buy off this hindrance.

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

Light Sleeper: You can sleep comfortably in any position and maintain balance while doing so. You require only four hours of sleep every 24 hours, which may be non-consecutive. Like all living creatures, you require REM sleep, but this only requires four hours of consecutive, comfortable sleep every three days. You cannot be put to sleep by magic and you can make Notice rolls while asleep (but you cannot gain raises this way).

Fae Iron Weakness: A specific ratio of lead and iron is extremely toxic to all fae. It is a forbidden substance, outlawed in most civilized communities. Damage rolls against you with fae-iron weapons gain one raise over and above the result of the roll.



CHAPARRAN

The huntress sat perfectly still in the canopy above as the prey blundered carelessly along the forest path. Though they bore no signs of their allegiance, she recognized their bearing: slavers, almost certainly from the despoiler nation to the east, invading her forest in search of chattel. The more fools they. The huntress stood silently, balancing effortlessly on the thin branch, and fitted an arrow to her bow.

The first human died with the arrow in his throat. His companions turned sharply at his last gurgling scream, and then looked up at the ominous shadow perched among the leaves. "Ambush!" the leader yelled, drawing a crossbow. "Get—" But his words were cut off as he suddenly felt the pressure of a knife at his throat. He could have sworn the elf hadn't moved, and yet somehow she had got out of the trees and crossed the clearing in the blink of an eye.

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

Hiding in the deep woods across the world, the chaparran fae have evolved concealment to an art form. Where the laudenians are merely disdainful of those unlike themselves, chaparrans are downright xenophobic and hostile to outsiders. Chaparrans believe most other fae have forgotten their origins. They believe that the original fae were birthed from the forests and should always remain tied to them. The chaparrans live almost exclusively among the woods, growing towers, temples, and whole communities from the soil and branches. Their mere presence encourages vegetation, and the tallest, thickest trees in the world grow where chaparrans live.

Chaparrans mostly keep to themselves, refusing to become involved in the affairs of outsiders. One could walk through a chaparran forest without ever knowing of their presence. Unless threatening elf or tree, trespassers often cross without worry or encounter: more nefarious individuals vanish after entering. They defend the forests when necessary with their inestimable archery skills. Their bows and arrows grow naturally from wood, a result of their symbiosis with the trees around them.

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

Physical Description: Chaparrans are only slightly taller than damaskans, on par with the average human, but give the illusion of much greater size due to their increased muscle mass and physical stamina. Of all the fae descendants, the chaparrans have the greatest spectrum

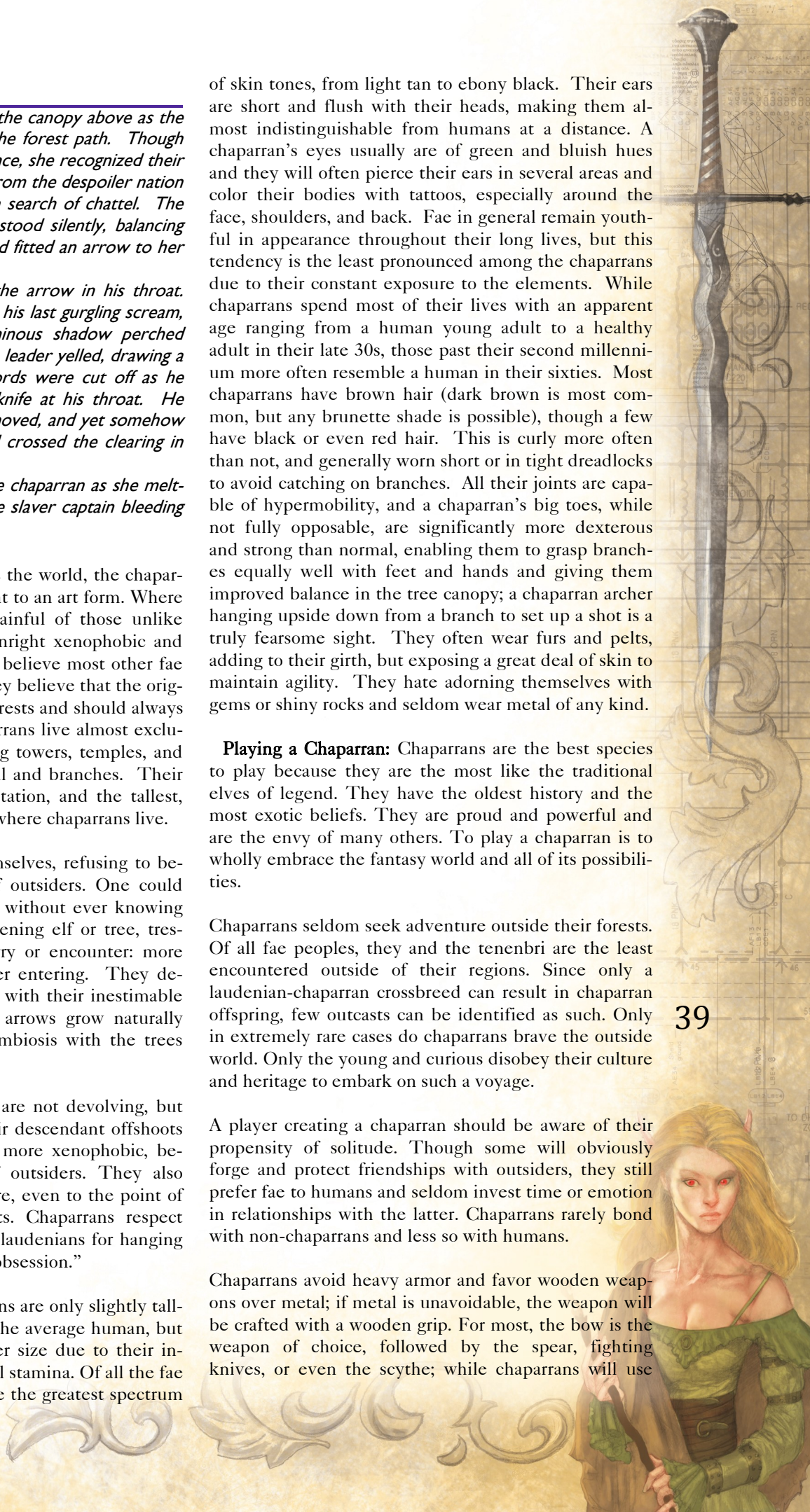
of skin tones, from light tan to ebony black. Their ears are short and flush with their heads, making them almost indistinguishable from humans at a distance. A chaparran's eyes usually are of green and bluish hues and they will often pierce their ears in several areas and color their bodies with tattoos, especially around the face, shoulders, and back. Fae in general remain youthful in appearance throughout their long lives, but this tendency is the least pronounced among the chaparrans due to their constant exposure to the elements. While chaparrans spend most of their lives with an apparent age ranging from a human young adult to a healthy adult in their late 30s, those past their second millennium more often resemble a human in their sixties. Most chaparrans have brown hair (dark brown is most common, but any brunette shade is possible), though a few have black or even red hair. This is curly more often than not, and generally worn short or in tight dreadlocks to avoid catching on branches. All their joints are capable of hypermobility, and a chaparran's big toes, while not fully opposable, are significantly more dexterous and strong than normal, enabling them to grasp branches equally well with feet and hands and giving them improved balance in the tree canopy; a chaparran archer hanging upside down from a branch to set up a shot is a truly fearsome sight. They often wear furs and pelts, adding to their girth, but exposing a great deal of skin to maintain agility. They hate adorning themselves with gems or shiny rocks and seldom wear metal of any kind.

Playing a Chaparran: Chaparrans are the best species to play because they are the most like the traditional elves of legend. They have the oldest history and the most exotic beliefs. They are proud and powerful and are the envy of many others. To play a chaparran is to wholly embrace the fantasy world and all of its possibilities.

Chaparrans seldom seek adventure outside their forests. Of all fae peoples, they and the tenenbri are the least encountered outside of their regions. Since only a laudenian-chaparran crossbreed can result in chaparran offspring, few outcasts can be identified as such. Only in extremely rare cases do chaparrans brave the outside world. Only the young and curious disobey their culture and heritage to embark on such a voyage.

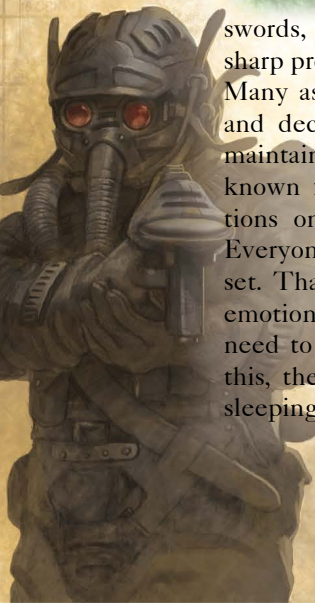
A player creating a chaparran should be aware of their propensity of solitude. Though some will obviously forge and protect friendships with outsiders, they still prefer fae to humans and seldom invest time or emotion in relationships with the latter. Chaparrans rarely bond with non-chaparrans and less so with humans.

Chaparrans avoid heavy armor and favor wooden weapons over metal; if metal is unavoidable, the weapon will be crafted with a wooden grip. For most, the bow is the weapon of choice, followed by the spear, fighting knives, or even the scythe; while chaparrans will use





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swords, they prefer makana (a wooden club inset with sharp protrusions of stone or metal). Many assume chaparrans are utterly wild in demeanor and decorum. In truth, they are quite civilized and maintain good grooming and health. Unlike other fae, known for being austere, chaparrans wear their emotions on their sleeves...if they actually had sleeves. Everyone knows immediately when a chaparran is upset. Thankfully, this openness spreads to more upbeat emotions as well. Chaparrans enjoy the outdoors and need to see the sun to orientate themselves. Without this, they often grow confused about the time of day, sleeping at odd hours for random lengths. Chaparrans

also have the dual disadvantage of being both agoraphobic and claustrophobic: they are intensely uncomfortable outside of a forest, edgy almost to the point of uselessness in a dungeon or town, but virtually unstoppable in their forest homes.

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



A chaparran player character is one who wishes to see what lies beyond the trees of home. They may still be skittish of strangers but brave enough to take chances where others would run away. Chaparrans have a flight instinct and will bolt instead of standing ground unless allies or the innocent are threatened.

Names: Unlike other fac, often taking human-like names to better associate with the human world, chaparrans refuse to do so. Their names, like all fac, are personal and are only meant to be heard by pointed ears. A chaparran's family name merges with their given name: this full name is usually four or more syllables long and always features both hard consonants and hissing sibilants (multiple instances of K, G, or S when spelled in the English orthography) interspersed with elongated, rich vowels. Since they don't adopt human names and refuse to let humans address them by their given titles unless they are true intimates, most simply ask that outsiders refer to them as "Krysid" which means "Fac-Born" in their language (it was more than a century after mankind's initial contact with chaparrans before the humans figured out why they all had the same name). With proven comrades, the chaparran may permit a human to address them by an adopted title which describes their accomplishments or role in society. Under no circumstances will any human, even the closest of friends, be allowed to use a shortened form of their true name.

Truename Examples: Marakenassa, Jassakerak, Brassekonnas

Title Examples: Darawren ("Earth-seer"), Kitarri ("Black Bow"), Merawrak ("Swift Birdcatcher"), Nathash ("Red-Bellied Salmon")

CHAPARRAN SPECIES ABILITIES

Agoraphobia: You are uncomfortable in open spaces. You suffer a -2 penalty to all trait rolls when not in close quarters.

Brachiate: You ignore difficult ground in woodlands or similar terrain.

Forestsight: You have low-light vision and +2 to Notice rolls related to hearing.

Surprisingly Resilient: You can take more of a beating than your appearance would suggest. You begin with a d6 in your Vigor attribute instead of a d4.

Weald Walk: You are trained to disappear into the trees and reappear elsewhere when your foe is not looking. You start with the Stealth skill at a d6, and running while using stealth does not inflict penalties to your roll.

Xenophobic: You have -2 Charisma outside your own species due to centuries of suspicion of outsiders.

Average Height: 5'8" – 6'3"

Average Weight: 80-120 lbs.

Average Starting Age: 100 years

Estimated Life Expectancy: 3,000 years

Starting Language: Chaparran

NEW EDGES

KITARRI

(Professional Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, Shooting d10+, Chaparran trained by a kitarri-kansi master

The kitarri are the ultimate archers, trained in the ancient bow arts, armed with black bows and storied reputations that eclipse their names. You have a kansi name that describes your greatest achievement, and is known to all chaparrans. Additionally, you gain a kitarri black bow for free when you take this edge, and if you are openly carrying this bow, your Charisma increases by 2 when dealing with chaparrans who know you by your kansi name.

KRYSALLIS

(Weird Edge, Supernatural)

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8+ and either Chaparran or Arcane Background (Darawren)

Considered the perfect form of the chaparran species, the krysallis has become one with the natural world. You can make a Spirit roll to create a metaphysical connection between yourself and a number of wooden objects equal to half your Spirit. While this connection is forged, you can use all your movement for the round to physically merge all or part of your body with the target items or teleport to an item's position through any wooden surface.

REKII

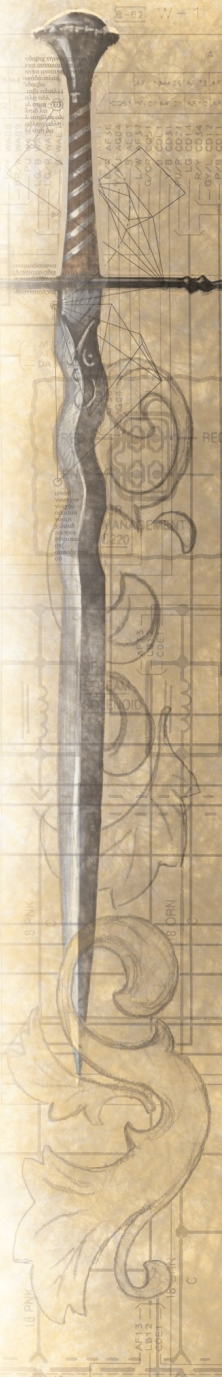
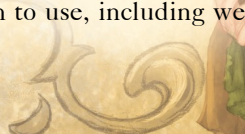
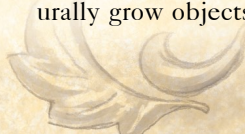
(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6+, Chaparran

As long as your allies can see or hear you, they use your range from the target to determine range penalties for attacks instead of their own range. This benefit does not apply to targets beyond their weapon's long range. Additionally, if you are not surprised at the beginning of combat, none of your allies who can see or hear you are surprised either.

WEAPONS

Kitarri Black Bow: Legend claims that the wood inside of a kitarri black bow is partly infused with the spirit of dead chaparran. It is commonly known that when a chaparran dies, the body is placed in the dirt without a coffin, along with a single acorn. The tree which grows requires neither light nor water. Chaparrans have a secret technique of persuading wood to naturally grow objects for them to use, including weapons.



MELEE WEAPONS	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES				
Makana	Str+d6	7	150	AP I vs. rigid armor, Parry +I				
RANGED WEAPONS	RANGE	DAMAGE	ROF	COST	WEIGHT	SHOTS	MIN STR	NOTES
Kitarri Black Bow	30/60/120*	2d8*	2*	--	5	--	d6*	AP I*

*When wielded by a character with the Kitarri edge. Otherwise, use the stats of the English longbow.

It was at some point where these two traditions merged, and these trees enchanted with the spirit of passed fae were asked to create great structures and items for the elite of chaparran society. The temples of Jibaro are thought to be such examples. Kitarri black bows are believed to be another, capable of adapting themselves to any chaparran (or other worthy spirit) wielding them. Black bows do not bond permanently to a user but they have been known to “play favorites”. Being a non-chaparran and gaining the benefits of a black bow is rare, but has been known to happen; however, chaparrans consider non-chaparrans wielding black bows to be a mortal insult against their people and will respond with lethal force to this affront.

Makana: Chaparrans do not like using metal weapons if they can avoid it. While they will use swords if they have to, most prefer the makana – a thin, sharp-edged club made of very dense wood, studded with stone, bone, or occasionally steel rivets at regular intervals along opposite sides of its length. The makana handles similarly to a short sword under normal usage, but can be shifted to act as a heavy club.

CHAPARRAN ARCHETYPES

DARAWREN

(Seasoned)

Many wizards across the world classify the Towers of Jibaro as the greatest collection of arcane magic, even compared to the repositories of Limshau and Laudenia. However, the knowledge locked inside Jibaro is accessible only to a select few, the elite spellcasters of Jibaro, the darawren. With only one wizard graduating each a year, Jibaro is considered one of the most prestigious and daunting learning experiences in arcane wizardry on the planet, more so than even Laudenia. Where Laudenia's limited enrollment stems from its prohibition of non-laudenians, a restriction the chaparrans do not share although non-chaparran students are very rare, Jibaro's small membership is due to a lengthy and unorthodox teaching model. Although still employing totems, the mandatory standard of all wizardry, Jibaro teaches an altered viewpoint of their purpose, being only a repository of words, and not the focus of magic. Jibaro instructs its students that magic rises from the Earth, not falls from the gate. The gate may be the ultimate source of magic in the world, but the chaparrans cite one observable fact—there's no magic in space. All creatures rise from the soil, and it follows logically that magic, too, derives from Earth. Magic would not exist without the Earth. The wizards of Jibaro are taught to channel Pleroma—the language of magic—through material components brought up from the Earth. This can

be as extravagant as jewels but often enough it only a handful of dirt or sand. A darawren often carries a pouch of soil when entering a dungeon or building.

Species: Chaparran

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Healing d8, Intimidation OR Persuasion d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Knowledge (Nature) d6, Spell-casting d10, Stealth d6, Survival d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0 (-2 against non-chaparrans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Pacifist (minor), one major, one minor

Edges: Arcane Background (Darawren)*, New Power (x2)

Totem: Staff

Power Points: 13

Powers: *Barrier, burrow, environmental protection, shape change, stun*

DAWNAMOAK KITARRI

(Seasoned)

Many of the tales about chaparrans describe them as phenomenal archers, able to send arrows clear over the horizon to strike a bull's-eye. They carry bows of inflexible wood only they can coax to bend. When a chaparran fires his bow, the arrow flies with enough strength to pass through trees or skulls. When images of these archers come to mind, people are thinking of the Dawnamoak kitarri, masters of the ancient martial art of kitarri-kansi and bearers of the black bow of their order. Kitarri are rarely known by their own names in greater chaparran society, but every one bears a 'kansi name' – a nom de guerre which describes their greatest accomplishment prior to being confirmed among the order. Every chaparran in Canam knows these names, and everything the archer does after becoming a kitarri is expected to at least equal if not surpass this mark. Most kitarri live in the nation pierced by the three tower trees but most chaparran villages across Canam can claim at least one member of the order. No chaparran would even think of wielding a black longbow fraudulently and a non-chaparran carrying a black kitarri bow is considered to have taken it from the original wielder's body, and is dealt with accordingly.

Species: Chaparran

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d8, Survival d6, Tracking d8

Charisma +0 (-2 against non-chaparrans); **Pace** 6;



Parry 5; Toughness 5

Hindrances: Arrogant, Echan*, two minor

Edges: Alertness, Kitarri*, Marksman, Trademark Weapon (black bow)

LAURAMA SOMBRA

(Novice)

The forest of Laurama is the scene of the most mutually dedicated campaign of ethnic cleansing in Canam, between the chaparrans who call the forest home and the reavers of Baruch Malkut who come to kill and enslave them. The Laurama fac learn to transform their hatred of the invaders into dark strength, and prefer to kill up close, dragging their victims into the shadows of the trees before reappearing to kill again, allowing their enemies' fear to do the work for them. They paint their faces and bodies in pale skeletal patterns that are hid-

den in shadow but glow when a shaft of sunlight is allowed to touch them, in mockery of the golden skull-masks of Darius Konig's inner retinue. The Malkut slavers call these black-avised fac "da Sombra" ('shadows'), and tread more carefully in their known haunts.

Species: Chaparran

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Survival d6, Throwing d4, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0 (-2 against non-chaparrans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Vengeful (major), two minor

Edges: Rekii*, Quick

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DAMASKAN

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

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

Damaskans are the most common, most often seen, and most widely circulated fae in the world. Though the people of both the Lauropan empire of Damaska and the kingdom of Limshau in Canam are considered the same species, damaskans from Limshau often refer to themselves as 'Limshau fae' to emphasize their cultural distinctions. Damaskans are also one of the few fae species to permit the term 'elf' to be applied to them, often using it themselves. Of all fae, damaskans are the most numerous with the largest kingdoms. They have the most artisans, the most diplomats, the most historians, and the most architects. Their wizards all employ the book as their totem, which makes them hard to distinguish from others since nearly all damaskans (at least in Limshau) carry books through their day-to-day activities.

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

Each individual damaskan possesses an encyclopedic knowledge on a subject defined by their individual tastes. Where those from Damaska prefer internal recall for this information, citizens of Limshau insist on writing all of it down. Until the damaskans appeared, fae seldom recorded anything. Their history was marred with inaccuracies, legends claimed as fact, or facts discredited as myth. This was part of the reason why fae history from the time of Terros is so vague and sporadic. Alas, damaskans could bring nothing with them to the new world and had to reconstruct their past from memory – and although their memories are good, they are not eidetic. One distinction damaskans are clear to make is that they never volunteer their own opinion in their papers or journals, nor clog the books with judgment, sentiment, or meaningless diatribe. Where humans believe any individual can stand on a box and

preach prose worthy of print, damaskans remain quiet, recording only objective events.

Physical Qualities: A damaskan's eyes are slightly slanted and have epicanthic folds similar to humans of Asian descent. Their ears taper straight out the sides of the skull to a very sharp point and have a tendency to flutter and vibrate slightly depending on mood. They generally have darker hair tones and seldom grow it beyond shoulder length. Their skin ranges from light tan to olive color with eyes of brown and grey. When reaching adulthood, damaskans still resemble human young adults barely out of puberty (17-19 in human years). Even at their most venerable age, damaskans don't often look a day past 30 and none look older than 40 when they finally shuffle on. Because of a peculiarity of the damaskan brain, they are able to employ both lobes simultaneously, and their analytical and creative centers are diffuse rather than localized. This makes them functionally ambidextrous, as well as enabling them to work on one project while thinking about another. Damaskans frequently wear new clothes, or at least pressed and clean. They abhor getting dirty. They also rarely pierce their skin or adorn their bodies with tattoos, although this has little to do with any philosophy other than just not seeing the point.

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

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

They believe in discipline and order and find disorganization of any kind unsettling, and deliberate falsehood sets their teeth on edge (this is not to say that there are no damaskan criminals, but even these tend to rely on verbal misdirection rather than outright lies). Dam-



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

Due to the shape of their ears, damaskans avoid wearing helmets whenever possible, and because of their slight builds favor lighter armor over heavy plate. Limshau fae prefer light, form-fitting leather armor with a generally Asian cut, and their preferred weapons are similarly of oriental styling; all damaskans favor polearms or light weapons that can be dual-wielded whenever possible.

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

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

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





Most damaskans keep their fae names if they have them, privately known only by loved ones and family. Even in situations where the damaskans use their family name, they still regularly select a human given name because the damaskan language contains many phonemes and tonal variances that sound similar to humans, and consequently their native names can be difficult to pronounce accurately. Their chosen human names are usually simple, with little cultural identification, and are often picked to reflect an attribute of the individual. Family names are very culturally specific and sometimes reflect an attribute of the family or important individuals within it. Damaskan names are not gender-specific. While both Limshau and Damaska place the given name before the family name, a damaskan will usually adopt the name order of whatever community they are currently in (so a damaskan visiting Fargon or Genai will give their family name first).

Examples: Ravenar Limshau III is his real name, but his sister's husband elected to adopt the human title "Strongbow" to replace their damaskan family name of

Kaixiu'Ooria. Centuries later, few in that family ever use that title. Their fourth child, a daughter was given the damaskan name Reivune, which eventually turned into Raven, which she elected as her open name, as well.

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

Example Family Names: Anaiquore, Ekka'Vraiul, Hastalleiki, Kaixiu'Ooria, Talassezri, Uotha'Vuesti

Example Open Names: Damon, Chandler, Hope, Peregrin, Raven, Salla

DAMASKAN SPECIES ABILITIES

Ambidexterity: You suffer no multi-action penalty for performing a non-movement action with each hand (this also conveys the benefit of the Ambidextrous edge).

Encyclopedic Knowledge: You have a near-perfect memory for facts. You begin with a d6 in your Smarts attribute instead of a d4.

Fearless: Concern for your own safety rarely factors into your decisions, especially when a friend is in danger or there is a new fact to be learned. You gain +2 to Spirit rolls against fear, but you also gain either the Curious or Loyal hindrance for no points.

Gravity Focus: Your climbing and maneuvering skills are legendary, almost supernatural. You begin with a d6 in the Climbing skill, and you do not suffer any penalties for poor handholds. Additionally, you can spend a Benny to gain the Wall Walker ability for ten minutes.

Polyglot: You know many languages and can pick up the rudiments of one in the course of a single conversation. Your Smarts die is treated as one size larger for purposes of determining how many languages you know (using the Multiple Languages campaign option), and you can make a Smarts roll (at its normal die size) to be able to communicate on a rudimentary level with someone whose language you do not know.

Tactless: You have -2 Charisma due to your bluntness and compulsive honesty. Against other fae, this is reduced to -1.

Average Height: 4'8" – 5'7"

Average Weight: 70-100 lbs.

Average Starting Age: 100 years

Estimated Life Expectancy: 1,500 years

Starting Languages: Damaskan, English (Common and Englo-Lingo), one other

NEW EDGES

BIFOCAL BRAIN

(Background Edge)

Requirement: Damaskan

You do not suffer a multi-action penalty for performing a purely mental action in addition to one other action (physical or mental). If you are a spellcaster, you cannot cast two spells at once (since you only have one mouth to speak the Pleroma words), but you can maintain one spell for free before you start suffering penalties to your arcane skill rolls.

CARTOON PHYSICS

(Weird Edge)

Requirements: Climbing d8+, Damaskan

Whenever you ace on a Climbing roll, you gain the Wall Walking ability for one minute.

ELVEN MEMORY

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Smarts d8+, Damaskan

You never forget anything you have ever learned, however inconsequential. You never suffer an unfamiliarity penalty when making common knowledge rolls, or for

using a Knowledge skill outside of your normal area of expertise. If you are ever called upon to make an unskilled Knowledge skill roll that is not common knowledge, you use your Smarts die for the roll instead of a d4.

DAMASKAN ARCHETYPES

KOANA DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

(Seasoned)

Despite their inherent mental edge, damaskans are not all that uniquely gifted at magic. What they are good at is patient study and research. Human wizards of the Koana school tend to be more impatient (by fae standards) and only occasionally pursue the colleges' advanced degrees, but for a damaskan (for whom the eleven-year undergraduate period is barely significant), there is little reason not to. While necessarily a specialist, A doctoral candidate usually has a few years of fieldwork under her belt in addition to her schooling, and with typical damaskan fixation, can be a formidable opponent to anyone and anything who gets in the way of her research.

Species: Damaskan

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Persuasion d6, Spellcasting d10, +3 additional skill points.

Charisma -2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Curious, Echan*, one major, two minor

Edges: Arcane Background (Koana Scholar)*, New Power (x3), Wizard

Totem: Book

Power Points: 10

Powers: *Armor, bolt, detect arcana, dispel, elemental manipulation, healing, slumber, telekinesis*

LIMSHAU CUSTODIAN

(Novice)

Behind the white walls of Limshau, elite guardians patrol the stacks, defending knowledge and people against anyone wishing to destroy such riches. Because of the tight confines of narrow city streets and alleys, this elite force eventually developed a discipline revolving around fast movement and quick, decisive strikes at critical enemy weaknesses. This martial art is known as gorna sersannis, or 'Lotus Blade'. Custodians wear form-fitting, flowing leather coats (white inside the walls, black outside) and dual-wield light-weight weapons such as the katana and wakizashi, or finessable polearms such as the naginata. A custodian's priorities are on the freedoms of all. Free speech and the written word are both worthy causes for a custodian to die for.

Species: Damaskan

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6





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Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Investigation d6, Knowledge (any subject) d8, Notice d6, Stealth d4, Streetwise d6, Throwing d6

Charisma -2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Book Lover*, Echan*, Vow (minor: defend knowledge), one minor

Edges: Custodian*

Special Equipment: Limshau kawabari armor.

ROOFRUNNER

(Novice)

Damaskans are city-dwellers by preference, and even outside of their own nations, they have a fairly direct approach to navigating in cities: the best route to any place is a straight line, with the streets only being one possible option. Their skill in this regard makes them popular as messengers, and many city elves make a reasonable living running letters, dispatches and packages

from one end of a city to another. Of course, since occasionally other people disapprove of their roofs and gardens being used as a thoroughfare, rooffrunners learn to be stealthy and circumspect, skills which also serve them in good stead if they fall into a more unsavory line of work.

Species: Damaskan

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Area Knowledge: home city) d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6, Throwing d4, +3 additional skill points.

Charisma -2; **Pace** 8; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Curious, Echan*, Overconfident, two minor

Edges: Fleet-footed, Quick



GIMFEN

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

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

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

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

No one is sure how the gimfen broke off from the other fae, being only superficially similar in body and utterly distinct in mind. They possess at the same time a natural curiosity about the world and a near-total lack of imagination. They embraced many human customs when relationships blossomed between the two species, and are the second most common nonhuman species (after the damaskans) seen in echan human communities. They have a flare for fine food, good tobacco, and comfortable clothes. Gimfen love dance from every culture but have never developed one of their own.

The curiosity of gimfen eventually spread to technology. Most fae reach an impasse when encountering human technology: touching or even being in the same vicinity as any complex device inevitably causes it to break down sooner or later. However, the gimfen don't share this curse. This strange deviation, once thought to be a production of corruption from Ixindar, was later accepted by the other fae as another attribute of a later branch in the fae tree. The gimfen desire to pursue technology in an age where machinery didn't work reliably turned into a fixation. Many of them obsessed about discovering a way to allow machinery to operate in a realm of magic. The gimfen eventually turned out numerous masterful technicians, engineers, alchemists,

and inventors, though nearly always refining existing accomplishments rather than pioneering new ones. Where laudenians pioneered totem magic and narros the forging of magical items, gimfen took pride in alchemy, stumbling into potion brewing soon after. What they lack are spell casters – not because they are incapable, but because for most the principles of magic simply aren't interesting (and get in the way of the study of mechanism). Gimfen are never content simply to observe the world, but believe it can always be improved. Even the most sedentary pursue constructive hobbies such as basic carpentry and metalwork, while others found a happy medium with minor gadgets and tools. Many a gimfen's home is adorned with never-used inventions.

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

Physical Qualities: Gimfen are the shortest of the major faekind. They feature thin, lightly slanted eyes of bright green and blue tones. Their hair is often vibrantly colored and their ears taper straight back, with the tips sometimes as much as an inch from the back of their head. Their skin is often lightly colored, and unlike other fae, they are known to freckle. Because of their quickness to adopt other cultures, anything goes when it comes to their attire and whatever else they do to their bodies. Gimfen enjoy their sense of humor as well as a desire to possess shiny objects. Their connection with nature has largely fallen by the wayside in favor of the new knowledge from man and their obsessive fascination with human machinery.

Gimfen look like pubescent youths through the majority of their lives. This makes many humans uncomfortable when dealing with gimfen adults. They only break



from this in their final years, when their age rushes upon them, growing wrinkles and spots, aging decades in days. Most gimfen have difficulty growing facial hair, but that doesn't stop them from trying: a flamboyant moustache or goatee may be the work of decades and is seen as a major accomplishment.

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

A gimfen player character always follows one of two paths: nature or technology, with technology being by far the most common. Gimfen are the first to try anything. They are naturally inquisitive, but this often gets them into trouble. Despite being great liars, an attribute the other fae dislike, gimfen share with the other fae a propensity for naiveté. They believe everything is safe and everyone is honest unless proven otherwise. One prevalent route is the thief, as gimfen look naturally innocent and inconspicuous (and are known to let their enthusiasm for baubles get the better of legal constraints, usually without malice; when confronted, a gimfen kleptomaniac will usually express surprise at their thoughtlessness and promptly return the stolen goods with a smile), though dungeon delvers are equally as popular. An alternative approach is the techan enthusiast, walking around with a modified human firearm she can hold and fire safely. When brandishing such a trophy, a gimfen is no longer unassuming. There have even been gimfen spotted sporting a heavily insulated plasma rifles on their backs.

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

Names: Gimfen have no language of their own. In the old world, they spoke damaskan; in the new, they are just as likely to speak English as a first language. Like the damaskans, gimfen adopt a human first name either at birth or when leaving an all-fae community, but – unlike the damaskans – they intentionally spell these names idiosyncratically, and think nothing of gender-

bending names or adopting a human surname as a given name and vice versa. They also change their names every century or so. Family lineage means nothing to them. Because of this constant variation, some outside critics grow concerned with potential gimfen inbreeding. Gimfen never seem to worry about it. Their names sometimes reflect the cultures they integrate in, adopting narros and or human titles. They also frequently, but not always, use alliterations.

Examples: Xris Jiggadaxion, Glynn Glengarric, Kimma Kutaming, Malachi Boomfellow, Maris Nippentuck

GIMFEN SPECIES ABILITIES

Lithe and Irritable: Size is no obstacle to you in a scrap. You begin with a d6 in the Fighting skill, and you gain +2 to Fighting rolls against enemies that are larger than you.

Mecha's Blessing: Although you are an echan, you do not disrupt technology, and thus do not receive the Echan hindrance by default; however, you still gain it if you take an Arcane Background edge that comes with it. Additionally, you can spend a Benny to restore one piece of held or touched technology that has been disabled by disruption to full functionality.

Nimble Fingers: You are skilled either at the construction of crafts or at parting the unwary from their material possessions. You begin with a d6 in either the Repair or Stealth skill.

Open and Friendly: By fae standards, you are very approachable. You gain +2 Charisma.

Short: You are about the size of a human child, rarely more than 4' tall. You have the Small hindrance, but receive no points for it.

Average Height: 3'3" – 4'3"

Average Weight: 40-60 lbs.

Average Starting Age: 30 years

Estimated Life Expectancy: 500 years

Starting Languages: Damaskan, English (Common or Englo-Lingo)

NEW EDGES

ARCANE BACKGROUND: EXPERTEERING ENGINEER

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Gimfen

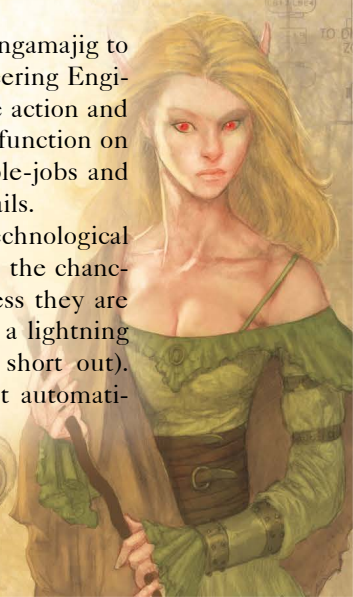
Gimfen cannot innovate, but they can replicate and improve. After gleaning every nugget of information they could acquire, they started to adapt what they learned to operate outside the walls of bastions. The experteering engineer is the result of this growth. Their greatest ability is their knack to reverse-engineer human technology they encounter and modify it to operate without disruption in the lands of magic. Most



employ this ability in the field of high tech weapons, but some utilize it with standard gear as well. They are limited in what they can adapt, as the result is usually clumsier and substantially larger than the original. This background is more or less identical to the Weird Science arcane background, except as follows:

- The arcane skill for the Experteering Engineer is Knowledge (Technology) rather than Weird Science.
- An engineered thingamajig must roughly duplicate a technological device that the Experteering Engineer has seen or heard of before – which is not to say that the device has to be real or obey the laws of physics (an Experteering Engineer who has an extensive familiarity with steampunk or science fiction could construct a device that follows the principles laid down in fiction, but could not come up with the idea for the object on her own).

- An engineered thingamajig is always bulkier and more awkward than the device it duplicates, which may result in situational penalties (GM's prerogative). Engineered thingamajigs are immune to disruption, regardless of how closely they resemble a real device.
- If the Experteering Engineer gives a thingamajig to another character (even another Experteering Engineer), the device works properly for one action and then malfunctions (treat as a Major Malfunction on the table). They are also obvious cobble-jobs and any attempt to sell them automatically fails.
- Experteering Engineer powers are technological rather than magical, and do not increase the chances of nearby technology disrupting unless they are designed with that intent (for instance, a lightning gun that causes nearby electronics to short out). Characters with this background do not automatically gain the Echan hindrance.



CRIMSON LEAF

(Professional Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Gimfen from Salvabrooke

Make a list of five to ten severe and specific crimes that you are tasked with punishing. When you make an attack against any target that you know is guilty of one of those crimes (either you have personally witnessed it, you have the testimony of at least three unrelated witnesses, or you have been assigned the target by a superior), you can reduce your Parry by up to 3 until your next turn to add double that amount to your damage roll. Some sample crimes for the list are:

- Kidnapping to sell into slavery;
- Purchasing a slave without intent to immediately free them;
- Initiating sexual violence;
- Robbery resulting in injury or death;
- Spousal abuse;
- Incitement to violence;
- Treason;
- Warmongering;
- Cruelty to animals;
- Theft of an heirloom.

SEEKER

(Professional Edge)

Requirements: Novice, any two of Agility, Spirit or Smarts d8+, Gimfen from Salvabrooke

A seeker is not just a professional daredevil and thief – she is also a performer who sees her purpose as adding a little zest to someone's otherwise dull day. You gain +1 Charisma, and add your Charisma to any daring exploit for which you have an audience of at least one person and which you can describe fulfilling with aplomb and panache (as determined collectively by the rest of the table: take a show of hands whenever you do something sufficiently audacious).

52 GNIMFALL (TECH-GIMFEN) ARCHETYPES

EXPERTEERING ENGINEER

(Novice)

Gimfen cannot innovate, but they can replicate and improve. After gleaning every nugget of information they could acquire, they started to adapt what they learned to operate outside the walls of bastions. The experteering engineer is the result of this growth. Instead of hiding inside or underneath the grind towers of Gnimfall or the dozens of other communities around Canam, experteering engineers embark into the outside world in search of even more knowledge. They travel the world finding technology they can either use outright, or return home to their people. Their greatest ability is their knack to reverse-engineer human technology they encounter and modify it to operate without

disruption in the lands of magic. They are limited in what they can adapt, as the result is usually clumsier and substantially larger than the original. Experteering engineers are an unusual sight in Canam but their presence proves that technology's eventual dominance over magic is inevitable.

Species: Gimfen

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d4, Driving d4, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Technology) d8, Knowledge (two other sciences) d6, Repair d8, Shooting d6, Throwing d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 4

Hindrances: Curious, Small, two minor

Edges: Arcane Background (Experteering Engineer)*, Gadgeteer

Power Points per Thingamajig: 10

Thingamajigs: Capacitor plasma rifle (bolt power with fire/heat trappings)

ROADSIDE MECHANIC

(Novice)

Not all gimfen mechanics follow the path of the mad scientist. Most prefer a more methodical approach to technology. Their gadgetry may not be as flashy or effective as the weird machinery produced by an experteering engineer, and they can't immunize devices against disruption, but for routine maintenance they tend to be a lot more reliable.

Species: Gimfen

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d4, Driving d4, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Technology) d8, Knowledge (two other sciences) d6, Notice d4, Repair d10+2, Shooting d4, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 4

Hindrances: Small, two minor

Edges: Mr. Fix-It

STEAM TUNNEL RAT

(Novice)

Large sections of the grind towers consist of networks of steam tunnels and service shafts. Many don't see regular maintenance teams for years or even decades on end, and few know where they all lead, making them perfect shortcuts, secret ways, and hideouts. The 'tunnel rats' who make their homes and livings in the tunnels are expert wayfinders, and their skills at making a path where paths are not supposed to be comes in handy if ever they leave the grind towers for a life of adventure.

Species: Gimfen

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Underground) d6, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Repair d4, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6, Throwing d4, Tracking d4, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Small, two minor

Edges: Quick

SALVABROOKE (PASTORAL GIMFEN) ARCHETYPES

CRIMSON LEAF

(Seasoned)

The Crimson Leaves are a guild of assassins who have taken on the mantle of Salvabrooke's final court of appeal, eliminating the worst criminals who plague their society. Despite being officially outlawed by all the villages of Salvabrooke, there has never been a bounty placed on their capture and they are generally regarded as "a humorous irritation." Part of this may be because of Salvabrooke's laissez-faire view of law enforcement: gimfen don't consider something a crime unless it does serious harm to someone, and few communities are equipped to mete out serious punishment themselves. The Crimson Leaf claims a membership between 100 to 250 gimfen which travel throughout Salvabrooke and beyond, acting nonchalant and going about their lives until given a mission. This usually takes the form of a short, specific list of crimes, unique to each member, which the assassin is expected to punish immediately upon becoming aware of them. A farmer may be minding his crops and see a crime listed on his or her response list. He would leap into action and return to his duties before anyone knew he was gone. A Crimson Leaf may interfere to prevent in a crime not on his list if he actually witnesses it, but otherwise is expected to leave it to another of the brethren to avoid compromising the order's secrecy.

Species: Gimfen

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Area Knowledge: Salvabrooke) d4, Notice d6, Shooting d4, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 4

Hindrances: Small, Vow (major: punish all crimes on Death List, at any cost), Wanted, one minor

Edges: Alertness, Crimson Leaf*, Improvisational Fighter

REDCAP

(Novice)

Gimfen, nearly as much as chaparrans, adore ranged combat, but where chaparrans prefer it because it keeps them away from the blood of the melee, gimfen favor it because it allows them to strike anyone they want, anywhere they want. These gimfen love getting close for the strike, and whether wielding a shortbow, crossbow

or blade, don't find it a satisfying kill unless blood stains their clothes. This gave them a disturbing nickname taken from human mythology, which most gimfen don't respond well to. Some hate the term on pedantic grounds because they don't wear hats. Others simply think it sullies a reputable profession as a close-combat warrior which commands as much respect as any chaparran ranger or damaskan fighter. The more wicked ones embrace the redcap legend even to the extent of donning a hat and staining it with the blood of their victims.

Species: Gimfen

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Taunt d4, Throwing d6, +4 additional skill points.

Charisma -2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Small

Edges: Steady Hands

SALVABROOKE SEEKER

(Novice)

In the eyes of many gimfen, governments and rules are part of the corruption of the other side. As Attricana encourages its chaotic drive for life in all forms, said lives prefer the anarchy of an unpredictable existence and strive to introduce some chaos in the world around to ensure all the others remember that laws are part of a method of control and thus, part of the problem. To them, life is designed to rebel against conformities and laws need not be a requirement for civility. In Salvabrooke, most citizens are shopkeepers, shop workers, or members of the small but ferocious military. Others take to thievery or careers where similar talents can be exploited. Regardless of their path, they always add a zest to their performance. Messengers run over roofs, flipping and sliding in their sprint. Tricksters are theatric and take minutes setting up their scam, entertaining their marks, and making the ruse almost welcoming in the end. Occasionally, they steal just for the thrill of taunting a chase, abandoning their pilfered possession around the block or even returning it and thanking the pursuer for a good run. Some sell it back to the owner for a mild fee, claiming they are enriching the lives of those around by disturbing the order of their lives.

Species: Gimfen

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Area Knowledge: Salvabrooke) d6, Lockpicking d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d8, Stealth d6, Streetwise d4, Taunt d4, Throwing d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +3; **Pace** 8; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 4

Hindrances: Overconfident, Small, two minor

Edges: Fleet-footed, Seeker*



LAUDENIAN

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

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

"Completely," said Hassan-an. "This experiment will conclude my research."

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

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

"Hypothesis confirmed," the magos said, rubbing his cheek. "Ever to earth they do return."

Of all the fae, a laudenian would be the most pompous. Laudenians, like most of their cousins, believe they are the true descendants of the original fae. The difference is that they might actually be right. Some claim their embracing of the sky made them immune to the physical changes brought on by interacting with the Earth. Before the First Hammer, most laudenians lived in a floating city no one could locate unless the laudenians wished it to be found. After their return after the Second Hammer, the city reemerged, then promptly vanished once again. Everyone aware of its existence knows the city floats around the Nankani Mountains, but steers clear of the sparsely inhabited lowland passes in favor of the virtually impassible high rocks. The city often remains rooted next to a mountain for years, then seemingly at random it uproots and drifts elsewhere. Since returning to Earth, the laudenians have retaken the skies, rebuilding a vast network of floating keeps shrouded in the clouds, which they almost never leave and prohibit outsiders from visiting.

As part of their claim to be the most ancient fae, the laudenians believe that they pioneered the modern

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

Physical Qualities: Laudenians tower over all other fae and even most humans. They have olive to dark skin and often long and flowing dark hair. Their ears are smaller than a chaparrans, tapering quickly to a point. Their eyes, usually dark brown and grey, always reflect a glint of light as if a candle always hangs suspended over their eyes. Braided hair is common but tattoos and piercings are not. Most wear long robes of white or green terminating just above the ankle. The more a fae species is connected to the earth, the more animalistic they become: chaparrans and narros are all on average stronger and sturdier, their later branches even more robust. Laudenians, by contrast, are almost impossibly slender and light-bodied, with subtly alien body proportions. Their senses are adapted in the opposite way from the common expectation of fae: while their hearing is acute (out of necessity, since sound carries far less well in thinner air), instead of superior vision in the dark, their eyes can see slightly into the ultraviolet spectrum, and thanks to a nictating membrane that both filters out harmful rays and guards against dust and dryness, laudenians need neither squint or shy away from a blinding glare, nor even blink. Their unyielding stares can be as disconcerting to outsiders as their strangely elongated frames.

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

Playing a Laudenian: Laudenians are the best species because they are the oldest fae and the most proud. The wisest of them have their names etched in books in every library of every other fae species. Laudenians

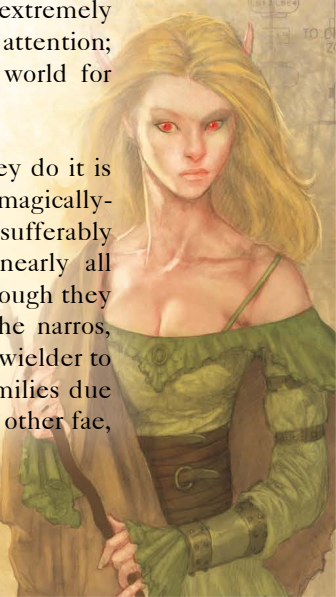


forged the first magical items, pioneered the use of totems and the language of dragons, and built an empire in the sky to look upon others below. They are arrogant and believe themselves always to be right...but that's because they usually are.

It should be noted that a laudenian character would be a rarity. This laudenian would be the only one in a group and probably would not have seen another of his kind in years. There would most assuredly be a reason, even if they withhold it from their companions, why this laudenian has taken the risk of walking on the soil. Laudenians dislike nature. They have no problems wearing metal armor and wielding forged weapons, but they abhor the natural world and have lost their empathy for it. The only reason why they have been able to survive unchanged these thousands of years is by fleeing to the sky, since the magic of Attricana reflects off the Earth. They never walk around in bare feet and cannot stand being immersed in water. Since they never

perspire, the concept of washing only becomes necessary when dirtied from earth-walking. Even essential natural resources are harvested for them by autonomous magic constructs, so a true laudenian never needs set foot on the corruptive ground. To meet a laudenian outside of the city is practically unheard of and few ever leave their home except under orders, on an extremely important quest that requires their undivided attention; only the rarest of the rare wish to see the world for themselves.

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



but each lineage has their own style which is never taught to outsiders.

Laudenians are known to be extremely arrogant. They are the longest-lived of echan kind outside of dragons and most of the elders date back to before the gate exodus. Their egotism refused to die when they lacked corporeal forms and only amplified when returned to the world. Laudenians consider themselves superior and often patronize those unlike them. Laudenians are often revered by other fae, a fact a laudenian is sure to bring up. They command respect and believe themselves correct in every assumption. Laudenians are known to have the most powerful spellcasters of all fae. A laudenian character could be more humble than her parents, whom most likely still live in the sky, but this would not mean the character isn't still arrogant.

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

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

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LAUDENIAN SPECIES ABILITIES

Equilibrium: You ignore all difficult terrain, and your speed is never reduced by any form of movement. You treat all falls as if they were 2" less than they are, and while running, you can move along the surface of water. However, because your body is so light and willowy, your Vigor attribute requires two points per step to raise during character generation, and you suffer a -2 to Vigor rolls to resist being moved against your will.

Gaiaphobic: You have -2 Charisma outside your species due to your deep-seated distrust of the natural world.

Perfect Arts: You are trained either in the way of the sword or the staff. You either begin with a d6 in the

Fighting skill, or you gain the Arcane Background edge for free.

Serenity: You constantly strive to remain detached from the world. You begin with a d6 in your Spirit attribute instead of a d4.

Average Height: 5'10" – 6'7"

Average Weight: 40-55 lbs.

Average Starting Age: 150 years

Estimated Life Expectancy: Unknown (10,000 years?)

Starting Language: Laudenian

NEW EDGES

ARCANE BACKGROUND: LAUDENIAN MAGOS

(Background Edge)

Requirement: Laudenian

Arcane Skill: Spellcasting (Spirit)

Starting Power Points: 10

Starting Powers: 4

Totems: Staff, Weapon

The arcane arts might have originated with the dragons, as all the words of power derive from their language, but it is the laudenians that created the modern concept of the wizard. They found a way to tap into the holy language of the oldest magical species and transplant the capacity of their written form into totems that wizards can use in the application of their art. Laudenians are still known as some of the most powerful mages on the planet.

- **Wild Surge:** When you roll a 1 on your Spellcasting roll, regardless of the result on the wild die, you lose control of the spell. The spell still goes off as intended if the wild die succeeds, but with two side-effects: first, if the spell has a variable cost, it is cast at the highest level that you have the power points to afford (whether you want to or not); second, you suffer a temporary mutation which makes you immediately Shaken (this can cause a wound). The mutation lasts until the end of the session and can be anything the GM thinks appropriate: it should inflict a -2 penalty to a broad range of actions, but grant a +2 bonus in a specific range of actions (for instance, if your dominant arm transforms into a monster's limb, you take a -2 penalty to any action that requires fine motor control, including Spellcasting rolls, but gain a +2 bonus to Climbing and Fighting rolls). If the mutation is obvious to the naked eye, you suffer a -2 penalty to Charisma against other laudenians until it goes away.

Canonical Powers: Any except *zombie*. You cannot take this power even with the New Power edge.

Trappings: Laudenian magic favors the element of air and the school of phantasm: most spells generate at

least some sparkly lights or phantom sounds, or cause light breezes to blow or frost to form on nearby surfaces when cast. No magos will ever use trappings related to elemental earth or plants, but other elements and schools are not restricted. Additionally, the following effects apply to laudenian magoi:

Ancient Patience: Laudenian magic is steeped in ritual. If you take an additional action (either on this turn with the multi-action penalty, or in another round) to cast a spell with additional steps, you are not subject to a wild surge if you roll a 1 on your Spellcasting roll, and the spell costs 1 fewer power point.

SKYBORN

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Agility d8+, laudenian

A floating network of sky-keeps hangs high in the sky over Canam, shielded from viewers beneath by magic. Between them, mighty airships ply the skies. As a native of this sky realm, you gain +2 to all your Knowledge (Sky Network) rolls. Additionally, you can use Knowledge (Sky Network) as an arcane skill to use the detect arcana power to locate and follow magical currents in the air (but no other forms of magic): this requires no power points and can be performed at will.

LAUDENIAN ARCHETYPES

AERONAUT

(Novice)

Laudenian airships are quite different from the dragon-flyers and thermal ships used by the so-called lesser species, being something like a cross between an old-style galleon and what an imaginative techan might reasonably term a UFO. While they have sails, they are primarily powered by currents of magic rather than wind. A sailor aboard such a vessel quickly learns to feel the flow of magical power from Attricana as it diffuses through the atmosphere, but tends to abhor contact with the earth even more than most laudenians.

Species: Laudenian

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d4

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Healing d6, Knowledge (Sky Network) d6+2, Notice d6, Piloting d8, Throwing d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma -2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 4

Hindrances: Echan*, Phobia (major: touching the ground)

Edges: Skyborn*

BLADE DANCER

(Seasoned)

Each noble family of Laudenia maintains its own ancestral sword style, which is taught to all its scions and followers but never to outsiders, with the pinnacle arts of the style being reserved for the matriarchs and patriarchs of the family. All laudenian sword arts revolve

around mobility and evasion, avoiding a direct attack until one is certain of ending the duel with a single strike – since due to the willowy laudenian physique, even the most skilled blade dancer is something of a glass cannon. Most styles integrate a technique known as the ‘slide waltz,’ a method of dodging around the side or back of the opponent for a clean strike: watching two laudenian blademasters attempting to outmaneuver one another, it becomes clear how the discipline got its name.

Species: Laudenian

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Healing d4, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Fencing) d6, Notice d6, Taunt d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma -2; **Pace** 8; **Parry** 7; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Echan*, Phobia (minor: touching the ground), one minor

Edges: Dodge, Fleet-footed, Trademark Weapon (ancestral sword), Quick

MAGOS

(Seasoned)

The arcane arts might have originated with the dragons, as all the words of power derive from their language, but it is the laudenians that created the modern concept of the wizard. They found a way to tap into the holy language of the oldest magical species and transplant the capacity of their written form into totems that wizards can use in the application of their art. The laudenians have several schools of wizardry, the most obscure and elite being the magoi. One cannot simply join this school – one is chosen for it. From birth, a magos’ natural affinity with the arcane has been groomed to focus and master her abilities. All magoi use the staff as their totem, regarding all other choices as not only inferior but almost blasphemous.

Species: Laudenian

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Healing d8, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Persuasion d6, Spellcasting d10, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma -2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2; **Toughness** 4

Hindrances: Arrogant, Echan*, Phobia (minor: touching the ground), one minor

Edges: Arcane Background (Laudenian Magos)*, New Power (x4), Power Points, Wizard

Totem: Staff

Power Points: 18

Powers: Armor, bolt, detect/conceal arcana, elemental manipulation, fly, invisibility, healing, mind reading



NARROS

"Strike! Up! Hold! Strike! Low! Hold! Middle! Strike!" The drillmaster called the moves, and the students followed them, each warrior moving as one. Each stood balanced on one leg atop a small, sharp pyramid, and periodically the senior students would pass along the line, striking the examinees' shins with heavy wooden rods. Not one wavered, nor even flinched. But that was only to be expected. This was not a test of the students' dedication, or even of their technique. The ravnorra's eyes narrowed as she passed down the line.

At last she came to one of the students, to the untrained eye seemingly no different from any other. "You!" she declared. "Step out of line!" The young narros obeyed without hesitation. "Are you left- or right-handed?" she demanded.

"Neither, Tomannik-nor," the student replied, "but I am accustomed to write with my left hand."

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

Despite ignorant stereotyping claiming them all to be squat, long-nosed dirty miners, narros don't really resemble the fantasy creature they're often compared to. While the majority live underground, they are not singular in their purpose of greedily digging for riches in the Earth. In fact, narros are among the most selfless of all fae, taking on the role as protectors for all their allies. Even when outnumbered, narros often win in open combat. They are the greatest soldiers of the fae, with only the pagus threatening the claim. Almost every narros citizen knows how to use a weapon. Soldiers enforce a strict discipline in the art of war, a reflection of the culture as a whole. There is a martial skill attached to every facet of their lives. The same techniques and movements used in warfare are duplicated in the mines, planned and coordinated with precision.

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

Narros' silvery skin reflects a glitter in sunlight. Their skin tones range usually between peach and pale white. Their ears are long but remain flush to their heads. Their eyes, seemingly always squinting, can open extremely wide and their irises loom large in their sockets,

though their colors, dull browns and matted grays, don't shine even in the brightest light. Narros eyes can adapt between light and dark vision in an instant, and their vision extends far into the infrared spectrum, allowing them to see almost perfectly even in total darkness.

Narros insist on a high degree of personal grooming. Males despise painting their bodies in any way but women often do: the same abhorrence does not apply to tattooing, but this is still a rare practice. Body piercing is unknown among them. Unlike their stereotyped equivalents, narros have a general aversion to body hair. Males sport tight trimmed beards, patterned sideburns or short braids when they grow them; the only moustaches considered fashionable are thin side-whiskers. Their hair is often pulled back to a tail, loose strands tightly controlled. Some narros males shave themselves completely bald. Unlike the legends they inspired, female narros neither grow facial hair nor look overtly masculine. It is only when narros dress for war that males and females become indistinguishable. Narros age proportionately to humans at an approximately 12:1 ratio.

Playing a Narros: Narros are well and beyond the best people as there is no subtlety behind them. They scoff adversity and seldom run from a fight. They are the strongest and take pride that the entire fae species would have been wiped out long ago if it weren't for them. They are soldiers from birth. In the end, why would anyone want to be anything but the greatest warriors of legend?

A narros character should not just be some loud fighter with an axe. They can be anything they choose and commit themselves 100% to that duty, often ignoring other concerns. They are fanatical about any crusade they are on. A narros would be the first to awake in the morning to tackle the day's goals. They will ignore fleeting pleasures like smoking and sex when committed a quest. When indentured to a lord or sworn to a friend or party, a narros will risk everything including his own life to protect them. This focused spirit is admirable but can sometimes make a narros a real drag at parties – unless they have decreed that it is now time to enjoy themselves. The narros believe in hard work and hard play. It is common for a narros to work past the point of exhaustion during the day, party and drink until past midnight, sleep insufficient hours, and start everything again the following dawn, apparently none the worse for wear. They are extremely regimented in whatever direction they take in life. Mages own more books. Priests pray longer. Soldiers train much more fiercely. They are focused in their view – some human would-be wags claim that the name 'narros' is synonymous with their mentality.

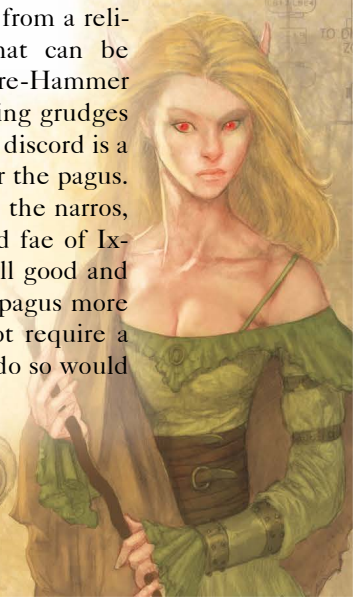
Narros favor medium to heavy armor, if they wear armor at all. Those from Fargon prefer heavy steel lamellar and crested helmets superficially similar to those of the



ancient Japanese samurai, but they tend to prefer heavier weapons as a rule; though every narros has a particular favorite, spiked maces, hooked halberds, and double swords are in overwhelming evidence in narros armies. Rare is the narros mage whose totem is not the weapon, and most of those few instead favor the shield.

Because of their polar opposite concepts of an appropriate attention span, the narros and gimfen don't always get along. They are otherwise at least tolerant of most other fae, and particularly of humans – indeed, the narros boast the only open trading agreement between a fae kingdom and a techan bastion. However, they overwhelmingly despise the tenenbri. The schism between

the two is rarely mentioned – its roots stem from a religious dispute, a divergence of dogma that can be tracked back thousands of years in the pre-Hammer age. Some have accused the narros of holding grudges far longer than socially acceptable. Still, this discord is a poor rubbing of the hatred the narros feel for the pagus. Not even the ogres, a lower fae branch from the narros, can match the loathing felt to the corrupted fae of Ix-indar. Being the primary military force for all good and honorable fae, the narros have clashed with pagus more often than other peoples. A narros need not require a reason to fight them and the opportunity to do so would be reason enough to join a quest.





Narros uphold their discipline when on their own or outside of their community. Personal and family honor is very important to all narros, although their definition of it is a trifle unusual: a person's honor is defined by how thoroughly she dedicates herself to her task, and a family's honor is wrapped up in how thoroughly they have taught their scions to do this. A narros warrior's greatest shame is to lose his liege lord on the battlefield, for this means that he has failed to perform the duty that should have been utmost in his mind, and he will likely never be able to find another lord with such stained honor. Warriors shamed in this way traditionally foreswear their family names and depart from narros society on quests to redeem themselves, in order to prevent their dishonor from reflecting upon the clan. Those who lost their community or their lord often travel alone across the world as masterless ronin. All narros adventurers maintain an utter dedication to their chosen path, even without a crusade or cause in their hearts.

Names: Unlike gimfen and damaskans, placing little stock in their family names, narros cherish their family names more than their given ones. They place their family names first when writing them down and announcing themselves in public. Because narros families are vast, many outsiders believe narros are not original with their names. Narros refer to each other by their given names only in private or when asked; using a person's given name without their permission is considered at best a breach of etiquette, at worst a deadly insult. Married couples call themselves by their given names in their homes. Friends and family members often refer to each other by the additional titles Kar (Father/Ruler), Mir (Mother/Mistress), Lan (Son, first born), Sen (Son, second born or later), Jes (Daughter) or the generic titles Nor (senior or social superior), Kin (male equal), Mon (female equal), and Dan (junior or social inferior), appended to the end of whichever name is used. The given names are usually shorter than their family titles, thus making their full names somewhat front-heavy.

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

NARROS SPECIES ABILITIES

Final Word: When you become incapacitated, you do not suffer the effects until the end of your next turn. You still receive an action card on that turn and you ignore all wound penalties for that action.

Infravision: You can see in the dark, halving attack penalties (round down) for bad lighting.

Militaristic: You are trained in a variety of weapons and combat tactics from an early age. You begin with a d6 in the Fighting skill.

Stonebones: Your body is as the stones of the mountains. You begin with a d6 in your Vigor attribute instead of a d4. However, you suffer a -4 penalty to all Swimming rolls.

Average Height: 4' – 4'9"

Average Weight: 195-395 lbs.

Average Starting Age: 75 years

Estimated Life Expectancy: 1,000 years

Starting Languages: Narroni, English (Common or Englo-Lingo)

NEW EDGE STONE'S ENDURANCE

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Novice, narros from Fargon or the Finer Fire Pits

The cold of Fargon and the heat of Finer produce narros inured against the extremes of their homeland. You gain +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effects of cold (Fargon) or heat (Finer).

MELEE WEAPONS	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
Narros Krollish	Str+d8	15	300	AP 1 vs. rigid armor, Reach 1, 2 hands

NEW WEAPON

Narros Krollish: The narros krollish was considered the standard weapon of choice for most narros serving in the military. This practice has waned in the centuries since the narros' return, and now only Fargon maintains the tradition: narros born or raised elsewhere might never pick one up in their lifetimes. The krollish is a multi-function weapon featuring no less than three different ways to inflict damage on a target. Its business end sports an axe, a hammer, and a fiendishly long spike, formed from a single block of steel or magnarros and perched upon a long staff towering over most narros wielding it.

NARROS ARCHETYPES

FARGON WUXIA

(Seasoned)

The narros love to take credit for influencing the ancient Asian martial arts, as well as their mythology and culture. They place a great deal of pride in this and were happy to see the pillars of their disciplines replicated and honored across the millennia, remaining virtually unchanged on their return. Their discipline stems back to the old age, where they perfected their art over thousands of years; despite their pride, it irritates them profoundly to know that humanity was able to create more complicated systems with greater physical and mental conditions in a tenth the time. One trained in this practice may prefer weapons endowed with magic, but a follower of wuxia is not helpless while unarmed. This path does not encourage violence. Instead, it is designed for self-control and mental clarity.

Species: Narros

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d8, Survival d4, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 7; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Heroic, Pacifist (minor), one minor

Edges: Fargon Disciplined (Notice)*, Martial Artist, Sweep

FINER MINER

(Novice)

The narros from Finer fit the stereotype of their fictional parallel: expert miners and craftsmen, just as proud but less obsessed with personal perfection than Fargon narros in favor of the perfection of their crafts, not exactly avaricious but with keen business sense and a general materialistic streak that is usually suppressed in their northern cousins. More than just a miner, this narros is a smith and a warrior in equal measure. A Finer miner puts his trust in his hands and the fruits of his

labors. The only magic he allows to come into his work is the ordinary alchemy of alloys. He frequently accompanies his customers into the field to see the results of his handiwork firsthand.

Species: Narros

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Alchemy & Metallurgy) d6, Lockpicking d4, Persuasion d6, Repair d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Echan*, Doubting Thomas (major), two minor

Edges: Stone's Endurance*

VORRONAR

(Novice)

The highest honor that a narros student of doppelshido can earn is to be selected as a bodyguard ('telokkrim' in narroni) to a noble, or even better, a ravnorra lord, the masters of their art. Not all achieve this pinnacle, although there is no shame in being assigned to a less important charge. A telokkrim goes everywhere with her charge, and is expected to fight anyone who the charge deems necessary to fight, to protect her ward against all dangers, and take a death-blow in place of the one she must protect if necessary. Unfortunately, this is not always possible, and in order to assuage the stain of having failed in her duty, a fallen telokkrim usually goes into exile as a wandering blade for hire. Such warriors are known as 'vorrnar' in narroni, but in the southlands, where people are more familiar with the Sinitic language, they are usually called 'ronin'.

Species: Narros

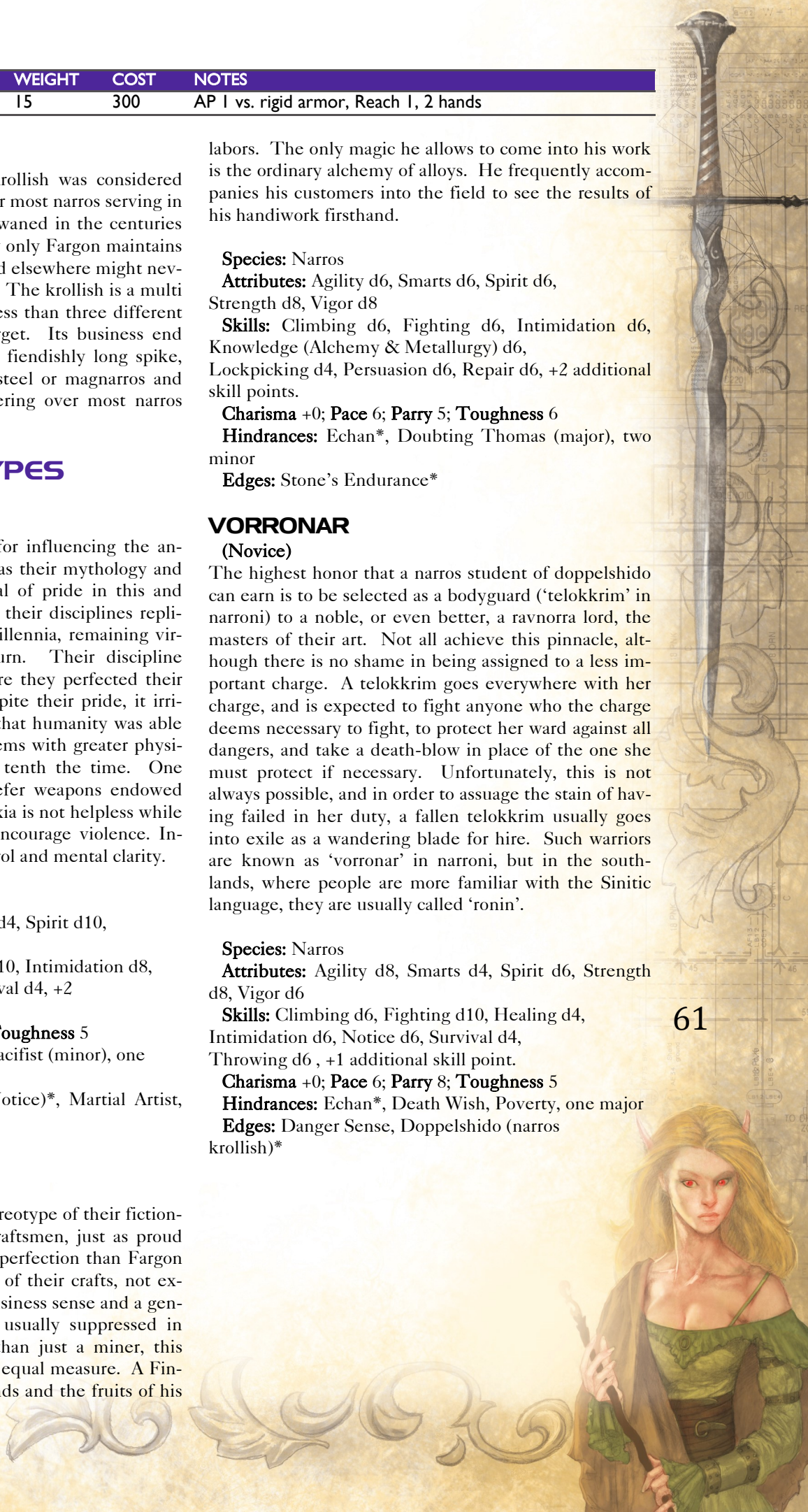
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Healing d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Survival d4, Throwing d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 8; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Death Wish, Poverty, one major

Edges: Danger Sense, Doppelshido (narros krollish)*



PAGUS

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

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

The pagus emerged over a single night during the age of Terros—the era before man when fae and dragon reigned unopposed. When the black gate of Ixindar drifted over the sky on its arrival, the whisper of Mengus corrupted a million fae to her cause. They abandoned their families and friends. Most of these tainted creatures were chaparran, though no part of faekind was left unspoiled. They vanished on an unspoken pilgrimage to the land where Ixindar finally settled.

Loved ones that followed who had not heard the whisper were killed by their own corrupted families or cursed themselves. When finally emerging in their initial raids against their ancestors centuries later, the fae no longer resembled the peoples they escaped from. They had grown in muscle. They had lost their hair. Their skin had grown pale. They looked nearly identical to each other and shared a single disposition, one single desire—to eliminate anything not blessed by Ixindar.

A little known fact about the pagus is that Ixindar's control is lessened the further one travels from Ixindar. Mengus strengthens her influence by channeling the gate's syncretic power through the will of its loyal disciples, the shemjaza. Separated from that influence, it falls under corrupted dragons to enforce the will of syntropy, despite not always following their avatar's will. Without the control of these authorities, pagus act independently, though still bound by a compulsion for violence and a brutal culture that reflects that propensity. This is not helped by the tendency of pagus to degenerate into madness as they grow old (if they survive that long). Only a noteworthy few maintain their sanity. These singular elders gain an enlightened view of the role pagus are forced fill in this world. Their wisdom and strength of personality is such that younger pagus around them will bind themselves without thinking to any action the elder commands. Unfortunately, this usually entails the same bloody conflict forced upon them from demons and dragons. Even more uncommon are the elder pagus that preach a rejection of the ideals imposed by their creator and controllers. These pagus attempt an unpretentious life filled with hunting, revelry, and reproduction. They avoid the wars demanded by others. Regrettably, these pagus are often still called into conflict as they must habitually defend their lands from outsiders, often their own kind.

Physical Qualities: Pagus are taller than most men, looming over all other fae save laudenians. Pagus have

pale, cracked skin marked with raised veins and bruises from rapid aging. The only recognizable feature from the old fae are their ears—still pointed, but short and flush to their heads. Although pagus don't appear "stretched" like laudenians, they still look thin given their height. They are muscular but not well built like the shorter narros. This is deceptive, as the pagus are among the strongest fae. The arms of a pagus dangle nearly to his knees.

Pagus are completely hairless, and there is no sexual dimorphism, with females as strong and as violent as the males.

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

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

A pagus joining a party has an uphill journey. Where the tilen are unjustly pigeonholed as predators, the pagus' reputation has been well earned. Creating a pagus character must begin with an origin. Where was this pagus born and how did he reach this point in life? If joining an evil party, no explanation is required. However, if the group is populated by noble warriors, an initial encounter should be established (if not fully played out). Kodiaks carry no inherent grudge with pagus, nor do tilen or even most humans outside of Abidan, but all other fae are more inclined to decapitate first and ask questions later. This generally prevents pagus from being encountered alone in a tavern.

Once the pleasantries of introductions have passed, a pagus can be a fierce and effective (as well as loyal) contributor to a party.

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



dropped in favor of a more fearful title like Manik the Malign and Kallis the Monster.

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

PAGUS SPECIES ABILITIES

Earned Stigma: Because your species is almost universally reviled, you have -3 Charisma – including against other pagus.

Focused Aggression: Whenever an enemy inflicts at least one wound on you, you can immediately make a Vigor roll with a +2 bonus to avoid being Shaken. This is addition to the normal Spirit roll you can make on your turn.

Infravision: You can see in the dark, halving attack penalties (round down) for bad lighting.

Creature of Ixindar: Although you are an echan, you do not disrupt technology, and thus do not receive the Echan hindrance by default: however, you still gain it automatically if you become attuned to Attricana. Additionally, the Ixindar-Bound hindrance does not count against your normal limits on hindrances.

Trained from Birth: There has never been a moment when you didn't have to fight. You begin with a d6 in your Vigor attribute instead of a d4, and you have a d6 in the Fighting skill. Furthermore, the Illiterate and Poverty hindrances do not count against your maximum hindrances.

Average Height: 6'3" – 6'7"

Average Weight: 200-250 lb.

Average Starting Age: 9 years.

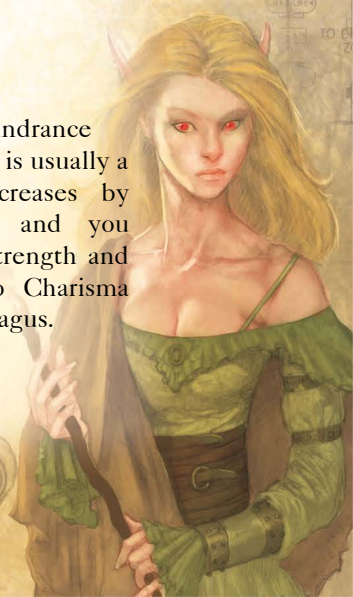
Estimated Life Expectancy: 40 years

Starting Languages: Paggin, ignotan

NEW EDGE CRYPTHTARON

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, Pagus, Elderly hindrance
A pagus who makes it past the age of twenty is usually a battle-scarred elder. Your Vigor attribute increases by one die type instead of dropping a die type, and you are no longer prevented from raising your Strength and Vigor. Additionally, your species penalty to Charisma becomes a bonus when dealing with other pagus.





PAGUS ARCHETYPES

HUZ'RAIKAN

(Seasoned)

The huz'raikan is something of a contradiction in pagus culture, as the title roughly means 'peace seeker' (paggin and ignotan don't actually have words for 'peace' – the literal translation of huz' is 'a lull in the fighting'). It is a spiritual order in a species that is biologically programmed for combat, and was founded by one of the few Buddhist free pagus (although adherence to Buddhism is not necessary for a member of the order). They teach that rather than trying to suppress their violent nature, pagus can learn to channel their aggression into physical and spiritual self-improvement. The order has a temple hidden among the mountains of northern Halyc where adherents learn to redirect their bloodthirst into physical competitions and master a martial art known as huz'kiya ('the calm before the storm'), which to outsiders resembles a significantly more violent version of aikido.

Species: Pagus

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Knowledge (Buddhism) d4, Notice d4, Survival d6, Swimming d6, Taunt d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma -3 (+3 among pagus); **Pace** 5; **Parry** 6;

Toughness 8

Hindrances: Elderly, Pacifist (minor), one minor

Edges: Cryptaron*, Martial Artist

JANNISHAR

(Seasoned)

Jannishar are the leaders of pagus warbands, subject only to the orders of typhox dragons or shemjaza. Most remain firmly in the service of Ixindar, but because their role as battlefield commanders means they must be inherently more strong-willed and tougher than other pagus, a jannishar is more likely to be able to reject her conditioning and survive longer as a free pagus. Unfortunately, the fact that she's bigger, tougher,

meaner, and smarter than most of her brethren means that she is less likely to find acceptance outside of pagus society. Most former jannishar become chieftains of short-lived free villages, but a few make their way in 'civilized' lands as mercenaries, particularly in free companies where their leadership skills can be put to best use.

Species: Pagus

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Survival d6, Taunt d8, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma -3 (+3 among pagus); **Pace** 5; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 8

Hindrances: Elderly, Illiterate, Ixindar-Bound*, one minor

Edges: Brawny, Command, Cryptaron*, Hold the Line!, Nerves of Steel

SAVASHOKAR

(Novice)

The foot soldiers of the pagus armies, the savashokar ('battlesworn') exist for one purpose – to kill things as efficiently and violently as possible. Most perform this task in the service of Ixindar without even thinking of an alternative, but the further away from the black gate a pagus gets, the weaker the whisper of Mengus becomes. Savashokar who have been lost or abandoned in enemy territory have been known to awaken to self-will, although in the presence of a shemjaza or another strong source of Ixindar's power, they may revert to their old allegiances suddenly. Such pagus can sometimes find work as soldiers of fortune, although they are never entirely trusted by their new allies, and any pagus who enters a non-pagus community unaccompanied by someone more familiar is practically guaranteed to be attacked on sight.

Species: Pagus

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, +3 additional skill points.

Charisma -9 (-7 among pagus); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6;

Toughness 7

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Illiterate, Ixindar-Bound*, Outsider

Edges: Brawny





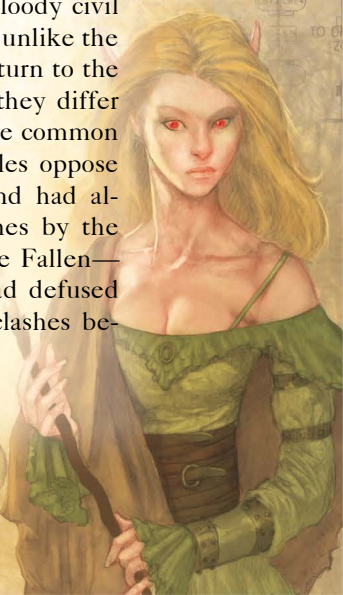
TENENBRI

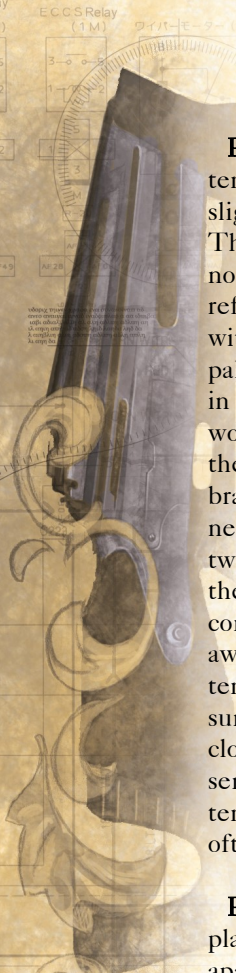
On the far side of the wall, Mustafarnis could feel the human construction machines shoring up the barrier. She had no doubt that she could climb it faster than the snipers atop the wall could react to her presence – they had not seen her come this far, after all, and they were accustomed to watch the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

me, but can you tell me where to find David Chen’s bookshop?”

Many human cultures have tales of wicked creatures that live beneath the Earth, but all of them differ drastically on the particulars. As with most elements of human mythology derived from the age of Terros, it bears only a passing resemblance to reality.

The tenenbri mark a point in fae history where the naïveté of free-thinking fae was stained with bloody civil conflict. The tenenbri live underground, but unlike the similarly subterranean narros, they seldom return to the surface: only one of many points on which they differ from their cousins. Although both share some common heritage and religious beliefs, the two peoples oppose each other on many fundamental values and had already been involved in smaller ethnic clashes by the time the pagus arrived. After the War of the Fallen—the conflict between the fae and pagus—had defused from immediate fear to daily concern, the clashes between the narros and tenenbri resumed.





Physical Qualities: In size, build, and general features, tenenbri are almost identical to damaskans, albeit slightly shorter. However, their entire race is blind. Their eyes are glossed over; irises are faded to near nothing, concealed under cataracts. The slightest light reflects a glint off the back of their corneas, shimmering with a white glow in direct illumination. Their deathly pale skin feels cool to the touch and tastes salty, a sign in humans of cystic fibrosis, a condition the tenenbri would all probably suffer from if magic did not suppress the gene in their body. Their long ears respond to vibrations in the air, detecting movement in total darkness, and like the damaskans, their ears are prone to twitch depending on their emotional state. Though their enhanced hearing greatly assists them, it is their connection to the ground that offers them the greatest awareness of their surroundings. Even though the tenenbri have no vision to speak of, they still maintain a surprisingly high level of personal grooming. Their clothing is rarely overtly ostentatious, as their aesthetic sense is attuned to texture rather than color: what to a tenenbri may seem like an outrageous costume is quite often puritanically plain to others.

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

Tenenbri outside of Southam are often outcasts. Some communities are so fanatical that even talking to a non-tenenbri may exact banishment, and even among more moderate societies expulsion is the preferred punishment for most serious offenses (unorthodoxy being considered a serious offense by most). Virtually all tenenbri found in Canam are those who have been exiled from Southam, usually for rejecting the dominant belief that the tenenbri are a master race others should serve. Even though the tenenbri would be valuable in mines, most narros refuse to employ them, though gimfen have no such prejudices except insofar as a tenenbri in a gimfen community would have to be kept away from sensitive equipment that can't be shielded. Canamite tenenbri find surprising acceptance in echan human kingdoms, considering the treatment that humans are subjected to in Southam. Limshau finds the tenenbri braille books fascinating additions to their collection and will always allow a tenenbri to settle within their borders.

The narros, of course, still hold a grudge, with the majority of the narros judging the tenenbri as dishonorable and untrustworthy. Unsurprisingly, narros and tenenbri are almost polar opposites in their mentalities. Where the narros take pride in their discipline and military might, tenenbri play life looser, letting their emotions

carry them; as warriors, they employ stealth and trickery more than a daunting shield wall. Tenenbri prefer talking their way out of fights or finding a way to trick two enemies into killing each other. Their extraordinary hearing and vibration sensitivity have allowed them an impeccable awareness of people's intents. Tenenbri are considered extremely exotic and many humans get tongue-tied when dealing with them, for while most fae are merely uncomfortably honest, tenenbri can casually identify when someone is not telling the whole truth and are not shy about telling the world.

Tenenbri have little use for armor, preferring to strike from the shadows and then retreat before an enemy has the opportunity to target them. They favor light short blades, easily manipulated in tunnel fighting; tenenbri travelers, freed from the constraints of the underground, frequently adopt walking sticks with concealed blades, easily drawn and easily stowed. They do not care overmuch for ranged weapons, though some develop a taste for knife throwing or small, powerful spring-loaded crossbows.

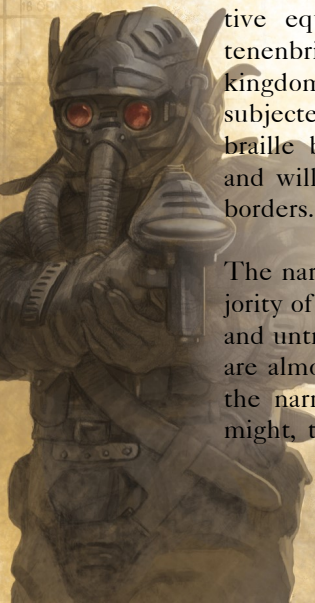
Regardless of their natural proclivities, a tenenbri willingly sworn into a group of adventurers will seldom steal from them or betray their trust. However, a tenenbri may invite trouble with her very presence because of her exotic appearance and unnerving behavior. If not, she is likely to cause a stir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

Names: Tenenbri have no use for family names; they have only one name, using phonemic similarity to denote relation. For example, two names like Shara-jaclypse and Lamaclypse, the ending '-clypse' denotes their genetic similarity. The common syllable may occur at any point in the name: siblings usually have the same sound on the same syllable, but the rules for other relations are byzantine and only make sense to tenenbri. Most children are raised in communal crèches and some tenenbri children don't even know who their parents are (tenenbra has no generic terms for family members in any case, everyone being addressed by name). In larger cities, this is not always the case.

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

TENENBRI SPECIES ABILITIES

Piezo Scream: You have a natural sonic attack that deals Vigor+d6 damage to any creature within 1" of you. After you use this attack, make a Vigor roll with a -1 penalty for each targeted creature: if you fail, you cannot use this attack again until you have had a chance to rest for at least six hours.





Zatou: You are blind, which might hinder fighters of another kind, but never you. You can perceive vibrations and micro-changes in air currents, allowing you to 'see' normally within 20", even in total darkness. You are immune to any effect that depends on vision. However, you cannot perceive color, only texture, and you cannot read normal writing (although you can read Pleroma - its glowing words illuminate even those who cannot see). Any of the following conditions reduce the range of your perception to 6": being on a mount, being in the air or on a boat, sleeping, or being deafened. You also begin with a d6 in the Notice skill.

Average Height: 4'5"-5'3"

Average Weight: 50-75 lb.

Average Starting Age: 55 years.

Estimated Life Expectancy: 500 years

Starting Languages: Tenenbri, English (Common) or Damaskan

NEW EDGES

ARCANE BACKGROUND: ITHRANNAS

(Background Edge)

Requirement: Novice, Tenenbri or trained by an ithrannassa

Arcane Skill: Knowledge (Religion) (Smarts)

Starting Power Points: 10

Starting Powers: 3

Totems: Book, Shield, Staff, Weapon

Ithrannas is the sacred art of scribing Pleroma sigils on specially prepared surfaces, such as consecrated ground or blessed slips of paper: the spell is cast by presenting the sigil and evoking its power, in a manner similar to (but with some very distinct theological differences from) the Asian arts of onmyoujutsu and feng shui. The surface becomes a temporary extension of the wielder's totem, preserving the word's power until it is released, at which point the symbol fades away. Since the multi-dimensional characters of Pleroma are revealed even to those who cannot see, practitioners of this technique are no more handicapped than the famed tenenbri swordsmen. The ithrannas tradition is largely restricted to the tenenbri priesthood, as it requires knowledge of holy rituals to properly consecrate a surface for scribing (while the spells still work if written on an unconsecrated surface, orthodox tenenbri consider this magic tainted).

- **Blinding Insight:** When you roll a 1 on your Spell-casting roll, regardless of the result on the wild die, a magical surge overwhelms your blindsight. You suffer a -4 to any roll that relies on perception, including social rolls (as you can no longer read a person's emotional state by their autonomous responses) until you succeed at a Spirit roll.

Canonical Powers: Any except *zombie*. You cannot take this power even with the New Power edge.

Trappings: This art favors the elements of aether and earth and the school of calling - while theoretically it can also utilize the school of phantasm, since tenenbri can't perceive most illusions they tend not to bother, even against sighted opponents. The following special rule applies to ithrannas practice.

Ofuda: You can prepare a number of spells ahead of time equal to your Smarts die type (+2 more if you use the book totem). Preparing a spell takes ten minutes and requires a ritually prepared surface (a slip of blessed paper, or a space up to 10" across which you have designated as holy ground through another 10-minute ritual) and a successful Knowledge (Religion) roll. When you cast one of your prepared spells, it costs 1 fewer power point to cast and/or maintain. Additionally, a prepared spell treats the prepared surface as the origin of the effect for purposes of range (so a touch spell would take effect on the person touching the inscribed scroll, not whoever the caster is touching at the moment).

ITHRANNASSA

(Power Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, Spirit d10+, Arcane Background (Ithrannas), Knowledge (Religion) d10+

You have learned the secret mysteries that allow you to quickly consecrate areas for your magic. Preparing a spell or a ritual space requires only one minute each, and you can reduce the time involved by 3 rounds (16 seconds) for each raise on your Knowledge (Religion) roll (to a minimum of one action on a roll of 20+: if you roll this high you can cast the spell on the same round you prepare it with the standard multi-action penalty).

ICHI

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Agility d6+, Smarts d8+, Tenenbri

The quintessential tenenbri martial art of iadona focuses on the mastery of one's own position in the world: speed, perception, and position are one. You act on the better of two cards for initiative, and when you spend a Benny to make a Soak roll, you gain +3 to the roll.

PROPRIOCEPTING POSTURE

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, Ichi

Whenever you take at least one wound from a Fighting attack, you can spend a Benny to make a Fighting attack against the enemy that wounded you. If you hit, even if you inflict no damage, you negate the enemy's hit (you take no wounds and are not Shaken).

TENENBRI ARCHETYPES

CENOBITE

(Novice)

Tenenbri and chaparrans are, as far as anyone knows, the only fae species to have a magical tradition deeply rooted in religion, and only the tenenbri tradition really resembles the 'holy orders' of some human cultures. Tenenbri cenobites are ultra-orthodox followers of the official Oaken faith who believe, much like the chaparran darawren, that magic rises from the earth rather than falling from Attricana – but while the darawren believe this is a natural process, cenobites believe that this natural magic is refined by Oaken and presented as a gift to his followers. Most cenobite spellcasters (apart from the rare handful of gneolistics who receive their magic 'directly from Oaken's hand') practice the art of ithrannas, and (because their religion preaches that the tenenbri people are inherently superior) they tend to be more than a little insufferable about it around other spellcasters.

Species: Tenenbri

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Fighting d4, Healing d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Stealth d4, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma -2 (+0 among orthodox tenenbri); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 4; **Toughness** 4

Hindrances: Arrogant, Echan*, Outsider, Vow (minor; strict religious orthodoxy)

Edges: Arcane Background (Ithrannas)*

Totem: Book

Power Points: 10

Powers: *Armor, boost/lower trait, deflection, summon ally*

KINETASSANA

(Novice)

Most tenenbri encountered north of Southam are nomadic. Some are drifters that have gathered in a family caravan to escape their land or explore the world. A few are hermits, keeping to themselves and staying out of harm's way. When encountering such a recluse, passers are advised to leave them alone, for they may be a member of an exclusive order of wandering warriors, the kinetassana. Kinetassana may be wise, even friendly to outsiders, able and willing to lend their skills to the innocent. But compared with other tenenbri they are quiet and unsociable, seldom traveling shoulder-to-shoulder with others. Even when enticed or forced to accompany a party, the kinetassana trails behind and volunteers little. On the surface, a kinetassana appears nonchalant, almost unaware of her surroundings. She rarely brandishes weapons openly, preferring light varieties kept hidden, exposing them only the instant they are ready to swing and sheathing the instant the stroke concludes. Kinetassana are nearly impossible to catch off-guard and rarely charge into combat, preferring to

let enemies approach and attack. They don't play with targets during a fight. They don't dance, jump around, or tumble. They kill quickly and efficiently and do so with hardly a sound.

Species: Tenenbri

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Acoustics) d6, Notice d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Tracking d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Heroic, Poverty, Quirk

Edges: Ichi*

KINSHOA MASTER

(Seasoned)

The cream of the kinetassana are recognized as kinshoa masters. More than just a master of iadona, the kinshoa has achieved the pinnacle of understanding of space and self: speed, perception, and position are all one. When she moves, she does not move: she merely changes the singularity of her position. When she draws her weapon, she does not draw: she only puts what should be elsewhere in the place it belongs. Her mind perceives what cannot be seen. She can taste emotions on my lips and smell the impulses of her enemies. With such perceptions of the world, nothing comes as a surprise, and she need never know fear. She will be aware of her own death moments before her final breath. Her talents may appear magical to the uninitiated, but anyone who knows the world as it truly is could do the same.

Species: Tenenbri

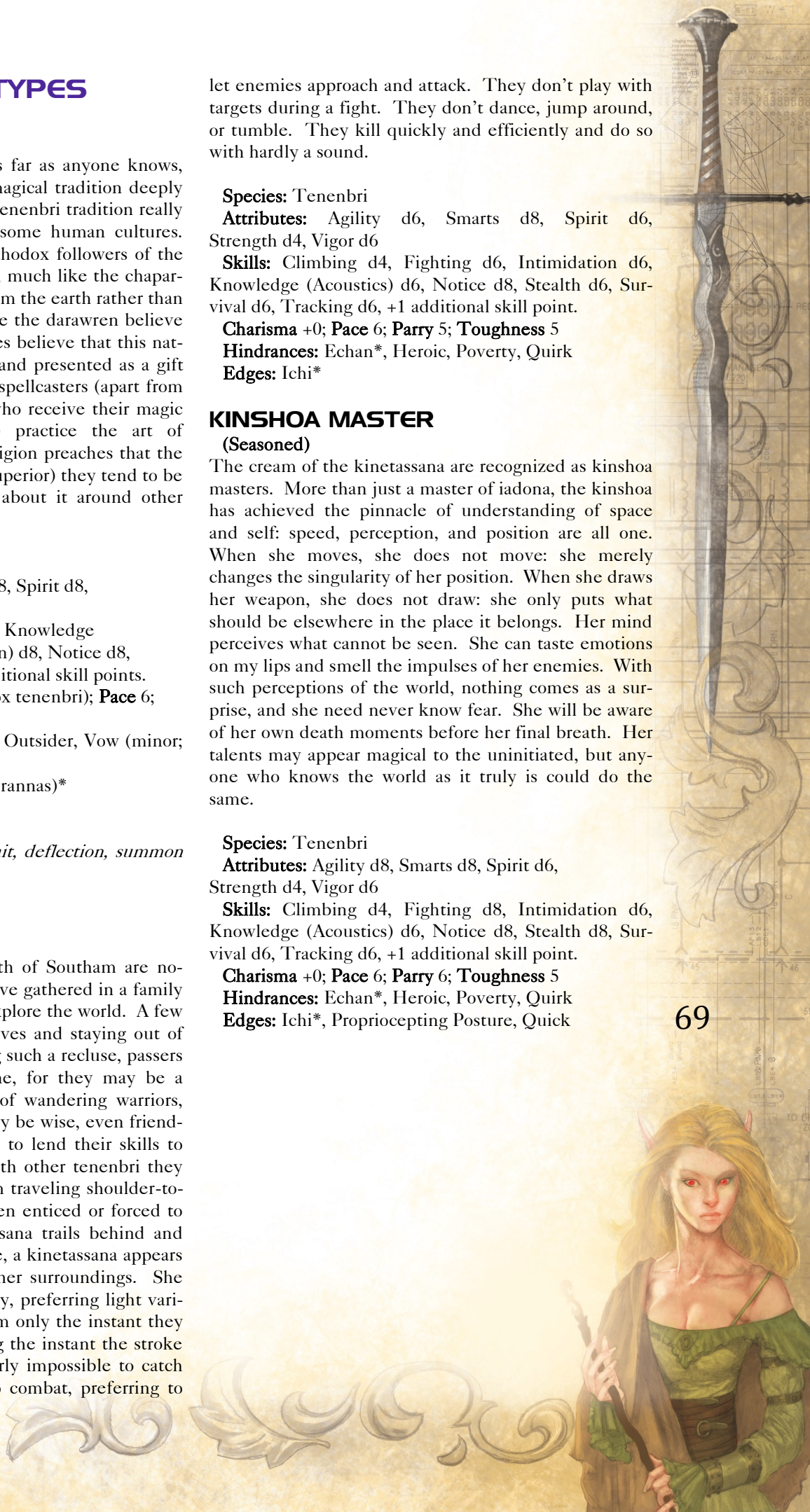
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Acoustics) d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Survival d6, Tracking d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Heroic, Poverty, Quirk

Edges: Ichi*, Propriocepting Posture, Quick



TILEN

Kinien had told her there was nothing to it: just stare at them with wide eyes, smile, laugh at their jokes, and they would be putty in her hands. But Kinien wasn't here, and Sallah was becoming increasingly nervous surrounded by the three drunken aristocrats. She flinched as one of them put his arm around her bare shoulders, his fingers questing for the neckline of her elaborate dress. She fended him off with a forced coquettish giggle, and shuddered inwardly as she smelled the jealousy rising in the others. At this rate, they would start fighting over her no matter who she chose to dance with. She didn't think she could handle that... the shouting, the acrid smell of sweat, the blood pounding in the brawlers' hearts, the sweet, delicious blood she just couldn't help but imagine how it tasted how it felt she wanted it NOW... the tips of her teeth pricked her tongue and she realized what she was doing, hurriedly chastising herself. She had always been more sensitive than her brother; why wasn't he here to keep her in line? As she sat there miserably, feigning smiles and wondering how to extricate herself from the trio of boors, a fourth man broke away from the crowd on the dance floor and came toward her. Sallah looked up at him as he held out his hand – one of her gallants looked like he was going to object, then recognized the newcomer and decided against it. Her breath caught in her throat. This man smelled nice... very nice. She found herself unconsciously glancing at his neck, and forced herself to look up into his limpid blue eyes.

"May I have the pleasure of this dance, mademoiselle?" he asked.

"Ah..." Sallah stammered, and then smiled genuinely. "Of course, milord."

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

Tilen don't need blood to survive, but it is the only way they can heal major wounds since the natural regenerative rate of their own body is impeded by the necrotic power of their heritage. They are extremely sensitive and avoid violence when they can, both for moral reasons and because the numbers of their species are so few. Most tilen are nomadic, hiding from the light and judgmental outsiders. They spend most of their time fighting against their own untamed natures, believing themselves one step from regressing back to the undead. They carry that fear to this day, though through-

out their history, only one has ever fallen back to darkness, and that only temporarily. Tilen both fear and despise undead and many of them have vowed to remove from the Earth all mindless mockeries of life. They consider necromancers, nihilancers, and their old ghulath masters sworn enemies.

Physical Qualities: Like their vampiric forebears, tilen have pale skin (though without the pallor of unlife), faintly prominent canines, and a sensitivity to light: they also cast no reflection and only weak shadows. They are generally thin, almost frail, but their strength is deceptive given their slender bodies. The elder tilen came from every fae species and retain their original basic forms, but all their descendants now have the same basic physique regardless of their lineage. This fact has brought accusations of corruption—believers claiming the tilen were intentionally released by the darkness to convert the planet to their form. Tilen age at nearly the same rate as humans, reaching maturity in their twenties but then remaining in that state for nearly 200 years before slowly aging, though never appearing older than 50 human years. Their skin is cool to the touch but not cold, dry, or cracked. Their hair is usually bleached gold or white, often streaked with silver. Their ears taper long and straight up, though the edges tend to become jagged with age. Their eyes stand out from their monochromatic skin and attire, reflecting brilliant greens, blue, and even orange but seldom yellow or red. Their eyes often expose a tilen's presence from across a crowded room, as their radiance bursts from the shadows where they frequently try to hide. Though passionate and kind creatures in general, tilen are incapable of crying. The majority of tilen are female and are on average taller than the males.

When tilen get profoundly excited, stressed or angered, their ghulath traits become more exposed. Their eyes glow bright red or yellow, their upper canine teeth sharpen and extend nearly to their lower gums, and their nails grow long, sharp and strong. They despise showing this side of themselves, especially to those they care about.

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

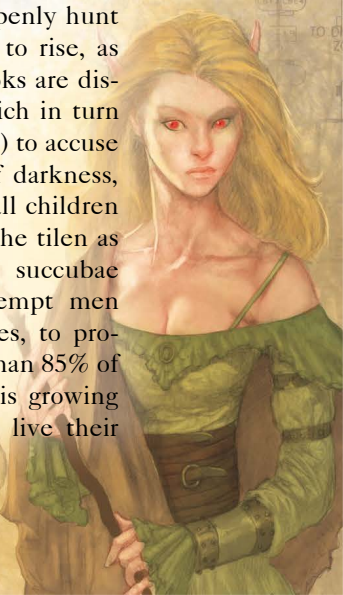
Playing a Tilen: Tilen are the best people to play because their colorful heritage will encourage role playing outside of combat. They are the best choice because they are the fewest on the planet. When a tilen enters a



crowded room, they are the only ones of their kind in it, and heads will turn. They are a double-edged sword because of their dark past and kind nature. In the end, such a rich palette will create a more interesting character to play.

A tilen player character must accept that their species is stigmatized as much as the tenenbri – in some cases, even as much as the pagus. Tilen are executed on sight in some nations in the world (not just in Baruch Malkut, where all fae run this risk). They usually keep to themselves and seldom advertise their presence outside their own villages. Though almost entirely benign and peaceful, tilen suffer greatly at the hands of others. Most fae

avoid the tilen and several human villages openly hunt them. Despite this, tilen numbers continue to rise, as their demure nature and statuesque good looks are distinctly appealing, especially to humans—which in turn often provokes others (mostly humans as well) to accuse them of being evil tempters and servants of darkness, planning a clandestine campaign to destroy all children of God by breeding them out. They regard the tilen as demon masters of seduction—modern day succubae and incubae—whose only purpose is to tempt men away from chaste and loyal human marriages, to produce an army of cambion half-breeds. More than 85% of all tilen are female, which does not help this growing stereotype. Nevertheless, tilen continue to live their





lives, willingly offering the hand of friendship at the risk of having said hand removed.

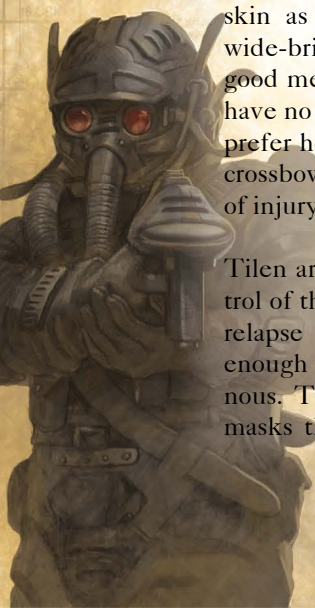
Tilen have little culture of their own. Their desire for acceptance makes them quick to adopt the customs of whatever community is willing to welcome them. Contrary to the traditional view of vampires as beings of consummate style, tilen on their own will often adopt drab, unassuming clothing, preferably covering as much skin as possible to prevent sunburn, often adopting wide-brimmed hats, deep-hooded cloaks, or veils for good measure. Being deeply opposed to violence, they have no native martial traditions. If forced to fight, they prefer heavier armor and reach weaponry, or better still, crossbows or magic, the better to minimize the chance of injury.

Tilen are emotional and expressive but rarely lose control of their facilities. Even when they do, their fear of a relapse that will turn them back to darkness is strong enough to prevent them from doing anything truly heinous. They loathe exposing their ghulath traits: it un-masks them, and tilen fear that, if others were to see

them in that state, it would cause a violent reaction and endanger them and those they care about. Living so close to the specter of death, they are not only driven to survive, but have a pathological abhorrence of causing an unnecessary death.

Among allies, friends, or family, tilen are open, honest, gentle, and fiercely loyal. Once they establish a bond in any form, they honor and relish such attachment, knowing perfectly well how rare they are when images of tilen can be seen on so many city walls proclaiming them to be demons from a wide range of legends and religious books.

As religion is usually used as an excuse for expelling them from a community, most tilen have a healthy distrust for any organized faith. This is more pronounced with human religions, as the fae faiths have no concept of 'hell' or 'demons' beyond the very real embodiments of Kakodomania, but even so, the tilen always harbor a suspicion that any gods they might pray to do not want them. Those who still yearn for the sacred tend to be drawn to religions that are more philosophy than faith;



Buddhism in particular has a moderate following among tilen. Of course, those who integrate into another society will adopt the customs and religion of their adopted home—until such time as that religion is turned against them.

Names: The first tilen elders adopted new names when they were pulled back into the light, mostly human-inspired, to sever their connection with the past. Their descendants continue the trend, usually choosing a new name when they enter a new community (a useful practice, given their propensity for being driven out of town for perceived offenses). There is no consistent naming scheme among tilen, as they have no native language of their own, usually adopting that of the nearest community for their day-to-day business.

Examples: Azula Jaheer, Lhamah Cyrose, Mira Die-masko, Naga Sorenti, Saleena Kacris, Zacheria Korvek

TILEN SPECIES ABILITIES

Blood Drain: You can give up two raises on a melee damage roll to remove one of your wounds, even if the wound is more than an hour old. The wound vanishes as if it had never been inflicted. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to half your Spirit (round down).

Infravision: You can see in the dark, halving attack penalties (round down) for bad lighting.

Reduced Healing: Healing powers used on you cost double the normal power points. Attempts to heal you naturally suffer a -2 penalty, and the time required to recover from a wound is doubled. Only your Blood Drain ability bypasses these restrictions.

Resist the Curse: Your long practice of fighting against the call of your blood gives you a starting Spirit die of d6 instead of d4. Additionally, you gain +1 to all trait rolls against undead, or +2 against vampires.

Vampiric Remnants: You begin with a d6 in the Fighting, Intimidation, or Persuasion skill. However, you suffer a -2 penalty to all trait rolls when exposed to direct sunlight, and you become sunburnt easily.

Average Height: 5'8" – 6'4"

Average Weight: 45-70 lbs.

Average Starting Age: 30 years

Estimated Life Expectancy: 600 years

Starting Languages: English (Common and Englo-Lingo), one other

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

NEW EDGES BOTTLED BEAST

(Weird Edge, Supernatural)

Requirements: Novice, Tilen, Spirit d8+

You keep your inner beast on a long lead, dangerously skirting the divide between control and releasing your undead nature. You can spend a Benny to release your beast for a number of minutes equal to half your Spirit. During this time, your Agility and Strength attribute dice each increase by one size, and you gain +2 to your Toughness. However, you have difficulty distinguishing between friend and foe in this form: if there are no nearer enemies, the GM may choose to return the Benny you spent to force you to attack the nearest ally until you succeed on a Spirit roll (at a -2 penalty) or are incapacitated – in this case, the bonuses persist even after the normal duration expires.

TILEN ARCHETYPES ARRANGED MARRIAGE

(Novice)

One of the less savory elements of tilen society is the fact that their miniscule birth rate puts pressure on every member of the species to reproduce as often as their biology allows. Since the percentage of viable pregnancies increases dramatically when the tilen's spouse is not a tilen, this often leads to the matriarchs and patriarchs of a tilen community arranging suitable matches with outsiders that occasionally fail to take the betrothed's own feelings into account. Most tilen are skittish at the best of times, and in some situations, the anxiety of being essentially sold as breeding stock to someone they barely know triggers a regression in the tilen, often resulting in one or more dead wedding party members, an arrest warrant for the tilen and possibly the tilen's relatives, the ire of said relatives, and a lifetime of evading bounty hunters and dealing with psychological trauma for the runaway bride or groom.

Species: Tilen

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Knowledge (Area Knowledge: one country) d6, Knowledge (Etiquette) d8, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d8, Survival d4, +4 additional skill points.

Charisma +4; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 4; **Toughness** 5

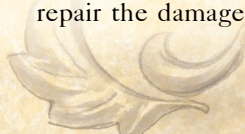
Hindrances: Echan*, Yellow, Phobia (minor: weddings), Wanted

Edges: Attractive, Very Attractive

BOTTLED BEAST

(Seasoned)

Tilen loathe the idea of returning to their roots. The elders remember the old ways and detest their traits more so than their descendants. They preach the ways of redemption with an emphasis on the obligation to repair the damage caused by their hands and others in





the name of syntropy. Although virtually every tilen follows this tenet, not all of them agree to ignore their inner strengths, despite the worry it may cause a regression to old habits. Some have embraced the dark side of their nature, dragging it by the neck into the service of good. When their blood pumps too quickly or if adrenaline starts to flow, their previous characteristics surface. They remain themselves in every way that is important. Many tilen consider it too much of a risk and many tilen would be prepared to kill a loved one if she went too far down this path. The tilen are a fragile people, few and scattered, dedicated to repairing the harm they inflicted centuries ago in another life, and they will not risk further damage to their reputation.

Species: Tilen

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (History) d4, Notice d4, Stealth d8, Survival d4, Taunt d6, Tracking d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 8; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Quirk, Wanted (major: hunted by elder tilen), one minor

Edges: Bottled Beast*, Fleet-Footed, Hard to Kill

EXORCIST**(Novice)**

Nobody hates the undead spawn of Ixindar more than the tilen. A tilen exorcist has dedicated her life to the task of eradicating unlife, especially ghulath. Exorcists train in a variety of specialized weaponry designed to counter the known weaknesses of undead, and are some of the few fac for whom the use of fac-iron weapons is not considered anathema (most vampires are fac, after all, and fac don't stop being vulnerable to fac-iron in undeath). An exorcist will go to great lengths to slay ordinary undead, but confronted with rumor of a ghulath, she will move heaven and earth and may even be willing to put innocent people in danger to achieve her goal of destroying the ancient shame of her people.

Species: Tilen

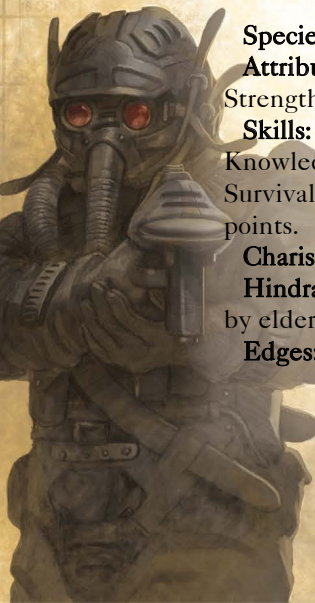
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Healing d4, Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Undead) d8, Notice d6, Shooting d4, Tracking d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Heroic, Vow (minor: exterminate all undead), one minor

Edges: Brave



FAE MIXED BLOOD

Crossbreeding between fae species occurs relatively frequently, but the offspring of such a union, even though they may take equally after both parents in terms of appearance, are always the same species as the parent lower on the devolutionary ladder:

Laudenian > Chaparran > Narros > Damaskan > Tenenbri > Gimfen > Pagus > Lesser Fae (bogg, skegg, pugg, etc.)

A pagus mating with any other of the major fae can only produce a pagus child, for instance, whereas only a laudenian-laudenian pairing can produce a laudenian child. Tilen are an exception to this rule: any offspring of a tilen, even with a laudenian or a human, is a pure-blood tilen.

Mixed-blood fae can take edges that have either fae parent's species as a requirement (other than weird edges, or edges that clearly require a species ability that the character doesn't have).

Half-Fae: Human-fae unions are unusual. Instead of being wholly of one species or the other, the children of such a pairing are true hybrids.

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

HALF-FAE

Occasionally it bothers me that I'll outlive my father by two centuries at least, and that my mother will never be able to see the colors I paint on this canvas. My sensei tells me not to worry about it. Focus on what they made when they made me, he says, and the gifts that both have given me to bring their worlds together. And so I search the world for new pigments to astound the eyes of the humans who see my art, and new textures to amaze the tenenbri who feel it: two worlds wrapped up in a single canvas. I've made many friends on my journey, many of whom will outlast me, some of whom I'll say goodbye to long before I'm ready to go, not a single one of them like me. But I can't say that I regret getting to know a single one of them, for any of that. We just keep on going one day at a time.

Half-fae have never developed nations or communities of their own. They either remain in their homelands, or venture to others if not accepted. Because a half-fae cannot be born except to a bonded couple (except half-pagus), if the child is expelled from their home culture, the entire family typically leaves as well. In human circles, feelings towards them depend on how the community responds to integration. Some fearing the fae ostracize the half-breeds as much as the laudenians do.

The only bastion which tolerates the presence of half-fae is York, and even then, their movements are as tightly regulated as the infrequent fae visitors: half-fae generate just as much EDF as purebloods do, after all.

Physical Qualities: Half-fae share the most dominant characteristic of their fae parent. Their ear size is midway between the human size and the fae parent. They are also between their parent's heights. Their skin always favors the darker tone. Magic often forces submissive genes into dominance when humans and fae breed; blonde hair will sometimes surpass black, blue eyes over brown. Thankfully, the fae parent filters out genetic defects or inherited disease. Human physical features not seen in fae but considered appealing (like freckles or snaggleteeth) often pass on, but negatively viewed genetic traits such as a predisposition for baldness or obesity almost never do, for reasons which science is unable to explain. Half-fae may grow beards regardless of their fae parent.

Playing a Half-Fae: Many believe the half-fae are the future of the Earth, the eventual course for everyone. Together, as one mixed species, the planet's population can truly be in peace, to unite against the coming darkness. Half-fae often let the winds call them to the open country. Though longer lived, like their fae parent, they still desire to seek adventure like their human progenitor. This makes them the best species to play because they have the versatility of humans with the exotic strengths of the fae.

Because a half-fae results only from bonded parents, raising one is a blessed affair, despite the feelings of the community. Half-fae rarely encounter abuse within the family and consequently seldom abandon their loyalties. Only acts of fate can result in a half-fae not having a normal childhood (this, of course, assumes both parents are good; evil parents can commit whatever atrocities they want against their children).

Half-fae, like humans, develop their personality more from how they are raised than what their racial stereotype denotes. Ones raised in open and welcoming cultures like Limshau will usually retain more of their cultural roots, but with a general cosmopolitan attitude; those raised in isolated or insular societies will mostly conform to those cultural norms. A half-fae player character will be shaped by their home culture more than their species; to that end, it is helpful to know which parent is the fae, and in which parent's culture the family resides. This will help create a believable back-story.

HALF-FAE SPECIES ABILITIES

Echan: You disrupt technology on you and around you. You have the Echan minor hindrance, but receive no points for it. If you take Echan as a major hindrance, you only gain points as for the minor hindrance. You can never buy off this hindrance.



Fae Gift: For all effects related to species, you are considered a fae of your parent's species. You gain one of the following features, depending on your fae parent.

- **Chaparran:** Gain the chaparran's Brachiate ability. You can take low-light vision as a background edge.
- **Damaskan:** Gain the damaskan's Ambidexterity ability. You can take the damaskan's Polyglot ability as a background edge.
- **Gimfen:** Gain the gimfen's Mecha's Blessing ability. You can take the gimfen's Lithe and Irritable ability as a background edge. The Small hindrance does not count against your maximum hindrances, and you do not automatically gain the Echan hindrance as above.
- **Laudenian:** Gain the laudenian's Equilibrium ability. As a background edge, you can remove the penalty to Vigor rolls against being moved against your will.
- **Narros:** Gain the narros' Stonebones ability. You can take low-light vision as a background edge.
- **Pagus:** Gain the pagus' Focused Aggression ability. You can take low-light vision as a background edge. You do not automatically gain the Echan hindrance as above.
- **Tenenbri:** Gain the tenenbri's Piezo Scream ability. You can take the tenenbri's Zatou ability as a background edge, but your blindsight extends only to 6".

Fae-Iron Vulnerability: You are vulnerable to fae-iron as a fae.

Human Versatility: You gain a free edge (which can be one of the background edges from your Fae Gift ability).

Sleep: You must sleep as humans do, but you only require five hours to be fully rested.

Average Height & Weight: Average of human and fae

Average Starting Age: 20 years

Estimated Life Expectancy: Average of human and fae

Starting Languages: Any languages known to both parents, one other

HALF-FAE ARCHETYPES

FREELANCE ADVENTURER

(Novice)

While it can't exactly be said that 'adventurer' is a respectable profession anywhere in Canam, there are parts of the world where it is more or less equivalent to a somewhat daredevil day job. Conveniently, since half-damaskans tend to be very good at this, the areas in which the most lucrative dungeon-delving is to be had tend to be the places largely settled by mixed damaskan-human populations, such as western Limshau, Plicato, Skyrose, and Seliquam.

Species: Half-Damaskan

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4,

Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Gambling d4, Healing d4, Investigation d6, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Streetwise d4, +3 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Curious, Echan,* two minor

Edges: Luck

PRO-BOXER

(Novice)

Half-pagus have certain advantages over their fae parents: it's fairly easy for them to pass as large and ugly humans, and while they have roughly the same durability and adrenal response as full-blooded pagus, they don't have the built-in Ixindar brainwashing that incites them to violence. Not that they don't often turn to violent pursuits, but they are able to apply their strength a lot more selectively, and as they aren't as subject to prejudice as a true pagus would be, they have a lot more opportunities to advance themselves. In places like southeastern Limshau, Kannos, Seliquam, and Fargon, where there is a minor industry dedicated to the sports of wrestling and boxing, they can even be in high demand.

Species: Half-Pagus

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Gambling d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Streetwise d4, Taunt d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma -2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Hard of Hearing, Ugly

Edges: Brawny

TECH-SWASHBUCKLER

(Novice)

Although rare, it is not unheard of for gimfen to bond with techan humans. Although the inherently magical nature of the bond immediately switches the human's soul to echa, this property is not passed down to their offspring, who can further benefit from their parent's old connections to gain greater access to high-tech equipment than most. This combined with the gimfen curiosity and wanderlust often leads to undersized soldiers of fortune wandering the roads, high-tech weapons stuck into belts like an old-fashioned pirate once carried one-shot pistols and wielding an otherwise phenomenally valuable bastion-made sword like it was nothing.

Species: Half-Gimfen

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Gambling d6, Knowledge (Technology) d4, Lockpicking d4, Notice d4, Repair d6, Taunt d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Arrogant

Edges: Rich

The outer gates of the southern wall groaned open for morning travelers. The rising spring sun brushed a graceful wave of heat across Aiden's face. He looked back at Angel's wall, perforated with sniper holes and artillery placements. He wasn't rethinking his decision, only taking in how unambiguous the boundary between the two worlds was.

Aiden had hardly spent a day away from Chen's biblio. Reading about dragons were only the beginning. Anything science denied as true, Aiden desired to learn. He remembered the story his mother had told him, of the singular focus of Willum Raenis. The character's aspirations were above his station, no higher than a princess, a target that could never be struck. All Aiden needed to do was sacrifice his central heating, internet, and cable TV. Martin thought it was selfish, and that Aiden's decision was like a virus that would spread to others, somehow disavowing thousands of years of progress, rejecting what mankind was most proud of--the very automation of his society.

As Aiden walked further past the gate, the level and planed pavement began to show cracks from shifting soil and snaking roots. At the edge, it had turned to rubble. The dirt felt the same as those in parks and planters in the city. The sun looked no different. Ahead was the forest. Against the barricade and under cover of shade sat hundreds of shacks and shanties populated by thousands that took pilgrimage to Angel in hopes of being blessed with admittance. If born inside, your citizenship could not be refuted. Trapped between the forest of Cyon and the city of Angel, refugees scavenged the city's garbage along with fragments leftover by more successful travelers. Some eked out a simple existence selling horses or trinkets from either side of the crown. There were no fae here, not this close to a magical dead zone. The village of Genai was ignored because of a long forgotten arrangement made centuries ago with the city's original builders.

Aiden's destination was hundreds of miles away. Deep in an area his brother called a wasteland was a city populated by millions of fae, humans, and books. It had been described more as a library than a city. Aiden could further his reading, having spent Chen's biblio nearly dry of words. He couldn't deny his ulterior motive, a city of fae and humans. Every pointed eared female a princess in his eyes.

Aiden had imagined her with unblemished naked skin riding a unicorn through an unspoiled landscape. He, the noble knight or wizard watches through the bushes, smitten. He jumps out to save the virtue of the virgin against a mob of hungry orcs, or boggs, whatever the story endorsed. She beds him against a tree in her gratitude. He follows her into the woods, taken by the fae into their flock to live for an eternity in enchanted bliss.

Despite aspirations of fancy, Aiden had proven himself an academic with enough saved and invested for the best universities. Out of high school, he could have been scooped up quickly and molded into an efficient, grounded, and functional member of society. He would do Martin, and his vision of their parents' ideals, proud. Now Aiden was nineteen and a hundred feet from all he had ever seen. Ahead lay everything he had read about.

Some books were fiction, written by authors hundreds of years dead. They spoke of faeries and demons, dragons and kings. Following that, Aiden would find a book claiming to be fact which told similar tales.

Dragons and unicorns had adorned crests and flags for centuries before being discovered as truth. It could not be coincidence.

Aiden hated the prospect of booking passage on an Echan Terrain Vehicle, but there was little hope of him making it through the forest on his own, not with boggs on the rise. On occasion, an armed caravan would arrive at the wall and pick up passengers for a price bordering extortion. The passengers would be escorted to one of the safe primitive human havens on the other side, most of which were controlled by the free house of Antikari.

This was one of those occasions, and Aiden was unwilling to wait for a medieval wagon. He planned his departure weeks ahead; only those in the biblio knew of it. A note on a countertop was all he afforded Martin.

Martin

I'm not going to waste time explaining. I got my passcard and I'm leaving. I'm going to Limshau. I don't know how long I'm going to be, or where I might go from there. I know you don't understand which is why I won't bother explaining.

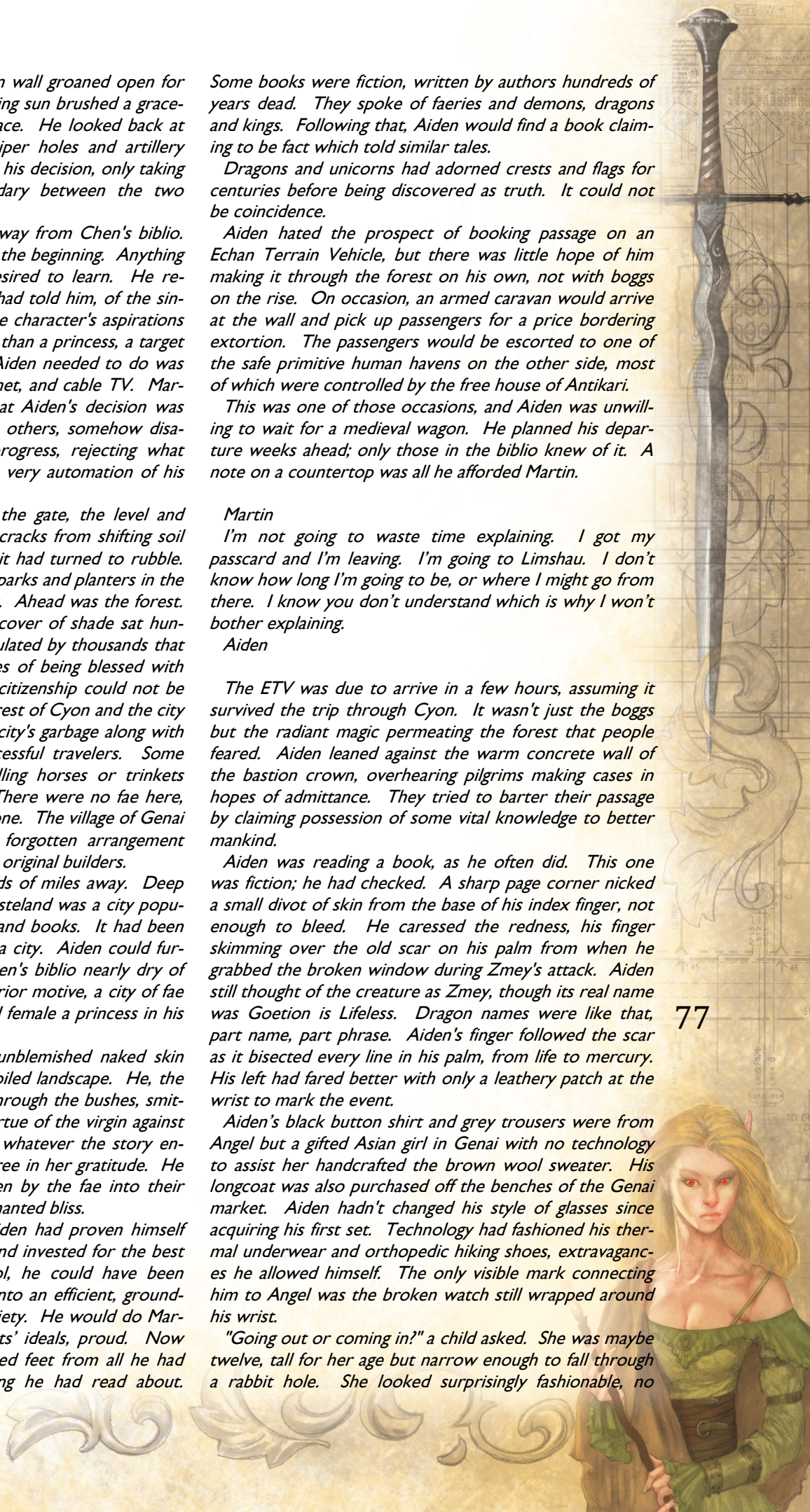
Aiden

The ETV was due to arrive in a few hours, assuming it survived the trip through Cyon. It wasn't just the boggs but the radiant magic permeating the forest that people feared. Aiden leaned against the warm concrete wall of the bastion crown, overhearing pilgrims making cases in hopes of admittance. They tried to barter their passage by claiming possession of some vital knowledge to better mankind.

Aiden was reading a book, as he often did. This one was fiction; he had checked. A sharp page corner nicked a small divot of skin from the base of his index finger, not enough to bleed. He caressed the redness, his finger skimming over the old scar on his palm from when he grabbed the broken window during Zmey's attack. Aiden still thought of the creature as Zmey, though its real name was Goetion is Lifeless. Dragon names were like that, part name, part phrase. Aiden's finger followed the scar as it bisected every line in his palm, from life to mercury. His left had fared better with only a leathery patch at the wrist to mark the event.

Aiden's black button shirt and grey trousers were from Angel but a gifted Asian girl in Genai with no technology to assist her handcrafted the brown wool sweater. His longcoat was also purchased off the benches of the Genai market. Aiden hadn't changed his style of glasses since acquiring his first set. Technology had fashioned his thermal underwear and orthopedic hiking shoes, extravagances he allowed himself. The only visible mark connecting him to Angel was the broken watch still wrapped around his wrist.

"Going out or coming in?" a child asked. She was maybe twelve, tall for her age but narrow enough to fall through a rabbit hole. She looked surprisingly fashionable, no



doubt in an attempt by her family to prove they weren't indigent. Aiden was unsure why she singled him out. She spoke his English, not one of the various patois Aiden had been warned to expect.

"Going out," Aiden answered.

"Why?" she asked.

"Why not?" Aiden closed the book. "What about you?"

"Going in." She nudged to her mother, the woman lay-
ered in linen with a talc-covered face discussing creden-
tials with the outer guard. "Mom grows spiky fruit. Ap-
parently that's hard."

Aiden nodded. "I'm sure she'll get in then."

"Why are you leaving?" she asked. She wanted to know;
it wasn't idle banter. She had never been inside a bastion
in her life. She was looking forward to frozen dinners.

"Because there are things you can't do in there."

"Like what?"

Aiden placed the novel between his legs and removed a
larger book from his pack. This one was crafted by ama-
teur hands with a badly sewn cover wrapped in leather.
The pages were rough and frayed and had a dappled tex-
ture. The words were written with the flaws and imper-
fections of a clumsy human hand. Aiden held the book up
edge on. He brought his lips to the spine and whistled.

A glowing ball of catkin lifted from the center of the
book. A tail of glitter, its only appendage, dangled behind
it as it danced around the tome, happy and delighted at
having been called, for its life was meaningless if it had
nothing to shine upon.

The child was taken back. She recoiled from Aiden, her
bottom lip quivering. "Y-You're magic?"

Aiden shrugged. "Not really. It's a gift from my teach-
er." This did not alleviate the child. She stepped back,
turned, and fled to her mother. The catkin fluttered be-
side Aiden, as confused as he was. If a parent wanted to
train her child to seek life in a bastion, it began early and
fear was an easy implement to wield. "I guess that's nec-
essary," Aiden whispered. He held up the open book to
the spark. It blinked and hid between the pages. Aiden
slipped his spellbook back into his satchel. It was a con-
venient term for it, spellbook. Wizards referred to them
as totems, requiring to always be in contact when at-
tempting magic. It didn't matter what Aiden called it; he
had yet to cast any spells. He wasn't, what some people
called, a radiant. Yet. All fae were born that way. For
humans, it was a choice, one which Aiden was required to
make if he wanted to cast any spells. He very much want-
ed it, but for some reason it had yet to take.

The laudenian totems were of ivory, bone, or steel.
Chaparrans were always wood. Narros took to using
weapons, swords and axes mostly, a few shields. The idea
of wands came mostly from the whims of writers. Few
casters ever needed them. They were the training wheels
of sorcerers. Children used them in areas where magic
was taught young. Aiden was never given such a crutch to
depend on. No competent caster ever employed a wand.
Hands were needed open to fiddle the fingers properly in
controlling the spells cast. With one hand taken by the
totem, putting a wand in the other was a colossal waste of
digits.

All that was important were the words, to say the right

one, the right way, and to understand its meaning. To
speak the name and create it from nothing. There were
other ways to harness magic, but Pleroma—the language
of magic—was the most powerful and the path chosen by
wizards. The spark that Chen had given Aiden was a living
light drawn from nowhere, created with intelligence, and
aware its life only lasted until dismissed. It knew this and
didn't care, lovingly loyal to its creator or controller until
discharged.

No matter how many laws of the universe the white
gate modified, none of them were altered in ways that
destroyed life. They allowed greater variations without
voiding existing ones. Aiden remembered what Chen had
said, that anything Aiden could think of thought for itself.

Humans not employing magic created dead zones where
the disruption of technology was moderated, but never
fully suppressed. The city of Angel was one of the few
bastions left.

* * *

Aiden needed to change his money. Bastion currency
was worthless plastic and paper. The bank was a wooden
hut with a steel door guarded by three men wielding dull
broadswords, archaic revolvers, and crater-ridden faces.
The man inside sat on a plush chair and looked thin
enough to pass through the iron bars separating him from
Aiden. A safe behind him had sunken into the dirt.

"How much?" the cashier barked.

Aiden passed his bills through the bars. "Five hundred."

"Looks like four--"

"It's five," Aiden snapped. There was no way to ex-
change money in the bastion. Angel would accept echan
currency because of the raw materials involved, gold and
silver, but they would never trade it back. The cashier
counted the bills twice.

"Exchange rate isn't good this time of year."

"Exchange? There's no trade, how could there be--"

"It's not good this time of year," he interrupted. The
cashier opened the safe and rattled a few bags. "What do
ya want?" he continued. "Kroenan? Carmots? Tence?
Torquil tence does quite well. A lot of places take it."

"Limshau currency please, carmots, chrysos--actually.
Yes, tence would be good. I don't know...fifty?" Aiden
had no idea.

"Want gold?"

"Yes, lovely."

The man chuckled and tendered the coins in a bag. Aid-
en knew it was short but had no angle to argue.

* * *

The Echan Terrain Vehicle wasn't a simple pantherbike
but scrambler, all thirty feet and forty tons of it. It rolled
on six thick-treaded, steel-sidewall run-flat tires, each ten-
feet across. Twenty high-intensity discharge bulbs
breathed a swath of light across the clearing. The vehicle
had a center pivot separating the engine cluster from the
cabin, allowing it to navigate around tight spaces and keep
its drive train insulated from magical disruption. Despite
the layers of padding, the vehicle still needed servicing

every thousand miles; magic always found a crack to work itself through. This specific scrambler had a battery of photovoltaic cells glued to the roof for additional range.

Aiden followed the other passengers to the entrance, the last to climb the steps, and the only one to notice the black wooden arrow shaft embedded in the side of the vehicle. It had caved a crater in the panel twice the size of Aiden's head. Aiden motioned to the scrambler captain, a thin man with neither a nametag nor hair. "Uh...excuse me?" Aiden called out.

Hairless looked up and followed Aiden's eyes to the arrow rooted in the plate. At first, Hairless was unsure what had drawn Aiden's attention. The arrow was obviously an annoyance that had paid him no mind when it occurred. He stepped up to Aiden's level and reached out to grab the exposed shaft.

"Oh don't worry about that," Hairless said as he strained against the arrow. "Picked it up on another run."

Aiden nodded and placed a foot inside the cabin. He immediately noticed the still sharp and polished bodkin sticking an inch into the compartment. That made him uneasy. Aiden leaned out again. "Aren't these hulls armored?"

"Six inches."

"Who?" Aiden started. He glanced inside, following the shaft through the foot-thick sandwich of kevlar, steel, carbon, titanium and plastic. The arrowhead had kept its point unbroken through the armor. "I mean. That's clean through."

Hairless moved in closer as he pulled hard against the wood. "Look..." He pulled hard and the shaft finally broke free. "Don't worry yourself, and don't scare the others. We're not going anywhere near them on this run. We'll be a minute covering this up. Gotta keep the chaos out." Aiden nodded timidly and entered the cabin.

The seats were of little comfort but a world apart from a horse's back. The crew sat on the deck above and seldom came down. Aiden didn't introduce himself to the other passengers, offering them only a nod and indirect eye-contact.

The older couple and their prepubescent child, all dressed in tatters, must have been stranded outside the wall for years before affording the tickets to return to a world they tried to escape. The two adult men opposite of the cabin were obviously brothers; one lost in music from headphones, the other reading a tablet computer. Both looked naïve with polyester pants and rayon jackets, probably fated for Salvabrooke, the vehicle's penultimate destination.

Salvabrooke was an adulterated sampling of the outside world, watered down and sanitized for ignorant outsiders, a secluded enclave with few predators and legal brothels, all run by welcoming fae.

The scrambler produced a canine-like yap, followed by further woofs as the engine's various electric motors activated. The growling increased to a whine and the vehicle launched with surge that tossed loose bags about the cabin. The vehicle moved at the pace that technology found comfortable.

It was a cumbersome machine, flattening unscarred terrain, marking its path with uprooted vegetation. The

trees fell out of focus at this speed. Aiden couldn't hear anything; the vibrations in the suspension transmitted its noise through the frame of the vehicle.

The grey wall of Angel faded behind, and Aiden felt an unexpected level of anxiety wash over him. Would the dragon save his life again if he were in need? Its name was Genai, a title the city within the city took in tribute. Every time Aiden approached the pagoda atop the pyramid where Genai was rumored to reside, he was shooed away by the sentinel monks.

"If you walk from this city, from these walls, you will always be a child. You will always live in your fantasy." Martin's words came back to him as Aiden closed his eyes and imagined what and whom he would find. No dream would do it justice. No fantasy could be too extreme. Anything he could think of was real. Why would anyone want anything else? Was the library city of Limshau encircled by a pristine white wall? Was there a marsh that marked the corruption of a fallen human kingdom? Were there faerie shapechangers that would marry a man if he stole their scarf?

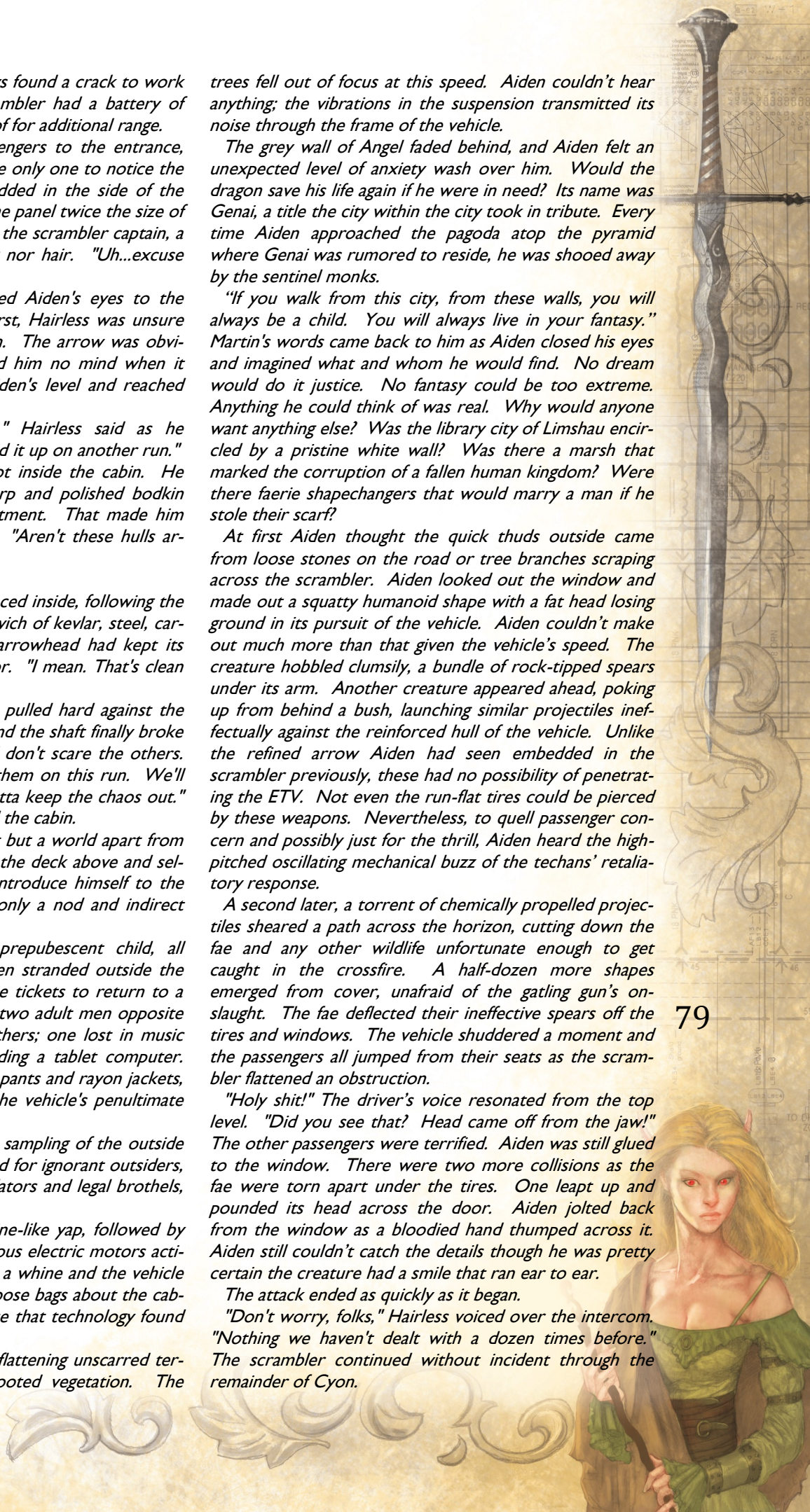
At first Aiden thought the quick thuds outside came from loose stones on the road or tree branches scraping across the scrambler. Aiden looked out the window and made out a squatty humanoid shape with a fat head losing ground in its pursuit of the vehicle. Aiden couldn't make out much more than that given the vehicle's speed. The creature hobbled clumsily, a bundle of rock-tipped spears under its arm. Another creature appeared ahead, poking up from behind a bush, launching similar projectiles ineffectually against the reinforced hull of the vehicle. Unlike the refined arrow Aiden had seen embedded in the scrambler previously, these had no possibility of penetrating the ETV. Not even the run-flat tires could be pierced by these weapons. Nevertheless, to quell passenger concern and possibly just for the thrill, Aiden heard the high-pitched oscillating mechanical buzz of the techans' retaliatory response.

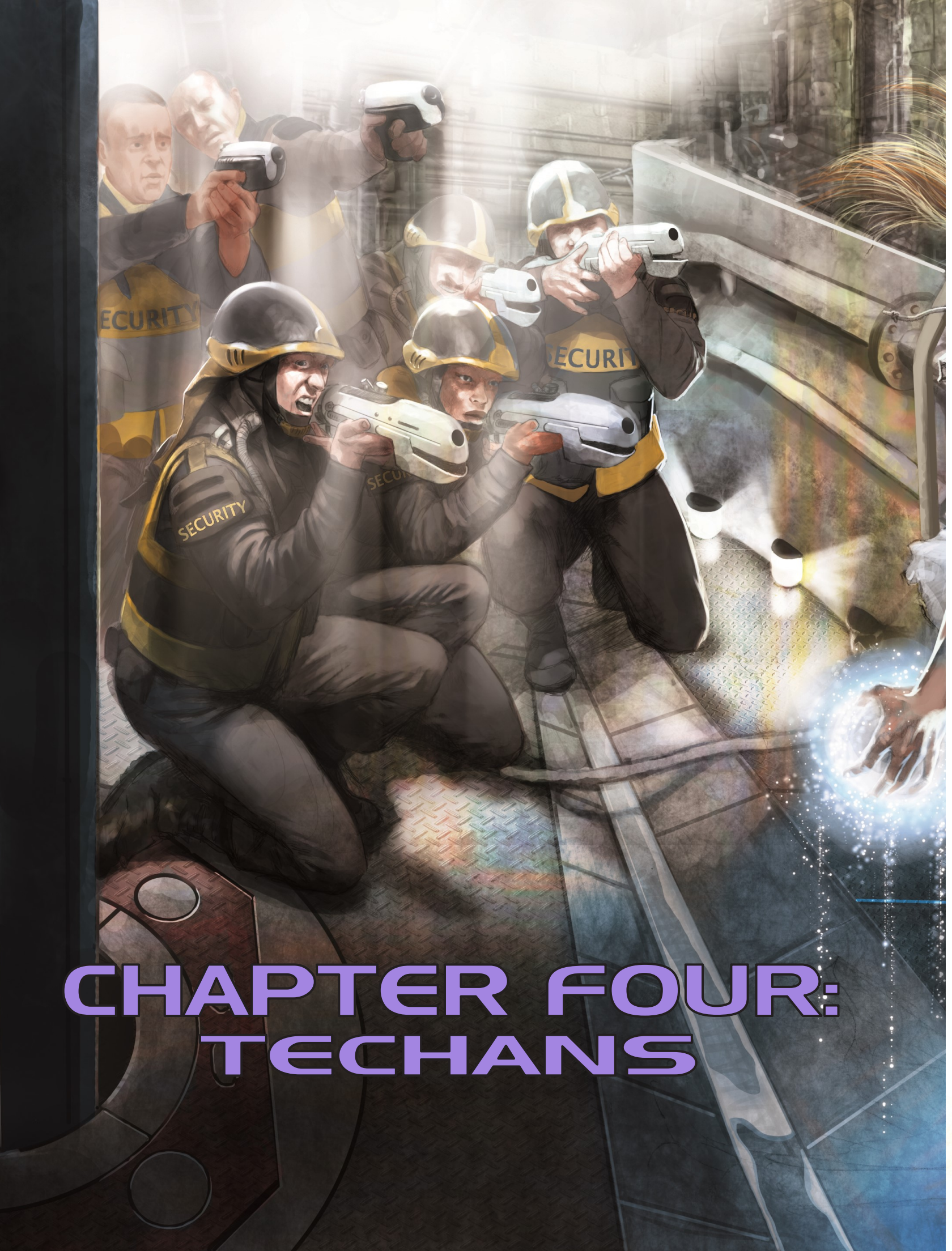
A second later, a torrent of chemically propelled projectiles sheared a path across the horizon, cutting down the fae and any other wildlife unfortunate enough to get caught in the crossfire. A half-dozen more shapes emerged from cover, unafraid of the gatling gun's onslaught. The fae deflected their ineffective spears off the tires and windows. The vehicle shuddered a moment and the passengers all jumped from their seats as the scrambler flattened an obstruction.

"Holy shit!" The driver's voice resonated from the top level. "Did you see that? Head came off from the jaw!" The other passengers were terrified. Aiden was still glued to the window. There were two more collisions as the fae were torn apart under the tires. One leapt up and pounded its head across the door. Aiden jolted back from the window as a bloodied hand thumped across it. Aiden still couldn't catch the details though he was pretty certain the creature had a smile that ran ear to ear.

The attack ended as quickly as it began.

"Don't worry, folks," Hairless voiced over the intercom. "Nothing we haven't dealt with a dozen times before." The scrambler continued without incident through the remainder of Cyon.





**CHAPTER FOUR:
TECHANS**



It could be argued that magic saved humanity. Knowledge of the time before the Hammer is sketchy at best, but it is generally believed that humankind was teetering on the brink of self-destruction, having fouled the environment with industry and allowed sectarian grudges to rip societies apart at every level. While the first Hammer's impact caused a mass extinction event, the second found the job already mostly done, and it could be counted as a miracle that it didn't quickly finish the job. Instead, the complete collapse of their way of life forced those who remained to set aside their differences and work together to preserve what little remained of the old ways. Most of these experiments failed and became the echan human nations and minor houses that dot the landscape, but a significant few succeeded – the techan bastions and atolls, where humanity's millennia of progress are preserved against the rising tide of magic.

Techan humans are the only ones who can safely use technology, and that only so long as they steadfastly refuse the touch of magic. Even so, fleeting exposure can cause their equipment to malfunction or break entirely. Most of those who would be considered 'echan' humans can still use technological devices, the simpler the more reliable, unless they have actively accepted enchantment into their soul by learning to cast spells, using magical items, or prolonged exposure to magical energies. In most cases, an echan can choose to become a techan by forswearing and avoiding magic for long enough for the latent enchantment to bleed out of them (a process of many weeks).

TECHAN HUMAN SPECIES ABILITIES

Free Edge: You gain a free edge, which cannot be a weird edge, an arcane background, or a supernatural edge.

Techan: You begin with the Techan hindrance as a minor hindrance, which gives you 1 bonus point which does not count against your normal hindrance limit. You also start with a d6 in the Knowledge (technology) skill (however, you are unfamiliar with any technology with a higher TL than your home bastion).

Note: All techan archetypes in this chapter assume that you spend this bonus point to gain 500uc extra starting funds, unless stated otherwise.

Average Starting Age: 20 years

Estimated Life Expectancy: 90 years

Physical Qualities: Humans continue to be more varied than any other civilized race on Earth. They possess virtually every possible skin color, range in height from three feet to a towering seven, are thin and fat, and sport a variety of hair colors and styles. Due to the initially diverse population of the bastions followed by their subsequent isolation, the traditional human ethnicities have tended to become somewhat (although not completely) homogenized: for example, the vast majority of Angel's citizens are a rough mixture of Latino, European, and Asian ancestry.

Playing a Techan Human: With their clear technical superiority, techans are the best people to play. With technology, anyone can accomplish amazing feats that take echan mages years of study to

achieve. However, the player character choosing a path of technology must have access to said technology on a regular basis. Without upgrading their technology, techan characters won't fare much better than inexperienced echans.

A techan character is a stranger in a strange land. It might be Earth but centuries under the glare of Attricana have changed the landscape. Techans leaving the walls are truly entering a fantasy world for which they have little to no preparation. Some may leave willingly while others are forced to because of obligations or because of an obsession that haunts them. Some may open their eyes, welcoming the wonder of this new world. Others watch with jealousy and resentment. Regardless, techans are loyal to their own kind and don't often welcome foreigners. While outside, they miss their refrigerators and computers. On the other hand, some techans have given up their central heating and televisions to pursue a path of magic, embracing the new world with a romantic naiveté, unaware of the horrors awaiting them. Loyal techans strive for the day when the gates close, orphaning the race to the ravages of the real world, a time where mankind could retake the planet as its true inheritors. The race would be forced to escape back into the formless void of dreams and delusions. Those unable or unwilling to make such a journey would be subject to the harsh reality of natural laws and perish quickly. Techans fear the future of a world where magic reigns uncontested and humanity lives stagnant, in limbo, never changing, forever in a fantasy world without consequences.

On the other hand, many techans also find bastion life a bit sterile, and many look longingly at the outside world – not as a place to live, certainly, but for short jaunts, the world of fantasy can provide some much-needed excitement. 'Echa-tourism' is a growth industry in the bastions of Angel and York, while the bastions of Selkirk and Sierra Madre would be overjoyed if a happy medium could be struck between the techan and echan worlds. In Canam, only the dour black walls of Mann look down on the fantasy world with nothing but loathing.

Names: Techan names vary depending on the dominant cultures of each bastion, but most combine the traditions of two (and sometimes more) distinct languages and ethnicities – rare is the techan whose name reflects a single culture. Consult the bastion descriptions for examples.



MIXED GROUPS

Of course, one could mix both echan and techan players together into one group. Why they would choose to unite is left up to the imaginations of the players or DM. One idea could be a shared past between several characters (both raised in Angel, one in Genai, the other in the main city), a techan out of place in the world or even characters romantically linked. Either way, they attempt to survive together, flying in the face of convention insisting the worlds live apart. In this situation, the techan must exercise caution and not wield or use magic though surrounded by it. The techan or techans also must be careful to keep their more sensitive gear away from the powerful magic items in the group or risk disruption. This problem escalates as levels progress and more powerful technology shorts out more often and more severely, despite the shielding techniques some bastions developed. This struggle reflects in the rest of the world as well.

GENERAL TECHAN EDGES

BROTHERHOOD

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, Shooting d8+

Once per round, when an ally within 2" is targeted by an attack, you can make a Shooting roll and add half your result (round down) to the Target Number to hit your ally.



BULLET BALLET

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+, Shooting d8+

If you fire a pistol before moving on your turn, you ignore difficult ground and getting up from prone does not cost any movement.

C-C-COMBO!

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+, Martial Artist

You can make an extra unarmed Fighting attack with a -2 penalty after you make any Fighting or Shooting attack (whether or not you succeed).

DO SCIENCE TO IT

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, either Healing or Repair d6+

When you or an ally that can hear you makes an attack, you add half of your Healing or Repair skill to the damage roll. If you have both skills at d6 or higher, you only add the highest of the two. You do not add your Healing skill to damage rolls against non-organic targets.

EQUILIBRIUM

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, either Smarts or Spirit d10+, Shooting d10+

Opponents that you are aware of suffer a -2 penalty to Shooting rolls against you (you do not have to be able to see them, just know what their position is).

GAMING AVATAR

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Shooting d8+

If you spend a Benny on a Shooting roll when firing more than one shot, you do not suffer the usual -2 autofire penalty and you do not use ammunition for the attack.

NO ONE HITS THE CHIEF

(Leadership Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, Command

Whenever you take a wound from an enemy attack, one ally within your command radius can make a Shooting attack at the enemy that wounded you.

SHINY RED BUTTON

(Weird Edge)

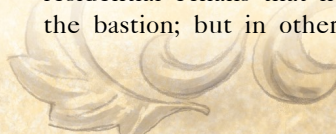
Requirements: Novice, Repair d8+

Whenever you spend a Benny for a reroll involving a piece of technology, your dice can ace on their highest two results instead of their highest result. If more than one die aces this way, the device is disrupted at the end of your turn.

BASTIONS

After the massive birth pains of Attricana's opening passed, the aura of enchantment finally subsided to a less chaotic level. Something passing for normality began to reassert itself. With what was left of humanity banding together, those still possessing technology also possessed the influence that comes with it. However, most of these initial communities could not expand that influence relying only on malfunctioning machines, and the majority eventually turned to magic, forgetting their heritage and the bulk of thousands of years of technological development. A few, however, grew fast and large enough to maintain their technological footprint. These surviving cities discovered caches or ruins from Earth's past intact enough to catapult the community to prosperity. The bastion of Sierra Madre discovered a colossal cavern and easily accessible thermal power; with Mann, an entire city pre-built by unknown hands was the catalyst to develop. Of course, the positioning of some bastions defies explanation: nobody, not even its current residents, knows what possessed the founders of Selkirk to build their society inside a mountain within one of the most magically active regions on Earth.

Like a weather map displaying topical zones and low and high pressure isobars, Earth displays regions of heavy and light magical saturation. Low disruption zones allow technology to function with virtually no side effects, although the EDF is always present and certain problems never cease. The more a bastion expands, the larger these dead zones grow. Most bastions have placed their highest technology or R&D facilities as close to the center of their cities as possible, to keep the EDF's effects on them to a minimum. If a bastion was to collapse (which has been known to happen), the background magical saturation would reassert itself very shortly after; and if the collapse was due to an invading enchanted force, the reversion could be instantaneous. Even a single echan in a bastion can cause havoc, if their inherent disruption field shorts out part of a power grid or disrupts a communications line. Some bastions are more concerned about this effect than others: in York, a main road through the bastion allows echans to walk freely to the docks, mingling peacefully with techans (though it is advised they don't linger); in Angel, an entire section of the city was partitioned for the residential echans that helped build the first walls of the bastion; but in other bastions like Selkirk, Sierra





Madre, and Mann, echans are strictly forbidden. For some, the prohibition is strictly to protect technology, but some communities have migrated towards bigotry with an unfortunate scientific justification.

Magic shrouds the Earth, blocking both low and high frequency waves. This suppresses cosmic radiation but also suppresses radio signals, preventing bastions from communicating. The rapid expansion of gas and plasma is slowed, preventing explosives from detonating or even combustion engines from running. While theoretically possible to communicate by laser with a satellite outside of the EDF's influence, no individual bastion has the resources to place such an object in orbit or the knowledge to locate any that might still be in operation. Therefore, like human nations of ancient Earth, bastions progressed completely independently from each other, altering their beliefs, their technological profile, and even their language. Even after messengers finally revealed these bastions were not alone in the world, regular communication was still unfeasible. As long as Attricana remains open, there is no way for the techans' way of life to escape their cities.

Bastions all flaunt a technological supremacy over their neighbors. Though their machines and electronics cannot survive long away from their city's borders without servicing, they still revel in such accomplishments as light bulbs, flat-panel televisions, and fuzzy-logic rice cookers. Still, not all bastions are on the same level of accomplishment. A bastion's listed tech level is the average degree of sophistication at which the majority of the bastion sits, but prototypes and cutting-edge de-

velopments will always provide exceptions: likewise, the existence of higher-tech variations rarely renders lower developments entirely obsolete.

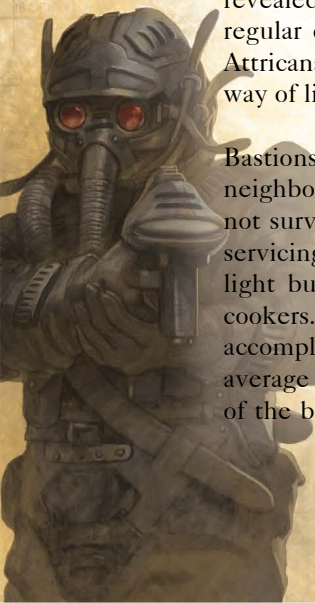
ANGEL

(Western Reach)

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

The best-known bastion of the west coast, Angel is known for two things: its massive city wall, and the echan (but legally non-magical) community of Genai nestled inside that wall, made up of descendants of Asian refugees that helped to build the city. Angel enjoys good relations and trade, albeit at a safe distance, with its echan neighbors, and its native dialect of English is considered the common trade tongue of western and central Canam. However, it teaches its children to ignore and deny the echan world, treating it at best as an appealing fantasy like the Tooth Fairy or Santa Claus. Angel is built upon a massive city of Earth's past: following old political lines, it occupies the entire Los Angeles/Long Beach/Santa Ana urban regions, including Huntington Beach, Ontario, Santa Monica and Thousand Oaks.

Tech Level: 1 to 2 (Angel), 0 to 1 (Genai). Despite being sealed away behind high walls, Angel is located in the middle of a magical wilderness and maintains a tacit tolerance of any echan influence within Genai as long as





it is kept out of sight and away from essential systems. Furthermore, there are far more ways for echans to enter the city (either overtly or covertly) than any other bastion but York, limiting the bastion's overall development. Angel's technological infrastructure somewhat resembles that of the pre-Hammer city of Tokyo in the 21st century, though with slightly more uniformity between districts, while Genai resembles the same city at the midpoint of the 19th.

Names: Angel's variant of English is the closest thing to a common tongue Canam has, as its wide-ranging influences (encompassing elements of at least four old European languages and six Asian ones) make it a very popular human language in Limshau. Angel's original population was drawn from every major pre-Hammer ethnicity and a few less prominent ones, so there is a great variety and intermingling of ethnic names, but names of Gaelic, Spanish, Greek, and Japanese extraction are most common. In Genai, where more than half the population is ethnically Chinese, even families descended from other Asian nationalities tend to adopt a Chinese-sounding 'social name' despite everyone speaking the same Asiatic creole. Both Angel and Genai habitually use the 'given name – family name' structure on a day-to-day basis and the reverse in formal circumstances and on legal documents. Despite Sinitic's primarily Chinese influences, everyone in Angel uses the old Japanese honorifics for most public interactions: -san for equals or superiors, -kun or -chan for friends and inferiors, -sama (or -dono in parts of Genai) for honored superiors, -sensei for teachers and doctors, -

kaichou for political leaders and CEOs, etc.

Angel Examples: Aiden Camus, Joachim Annikos, Kimiko Ross, Martha Tsukigawa, Shelley Delacruz, Xavier Moran

Genai Examples: David Chen, Ji-hu Kim (Jimu Qi-Hu), Hiroyuki Nogoe (Nuoguo Xiaoyou), Mana Sieng (Xian Mana), Yeong-Sun Park (Pake Yun-Sung), Xiaolung Li

NEW EDGES

ANGEL SNIPER

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, Marksman, Steady Hands, Human from Angel

The Angel snipers are renowned for their ability to take rapid pot-shots at attacking kaddog with perfect accuracy. You can gain the benefits of the Marksman edge with a Rate of Fire of 2.

WORLDLY RECLUSE

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6+, Human from Angel

Whenever you fail a knowledge roll related to the fantasy world, you can spend a Benny to repeat the roll with a +2 bonus. If you succeed, your information is mostly right, but may contain crucial inaccuracies.

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ANGEL ARCHETYPES

ANGEL SNIPER

(Seasoned)

The skills of the Angel snipers are legendary, their talents polished by years of skirmishes with the kaddog such that they can aim, fire, and find a new target instantly without bothering to confirm their hit, secure in the knowledge that the first shot has done its work. Within their stronghold, they are virtually undefeatable, much like the chaparran kitarri within their forests – and they might even prove a match for the fae snipers if both were taken out of their familiar element.

Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Knowledge (technology-TL2) d6, Notice d8, Repair d6, Shooting d10, Stealth d8, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0 (-2 vs echans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 4;

Toughness 5

Hindrances: Techan*, two minor

Edges: Angel Sniper*, Level Headed, Marksman, Steady Hands

CRIMSON STARLIGHT OFFICER

(Seasoned)

The Crimson Starlight is Angel's specialist echan-response military force. The CS often takes missions outside of the city walls in all-terrain vehicles, ETVs, or VERTOL flyers. It operates from four immense towers situated around the outer perimeter of the city. Response time to an outside attack is measured in seconds. Another branch of CS handles internal problems dealing with Genai, dealing with any echan threat that emerges in the commune and acting as police liaison for criminal elements that evade the yoriki and cross into Angel proper.

Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d4, Driving d4, Fighting d6, Knowledge (technology-TL2) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Piloting d4, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6, Tracking d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0 (-2 vs echans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5;

Toughness 5

Hindrances: Techan*, two minor

Edges: Command, Command Presence, Natural Leader, Worldly Recluse*

GENAI XIAOLIN

(Novice)

Once, the famous yellow-robed Xiaolin monks were what someone thought of when the term 'kung fu' was mentioned – but that was before the expanding borders of Kakodomania forced a mass exodus from east Asia. Now, only two Xiaolin temples are believed to still exist

anywhere in the world, one of which is located within the very shadow of the great temple of Genai-Dilong. Monks of the temple ponder the ultimate koan: how the techan and echan worlds are truly the same, and how the clear differences between them mean nothing. To that end, they accept disciples from both backgrounds equally, and they are encouraged to travel beyond the walls to experience as much of both worlds as they can in their search for enlightenment.

Species: Human (techan or echan)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Buddhism) d4, Notice d6, Taunt d6, +2 additional skill points (+3 if techan).

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan or Techan*, Heroic, Loyal, Pacifist (minor)

Edges: Martial Artist, Sweep

Note: This archetype does not come with +500uc starting funds.

MANN

(East Cross)

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

A dark and forbidding fortress bastion just across the water from the bastion of York, Mann considers itself the only true remnant of the human race. It is ruled by a brutally repressive and mysterious theocratic oligarchy that values technology as the highest achievement of mankind. Unlike Angel, bristling with lights and life, Mann looks dead and deserted. The only time movement is ever evident upon its outer wall is when it fires on approaching targets. No one outside knows how the city was built, how it sustains itself with no external trade, or how the residents inside developed such a technological level surpassing all others on the continent. Those who leave it never speak of such things, out of terror that someday the city's masters may track them down and silence them if they reveal the bastion's secrets.

Tech Level: 5. Mann is the most technologically advanced of the Canam bastions, and also the most fiercely protective of that technology, sending covert agents into the world to eliminate anybody who might compromise their secrets. This technology is ubiquitous and largely invisible to its citizens, most of whom have no real technical knowledge at all and are conditioned to think of scientific advancement as a divine miracle.

Names: Pure Englo-Lingo is the only language spoken in Mann, and their names have a strongly Teutonic cast to them.

Examples: Adolphus Rasmussen, Henrietta Schelber,



Mila Eisdottir, Niermann Kessler, Olga Vandeker, Theodor Hanssen

NEW EDGE GLORY TO MANKIND

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6+, Human from Mann

You cannot fail knowledge rolls related to scientific knowledge. However, unless you get a raise on the roll, any information you recall is intermixed with an equal amount of incomprehensible mysticism, which may or may not have a basis in reality.

MANN ARCHETYPES COVENANT AGENT

(Seasoned)

The secret society known as ‘the Covenant’ conducts all of Mann’s anti-echa operations outside the bastion. Their primary duty is the retrieval or destruction of any of the bastion’s secrets that manage to escape the walls (including those inside the heads of its wayward citizens), and their ultimate goal is the destruction of all echa. However, those who work outside for too long tend to develop doubts as to the purity of their vision. They know that outright betrayal will result in nothing but their own speedy demise at the hands of one of their comrades, so they continue to toe the line as long as possible while subverting their own orders. Inevitably the day will come when they have to make a break with home once and for all – but hopefully only after

they’ve managed to steal a covenant exo-suit and fake their own death.

Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Investigation d6, Knowledge (East Cross region) d4, Knowledge (technology-TL5) d6, Notice d8, Piloting d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6, Tracking d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0 (-2 vs echans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5;

Toughness 5

Hindrances: Techan*, Vow (minor: serve the Covenant), one minor.

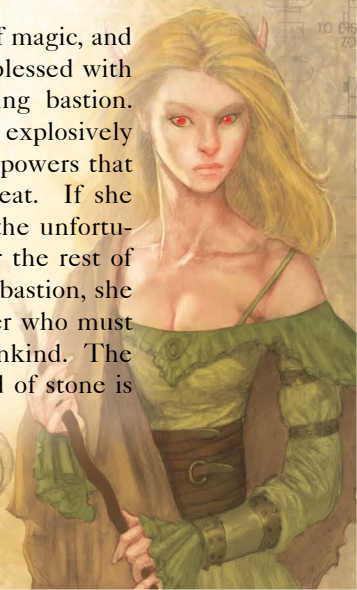
Edges: Connections (the Covenant), Glory to Mankind*

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INFECTED

(Novice)

Even Mann is not immune to the vagaries of magic, and it is not unknown for one of the rare souls blessed with innate power is born into the magic-hating bastion. Such people usually awaken to their powers explosively and immediately draw the attention of the powers that be, who take steps to exterminate the threat. If she manages to escape the first men in black, the unfortunate tuner is doomed to run from them for the rest of her life – even if she manages to escape the bastion, she represents the ultimate anathema, a monster who must be struck down in the name of God and Mankind. The power to summon bolts of flame or a shield of stone is little comfort.





Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Armor d6, Bolt d6, Fighting d4, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (technology-TL5) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d6, Survival d4, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 3; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan (major)*, Wanted (major)

Edges: Arcane Background: Incarnate* (choose an element), New Power

Power Points: 20

Note: This archetype does not come with +500uc starting funds.

Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d4, Healing d4, Investigation d8, Knowledge (history) d4, Knowledge (technology-TL5) d8, Lockpicking d4, Notice d6+2, Repair d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4, Streetwise d4, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0 (-2 vs echans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Techan*, Wanted (major), Cautious, one minor.

Edges: Alertness, McGyver

Note: This archetype does not come with +500uc starting funds.

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THOUGHT CRIMINAL

(Novice)

The average citizens of Mann are taught that technology is a gift from God and science is a divine miracle, and like most theocracies, those that rule are keen to prevent their people from thinking too hard about how miracles work. The brainwashing doesn't always work, however. Sometimes a naturally curious individual stumbles across forbidden knowledge by accident, and sometimes a deserter from the intelligentsia takes an apprentice from the general populace. Such people must go into hiding to prevent immediate and lethal retribution for the crime of independent thinking, but fortunately, Mann is full of maintenance tunnels and other hidden spaces, where a tech-savvy thought criminal can hide herself away for years if she's careful.

SELKIRK

(Dianaso)

"Six in the day

Six in the shade

Half at play

While the others trade

A shovel in the ground

Beats a rifle in the hand

When the dwarves come round

Charge the military band."

Built inside and on the slopes of a mountain in the northern Nankani range, the most magical region in Canam, Selkirk would be the most isolated of bastions if it were not for their friendly relations with the narros nation of Fargon to the north and the loose confederation of states in the nearby Seliquam river valley. The bastion's entire population belongs to a socialist corpo-



ration and is cross-trained in every aspect of corporate life: though most have one primary profession, everyone is required to spend a certain percentage of the year in the mines and in military service. Selkirk also has a strong sporting tradition, with rugby and wrestling being the national sports.

Tech Level: 3 – for the most part. Deep within the mountain, the rampant magical influences from outside are minimized, allowing for a higher general standard of technology, but the nearer to the slopes, the more susceptible things become to disruption. Thankfully, Selkirk’s technology is largely based on the principles of magnetism, which remain unaffected by Attricana’s influence, so the magnetic trains that are vital to life in the bastion are generally reliable. Selkirk citizens are also better at dealing with disruption than most, and build low-tech redundancies into most of their conveniences.

Names: Selkirk’s isolation and focus has made its population very homogenous and its language very utilitarian. Most of the original population was ethnically of Scottish, Irish, and Welsh extraction, with the result

that fully fifty percent of the population has the surname ‘Brown,’ ‘Jones,’ ‘Owen,’ ‘Smith,’ or ‘Walsh’.

Examples: Andrew Walsh, Maisie Nelson, Moira Owen, Patrick Kelso, Sean Smith, Tanith Westenra

NEW EDGES MINER’S EYES

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Human from Selkirk

You have low-light vision.

SELKIRK BRAWLER

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Strength d8+, Martial Artist, Human from Selkirk or Narros from Fargon

Selkirk’s variant on rugby is actually a full-contact combat sport that incorporates several professional wrestling techniques as well as quite a few moves more commonly associated with dirty street brawling. You gain +2 to opposed Strength and Fighting rolls against an opponent in a grapple (not necessarily a grapple that you are

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involved in: the bonus also applies if you are in a scrum with someone else).

SELKIRK ARCHETYPES

BRAWLER

(Novice)

Selkirk has developed a unique martial art, although the appellation 'art' is hotly debated among those who have witnessed it in action. Derived from scrum tactics in their rugby-like national sport, it is a wrestling style that incorporates many tactics that under other circumstances might be considered 'dirty fighting', only drawing the line at biting and clawing: there is no such thing as 'below the belt' in Selkirk brawling. This style of unarmed combat has, strangely, drawn much acclaim from the narros of Fargon, despite their more refined traditional martial arts. There is an annual fighting tournament in Thos Thalagos which draws many Selkirk miners eager to test their might against the stonebones – and more than a few go home with the belt.

Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Gambling d4, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (technology-TL3) d6, Notice d4, Streetwise d4, Taunt d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0 (-2 against echans outside Fargon and Seliquam); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Techan*, Overconfident, one minor

Edges: Brawny, Martial Artist, Selkirk Brawler*

Note: This archetype does not come with +500uc starting funds.

MINING SUPERVISOR

(Novice)

Selkirk's livelihood is centered around mining, and each mining team needs a foreman – someone who stands between the miners (who always need better equipment and working conditions) and the bureaucrats (who usually find excuses to deny them better equipment and working conditions). The foreman might not be the most popular person on the team, but she's the one who can get the workers to keep working despite their crappy conditions, and can convince the higher-ups to pony up the cash for new drills every so often.

Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Driving d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (mining) d6, Knowledge (technology-TL3) d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Shooting d4, Taunt d4, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0 (-2 against echans outside Fargon and Seliquam); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Techan*, Loyal, Phobia (agoraphobia)

Edges: Connections (TERMINAM), Miner's Eyes*

OROBAS SPECIALIST

(Seasoned)

The Selkirk defense authority, unlike many other interdiction forces from bastions, doesn't consider echans their enemy. Most Orobas missions entail escorting and protecting Fargon and Seliquam patrols through the Selkirk controlled section of the Dianaso pass. Other missions include scouting and recon outside the Dianaso pass, as well as interfacing with the Train Guard to defend against encroachment from Xixion. Orobas personnel are usually selected from the mining population and trained separately. Already used to working in groups, the operatives quickly learn to offset each other's weaknesses and operate as a cohesive unit. They seldom display internal personality conflicts and stay together, even when on vacation. While the name 'Orobas' is almost certainly an acronym for something (nobody knows what: it doesn't appear on any official documentation and if the members themselves are told, they don't bother to relay that information to outsiders) the organization shares its name with a goetic demon which always speaks the truth. Members of Orobas in turn can never be swayed from their objective. An Orobas unit will fight to the last man to fulfill a task even if the cause seems hopeless. However, the demon is also able to change its shape, and so the Orobas unit is given broad leeway to adapt its tactics: as long as the mission is accomplished, the unit's superiors don't care how they accomplish it.

Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Dianaso region) d4, Knowledge (technology-TL3) d6, Notice d6, Repair d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Tracking d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0 (-2 against echans outside Fargon and Seliquam); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Curious, Techan*

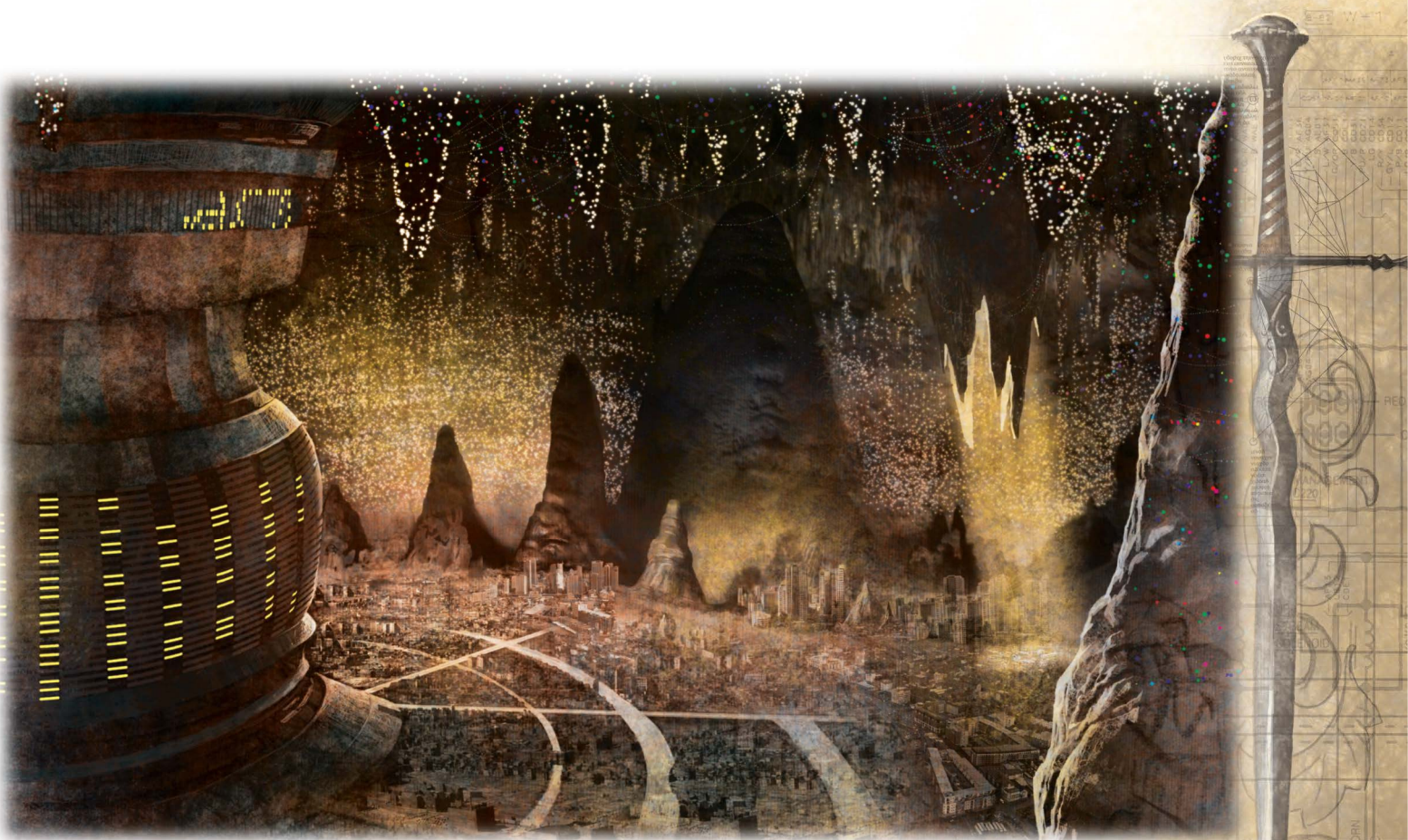
Edges: Dodge, Miner's Eyes*, one combat edge.

SIERRA MADRE

(Kesakas)

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

The most remote of all bastions, located within an underground cavern far to the south of Canam and defended by both a brutally effective security system and hordes of paleozoic beasts in the canyons above, Sierra Madre is quite content to live in isolation: every need of its population is provided for, it enjoys plentiful clean energy from a geothermal tap, and it boasts the best EDF-shielding of any bastion, making its technology some of the most reliable in the world. Sierra Madre's people are the most laid-back of any techan population, and follows a philosophy of limitless self-expression and



improvement. The only drawback is that it is also one of the least advanced bastions, continuing to make use of technology that became obsolete centuries ago elsewhere. To that end, secret agents frequently leave the city, often posing as ambassadors or tourists, to steal technology from other bastions and bring it back for reverse-engineering.

Tech Level: 4, although it doesn't look it for the most part. Sierra Madre's technology embraces what might be considered a 'retro' aesthetic, and there are noticeable gaps in its technological infrastructure. It has the most advanced shielding technology on the continent, as well as vehicle designs and electrical power systems that would make a Mannite green with envy – and yet it still uses flat-panel TVs and monitors (a technology largely eclipsed by 3D holography almost everywhere else) and prefers chemical-based projectiles to advanced energy weapons. These kinds of idiosyncrasies are common throughout the bastion, with high technology standing side-by-side with something that looks like it might have come out of a pre-Hammer bomb shelter – but then again, looks can be deceiving.

Names: Much of the bastion's original population was of Latin descent, and their propensity for large extended families has resulted in almost every Madrian having a surname derived from Spanish roots even if they originally came from other ethnic stock.

Examples: Andre Semana, Cynthia Calabrea, Maria Jimenez, Sancho Milardes, Tomas Real, Zanetta Valterras

NEW EDGE APOCALYPSE-PROOFING

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Human from Sierra Madre

You treat any Sierra Madre-made device you are carrying as if it were one TL lower for purposes of disruption. Additionally, whenever a disruption event occurs to you, any additional Sierra Madre-made devices you are carrying cannot be affected by raises on the disruption roll.

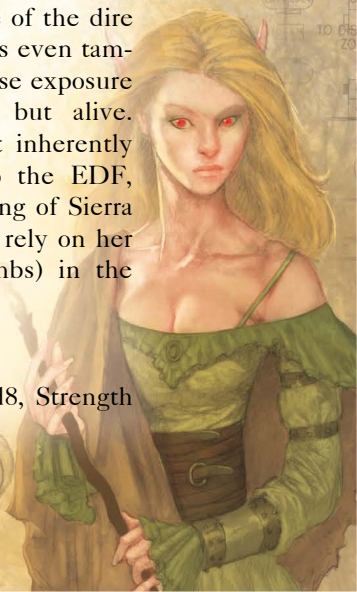
SIERRA MADRE ARCHETYPES CANYON RANGER

(Seasoned)

For the most part, those leaving the bastion rely on local guides through the mazelands of Kesakas, but there are a rare few who brave the labyrinthine ranges and canyons as a test of character. They learn the passages through the mountains, and the nature-lore of the dire beasts that make their homes there, perhaps even taming one as a mount or companion. This close exposure to nature usually leaves them scarred, but alive. Thankfully, the beasts of Kesakas are not inherently magical and do not contribute greatly to the EDF, which means that with the superior shielding of Sierra Madre technology, a ranger can reasonably rely on her weapons (and, if necessary, prosthetic limbs) in the wild.

Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength





d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Kesakas region) d6, Knowledge (technology-TL4) d6, Notice d6+2, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Tracking d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0 (-2 vs echans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5;

Toughness 5

Hindrances: Techan*, two minor; One Arm, One Eye, or One Leg (choose one)

Edges: Alertness, Apocalypse-Proofing*; Brave or Beast Master (choose one)

PISTOLERO

(Seasoned)

From the flamboyant culture of Sierra Madre comes the natural successor to the ancient gunslingers of legend. Her abilities are naturally canny skills developed over years of hard training and discipline. She possesses the capacity to be in the right place at the right time in close combat to place a perfect shot. She prefers to present herself in close quarters, preventing enemies from striking from a distance, maneuvering to get close, maximizing her firing potential while reducing the capacity to be hit in return. It is not unheard of for a pistolero to jump in the midst of an enemy squad, take every one down at point blank range, and walk away without a scratch.





Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Climbing d4, Gambling d4, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (technology-TL4) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d10, Taunt d8, +3 additional skill points.

Charisma +0 (-2 vs echans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2;

Toughness 4

Hindrances: Arrogant, Techan*

Edges: Bullet Ballet*, Equilibrium*, Quick-Draw

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AGENT

(Novice)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is ostensibly Sierra Madre's ambassadorial service, but is more interested in subversion and intelligence gathering than anything else. Even though flaunting advances few other bastions even dream of, Sierra Madre still lacks many developments even bastions like York claim. This comes from the lack of outside threats and from a naïve, narrow-minded population. Groups sent out from the subterranean bastion often travel north to 'acquire' technology from others, especially York and Angel (Mann remains a hard target and most attempting entry are killed upon discovery, and Selkirk is just plain hard to get to). Ministry agents are trained to use their personal magnetism and winning ways whenever possible to obtain what they need, and only use stealth or the threat of force when absolutely necessary.

Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Gambling d4, Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (bastions) d4, Knowledge (technology-TL4) d6, Lockpicking d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d4, Stealth d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +4 (+2 vs echans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2;

Toughness 5

Hindrances: Curious, Techan*

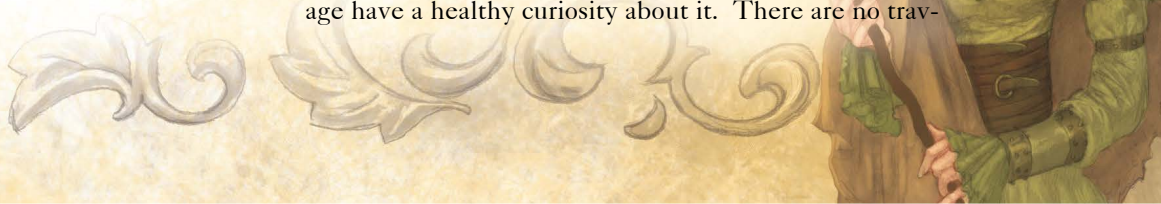
Edges: Attractive, Charismatic

YORK

(East Cross)

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

Located on the eastern seaboard, York is the only bastion that does not attempt to isolate itself from the magical world. In fact, echans are permitted to travel freely along the main road through the bastion to the docks with the purchase of an inexpensive pass, although they are discouraged from mingling outside of defined areas. Instead of a wall, York is protected by a wide swathe of uninhabited plains patrolled by robots. However, tolerance of magic does not equate to acceptance of it. Due to the prevalence of passing magic users in York, most residents neither fear nor loathe the echans: they just prefer living their lives with air conditioning, elevators, and parking meters. The people of York are divided in their view of the fantasy world, but a sizeable percentage have a healthy curiosity about it. There are no trav-



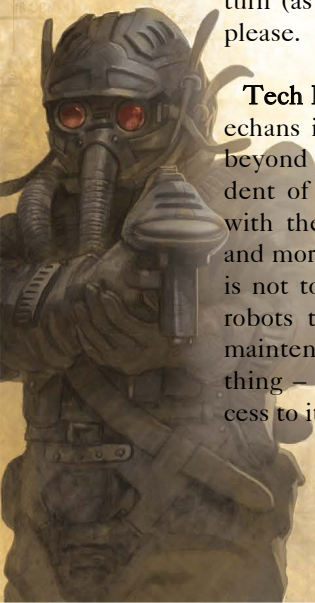


el restrictions on York citizens, who can leave and return (as long as they have not become echan) as they please.

Tech Level: 0-1. The down side of its open policy for echan is that York, for the most part, cannot advance beyond a basic level of technology. A pre-Hammer resident of the region would probably feel right at home with the available conveniences, which become more and more unreliable further from the city's center. This is not to say that higher technology is unknown – the robots that make up most of the city's military and maintenance force certainly look very flash, for one thing – but the average person doesn't have much access to it.

Names: York's population has always been ethnically diverse, but with a large population that speaks Englo-Lingo as a first language (even though it is not the primary language of the bastion), most names have a strong French or Germanic influence.

Examples: Celeste Dupont, Clement Morel, Jeanne Milokovic, Konrad Tombs, Marie Kandler, Theo Vandersaar



NEW EDGE OLD RELIABLE

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Human from York

Sometimes, things just work like they're supposed to. Choose one of your TL1 devices. It is treated as TL0 for purposes of disruption (if it is a weapon, it is considered immune). If you ever lose or sell the item, you can designate a different one at the start of the next game session.

YORK ARCHETYPES GUN DANCER

(Seasoned)

'Gun dancer' is a slang term attached to those individuals exhibiting remarkable skill in the 'martial art' of analyzing enemies in a gunfight and capitalizing on their weaknesses. There is no formal academy or dojo where one acquires the title: it is acquired through the school of hard knocks, its warriors emerging with a prowess exceeding the others – a natural grasp of the skills, as if never needing to be taught. Gun dancers are able to examine a target in an eyeblink and determine the perfect point at which to inflict the greatest harm. In addition, they have developed a harmony with the area around them, always analyzing their surroundings for the best cover and field of fire. This allows them to avoid hits while still maintaining their concentration on the target.

Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d4, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (mathematics) d6, Knowledge (technology-TL1) d6, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Streetwise d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0 (-2 vs echans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2; **Toughness** 54

Hindrances: Techan*, Cautious, one major, one minor
Edges: Equilibrium*, Marksman, Old Reliable*

IRON SONS MERCENARY

(Novice)

The Iron Sons is the largest techan free company operating in the world. They command thousands of troops through a decentralized control network connected via a series of mobile command posts. They operate fixed offices in both York and Angel, though their operations are outlawed practically everywhere else (and even Angel officially calls them a terrorist organization and does not allow them to actually enter the bastion). Although the Sons are classed as mercenaries, and are easy to hire out, they receive their primary income through York and Angel service contracts. This does not account for their entire budget, and it's believed the company receives significant investment from unknown third parties

using the Sons as their proxy in Canam. The objective of these third parties is shared by most others that hire out the Sons—destroy the world of echa and return the planet back under control of man. While some cells are known to be lenient if not diplomatic in their relations with fantasy, most are ruthless.

Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Driving d4, Fighting d6, Knowledge (East Cross region) d4, Knowledge (technology-TL1) d6, Notice d4, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d4, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0 (-2 vs echans, -4 vs fae); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Bigot (fae)*, Techan*, one minor

Edges: Extraction, Gaming Avatar*

YSDF INVESTIGATOR

(Novice)

The York Self-Defense Force investigator is the police detective's police detective. Leave the investigation of ordinary crimes to the regular police – the investigator's job is the hard cases, often involving dead elves in back alleys, ritualistic murders, and other magic-related crimes. Not to say that they don't investigate more mundane atrocities as well, but in a city that stands poised between reality and fantasy, the uncanny crimes are far more common than most people suspect. Most investigators see more horrors on their first day on the job than other police see in their entire careers, so it's not surprising that many of them self-medicate in their off hours just to keep themselves sane.

Species: Techan human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d4, Investigation d8+2, Knowledge (technology-TL1) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Shooting d6, Streetwise d8+2, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0 (-2 vs echans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Techan*, Habit (major), two minor

Edges: Investigator, Old Reliable*





EQUIPMENT

Although Earth now resembles the ancient landscapes of fantasy, medieval it is not. The push for survival did not retard progress, and those building the first cities after gate-fall, even if outside the first fledging bastions, still possessed enough talent to build insulated housing and double-paned glass. Much basic technology still works most of the time, despite the occasional hiccup. Most of all, the knowledge from thousands of years of trial and error remained. The armor of today is lighter, stronger, and more maneuverable than the armor of legend. Swords are sharper and more balanced. Purely mechanical devices below a certain complexity, especially agricultural machinery, are retooled to accept animal or human power. Additionally, the functional limits of technology vary from place to place according to the density of the EDF. Prevented from developing complicated machines, many survivors delved into new areas, pioneers in alternative paths of development previously considered obsolete given the onset of the industrial revolution.

Alongside these innovations, bastions have employed their advanced expertise to weaving better clothes and forging better armor. Originally intended only for their own populations, word of the value of these goods has spread beyond their walls. Though their high tech weapons and devices are useless on the outside, bastions could still sell mass-produced, durable creature comforts, and even advanced versions of low-tech technologies, replacing tempered steel with carbon nanotubes, wood with advanced plastics, wool and cotton with synthetic fibers. This resulted in a torrent of new exports, boosting the economies of growing nations. The processes to create these items in bulk necessitates the use of bastion knowledge and machinery, methods only replicated where the EDF is low or virtually nonexistent; thus markets usually sell these items for outrageous markups. Bastions like Angel and especially York turned this into a substantial windfall as the money turned in (gold, silver, and platinum) could be converted into raw materials. Disruption-immune bastion exports have found their way across the echan countryside, employed by almost every manner of individual, though often only held by human hands. Many of the more old-fashioned fae, especially laudenians and chaparrans, despise these items.

The chief obstacle faced in open echa to a lifestyle not entirely unlike that of, say, the mid-20th century pre-Hammer is not lack of knowledge and development, but the lack of the dedicated infrastructure required to take advantage of it. The rare echans granted a peek inside the bastions (and allowed to come out again) often wax rhapsodical about two things: electric lighting and flush toilets. In fact, indoor plumbing is far from an impossibility in echan communities, powered as it is entirely by simple mechanical processes such as pressure and gravity – what most of echa lacks is the exten-

sive sewage and water table management facilities necessary to maintain such conveniences (even so, many present-day castles are equipped with running water and modern lavatorial facilities). Electricity is more problematic: though the processes for generating it work normally, even simple batteries lose their charge two to ten times faster than in techan communities, and even the most conductive wiring is incapable of carrying a current more than five miles. Thus, electric power is rarely seen in echa except in a few enterprising mountain villages who have refitted their mills with simple hydroelectric or wind-powered generators.

The greatest distinction between technology and magic is progress. Technology improves as a civilization endeavors to better itself. The desire to advance from a primitive design encourages the development of better materials, better processes, and better machines. There has never been a point where a society was content with what it had achieved. Based in the most basic evolutionary drive, a species must expand both in knowledge and in scope in order to remain competitive against rivals. These rivals include other nations as well as other species. This compulsory habit in humans is almost totally absent in non-evolved species like the fae, and even magically uplifted species like the kodiaks are slow to embrace this biological obligation to subsume or subjugate underdeveloped people, building upon a ruined foundation of past accomplishments.

Magic does not improve; when it changes, it does so on its own, and in random and unpredictable ways. Creatures of magic are the same the world over, except when they devolve, and even then the mutation usually takes the same form whenever it occurs from the same stock. The spells of yesteryear are the same cast today. Arcane knowledge and the ways of Pleroma passed down from the dragons in the previous age are finite. Though occasionally new spells are uncovered, they have not improved the knowledge of the language or how it is able to alter the world when uttered. No matter how powerful magic is, it does have limits, and only the most powerful dragons seem capable of transcending those limits. Additionally, the only creatures gifted with such enlightenment about Pleroma are creatures without the biological compulsion to better their species. Therefore there has never been an attempt by the fae to improve upon it, and a human lifetime is too severely limited to understand all the chaotic variables associated with magic.

With this impediment, many echalogians on both sides of the magical/technological axis have predicted that eventually, science will inevitably discover how to overcome their sensitivity to magical effects; theories of quantum mechanics already posit machines capable of making minute adjustments to their own inner workings to compensate for the vagaries of the EDF. Additionally, bastions like Porto and Mann have put forward proposals for creating a field that simulates a negative

energy signature not unlike the energy from Ixindar. This would result in an “anti-magic field” that would render all magic within it inert. If successful, the retaking of the Earth by men and machines would be inevitable.

UNIVERSAL CREDITS (UC)

It would be great to think that one could pass into the walls of a city of industry with a bag of gold and buy a laser gun. Alas, it is not that simple. Because of bastions’ desperate need for resources, currency is printed on the cheapest of materials. They all commonly feature a half-plastic/half paper medium impossible to copy with more than 300 counterfeit measures including holographic imagery and computer encoding. Each has special imprinting from its home bastion. No bastion currency can be exchanged with any other bastion currency. For the sake of clarity, these moneys are given the term Universal Credits (uc), for they represent the legal tender of all bastion currency.

Various Bastion Currencies: Angel dollar, Mann credit, Sierra Madre bar, Selkirk shilling, and York dollar.

Although you cannot trade one bastion currency for another bastion currency, they are all considered equal in value in regards to echan currency. Bastions are always happy to convert echan currency into their own denominations, because echan currency is worth the value of its metal, and bastions are always in the need for echan currency. Converting money the other way generally involves finding a black-marketeer, who will exchange uc for gold at a ruinous markup; most people leaving a bastion find it easier and more economical to convert their money into exportable trade goods and sell them at the first large market town outside.

Every bastion except Mann will accept echan currency regardless of its national stamp at its equivalent value in universal credits. There are no fractions or change and exchange banks will not accept lower value currencies unless they add up to a single uc. Banks will also not give out or return echan currency as they are smelted and put to applicable use; gold in particular is essential, as most modern electrical wiring is made from it due to its total impermeability to all but dragons’ magic. No bastions accept unique echan currency.

TECH LEVELS

Tech levels indicate the differences between the bastions. Some of these city-states reached pinnacles of advancement before others. Some struggled to survive while others flourished. With the EDF making near-instantaneous long-range communication impossible, the bastions grew and developed separately from their brethren. After 500 years, they are not about to start sharing. Bastions would not only fight for technology but for the people possessing the knowledge to build it. Tech levels indicate the possible origin of a weapon as well as its damage potential. Anyone finding and using



THE TREASURE CONUNDRUM

Alas, unlike echans, techan characters will seldom (if ever) find their equipment in a dragon’s lair. This means techans must return to a bastion or techan merchant to re-arm and upgrade their technology or depend on a trained engineer to build arms or armor over a long period of time. Nothing they find in field will be applicable to them (except as scrap).

Techans in the field will never conveniently find a more powerful weapon after they slay the next big monster, and restocking perishables such as batteries, ammunition, and the contents of supply kits is problematic when separated from industry. In long, protracted adventures, this may create problems. Vehicles are a wise base of operations as they may hold many times over the ammunition capacity of a single techan character. This may solve the problematic issue of ammunition but not about the eventual need to upgrade technology. Alas, the echan wilderness is not called a wasteland by the techans for nothing. The GM has options to offset this. In the end, very little is more satisfying than returning to a bastion with your holds overflowing with gold.


high tech gear is skittish about flaunting it in a lower-TL bastion for fear it will be confiscated, dismantled, and reverse engineered.

Six tech levels exist. These are broad categorizations reflecting both how advanced a device is and how easily disrupted it is by EDF. There are often exceptions when a bastion develops a device higher than their stated tech level. Higher tech level bastions gain access to all levels below them. ‘Tech Level’ is not a term that is used in-universe, but most bastions are broadly aware of the tiers of distinction between one another and have their own methods of classifying those differences.

TECH LEVEL 0 (d4)

This level covers all technological development from the early industrial level to the start of the microchip





revolution. Most, but not all TL0 technology is immune to disruption, although this depends on the strength of the local EDF, and as always, the less advanced the machine, the safer.

Vehicles: Aircraft utilize aero-forms with jet engines or propellers. Vehicles roll on wheels but possess traction control and anti-lock brakes. Military craft flaunt armor and tank treads. Fly by wire.

Weapons: Bolt action and flechette rounds fire from most guns. Electronically stacked projectiles and caseless ammunition. Basic energy weapons are limited to short range electric shocks.

Medical: Natural healing mostly, assisted by EKGs and X-Ray machines. Surgery can cure most wounds, but recovery can last a while.

TECH LEVEL 1 (d6)

At this level, almost every form of technology has integrated electronics and advanced computer control.

Vehicles: Ground vehicles now sport computer navigation, climate control, and electronic stability. Aircraft can now fly themselves if need be. Advanced aerospace has given way to vectored thrust and vertical-take-off aircraft.

Weapons: Computer tracking and targeting. Infrared and thermal imaging is available, but not standard. Firearms haven't changed but have grown more complicated with advanced reloading and higher firing rates. Advances in construction make them lighter with larger calibers.

Medical: Computer diagnostic beds, MRIs, and robotic assisted surgery.

TECH LEVEL 2 (d8)

This is a liminal stage. Old technologies are simultaneously being advanced and refined at the same time as their inevitable (but still somewhat primitive) replacements are entering circulation. This is the last tech level that an observer from the 21st century pre-Hammer might still find familiar.

Vehicles: Vertical take-off fan craft and wingless jets keep aircraft aloft, are much more stable, and can fly rings around more primitive craft. Aircraft designs are no longer dominated by their massive aero-forms. Ground vehicles still use wheels but now mass transit magnetic vehicles appear as an alternative.

Weapons: Bolt weapons remain the choice for most but the way they fire improves. Railcannons and self-propelled projectiles exist, but are not common.

Medical: Rapid healing injections, designer drugs, gene therapy, and beneficial viruses. Healing time cut in half with medical attention.

TECH LEVEL 3 (d10)

Refinements in the manipulation of magnetic fields and energy levels characterize this stage.

Vehicles: Magnetic vehicles reduce in size and now replace wheels in common transport. Fanjets shrink and become more efficient.

Weapons: The beginning of basic laser weaponry. Advanced magnetics. Prototype power armor appears.

Medical: Most known diseases are curable. Healing time cut to one-third with medical attention. Nano healing is in its infancy.

TECH LEVEL 4 (d12)

At this level, energy is almost as freely manipulable as matter and nanotechnology is ubiquitous.

Vehicles: Robots appear beyond the role of "dumb tool." Power armor is mass produced. Wheeled traffic virtually nonexistent or, if it exists, can traverse any terrain. Ramjets shrink and provide massive thrust in small packages, revolutionizing transportation outside the magnetic-traffic.

Weapons: Laser weapons "tunable." Plasma weaponry. Bolt weapons are outdated.

Medical: Nanotechnology can heal any wounds and even regenerate limbs.

TECH LEVEL 5 (d12+2)

Any sufficiently advanced technology would be indistinguishable from magic, if magic didn't break sufficiently advanced technology.

Vehicles: Antigravity replaces all previous transportation.

Weapons: Disruptors, vapor rifles, disintegrator weaponry.

Medical: Complete body reconstruction.

APPLICATION OF TECH LEVELS

An item's listed tech level die can be used in place of its user's own trait die if the user's die is lower for the applicable function (if the user is unskilled, it allows her to use the skill at d4 instead of untrained). A tech level 3 gun, for example, grants a d10 in place of the user's Shooting skill, unless the wielder has no Shooting skill or has it at d12 or higher. The tech level also deter-

mines how easily the item is affected by disruption (see below) and affects the difficulty of repairs and modifications to the item.

BATTERY CELLS

Many of the objects in the following sections require batteries. Batteries are considered background flavor in most cases (like ammunition), but they can be considered an attrition resource, and if their absence is compelled, finding the right type of batteries can be the basis of an adventure. Also, they have a tendency to explode when seriously disrupted or shot.

Battery Classes: The three different types of battery cells are as follows:

Basic (B): These cells are for smaller items. Ten cells weigh 1 lb and cost 10uc.

Medium (M): These cells power many weapons, smaller vehicles, and larger equipment. One cell weighs 0.25 lb and costs 25uc.

High (H): These cells are large, powerful, and usually reserved for huge weapons and massive energy equipment, such as large vehicles and exo-armor. One cell weighs 2 lbs and costs 50uc.

Optional Battery Rule: Outside of a bastion, all exposed batteries will lose their charge in a day unless protected (via muffler bags or crates, or mounted in weapons or devices).

GENERIC FIREARMS & PROPERTIES

When you come right down to it, most guns are basically the same in game terms – the major differences are the special properties. Rather than using a long table describing every possible combination of weapon traits, most guns can be customized from a single stat line, as

A COMPROMISE IN THE SETTING

Although realistically, bullets, batteries and devices that use them are unique to each bastion, certain rules are in place to make a techan game actually fun.

- Bullets of the same size category are interchangeable.
- Bastion batteries are compatible with other bastion batteries.
- Buying a lower TL item from a higher TL bastion still counts as the lower TL item. Further, the item is exactly the same in mechanics (though not necessarily in looks) as if the item was purchased from a lower TL bastion (a TL2 weapon from Selkirk works and is built exactly the same way as a TL2 weapon from Mann).

follows:

- Choose your weapon type (pistol, rifle, or heavy weapon) and determine its tech level.
- Select two weapon properties (described below) for free. A weapon cannot have more than one ammunition property, and certain properties may have other properties as prerequisites (for instance, the Capacitor property requires a Plasma weapon). You cannot select a property twice unless stated otherwise.
- You can select up to two additional properties by selecting one weapon hindrance (see below; a minor weapon hindrance gives you one additional property, a major one gives two).
- Apply all properties' modifiers to the weapon's stat line. Range modifiers apply only to short range unless stated otherwise: double the short range to get the medium range, and then double the medium range to get the long range.
- Add all properties' cost modifiers to the base cost, and then multiply the modified cost by the tech level (or by .75 for TL0) to get the final cost.

This does not apply to specialty weapons.

WEAPON PROPERTIES

ANTI-ARMOR

(TL 0-5)

Requirement: Heavy weapon, Bulky hindrance

An anti-armor weapon is usually intended to be mounted on a vehicle for use against other vehicles.

Benefit: The weapon gains AP15, or AP30 if it gives up the auto property.

Drawback: If not mounted to a vehicle or exo-armor, a normal-sized person requires some sort of mount or tripod in order to use the weapon, and its wielder cannot move and fire on the same round, regardless of her Strength. Additionally, if the weapon's tech level is more than one level lower than the target's, its AP is reduced by 5.

Cost: Military

AUTOMATIC

(TL 0-5)

An automatic weapon can be used in single-shot mode or on autofire.

Benefit: The weapon gains either the 3RB or Auto ability as described in the core rulebook, and increases the weapon's RoF by 2. If the weapon already has 3RB or Auto (or you select this property twice), you can give the weapon the second ability in addition (and increase the RoF by another 2).

Cost: +30 each time

FIREARMS	RANGE	DAMAGE	ROF	COST	WEIGHT	SHOTS	MIN STR	NOTES
Pistol	15/30/60	2d6	1	150	4	9	—	Medium bullets/M
Rifle	30/60/120	2d8	1	200	10	15	—	Large bullets/M
Heavy Weapon	30/60/120	2d8	3	400	30	200	d10	Auto, HW, large bullets/H

*Use the standard ammunition size categories from the *Savage Worlds* core rulebook for bullets: energy weapons use the listed battery cell category.

BASIC CHEMICAL PROJECTILE (BCP)

(Ammunition; TL 0-3)

The earliest firearms used chemical explosives to propel its deadly shell toward its victim. Although the chemicals evolved as knowledge did, the result remained the same. Requiring no energy cell, standard ballistic firearms seldom broke down. Even in the largest, most advanced bastions, chemical firearms are still popular among those leaving the safety of their walls.

Benefit: The weapon gains AP1. You can select this property twice to give it AP2 (this increases the bullet size to Large if it wasn't already).

Cost: +0 (first time), +40 (second time)

CAPACITOR

(TL 4-5)

Requirement: Plasma ammunition property

Capacitor weapons resulted from plasma bottle research, combining elements from both plasma and laser technologies. With a capacitor weapon, the shooter can dial up the strength of the energy burst. The weapon charges up by siphoning extra energy from its cell.

Benefit: You can add 1 additional die of damage per additional level of charge (up to level 5), but this uses up an extra shot per attack for each level (so a 3-round burst at level 4 would use 12 shots).

Cost: +100

CASELESS

(TL 1-2)

Requirement: BCP ammunition property

Caseless weapons use unique clipless, caseless ammunition. A square-shaped round is the entire firing mechanism. The shell is encased inside a solid propellant coffin, connected to others, and fed as a clip. Each bullet, when fired, incinerates its case, ejecting the remnants with the bullet. This has two advantages: first, each clip can hold more shots, and second, the weapon does not leave behind an incriminating trail of shell casings.

Benefit: The weapon's maximum shots increases by 50%.

Cost: +15

EASILY CONCEALED

(TL 0-5)

Requirement: Pistol or rifle

Some weapons are specially designed to be easy to hide about the wielder's person while being instantly accessible. Holdout pistols are the most common, but many component sniper rifles are also designed with this in mind.

Benefit: You gain +4 to Stealth rolls made to conceal the weapon.

Drawback: You must either reduce the weapon's maximum shots by half or reduce its base range by -5 (in addition to any other modifications).

Cost: +5

ELECTRONICALLY STACKED PROJECTILE (ESP)

(TL 2-3)

Requirement: BCP ammunition property

No longer are bullets loaded from an external clip and launched via a firing pin. Now they are loaded directly into the barrel, separated only by the propellant. The concept dates back to traditional fireworks except the stacked projectile weapon does not need to fire its entire payload when ignited. Electrical pulses launch the bullets in the proper order. Misfires are pushed out by the next round, preventing backfire. This removes the need for a clip, a firing pin, or for that matter, any moving parts at all. The greatest advantage of this technology is a phenomenal firing rate, capable of discharging rounds literally as a stream of bullets.

Benefit: The weapon gains the Auto ability, its RoF becomes 4, and its maximum shots increases by 25%. If the weapon normally uses Large bullets, it is reduced to Medium: Medium is reduced to Small.

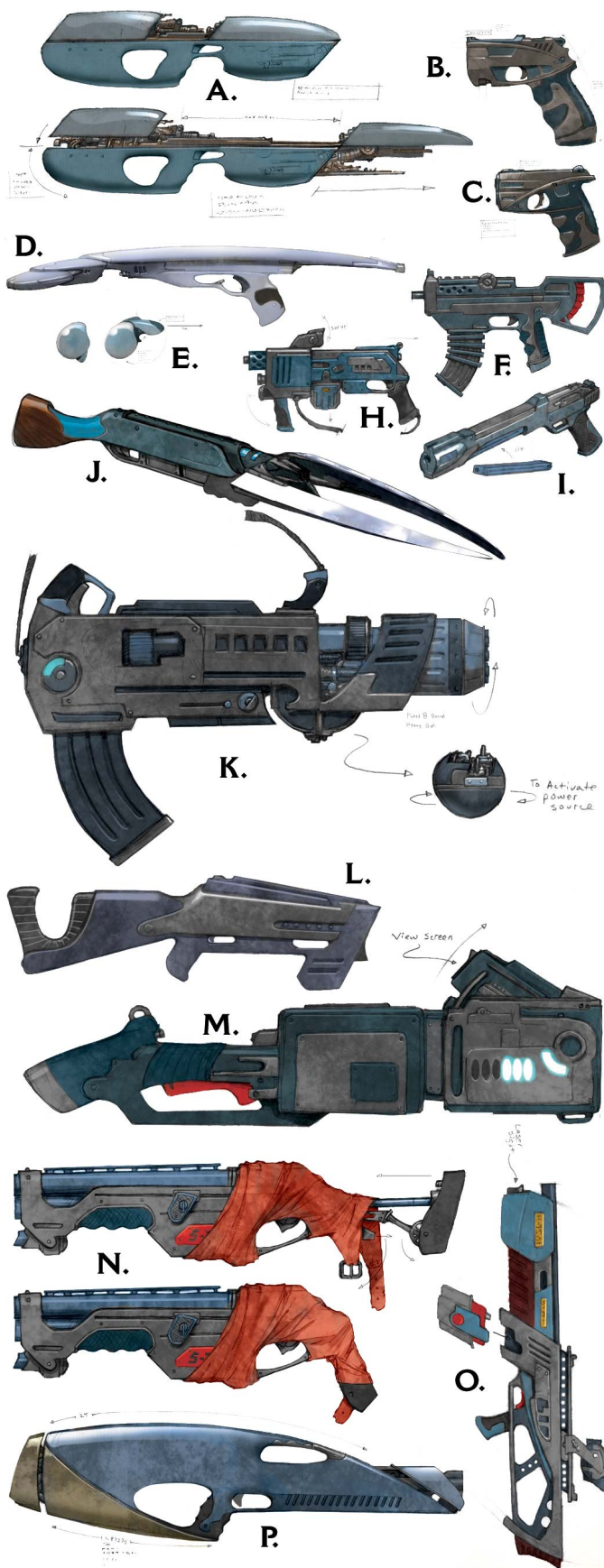
Cost: +60

EXPLOSIVE

(TL 2-4)

Requirement: SPP ammunition property

In addition to planted explosives, some weapons fire shells that detonate on impact with the target (or better yet, inside the target). As such weapons generally require greater rather than lesser precision to deal



- A. Plasma Rifle (Collapsed/Deployed)
- B. Caseless Pistol
- C. Pocket Pistol
- D. Pulse Carbine
- E. Plasma Grenade
- F. Submachine Gun
- G. SPP Rifle
- H. Rail Pistol
- I. Ion Rifle

- J. Rotary Cannon
- K. Thumper Laser Cannon
- L. Vapor Rifle
- M. Gauss Repeater (Medium & Large User Configuration)
- N. Caseless Rifle
- O. Pulse Capacitor Rifle

maximum damage to a target, they are more often seen as a form of covering fire or to soften up an enemy before a more straightforward assault.

Benefit: The weapon deals area damage according to the Small Burst Template. You can select this property a second time to increase the burst to Medium, and a third time to increase it to Large.

Cost: +30 (first time), +60 (second time), +120 (third time)

GUIDED

(TL 3-5)

Requirement: SPP ammunition property

These weapons assist in aiming after being fired. They may be heat-seeking, radar-guided, laser-guided, or even sonar-guided.

Benefit: Instead of making an attack with your Shooting roll, you make the roll to lock on (you still use all appropriate modifiers to the roll). If you fail to achieve a lock, you don't fire; if you do, the attack automatically hits unless the target can evade. The target has one round per range category to evade the attack by making an appropriate maneuvering roll at -4 (Boating/Driving/Piloting if in a vehicle, Riding if mounted, Climbing/Swimming or Agility otherwise): appropriate technological or magical countermeasures that stymie the guidance system negate the penalty (for instance, casting a ranged fire spell might interfere with a heat-seeking projectile, assuming that disruption doesn't take care of it first).

Cost: +80

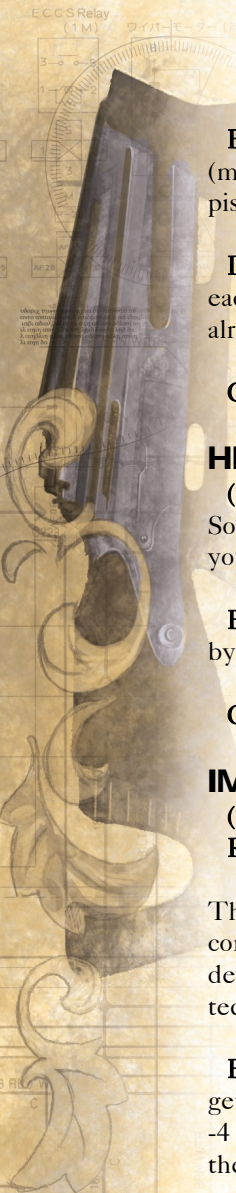
HIGH CALIBER

(TL0-5)

Requirement: Cannot have the Easily Concealed property

The size of the projectile and the force with which it is impelled are the arbiters of how damaging a projectile weapon is, while the ability of an energy weapon to focus its beam defines how much hurt it can dish out. Both of these abilities are affected by the size of the weapon's barrel.





Benefit: The weapon's damage die increases by 1 step (maximum d12). You can select this property once for a pistol, or twice for a pistol or heavy weapon.

Drawback: The weapon's weight increases by 10% for each time. Increase the bullet size to Large if it wasn't already.

Cost: +40 (first time), +60 (second time)

HIGH CAPACITY

(TL0-5)

Sometimes it doesn't matter how much stopping power your weapon has, only that it has consistent output.

Benefit: The maximum shots of the weapon increases by 25%. You can select this property multiple times.

Cost: +10 each time

IMMUNE TO DISRUPTION

(TL0)

Requirement: BCP ammunition property

These items, and they are few, use deliberately archaic construction to overcome the effects of EDF. Only TL0 devices can be immune: the same device at a higher tech level will disrupt like anything else.

Benefit: The weapon can only be disrupted by a targeted disruption or a critical collapse. The GM suffers a -4 penalty to the roll for a targeted disruption against the weapon.

Cost: +0

LASER

(Ammunition; TL4-5)

Any condensed, well-defined beam of light can be considered a laser. In history, the initial weapons concentrated radiation to a focal point, burning the target with intense heat: such beams were usually invisible, which is useful for stealth but less so for accuracy. Later developments increased the size, damage potential, and visibility of these beams.

Benefit: The weapon's range base range increases by +15. Additionally, if you succeed on a single-shot attack with a laser weapon, your next Shooting roll with the weapon gains a +1 bonus; if you succeed with a full-auto attack, each hit deals +1 damage (full-auto laser attacks are not subject to recoil penalties).

Cost: +70

MAGNETICALLY ACCELERATED PROJECTILE

(Coil or Rail) (Ammunition; TL 3-5)

Requirement: Rifle or heavy weapon

After standard chemical firearms, coil weapons and rail-guns are the most popular guns for techan soldiers in the echan wilderness, given the rare tendency of chemical ammunition to explode when directly exposed to magic. Magnetic fields are not affected by disruption, a welcome blessing to those living under Earth's blanket of protection. However, the specific process of accelerating metal shells using magnetism is complicated, and coil-based and rail-based technology fire their shells using different means. Because of their high speed, coil and rail rounds can easily penetrate anything less dense than concrete.

Benefit: The weapon's base range increases by +50 and it gains AP6 (coil weapon) or AP8 (rail weapon).

Cost: +100 (coil) or +150 (rail)

NUCLEAR

(Ammunition; TL4)

These are directed energy weapons similar to plasma and laser guns. Where a laser inflicts condensed radiation and plasma inflicts severe heat, weapons with the nuclear property inflict damage via a high-energy beam of atoms. Upon impact, they disrupt the molecular structure of the target. Tissue damage and nausea from radiation is an often side effect. This technology has been dubbed a "dirty solution", as it emerges frequently before the advancement of high-powered lasers and plasma weapons.

Benefit: The weapon's damage die increases by 1 step and its base range increases by +10. On a successful hit, the target must make a Vigor roll or take a -3 penalty to their Toughness against the hit. A target who survives the encounter may develop radiation sickness at a later date unless treated by TL2 or higher medicine or magic.

Cost: +120

PINCHER

(Ammunition; TL 3-5)

These weapons deliver an electromagnetic pulse that disrupts electrical systems. The massive electrical discharge may also have a temporary effect on a living creature's nervous system.

Benefit: This weapon does not inflict damage normally. Compare the weapon's damage to the target's Toughness (the average piece of electronic equipment has Toughness of 4). If it exceeds the Toughness, the item is disrupted (as if subject to a targeted disruption event) or the creature is Shaken (this can cause a wound





– the only way this weapon can be lethal) and cannot make Spirit rolls to recover for 1 round, +1 additional round per raise on the attack.

Cost: +25

PLASMA


(Ammunition; TL 4-5)

Any weapon employing ionized gas is considered a plasma weapon. This involves either using the magnetically conductive matter as a delivery device or as a weapon itself. Magnetism is one of the few scientific constants

not broken by the EDF: a plasma weapon fires a toroid of superheated gas inside a magnetohydrodynamic bubble that is then accelerated from the barrel in the same way a railgun fires its iron-core shell. The bubble remains solid for a significant time, or until it strikes its target, at which point the bubble is dispersed and delivers its energetic payload as a cloud of intense heat. Plasma weapons are the most destructive weapon technology currently available.

Benefit: The weapon's base damage increases by 1 die type. Additionally, if you get a raise on your Shoot-





ing roll, instead of inflicting an additional wound you can compare half your damage roll to the Toughness of one additional target within 2" of the original target, as if you had hit them as well. You can only do this once, no matter how many raises you get (you can apply the extra raises to either target if both would be Shaken).

Cost: +150

SHOTGUN

(TL0-5)

Requirement: Rifle, BCP or Plasma ammunition property

Shotguns impact with tremendous force at short range, but this stopping power diminishes rapidly further out. They are fairly distinct and few models are on the market.

Benefit: The weapon's range becomes 12/24/48, its damage becomes 1-3d6 (TL0) or 1-3d8 (higher TLs), and its maximum shots becomes 12. It follows the normal rules for shotguns in the core rulebook.

Cost: +0 (TL0) or +5 (higher TLs)

SNIPER

(TL1-5)

These weapons contain advanced targeting systems for long-range fire: as long as you can see the target through the weapon's scope, you can shoot it, no matter how far away it is. Obviously, a sniper weapon is most effective in the hands of a trained sniper, but a good scope can improve the aim of even a novice.

Benefit: The weapon's base range increases by +20. When using the attached scope, you reduce the long-range penalty to -2.

Cost: +25

SONIC

(Ammunition; TL3-5)

The first sonic weapon was no more than a simple high-powered oscillating pain siren generating 175 decibel (dB) acoustic waves in all directions, enough to deafen anyone who heard it (including the wielder, without protective equipment). Newer sonic weapons utilize high frequency ultrasound to carry the painful audio waves in a straight, focused path. This technology offers increased range with no adverse side effects for the firer. Sonic weapons generally have poor range compared with other weapons of their grade, but this only applies in the air: in water, or in any other dense medium, their range is slightly superior to an equivalent weapon in air.

Benefit: A target that is Shaken by an attack with the weapon takes a -4 to her first Spirit roll to recover from it, a -2 to her second, and no penalty to subsequent rolls.

Drawback: When firing through air or other non-dense medium, your base range is halved. The weapon does not work at all if any part of the beam passes through a vacuum.

Cost: +50

SELF-PROPELLED PROJECTILE (SPP)

(Ammunition; TL3-5)

SPP weapons started emerging from Angel R&D and eventually found use across the world due to parallel development or stolen designs. They are small rockets fired from pistols or rifles that continue to accelerate after an initial air compression push fires them from the shell. Although more expensive than traditional firearms, SPPs proved useful for engagements when range mattered. The ammunition for SPP weapons sabot rounds, as the shell ejected breaks apart, and the contained self-propelled projectile ignites, breaking from its seal. All SPP weapons can fire underwater, though their range is halved. They are not common but have definitive advantages, such as explosive or guided warheads.

Benefit: The Medium range only of the weapon increases by +30 and the weapon's RoF becomes 4.

Drawbacks: Instead of the normal range penalties, SPP weapons suffer a -2 penalty to Shooting rolls at Short range and Long range and no penalty at Medium range. Additionally, the weapon's base range is halved underwater (with the Medium range extended by +15 instead of +30).

Cost: +80

WEAPON HINDRANCES

BULKY

(Minor)

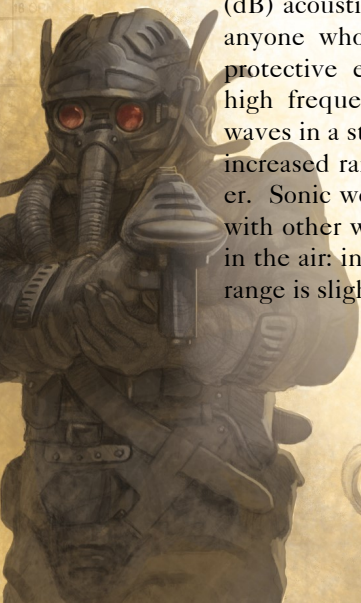
This hindrance can't be applied to pistols.

A common feature of gimfen-built weapons, this gun has a lot of surplus material that it really doesn't need. The minimum Strength of the weapon increases by 1 die type (d4 if none) and its weight increases by 25%.

EXPERIMENTAL

(Minor)

This weapon is hot off the drawing board, and may have a few kinks to work out. Its TL increases by 1, and the first two uses per encounter prompt a disruption roll even when there is no ambient EDF.



INACCURATE

(Minor)

This hindrance can't be applied to weapons with the sniper or SPP properties.

The weapon rapidly loses accuracy past the first range increment. It inflicts the same penalty at medium range as it does at long range.

LOW-POWERED

(Minor)

This hindrance can't be applied to weapons with the High Caliber property.

The gun doesn't pack as much punch as similar weapons. Reduce the weapon's modified damage die by 1 step (minimum d6). If the weapon normally uses Large bullets or H-cells, it is reduced to Medium/M-cells: Medium is reduced to Small/B-cells.

OVERHEATS

(Minor)

This gun is prone to overheating. In projectile weapons this makes it less accurate and more susceptible to jams and misfires, while in energy weapons it results in unstoppable safety overrides shutting down access to the power source to prevent a meltdown. Every time you ace on a damage die (not just roll) with the weapon, the effective TL for disruption rolls against that weapon increases by 1 for five minutes, with no maximum (this makes weapons that are normally immune to disruption able to disrupt).

PROTOTYPE

(Major)

While no longer experimental, the manufacturing process hasn't been refined yet. The weapon's modified cost increases by 25% and its TL increases by 1.

SHORT RANGE

(Major)

This hindrance can't be applied to weapons with the shotgun, sniper, or SPP properties.

The weapon's base range is reduced to 6/12/24 (pistols) or 12/24/48 (other).

SMALL CLIP / BATTERY DRAIN

(Minor or Major)

This hindrance cannot be applied to weapons with the High Capacity property.

The weapon has a lower ammo capacity than others of its class. Reduce the weapon's modified maximum shots by 1/3 (minor hindrance) or 2/3 (major hindrance), rounding down.

SPECIFIC FIREARMS

While the generic firearms system allows you to build pretty much any kind of corner-case weapon you want, there are a few weapons that stand out from the pack or are so common that it's easier to have a defined stat line for them. Weapons with a tech level listed by their name (rather than in the notes) are usually available at other levels: divide the given cost by the tech level and multiply by the new one to get the adjusted cost.

CAPSICUM SPRAY

This item employs a chemical irritant like capsaicin (common in some fruits, plants, and most chilies), also known as a lachrymatory agent. When a target is struck, a sticky, waxy, colorless and odourless liquid adheres to the skin. The spray contains almost pure capsaicin, with a Scoville rating of more than 10,000,000 – double the intensity of ancient pepper spray, the better to inflict pain on the new magical beasts roaming the world. The exact formula changes with each bastion. Most are built with a compressed canister while others eject a breakable projectile.

Notes: As long as the target has any exposed skin, this weapon ignores all armor. While it cannot inflict wounds, the target takes -2 to all Vigor rolls, and Spirit rolls to recover from being Shaken, until it can wash the stuff off.

DISRUPTOR

This sonic pistol first emerged from a Porto beluga carrier from across the ocean. Since then, few people have been able to successfully reverse engineer them. Porto's Tilthe Intelligica discovered that certain high-powered focused sonic waves inflict severe pain on certain targets. Prototypes issued to test units proved effective as an alternative to beam or shell weapons. The almost inaudible wave-rifle discharge inflicts massive damage on physical targets and on enemy combat units. However, in one incident, a test group reported that the weapon was especially effective against undead.

Notes: The disruptor has a d12 damage die against undead targets instead of a d8.

ELECTROSHOCK GUN

This wand-shaped device fires air-compressed barbed darts attached to coils towards a target. Upon impact, the coils conduct a massive electrical current, disrupting superficial muscle functions. The darts can penetrate enough to attach to anything, and are also magnetic. The electrical pulse does not need to penetrate skin to be effective. The maximum range of the weapon is limited by the length of the coils.

FLAMETHROWER

This close-combat antipersonnel weapon has shrunk in size over the years. Though still two-handed, it no longer requires an unsafe nozzle to an even more hazardous backpack. Modern flamethrowers keep their tank



SPECIFIC FIREARMS	RANGE	DAMAGE	ROF	COST	WEIGHT	SHOTS	MIN STR	NOTES
Bolt rifle	30/60/120	2d8	1	150	9	5	--	TL0, API, BCP, immune
Capacitor rifle (TL5)	30/60/120	2d10	1	2000	10	15	--	TL5, capacitor, plasma
Capsicum spray	1/2/4	2d6	1	50	2	1	--	TL1, special
Caseless pistol (TL1)	15/30/60	2d6	1	150	4	25	--	TL1, API, BCP
Disruptor	28/56/112	2d8	1	2000	5	20	--	TL4, sonic, special
Electroshock gun	2/4/--	2d6	1	400	3	2	--	TL1, pincher, 1 minute recharge
ESP rifle (TL2)	30/60/120	2d8	4	450	10	60	--	TL2, API, auto, BCP
Flamethrower (TL2)	Cone Template	2d10	1	1200	40	10	d6	TL2, ignores armor
Glue gun	20/40/80	--	1	400	30	10	d6	TL1, special
"God's Eye" sniper	50/100/200	2d8	1	8000	12	10	--	TL3, ignores armor
Laser rifle	45/90/180	2d8	1	1000	10	20	--	TL4, laser
Netgun	10/20/40	--	1	200	11	1	--	TL1, special
Sonic stunner	24/48/96	2d10	1	4000	8	10	--	TL3, sonic, special
Vapor rifle	30/60/120	2d12	1	200000	12	6	--	TL5, special

mounted under the weapon stock. The tank is comprised of a relatively safe solid fuel, enough for about a minute of continuous usage. When combined with air, it reacts into expanding foam. A small battery compresses air in a separate chamber. The foam enters the final chamber and, when allowed to uncompress, sprays out in liquid form. A magnesium igniter at its barrel sends the superheated stream of flame to its target. Despite rumours and urban legends, neither older nor modern flamethrower tanks explode easily if ruptured or if a spark flicks nearby. If the weapon tank is ruptured, the foam would break and spray but not automatically ignite. Even older models would only burst like aerosol cans and not violently explode. Advanced versions release superheated plasma. But regardless of its construction, a flamethrower's only purpose is to set things on fire.

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GLUE GUN

This large weapon, resembling a rocket launcher with an oversized ammo drum, utilizes a magnetic accelerator to launch metallic spheres which break apart upon impact, releasing expanding foam that solidifies soon after. This traps the target and anything else unfortunate enough to step upon or roll over it.

Notes: A target hit by a glue glob or who enters a space containing one must make a Strength roll to escape, with a -2 penalty for each additional glob in the same space. Creatures (but not vehicles) hit by the glue take a -2 penalty to attacks due to the constricting foam, but anything that enters a globbed area can still move enough to fire a gun or swing a sword.

"GOD'S EYE" SNIPER

The "God's Eye" uses a proprietary digital scope that analyzes intended targets and determines weak points for improved stopping power. It is able to find holes in cover, faults in armor plating, and spots on a target to cause the most damage (axles, hearts, etc). However, the weapon was deemed too costly and now is only sold to private security agencies and mercenary groups.

NETGUN

Similar to the glue gun, the net gun is de-signed only for personal use and is less messy.

Notes: A target trapped by the net must make an Agility or Strength roll to escape, and takes a -2 penalty to attacks due to the bulky netting.

SONIC STUNNER

Very similar to a normal sonic weapon, the sonic stunner is designed only to be non-lethal. Some variations of other sonic weapons incorporate this configuration as an adjustable switch (though they are commensurately more expensive).

Notes: An attack with a sonic stunner cannot cause a wound, but each raise on the damage roll extends the number of rounds that the target suffers the -2 penalty to Spirit rolls from the sonic property by 1.

VAPOR RIFLE

No one is entirely sure who created this weapon: an import first appeared in Angel several years ago, and examples still pop up occasionally, but all bastions but Mann have banned it. Porto refused to accept responsibility of the design, claiming a rival bastion known as Moteogo developed it in reprisal to Porto and to strike



fear into a subservient population currently under their control. It fires a plasma bottle similar to other pulse weapons, but the gas inside is of a particular volatile mix. When struck, the victim is literally torn apart by the massive heat and chemical reaction some compare only to fluoroantimonic acid, as molecules are torn apart upon contact. The pulse appears to simply vaporize a section of the victim, sometimes the entire body itself, leaving nothing but vapor and a clean cauterized cavity.

Notes: When you hit with a vapor rifle, any roll of less than 6 on a damage die is rerolled until the result is 6 or higher – including exploded dice.

FIREARMS FROM SAVAGE WORLDS

All the black powder and modern weapons from the *Savage Worlds* core book are available in *Amethyst*, albeit under different names since the companies that originally manufactured them are long gone. Black powder weapons, and any modern weapons with only AP1 and without the auto property are considered TL0 and have the immune property: all other modern weapons are TL1, although they can be obtained at TL2 (at twice the listed cost).



ALTERNATE AMMUNITION

Certain weapons can have their standard ammunition altered with a more advanced substitute. Some variants deliver more damage while others fill a specific purpose against an enemy. Some ammunition can only be used with specific ammo types. Ammunition has no tech level and can be used with any weapon of the appropriate type. You cannot mix alternate ammunition types in the same clip.

ANGELITE

Requirement: Any BCP or MAP

Angelite rounds overcome almost any physical damage resistances a creature may have, but as the metal is rare, such ammunition is prohibitively expensive except for the most specialty uses. Angelite also radiates EDF: any weapon using angelite rounds is treated as two tech levels higher for purposes of resisting disruption (even weapons that are normally immune).

Benefit: Your successful attacks ignore armor.

Cost: Military

ARMOR PIERCING

Requirement: Caseless rounds, ESP bullets, gauss iron flechettes, sabot SPPs, traditional bullets, or heavy shells

Armor piercing rounds are designed for penetration rather than for direct damage.

Benefit: The weapon's AP increases by 2, but it deals half damage against unarmored targets.

Cost: x2

FAE IRON

Requirement: Caseless rounds, ESP bullets, gauss iron flechettes, sabot SPPs, traditional bullets, or heavy shells

Rare, but some bastions made limited runs of fae-iron rounds, especially more xenophobic bastions like Mann. Bastions with positive echan relations like York and Selkirk prohibit their manufacture and sale. Most fae consider their use the equivalent of a war crime and will show no mercy on anyone caught even possessing such things.

Benefit: Fae creatures take extra damage from fae iron (see Chapter 3).

Cost: +10

HIGH EXPLOSIVE

Requirement: Explosive shells

While you can't use these to make something that isn't designed to go boom do so, they will make any explosive weapon even more so.

Benefit: Your explosive attack gains AP according to the weapon's burst template size. Small: AP2. Medium: AP5. Large: AP10.

Cost: x4

HOLLOWPOINT

Requirement: Caseless rounds, ESP bullets, sabot SPPs, or traditional bullets.

Hollowpoint bullets are designed to expand when they enter a soft body, dealing more damage to tissues they pass through. The downside of this is that they are both more difficult to aim and even armor as basic as a folded-up piece of paper in the breast pocket can be enough to stop them.

Benefit: You deal +2 damage per die with hollowpoint rounds against unarmored targets, but deal no damage against a target with any Armor.

Cost: +5

RUBBER

Requirement: Any BCP

Usually used for crowd control, rubber bullets hurt like hell, but are not usually immediately lethal – although concussion and being crushed by a panicked mob are usual side-effects of being on the receiving end. Automatic fire beyond a three-round burst tends to shred them.

Benefit: The target's Toughness is treated as being 2 points lower for purposes of becoming Shaken, but 2 points higher for purposes of gaining raises on the damage roll.

Cost: -5

SILVER

Requirement: Any BCP or MAP

Certain monsters, such as undead and therianthropes, are as vulnerable to silver as fae are to fae-iron. Contrary to popular myth, silver bullets made from holy relics are not any more efficacious against such beings.

Benefit: Damage rolls against undead, wercreatures, and other creatures vulnerable to silver gain one raise over and above the result of the roll.

Cost: x3

MELEE WEAPONS	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
Bastion export	(per original)	x.75	1x or 2x	TL1 or TL2
Buzz baton	Str+d6	2	600	TL3*, pincher*
Piton-gauntlet	Str+d6	2	500	TL1*, API*, unarmed
Power-hooks	Str+d6	8	3200	TL4*, unarmed, special*
Tesla glove	Str+d4	2	5000	TL5*, pincher*, unarmed, special*

*Property is non-functional when disrupted.

TRACER

Requirement: Any BCP

Tracers are usually packed at regular intervals among regular clips for automatic weapons (or, in more advanced weapons, in a separate clip that automatically injects the tracer round every few shots in full-auto mode), making it easier to aim at longer ranges and in the dark. Tracer rounds can occasionally be used to make volatile chemicals explode, but this is a lot harder than popular entertainment makes it seem.

Benefit: You gain +1 to Shooting rolls when using full autofire (not 3RB).

Cost: +20

MELEE WEAPONS

As useful as guns are, they have an annoying tendency to break. Therefore it helps to have a backup weapon.

BASTION EXPORTS

Bastions manufacture well-made variants of traditional medieval weapons. While many of these are sold to echan merchants, plenty of techan military forces have a use for them as well. Techan purchasers of bastion exports only pay the standard price for TL1 items, and double price for TL2 items.

BUZZ BATON

The buzz baton is a non-collapsible truncheon with a point capable of emanating a powerful electric shock.

PITON-GAUNTLET

These devices are not strictly speaking gauntlets, as your fingers are free to hold other objects. The gauntlet mounts to your forearm. This weapon is effectively a captive bolt pistol. When activated, it propels a titanium rod three inches from your fist (or as much as a foot for larger models). Spring action recoil returns the rod to its housing an instant later. The ejection system utilizes compressed air supplied by an internal power cell.

POWER-HOOKS

These impressive devices are over-sized augmented manipulators attached to synthetic muscles and hydraulic pumps. The entire assembly wraps around the arm and most of the shoulder. Purchasing two links the two

assemblies around the back (the listed price is for two).

Notes: A power-hook increases the wielder's Strength in the affected arm by one die type.

TESLA-GLOVE

This unique item is equipped with more than a half-dozen resonant transformers that conduct severe electrical shocks to a target.

Notes: If you don't hit any target on your turn, you increase the weapon's damage die by one step. This is cumulative up to d12+2. After you hit, the bonus resets to 0. When a fight begins, unless you are surprised, the glove is assumed to be primed to d12+2.



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ARMOR

A popular chestnut is that the development of firearms made armor obsolete. In fact, armor technology and gunnery technology have played a complicated game of leapfrog since the first fire lance appeared on the battlefield, and in a world where you are far more likely to be attacked by swords or teeth than bullets, it remains the most effective means of avoiding harm. Modern science is able to maximize the protective value of armor while minimizing its impact on maneuverability: while most armor still limits movement to some degree, it is far less obstructive than the neo-medieval varieties worn by most echans (and thus commands a high price in echan communities, as most armor without powered components is immune to disruption). Technology is even able to take things one step further and create armor capable of enhancing its wearer's natural capabilities.

STANDARD ARMOR

Basic armor is mostly concerned with putting extra layers of protection between the wearer and harm, although some armors are specialized for certain environments and may even have onboard systems to assist with certain tasks. However, the armor itself is not powered and retains its protective abilities even when disrupted.

STANDARD ARMOR TECH LEVELS

Standard armor has a tech level just like other high-tech equipment, which can be used in place of the wielder's Fighting skill to calculate her Parry. Higher-tech items are usually made better using lighter, stronger materials and superior construction techniques rather than anything that can be disrupted by magic, so there is usually relatively little preventing someone from fielding the highest-tech armor they can find (except, of course, the price). Most high-tech armors are available at multiple tech levels, with the TL applied as a multiplier to the base cost (.75 for TL0 items). This is the cost for techan characters: an echan character trying to obtain high-tech armor would pay 2-3 times as much.

ARAMID COMBAT SUIT (TL0-5)

The aramid combat suit is constructed primarily of heat-resistant synthetic fibers mixed with rigid plastic and metal plates. Additional layers of nylon separate staggered sheets of thin polymer plastic. The end result is a full-body combat suit insulated against extremes of heat and capable of, if not shrugging off, at least severely reducing the impact of most chemical projectiles.

ARAMID SURVIVAL SUIT (TL2-5)

This suit initially appeared in York. It employs a combination of flexible aramid fabrics and rigid ceramic and metal plates. The suit covers the wearer completely, sealing her from the outside environment and granting superior resistance to extremes of temperature. The survival suit has an edge over the combat suit in terms

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COVENANT





ARMOR	ARMOR	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
Aramid combat suit	+4/+8	25	400xTL	TL0-5, torso/arms/legs/head, +8 vs BCP, +1 to Vigor against hot/cold
Aramid survival suit	+4	25	500xTL	TL2-5, torso/arms/legs/head, +2 to Vigor against hot/cold, special
Ballistics armor	+3	20	150xTL	TL0-5, torso/arms/legs/head
Blinder-mail	+5	25	1500xTL	TL4-5, torso/arms/legs/head, +2 to Stealth*, special*
Carbide armor	+6	35	300xTL	TL0-5, torso/arms/legs/head, negates 4 AP
Flak longcoat	+3/+5	35	250xTL	TL0-5, torso/arms/legs, +5 vs BCP, negates 4 AP
Full combat warrior	+6	40	1200xTL	TL3-5, torso/arms/legs/head, +5 vs BCP, +1 to Vigor against hot/cold, special*
Force body vest	+5	20	200xTL	TL0-5, torso/arms
Nanotech armor	+10*	25	2500xTL	TL4-5, torso/arms/legs, special
Spider-silk suit	+3/+5	20	1200xTL	TL4-5, torso/arms/legs, +5 vs electricity, half weight when fitted
Synthetic weave	+2/+4	7	90xTL	TL0-5, torso/arms/legs, +4 vs slashing weapons, special
Tactical body armor	+5	30	900xTL	TL1-5, torso/arms/legs/head, +5 vs BCP
Tech-mail	**	**	Special	TL1-2
Yowie suit	+3	30	500xTL	TL2-5, torso/arms/legs, +2 to Stealth, special*.

*Property is non-functional when disrupted.

of maneuverability and range of environmental resistance, at the cost of having reduced stopping power.

Notes: The wearer can use the armor's tech level in place of her Vigor die for resisting the effects of heat, cold, and similar hostile environmental effects.

BALLISTICS ARMOR (TLO-5)

This is a light, but still somewhat clumsy, collection of ceramic and polymer plates placed strategically to withstand impacts without hampering manoeuvrability significantly.

BLINDER-MAIL (TL4-5)

This resembles a lightened version of the heavier titanium carbide armor. What it offers in addition is a holographic camouflage net that can alter the physical properties of the suit to resemble nearly any terrain it is using.

Notes: The wearer can use the armor's tech level in place of her Stealth die to avoid visual detection.

CARBIDE ARMOR (TLO-5)

Super-strong plates of tungsten carbide are strapped inside a flexible nylon suit to offer remarkable stopping power. However, these plates are heavy and significantly reduce the user's flexibility.

FLAK LONGCOAT (TLO-5)

This clumsy but stylish piece of subtle outerwear contains a thick inner layer of flexible aramid patches able to resist cutting and piercing. It comes available in brown or black. It leaves the head vulnerable, even with the collar up. Most importantly, it flaps dramatically in the wind.

FORCE BODY VEST (TLO-5)

An upgrade from basic ballistics armor, this variation is lighter, equally as resilient, and is offered in a modular configuration, making it far easier to provide a proper fit.

FULL COMBAT WARRIOR (TL2-5)


The full combat suit is a mixture of aramid padding and titanium plates in water-resistant layers of nylon and metallic fibers covered by patterned camouflage. It offers an insulated backpack-mounted computer system that controls various systems on the suit, including a night vision imaging system and onboard targeting system implanted in the suit's detachable helmet. While the helmet does not seal, the suit still offers significant protection against regular environmental hazards, including extreme heat.

Notes: The onboard systems negate Shooting penalties for darkness and reduce the penalties for range by 2.

NANOTECH ARMOR (TL4-5)

This advanced suit emerged with refugees from Mann, but even they admit to not developing it. They claim it was taken from a Porto craft, confiscated while on a diplomatic mission to Mann. It is an extremely rare item and according to rumor, less than a dozen can be found in Canam. The suit uses molecule-sized machines to alter the composition of the suit at the instant of impact. Usually, the combat suit remains elastic and comfortable. Anytime any impact occurs the micromachines react with a response time of less than 0.035 seconds. The impact point becomes immediately inflexible and solid, deflecting the attack.

Notes: The suit provides +10 Armor against any type



of attack it can react to. The TL4 version is only effective against physical damage (providing +4 Armor against energy damage), while the TL5 version is fully effective against both physical and energy damage. If it becomes disrupted during an attack, it locks into its current configuration and continues to provide +8 against that type of attack, and only +4 against other types. If disrupted while at rest, it provides only +4 against all attacks.

SPIDER SILK SUIT (TL4-5)

Computer controlled looms weave super-thin synthetic silk into an extremely flexible nylon. When struck with any attack, the spider silk resists as hard as steel but will still flex more than soft rubber. It employs several thicker pads of carbon fiber in key areas. The spider suit allows for extreme manoeuvrability for its weight class, and because of the non-conductive fibers is strongly resistant to electricity.

SYNTHETIC WEAVE (TLO-5)

The predecessor to advanced aromatic polyamides, this full body set includes thicker pads for impact damage reduction from cuts and slashes, with the unfortunate side-effect of being more vulnerable to piercing attacks. Nevertheless, they are a popular basic outfit and the comfortable choice for many in the field.


Notes: The suit only provides +1 Armor against piercing and bite attacks.

TECH-MAIL (TLI-2)

Just as traditional medieval weapons can be improved with bastion technology, so can armor. Tech-mails are simply improved versions of the types of armor found in open echas, generally lighter and more maneuverable than the models upon which they are based.

Notes: The armor uses the statistics of the medieval equivalent, but the user can apply its tech level in place of her Fighting die to determine Parry. The cost of the item is determined the same as for bastion export weapons (see above, and **Chapter 5**).

112 YOWIE SUIT (TLO-5)



Not designed for actual combat, this clumsy but effective piece of camouflage offers some rudimentary protection. It is not terribly heavy but its overlapping layers of fake foliage renders fast movement nearly impossible. Pouches and straps conceal various other camouflage patterns which can unfold or release to alter the appearance of the suit. Designed principally for forest and scrubland, the suit can be customized for any environment ahead of time.

Notes: TL 4 and 5 versions of the suit provide advanced holography units in addition to traditional camouflage, allowing the wearer to use the armor's tech level in place of her Stealth die against visual scans and granting a +4 bonus to Stealth instead of a +2.

EXO-ARMOR

Powered armor is designed to enhance the wearer's natural capabilities, boosting strength and enabling the pilot to move nearly as freely as if they were unencumbered: except for the most primitive models, exo-armor functions as if it were an extension of the wearer's body. By definition, exo-armor requires a power cell to operate, and when the armor's power is interrupted by disruption, the armor cannot move, immobilizing the wearer (fortunately, all exo-armor has quick-releases to allow the wearer to escape from an inert suit in under a minute). Under normal use, a battery drains one charge per hour, but operating in combat conditions drains one charge per minute.

Exo-armor has its own Agility and Strength dice and Pace, which replace those of the wearer while it is equipped, even if the wearer's is higher. While wearing the armor, the wielder can hold and use weapons that normally require two hands in one hand. Like a vehicle, each exo-armor suit has its own wound levels and Toughness, which also supersedes the Toughness of its wearer. Raises on damage rolls are always calculated off of the armor's Toughness as long as it is equipped – even if it is disrupted or disabled. However, when you would ordinarily take a Wound while wearing exo-armor, you can choose whether it applies to you or to the armor. Unlike a vehicle, most exo-armor only has two wound levels – a third disables the suit. Since most of its durability lies in its advanced armor plating, AP weapons simply subtract from the armor's Toughness. Some exo-armors are available at more than one tech level: for each increase in tech level, improve the armor's Toughness by 1, and increase its battery capacity by 5 charges.

Exo-armor requires special training to use effectively. A character must have the Piloting skill at d8+ and either Agility d8+, Smarts d8+, or the following edge in order to pilot exo-armor properly: anyone else suffers the -2 unfamiliarity penalty to all actions when wearing exo-armor.

EXO-ARMOR TRAINING

(Professional Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Agility or Smarts d6+, Piloting d8+

You do not take an unfamiliarity penalty when piloting exo-armor. You can spend a Benny to make a Soak roll for attacks that would damage your armor (a Piloting check instead of a Vigor check).

All exo-armor is military gear, and has no listed price.



AMAROK

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AMAROK (TL 3-4)

Agility d12, **Strength** d12

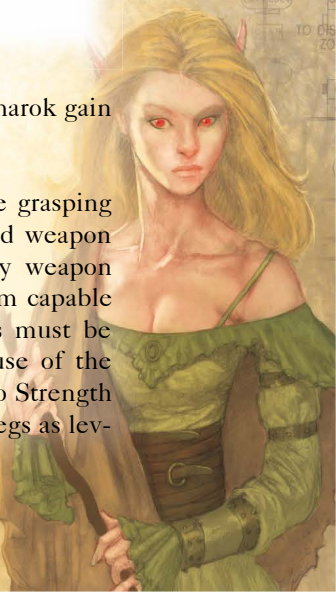
Pace 10" (ignores difficult ground), **Toughness** 24 (9)
10 battery charges

Angel developed its first powered armor after recovering a disabled Mann design some years ago. By a miracle of engineering skill, the Angel scientists successfully circumvented Mann's failsafes. Before the armor destroyed itself, a basic understanding of compact robotic design had been gleaned. Because of Angel's resistance to disruption compared to Selkirk or Mann, the amarok soon became the most popular exo design seen outside

of bastion walls.

Large: Attackers that are smaller than the amarok gain +2 to attack rolls against it.

Weapon Limbs: The amarok does not have grasping manipulators. Instead, it has three articulated weapon mounts capable of supporting up to a heavy weapon each. Each weapon has an auto-reload system capable of three reloads before the armor's weapons must be reloaded from the outside. However, because of the lack of hands, the armor suffers a -4 penalty to Strength rolls except in situations where it can use its legs as lev-



erage: if the full leg strength can be brought to bear (pushing directly from below or at a steep angle, for instance), the penalty is negated, whereas if only part of the force can be used (pushing from the side or a shallow angle), the penalty is reduced to -2.

Nightvision: The amarak grants infravision to its occupant while active.

Resistance: While the armor is equipped, the wielder is immune to inhaled poisons and gains +2 to Vigor rolls against extremes of heat or cold.

Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the armor is disrupted, it comes back online. The pilot can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.

APOSTLE MOTOR SLAVE (TL5)

Agility d10, **Strength** d12+4

Pace 8", **Toughness** 23 (9), 3 wound levels

15 battery charges

The main front line defender of Mann, this intimidating armor requires its user to slip into a form-fitting suit that fits tight in the control area. The pilot's head fits only partially in the machine's helmet with most of the user sitting in the trunk of the armor. The pilot's arms extend to the elbows and the legs only to the knees. Mann considers the armor's use outside of its own demesne blasphemy, claiming the knowledge was bestowed upon them from God. Although this prevents their deployment in some bastions, mercenary units have no such loyalties to the fanatical city.

Large: Attackers that are smaller than the apostle gain +2 to attack rolls against it.

Gauntlets: The armor's unarmed attack deals Str+d8 damage.

Regeneration: As long as the apostle is not disrupted or disabled, it has fast regeneration (as per the monstrous ability, but using the wearer's Piloting skill in place of Vigor).

Resistance: While the armor is equipped, the wielder is immune to inhaled poisons and gains +4 to Vigor rolls against extremes of heat or cold.

Sensor Net: The apostle grants its wearer +2 to Notice rolls while active.

Weapon Mount: The apostle has one articulated weapon mount capable of supporting up to a heavy weapon, in addition to its hands.



COMBAT EXOSKELETON

Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the armor is disrupted, it comes back online. The pilot can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.

COMBAT EXOSKELETON (TL 4-5)

Agility d10, **Strength** d12+2

Pace 8", **Toughness** 20 (8)

10 battery charges

The combat exoskeleton initially appeared in Selkirk, reverse engineered from stolen Mann technology. The suit resembles an oversized piece of medieval plate, reinforced by limbs of titanium, and amplified by synthetic muscle fibers running through the entire assembly. Though not very pretty, the Com-Ex has proved its usefulness in combat.

Large: Attackers that are smaller than the combat exoskeleton gain +2 to attack rolls against it.

Combat Primed: The wielder gains +1 Parry while the armor is active.

Gauntlets: The armor's unarmed attack deals Str+d8 damage.

Resistance: While the armor is equipped, the wielder gains +2 to Vigor rolls against extremes of heat or cold.

Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the armor is disrupted, it comes back online. The pilot can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.

COVENANT (TL5)

Agility d12+2, **Strength** d12

Pace 12" (ignores difficult ground), **Toughness** 15 (6)

15 battery charges

The most advanced armor currently available in open echa, the covenant tracks its origins to a secret caste of the same name within Mann society. This organization is charged with recovering and/or eliminating dissident factions from their own civilization. They are one of the few permitted to leave Mann with the sole objective to eradicating any possibility of their technology falling in enemy hands. Unfortunately, despite numerous fail-safes in Mann hardware, a few of these armors have found themselves in the hands of those very same adversaries.

Gravity Drive: While the covenant is active, it uses its Agility in place of the wearer's Climbing skill, can cling to walls and ceilings as long as they can support its weight, and negates all falling damage. Additionally, the armor can fly at half its pace for one round by expending a battery charge, but its maximum height is limited to 4".

Shadow Field: The wearer can use the covenant's tech level on Stealth rolls while the armor is active. Additionally, by expending a battery charge, the armor becomes partially invisible for one round (-4 to Notice or attack the covenant).

Resistance: While the armor is equipped, the wielder is immune to inhaled poisons and gains +2 to Vigor rolls against the effects of acid or extremes of heat or cold.

Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the armor is disrupted, it comes back online. The pilot can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.

GLADIATOR (TL 3-4)

Agility d12, **Strength** d12

Pace 10", **Toughness** 19 (7)

15 battery charges

Originally built as a heavy lift assistant for use in the Selkirk mines, the gladiator found popularity later as a muscle augments for weapon applications by the defense department. This eventually led to the construction of the tanker, designed to directly fulfill that role. However, the gladiator's smaller size, kept its position as the more popular model. It has been seen both as a ranged weapon's platform as well as a close combat suit.

Combat Primed: The wielder gains +1 Parry while the armor is active.

Gauntlets: The armor's unarmed attack deals Str+d8 damage.

Weapon Mount: The gladiator has one articulated weapon mount capable of supporting up to a heavy weapon, in addition to its hands.

Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the armor is disrupted, it comes back online. The pilot can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.

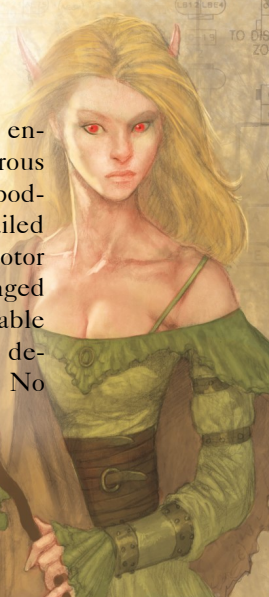
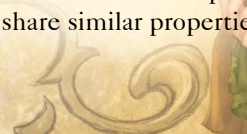
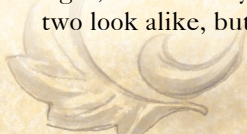
MOBILE MOTOR ARMOR (TL 3-5)

Agility d8/d12+2, **Strength** d12+2/d8

Pace 8"/10", **Toughness** 21 (9)

10 battery charges

In the wasteland of open echa, not all treasures are enchanted. In the mad dash to traverse this dangerous environment, occasional travelers fail, leaving their bodies clutching on to the lingering threads of their failed technology, only to be found by others. Mobile motor armors are exo-suits reverse-engineered from scavenged technology. While for the most part they are less stable compared to bastion-manufactured standardized designs, occasionally they can throw out a surprise. No two look alike, but they all share similar properties.



Large or Agile: The armor can either be regular sized and agile or Large and intimidating. If Large, use the ratings before the slash (and attackers that are smaller than the armor gain +2 to attack rolls against it); if agile, use the numbers after the slash.

Gauntlets: The armor's unarmed attack deals Str+d8 damage.

Surprising Capabilities: Choose one of the following powers, with appropriate technological trappings: the armor can manifest this power by spending a battery charge (powers that can be maintained cost 1 charge per round). If the power requires an activation roll, use the wearer's Piloting skill. Available powers: Barrier, blast, blind, burrow, burst, damage field, darksight, deflection, entangle, farsight, fly, healing (pilot only), invisibility, light/obscure, pummel, quickness (agile only), slumber (considered a gas effect), smite, speed, stun, wall walker.

Resistance: While the armor is equipped, the wielder gains +4 to Vigor rolls against extremes of heat or cold.

Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the armor is disrupted, it comes back online. The pilot can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.

"RACK" POWER SUIT (TL 4-5)

Agility d12, **Strength** d12+2

Pace 8", **Toughness** 21 (9), 3 wound levels

10 battery charges

Following the trend of virtually all other exo armors, the Rack resulted from Sierra Madre reverse engineering an apostle motor slave with the intent of creating an anti-echan armor specialized in close combat. Adding their own sense of flamboyance, the end result is smaller and more agile, though still not to the extent of the Skinplate design. The suit is large but thinner in areas to reduce weight. The catchy nickname comes from the positioning of the pilot within the frame, which to an outside observer looks profoundly uncomfortable (though it feels just as well-fitted as the Skinplate).

Large: Attackers that are smaller than the Rack gain +2 to attack rolls against it.

Gauntlets: The armor's unarmed attack deals Str+d8 damage.

Boosters: The Rack can jump 2" horizontally, or 4" with a running start, before making Strength rolls.

Resistance: While the armor is equipped, the wielder is immune to inhaled poisons and gains +2 to Vigor rolls against the effects of acid or extremes of heat or cold.

Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the armor is disrupted, it comes back online. The pilot can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.

SKINPLATE (TL4-5)

Agility d8, **Strength** d10

Pace 12", **Toughness** 14 (4)

10 battery charges

This is a small powered armor, every suit of which is adjusted specifically to the user and conforms tightly to the contours of the body. It employs a combination of lightweight polymers and aramids reinforced with carbon fullerene rings. Solid limbs are made from silicon carbide ceramic which slide perfectly to allow movement via a magnetorheological fluid. The suit covers the entire body, with an attached helmet that seals it completely.

Speedy: The wielder gains +2 to Parry while the armor is active.

Boosters: The Skinplate can jump 2" horizontally, or 4" with a running start, before making Strength rolls.

Resistance: While the armor is equipped, the wielder is immune to inhaled poisons and gains +2 to Vigor rolls against the effects of electricity or extremes of heat or cold.

Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the armor is disrupted, it comes back online. The pilot can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.

TANKER (TL 4-5)

Agility d10, **Strength** d12+2

Pace 8", **Toughness** 23 (10)

10 battery charges

The successor of the smaller gladiator, the impressive tanker has unfortunately not found as much recognition. Complaints have emerged criticizing the machine's size and cost compared to its cheaper cousin. Despite this, the tanker is still the preferred model for Selkirk military in long duration trade missions into Fargon or Seliquam. It's seldom seen outside of this role. In truth, its reputation as a weaker system is undeserving, as the tanker is considered one of the most powerful weapon platforms on the continent.

Combat Primed: The wielder gains +1 Parry while the armor is active.

Gauntlets: The armor's unarmed attack deals Str+d8 damage.

Weapon Mount: The tanker has one articulated weapon mount capable of supporting up to a heavy weapon, in addition to its hands.

Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the armor is disrupted, it comes back online. The pilot can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.

TESTAMENT (TL5)

Agility d8, **Strength** d12+6

Pace 8", **Toughness** 25 (10), 3 wound levels

10 battery charges

The most dominant and imposing suit in the known world, the testament appeared only recently as Mann started to take a more vested interest in exo-bastion affairs. Often flanked by a lance of Mann military hardware, the testament isn't subtle, spotted only moments before engaging large and/or numerous targets. There has not been a report of a testament being operated by anyone not in service of the fanatical bastion. If this were to occur, Mann would stop at nothing to ensure its retrieval or elimination.

Large: Attackers that are smaller than the testament gain +2 to attack rolls against it.

Gauntlets: The armor's unarmed attack deals Str+d8 damage.

Gravity Drive: While the testament is active, it negates all falling damage.

Nightvision: The testament grants infravision to its occupant while active.

Regeneration: As long as the testament is not disrupted or disabled, it has fast regeneration (as per the monstrous ability, but using the wearer's Piloting skill in place of Vigor). By spending one battery charge, the pilot can recover one wound to the armor without making a roll.

Sensor Net: The testament grants its wearer +2 to Notice rolls while active.

Resistance: While the armor is equipped, the wielder is immune to inhaled poisons and gains +4 to Vigor rolls against the effects of acid or extremes of heat or cold.

Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the armor is disrupted, it comes back online. The pilot can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.



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MOBILE MOTOR





VULTURE SYSTEM (TL4-5)

Agility d12+2, **Strength** d8
Pace 6", **Toughness** 14 (4)
 20 battery charges

This basic powered suit enables flight via a set of turbines, control surfaces, and vectored thrusters. It offers only rudimentary protection for its pilot. It also suffers from a limited range for each flight. Most of the systems are mechanical, so that disruption doesn't automatically bring the contraption plunging to the ground.

Boosters: The Vulture can jump 2" horizontally, or 4" with a running start, before making Strength rolls. As long as the operator is conscious, it negates all falling damage.

Flight: The Vulture System can fly (as the power) for one round by spending a battery charge: by spending two charges, the armor's flying Pace doubles for that round.

Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the armor is disrupted, it comes back online. The pilot can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.

VEHICLES

Though the overwhelming majority of travelers in the echan wilderness (or wasteland, depending on who you ask) still prefer beasts of burden for their transportation, a few still favor progressive methods. Vehicles designed to operate outside of bastions look different than those traveling effortlessly inside them. They are more rugged, with armored shells designed to withstand punishment both physical and magical. Though some vehicles in cities may employ internal combustion or short-life batteries, vehicles outside mostly utilize battery power, either from disposable cells or from rechargeable ones, generating electricity from solar power. Operating vehicles are rare in the echan landscape and many wandering travelers have come across ravaged and gutted techan vehicles, gears seized from disruption, their crew long dead with no way to return home. Along the Continental Cross it is not uncommon to see these vehicles towed along by horses like wagons when out of power or when conserving energy. All vehicles use batteries as they are far more efficient, clean, and supply rechargeable power where internal combustion requires a fuel source not easily accessible since most bastions don't sit on stockpiles of fossil fuels.

LOW-TECH VEHICLES

EDF is not kind to mechanical propulsion systems, especially those that rely on regularity – although the chemistry and physics work the same as ever, the systematic processes required by a fuel injection system is



too easily interrupted. Interestingly, the chance of disruption seems to rise according to the volatility of the fuel source: steam power (relying only on pressure) is almost totally safe, while high-octane gasoline, even if it were readily available, causes the vehicle's engine to break down almost the instant it is turned on. Alcohol-based carburetors are the most stable combustion engines, functioning with minimal difficulty in low-EDF areas and disrupting once or twice a day or so but easily set to working order again, and even the occasional engine burning refined vegetable oil can be made to run as long as one has a capable mechanic on hand to repair it a half-dozen times a day. This presumes that the device only sees low-grade use, and is kept out of combat – a crop harvester is far more reliable than a jalopy, and not only are such low-powered engines totally unsuitable for the stress of conflict, but the pressure of EDF that builds up in such circumstances would inevitably get to the unshielded mechanism. Low-tech vehicles are all TL1, have a top speed of 10 mph and no tactical properties – such vehicles disrupt immediately if combat breaks out.

VEHICLES FROM SAVAGE WORLDS

All vehicles from the Civilian Vehicles, World War II Fighting Vehicles, Modern Fighting Vehicles, and Wartercraft tables are suitable for *Amethyst*, although any named vehicles are of course called something else. These vehicles are TL1, although any modern vehicle is also available at TL2 for twice the listed cost (increase the Toughness by 1 for TL2 vehicles). All

such vehicles are powered by H-cell batteries instead of liquid fuel. Some civilian vehicles are reinforced for short excursions outside the bastion: for these, increase the modified cost by 50% and add +3 to the Toughness, but the vehicle's acceleration drops by 5 (if this reduces it to 0, it can't be reinforced). Standard vehicles have no particular protection against EDF, and their batteries will disrupt within a week if not shielded in some other way, or two days in a high-EDF or combat situation.

ECHEAN TERRAIN VEHICLES

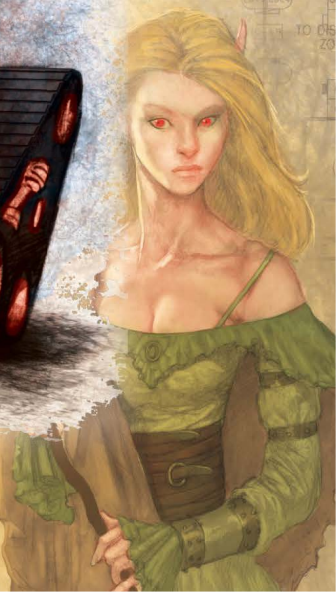
ETVs are meant to operate outside the protective walls of the bastions. Virtually all Wasteland All-Terrain Transports, or WATTs (usually referred to just as ETVs in standard parlance), come from Angel or Selkirk originally, although organizations such as the Iron Sons that operate out of multiple bastions make use of the technology wherever they go. These models are impractical for city use, being generally too large and/or clumsy for narrow city streets. They employ a modular design, shielded electronics, massive wheels, and grunt horsepower. They start from svelte and nimble bikes to gargantuan dirt trains like the behemoth and sand shark. The batteries in an ETV can last between two and four days in open echa, depending on the strength of the EDF.

ETVs are all military-grade equipment and difficult if not impossible for private buyers to obtain. All ETVs have the following ability:

LAND SHARK



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NOMAD



Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the vehicle is disrupted, it comes back online. The driver can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.

BEHEMOTH (TL3)

Acc/TS 5/20 (ignores difficult ground),
Toughness 116 (100)
Crew 1+50, 30,000lb of cargo space
Heavy Armor, Shielded

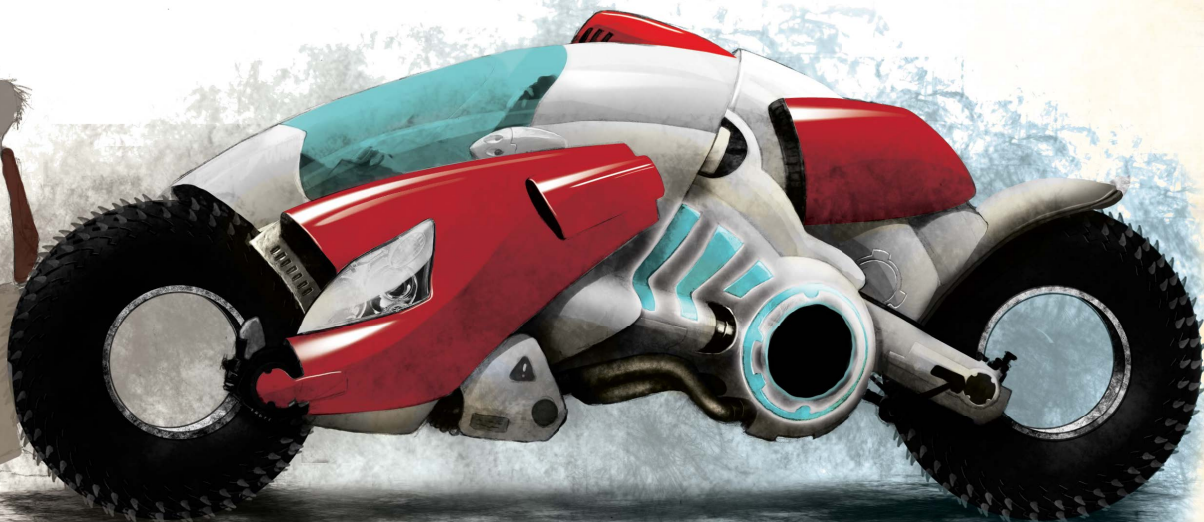
The behemoth matches its name perfectly. This goliath lumbers over the landscape, delivering power equally to its 8x8 drivetrain. Massive steel-reinforced rubber/carbon tires supply little cushioning, relying on the beast's floating platform suspension system to keep it smooth and stable. Its eight wheels cover a footprint 40 feet (7") wide and 60 feet (10") long, and the three-level atrocity towers nearly twenty-five feet (5") tall. This monster usually heralds its approach with the cracking of trees and snapping of bushes as it pushes and heaves through forest and grassland. Though at home in the arid and rocky terrain around Selkirk where it was built, in the varied landscape of the southern lands, the behemoth is somewhat overkill. The brute clumsily bullies its way through whatever stands in front. The fat and awkward TDM-001 Toad prances gracefully in comparison. When spotted outside Diana-so, the behemoth serves a broader purpose, as either a mobile base of operations for mercenary groups or as a nomadic home for families. The behemoth was not designed to be a military vessel so lacks any weapon mounts, counting on its population for defense. It is

completely sealed against the external environment and uses solar cells on its upper plating to recharge its batteries, although the rate of recharge is far outstripped by the rate of power consumption: however, the vehicle is big enough to carry a lot of extra batteries.

LAND SHARK (TL2)

Acc/TS 7/20 (ignores difficult ground),
Toughness 75 (60)
Crew 1+20, 5000lb of cargo space
Heavy Armor, Shielded

Also from Selkirk, this successor to the behemoth is substantially smaller, and while its redesigned motor system requires roughly as much power intake, it is much more efficient and can make do on a single battery instead of two. The 8x8 wheel system was replaced by an even more durable 4x4 tri-drive sprocket caterpillar system. In the middle of the 40-foot long vehicle is a pivot segment, allowing the vehicle enhanced mobility in tighter areas. Despite its convoluted drive system, the land shark is faster than the behemoth but not as roomy. It gained more popularity as a mobile command post for mercenary groups and military, and armed variants lead most Selkirk convoys into the Deep Pass. While the behemoth is wide and fat, the land shark is thin and tall. Even though only 20 feet (4") wide, it still stands 25 feet high, as tall as its predecessor. The land shark has one heavy weapon turret mount, and is also sealed against environmental hazards. It has the same roof-mounted solar cells as the behemoth.



NOMAD (TL2)

Acc/TS 7/25 (ignores difficult ground),
Toughness 61 (45)

Crew 1+10, 2000lb of cargo space
Heavy Armor, Shielded

The final Selkirk land cruiser variant released is the smallest of the trio, and by far the most popular outside of the Dianaso pass. The nomad uses wheels like the behemoth, though only having six. It features a center pivot so the vehicle can maneuver in tighter confines like the land shark. It is the smallest at only 20 feet (4") tall and 30 feet (5") long. This model has found use all over Canam and, along with the scrambler, is the most common ETV seen in open echa. The nomad moves via four separate electric motors contained in each of the axles. It receives power to all of them from its contained main drive in the rear of the vehicle, snuggled next to its ample cargo hold. The cabin occupies the entirety of the forward module. Unlike the land shark and behemoth, the nomad only has two levels but an efficient design makes it almost as roomy as the shark, with separated cabins and full air and waste management system. The nomad is both waterproof and self-sustaining. However, because of its smaller size, a rechargeable power system was never offered standard,

necessitating frequent returns home to recharge batteries. It is sealed against environmental hazards.

PANTHER, VERKELEN ALPHA-I (TL2)

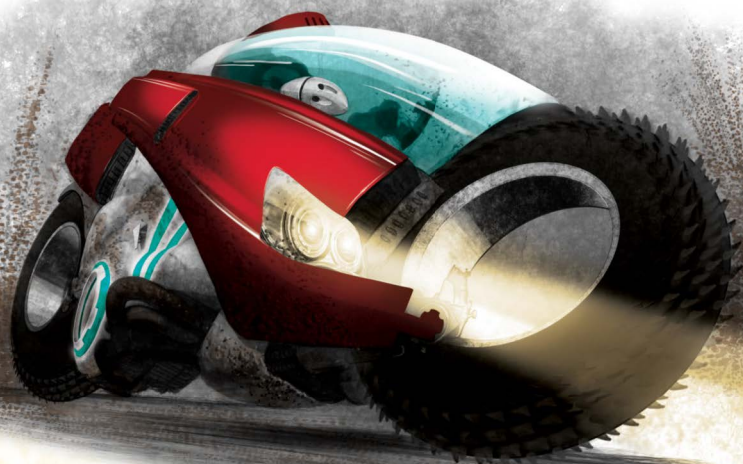
Acc/TS 16/48, **Toughness** 14 (4)

Crew 1+1 (cramped), 50lb of cargo space

Shielded, treats each inch of difficult ground as 1.5

Angel's government-funded arms maker dedicated to ETV and anti-echan R&D, Verkelen, started drawing plans to compete in the ETV market just under a century ago. The result, after millions of uc in development and testing, proved brilliant. The panther features a completely enclosed and Shielded stretched ovoid body with two forks sticking forward and back where the spoke-less wheels are mounted. Huge computer-controlled gas shocks absorb impact by predicting upcoming terrain and adjusting accordingly. The panther features a gyroscopic stabilization control system (GSCS), preventing it from toppling over. Unless fully deactivated, the panther can never be unbalanced from any maneuver or attack. The computer works with the driver, allowing the bike to lean over when the vehicle intends to maneuver but sensors detect if it will result in a fall. The GSCS even allows the vehicle to adjust its

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PANTHER



angle of attack on upcoming terrain. The panther's wheels are magnetically driven, capable of stopping and forcing its wheels into a lock. Each wheel carries enough torque to lift the entire body of the panther on one axle. The GSCS can then maintain that angle. With this ability, the panther could even climb a steep hill it has no hope of scaling by simply walking up its side.

SCRAMBLER, VERKELEN MARK IV (TL2)

Acc/TS 7/25, **Toughness** 64 (45)

Crew 1+4, 1500lb of cargo space

Heavy Armor, Shielded, treats each inch of difficult ground as 1.5

Selkirk produces the largest ETVs in the world but at one point Angel made a play for the prize. They released two models within ten years, both large and somewhat clumsy, though in the end, nowhere near to the immensity of those from Selkirk. The most popular of all these was the scrambler ETV. This vehicle keeps the crew in a tightly sealed environment, elevated twenty feet (4") above the ground. It rolls on six massive thick-treaded, steel-sidewall supported run-flat

tires eight feet (2") across. The scrambler can lose up to two tires without being disabled. The externally sealed and shielded multi-level cabin can hold five people in relative comfort with many of the amenities the crew enjoys at home, including full sewage recycling and kitchen as well sleeping areas. It also sports one of the largest headlight assemblies of any vehicle, equipped with twenty forward-mounted high intensity discharge lights capable of illuminating a cone of terrain hundreds of feet long. Much smaller than the behemoth or land shark, the scrambler is the preferred choice among smaller techan groups.

TDM-002 MACO, THE "NUKE TRUCK" (TL3)

Acc/TS 5/20 (ignores difficult ground),

Toughness 81 (60)

Crew 1+10, 3000lb of cargo space

Heavy Armor, Shielded

In order to combat EDF interference outside their walls, Angel R&D created a vehicle with its own shielded micro-nuclear fission power pack. The result is an extremely expensive and risky long-range carrier, the



SCRAMBLER

NUKE TRUCK



TDM-002 Maco, mostly referred to as the “the nuke truck.” The reactor, though miniature, is enough to keep the vehicle going and its systems fully powered for a full year before needing service. Because of the reduced degradation of Uranium-235 in the EDF and its increased resistance to shedding neutrons, scientists switched to Radium 226 and Thorium 232, which accelerate their decay while in magic. Since these materials cannot be found easily in nature, the only way to service and re-supply a nuke truck involves taking it to one of only two breeder reactors in Canam, one in York and the other in Angel. The breeder reactors expel more fissionable materials than they receive, but the process is not cheap and a full service and re-supply of a nuke truck takes a week and costs 10,000uc. However, the advantages are plain to see, as the vehicle is otherwise totally environmentally sealable and self-sufficient apart from this annual maintenance. The extensive radiation shielding virtually removes any chance of the reactor shorting out in the EDF; the rest of the vehicle’s onboard systems aren’t quite so well protected, but they are more heavily shielded against disruption than most equivalents. If the nuke truck is destroyed, however, the reactor melts, potentially incinerating everything within 200 feet (34”) and making the initial area where the truck detonates a severe radioactive hazard for 20 years (EDF prevents the radiation from spreading beyond the initial point).

AIRCRAFT

Generally, most techans avoid air travel outside of bastions, stemming from the susceptibility of avionics to disrupt. Techans are paranoid enough worrying about an ETV breaking down: add in the possibility of falling to one's death and most people opt for ground travel. There are noteworthy exceptions, and these all come in the form of lighter-than-air vehicles.

ANGEL HAMMERHEAD (TL2)

Acc/TS 20/180, Climb 1, Toughness 21 (5)

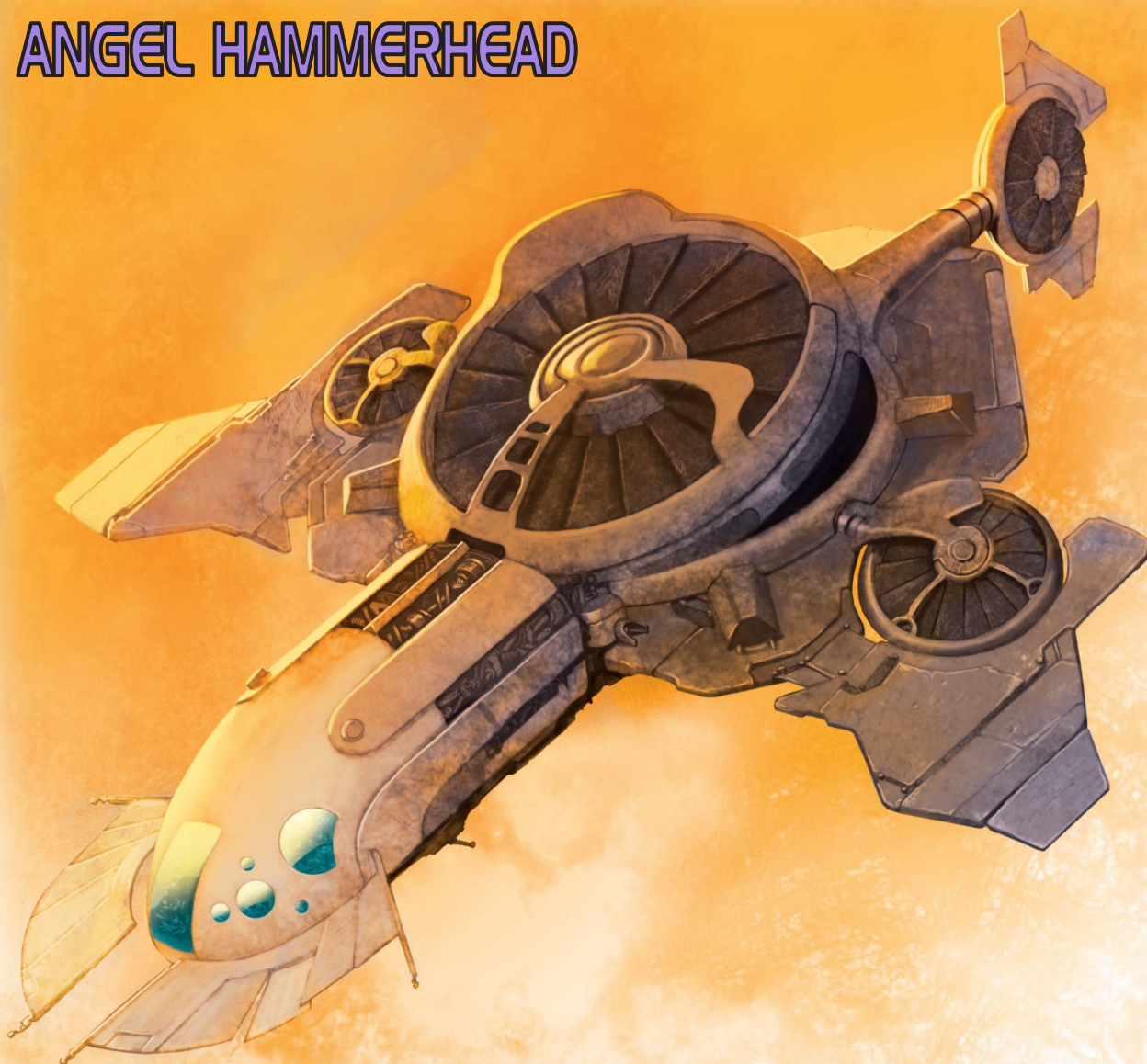
Crew 2 + 2, 500lb of cargo space

This military aircraft uses fanjets to keep itself airborne and is unable to stay aloft otherwise: thankfully, the fanjets have a built-in redundancy that can compensate if the craft loses one of its engines. It operates as both a transport and as an attack vehicle capable of parking over a location and securing ground like a tank. It doesn't deliver the massive punch of a focused attack helicopter but can nearly equal one when accounting for maneuverability. It is equipped with a laser range finder, thermal imaging night sights, and a digital ballistic computer. Both the fuel and ammunition are compartmentalized to enhance survivability. The cockpit is sealed against all environmental hazards and the whole system is shielded against disruption. The hammerhead has weapon mounts for two heavy weapons or three smaller guns. As it is not intended for long-range action, it will drain its battery in a day, inside or outside of a bastion.

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ANGEL HAMMERHEAD



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Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the vehicle is disrupted, it comes back online. The driver can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.

ARMORED ZEPPELIN (TL2)

Acc/TS 8/50, **Climb** -1, **Toughness** 14 (3)

Crew 1 + 15, 2000lb of cargo space

Thankfully, along with magnetic fields, lighter than air vehicles depend on a science undisrupted by magic. Before they developed magnetic technology, Selkirk employed low-tech rigid airships filled with helium to transport themselves around the mountains. Because of its resistance to disruption, the zeppelin remains a popular choice for long journeys. Even if its fanjet nacelles short out, the craft will remain airborne, and the nacelles are such a low energy draw that one battery can power them all for up to two weeks. Engineers later added retractable sails for emergency propulsion if the primary drive fails. Internal cells separate the helium to

prevent a catastrophic collapse in case of a puncture. The craft can lose pressure from more than half of its twelve segments and still not fall. Its ultra light polymer and metal envelope covers an internal aramid skin. The shell, wrapped around an aluminum skeleton, maintains its shape even when deflated, unlike standard balloons or blimps. This allows a greater capacity of gas and cargo. An automated repair drone buzzes around inside the superstructure, patching breaches in the baffles before they hemorrhage their gas. The majority of the crew lives in a pressurized segment inside the superstructure. Though several echans and techans use airships, the armored zeppelin from Selkirk is the only model employed by a bastion.



MANN PANTOKRATOR

MANN PANTOKRATOR (TL4)

Acc/TS 30/180, Climb 2, Toughness 24 (5)
Crew 1 + 6, 1500lb of cargo space

The only known Mann aircraft seen outside of the bastion's walls, the pantokrator was intentionally over-engineered to increase survivability in echa. Environmentally sealed and heavily shielded as with all Mann anti-echa technology, two pylon-mounted fanjets provide lateral movement and rudimentary lift if the vehicle's primary anti-gravity module is damaged. The vessel also features visible weapon pods to increase intimidation. Its size and payload have dubbed it the "flying fortress". Increased armor makes it virtually impenetrable to small arms fire from the ground: an automated repair system easily deals with what few assaults are able to pierce the armor. The rear cargo area can hold up to six fully armed soldiers. In addition to its state-of-the-art sensors and thermoptic imaging, the craft has a wide array of weapon configurations, from two small arms turrets and one heavy weapon turret, to two heavy weapon turrets, to one truly massive gun.

Active Camouflage Denial System: When the system is engaged, any hidden or invisible creatures in a small

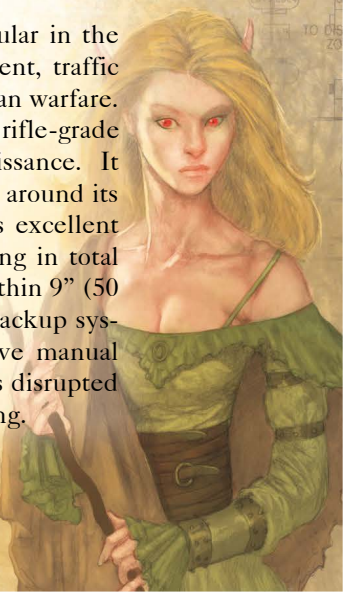
zone within 34" (200 ft) of the craft are revealed. This mode punches through any form of concealment, and can even see through walls and ceilings (up to 1").
Disruption Recovery: Once per session, if the vehicle is disrupted, it comes back online. The driver can also spend a Benny to bring it back online if this ability has already been used.

YORK WASP (TL3)

Acc/TS 30/250, Climb 2, Toughness 13 (2)
Crew 1 pilot, 5lb of cargo space

The wasp is a one-man aerial transport popular in the eastern bastion. It is used in law enforcement, traffic control, and military divisions assigned to urban warfare. The wasp is occasionally fitted with a single rifle-grade weapon, but is mostly employed for reconnaissance. It has no room for passengers, as the craft wraps around its user, sealing her against the outside. It has excellent thermoptic sensors, capable of perfect imaging in total darkness and revealing all invisible targets within 9" (50 ft) of the craft. Rather than a cumbersome backup system for disruption recovery, its aerofoils have manual overrides, so that in the event that the craft is disrupted the pilot can guide it to a relatively safe landing.

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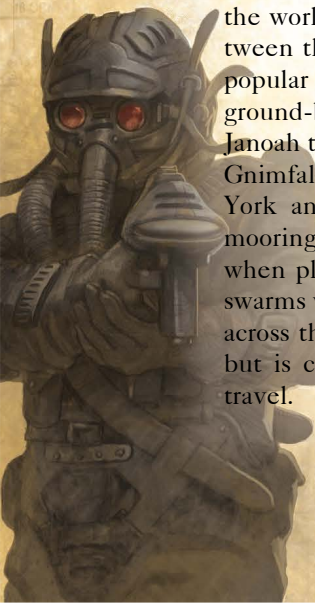


THERMALS

Since helium or hydrogen are hard to come by in the modern world, designers started brainstorming alternatives. With the exception of Selkirk, still employing a model of gasbag craft when flying outside of its perimeter, all the other bastions abandoned airships in favor of faster, more maneuverable vectored-thrust and rotor-lift variations. This knowledge refused to fall into antiquity and a few stubborn engineers, relics proclaiming a lost art, sold or imparted this expertise to the outside world. Airships moved in their own direction. Though a few rare models employ solar or battery powered propulsion, the majority (including all those under control of echans) utilize reliable methods including wind, steam, and dependable manpower. The laudenians are believed to employ a variety of airship powered by magic to travel between their semi-mythical castles in the air, but no non-laudenian has ever seen such a craft.

Thermals (as they are often known) remain popular in Canam and Lauropa more than in any other region in the world, though few attempt to cross the expanse between these great lands. In Canam, they proved more popular given the continent's girth and the influx of ground-based raiders. Almost every echan city, from Janoah to Limshau to Victrix, sports mooring towers. In Gnimfall, mooring cables hang from every grind tower. York and Selkirk are the only bastions to allow the mooring of echan thermals. Pilots must tread carefully when plotting a course: the northeast region of Canam swarms with dragons, and airship skeletons are scattered across the Gloam to the south. The sky is still not safe but is considerably healthier in comparison to ground travel.

Thermals are broken up into two subgroups: blimps and frames. All variations gain their lift through differentials in temperature between the outside air and the gasses contained within airbladders resting inside the structure. The choice of thermal lift over lighter gas comes from access: refining helium (the safer choice) is costly and requires techan processes to produce. The method of heating the air inside the balloon comes either from a natural heat (a coal fire for example) or from a magical one. All models are controlled by non-amplified mechanical flight control systems. This involves a series of pulleys and cables that directly transmit instructions to the control surfaces – though ineffective on faster aircraft, this method is perfect for slower-moving airships. Even on the larger thermal frames, a slightly more advanced servo-tab system allows the shifting of these massive fins with little force-feedback. All thermals are equipped with a basic pedal-based motor system requiring simple brute constitution for acceleration, making travel by flier just as exhausting as travel by foot, at least for a portion of a group. Rumors persist that it is possible to permanently enchant an airship. Though a basic blimp or standard frame without any propulsion or control modifications could theoretically be enchanted, the possibility of the enchantment disrupting the control surfaces may be too high. Moreover, the amount of spellwork required would be staggering. Not only would the entire craft need to be animated, but so would its propulsion system and flame. Add to that the need to make the spells permanent and the result is a procedure probably costing upwards of 3,000,000 gp not even taking into account the rarity of casters capable of accomplishing such a feat.



All thermals have multiple lifting bags to defend against punctures: the vehicle's listed Toughness is per bag. If half the thermal's bags take a Wound, the vehicle cannot stay aloft and begins to slowly descend: if more than three quarters (round up) of the bags are hit, it plummets.

THERMAL BLIMP (TLO)

Acc/TS 7/40, **Toughness** 12 (2), 2 lifting bags
Crew 1 + 4, 300lb of cargo space

Blimps are hot-air ships with a non-rigid structure. Without pressure, they deflate. After cold air is pumped in and then heated, the baffles fill up and the final shape takes form. Only the passenger car or gondola has rigid construction. The difference between blimps and simple hot-air balloons is the addition of tail fins and propulsion.

THERMAL FRAME (TLO-I)

Acc/TS 7/40 (TL0) or 10/80 (TL1),
Toughness 16 (3), 8 (TL0) or 12 (TL1) lifting bags
Crew 1 + 15 (TL0) / 30 (TL1), 1000lb (TL0) or 2000lb (TL1) of cargo space

This refers to a rigid airship—a dirigible maintaining its shape from a framework instead of internal pressure via a lifting gas. The rigid design offers the advantage of an increased lift capacity as the vessel can hold more and larger lifting bags inside the superstructure. Unlike blimps, where the crew sits in a gondola underneath the main balloon, frames only have a small cockpit with the cargo and crew compartments residing inside the balloon assembly. Some models come equipped with galleys and sleeping bays. Two sizes fly over most of Canam, with the larger reserved for mercenary units, public transportation, and charter flights. Manual propulsion keeps this vehicle incredibly slow, and most of those who can afford it and justify the disruption risk opt to upgrade to an automatic system.

If using the manual system, the standard frame requires 1 additional crewmember and the large model requires an additional 3. The large variant is by no means the largest; it's just the largest public option. Gnimfall flies the Ziggurat-Ex-Mundi between the various grind towers around Canam. It can hold up to fifty gimfen in comfort (though humans find the accommodations cramped). The ZEM's advanced steam drive makes it the fastest airship known. The largest frame of all comes from Limshau, the Abecedarian. Measuring a thousand feet long and weighing 150 tons, this 120-passenger transport connects with all the smaller cities in the kingdom.



MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT

Most mundane items are still available in more or less the same basic form as their pre-Hammer counterparts. By default, technological items are considered TL1 unless stated otherwise: higher-tech versions can be purchased by multiplying the listed cost by the desired tech level.

BASTION EXPORTS

Some manufacturers in bastions employ advanced technology to create melee weapons of amazing quality. The materials melt at exacting points and are chemically combined to a perfect ratio, their edges shaved to almost an atom's sharpness. Bows are no longer strung animal hides around bent wood but cables wound around a mechanism of levers. All bastion export weapons are finely calibrated, lighter and sturdier than their echan equivalents. However, bastion exports look plain and somewhat ordinary: maker symbols offer some style, usually engraved in the steel itself, but are rarely ostentatious. Often enough, they are built to be effective rather than showy, so seldom do they strike fear in opponents when raised in anger. They won't rouse the masses when pulled from their scabbard. Because of the niche market for such items, echan weapons made and exported from techa fetch steep prices and rarely can buyers justify the expense. A prospective buyer can usually spot one of these rare weapons by their extravagant cost. They are still counted as echan weapons and are not affected by disruption. Most fae (except gimfen and damaskans) disdain bastion exports, but anyone else who can get them wields them as proudly as if pulled from a narros fire pit, representing as they do the endurance of human ingenuity.

The bastion export property gives the affected item TL1 or TL2, allowing the wielder to substitute a d6 or a d8 for her normal trait die when using the weapon (since most bastion exports do not have electronic or mechanical elements that can be disrupted, they are generally safe to use in open echa). The downside is that the cost of the item is doubled (TL1) or tripled (TL2). Techan characters can purchase the items for half their listed cost.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

The following items have specialized usage, usually military.

ANTI-ECAN NETWORK (TL3)

This York-designed device exhibits a level of ingenuity many other bastions don't attest to the lower-tech city. It has found circulation across the world by mercenaries and military groups. While battery-powered, it utilizes the EDF to its advantage. The AEN consists of metal poles driven into the ground or supported by tripods: each pole cannot be more than 9" apart from another.

They generate an electrical field which transmits a signal back to the base system at camp. If any creature that generates EDF passes through the field or interferes with one of the poles, the localized disruption is detected and an alert message is sent back to the transmitter. If the receiver shorts out, it breaks a connection to a backup mechanical siren, which goes off. Their only weakness is subterranean infiltration, assuming approaching echans notice the network. The receiver can locate where a break occurs. The AEN poles receive power from the transmitter so only one battery is required. Each charge used maintains four poles for one day. Each additional charge per hour allows the addition of four more poles.

ANTI-GRAVITY GENERATOR (TL5)

The subject using this belt device is able to fly at her base Pace with a Climb of 0, although only for about five minutes on a single battery.

AUTOMATIC WATCH (TL2)

Digital watches have fallen out of favor in the world of today. Modern watches employ a balance wheel that winds via the motion of the wearer's arm. This allows the watch to keep perfect time without requiring manual winding or any power source. The compact and complicated device is water resistant, shock resistant, and cannot be over-wound with abuse. They are also completely silent.

BIG EAR (TL3)

This tiny device wraps around one's ear and amplifies incoming acoustic data. It is best to switch it off when not actively listening, since not only does the battery only last about 20 minutes with continuous use, but any sudden loud noise can temporarily deafen the wearer.

Notes: When activated, the device grants +2 to Notice rolls related to hearing (in addition to being able to use its TL die for Notice rolls).

CAMERA BALL (TL3 or TL5)

This three inch rubber ball with a weighted flat bottom can be thrown or fired from a grenade launcher. Once it lands, it transmits audio and video input from a full 360 degree arc up to 84" (500 ft) to a receiving monitor. The TL5 version contains a small antigravity unit, enabling it to hover for up to 5 minutes on a single battery.

DISRUPTION MUFFLER (TL2-3)

Though designers succeeded in creating a small container rendering its contents immune to disruption, larger attempts resulted in failure. The amount of insulation required increases proportionately to the size of the container, resulting in only slightly larger capacity for much large containers. The largest effective container is a small crate a little larger than a standard insulated cooler, with the most common muffler being a small bag about a third the size of a gym bag. Whatever their form, mufflers prevent disruption of anything inside

BASTION EXPORTS: LOW-TECH MELEE	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	COST		NOTES			
Bastion claymore	Str*+d10	10	800/1200*		TL1 (d6) or TL2 (d8)*, Parry -1, 2 hands			
Bastion longsword	Str*+d8	6	600/900*		TL1 (d6) or TL2 (d8)*			
Bastion short sword	Str*+d6	3	400/600*		TL1 (d6) or TL2 (d8)*			
LOW-TECH RANGED	RANGE	DAMAGE	ROF	COST	WEIGHT	SHOTS	MIN STR	NOTES
Compound longbow	16/32/64	2d6	1	400/600*	4	--	d6	TL1 (d6) or TL2 (d8)*
Carbon crossbow	16/32/64	2d6	1	1000/1500*	8	--	d4	TL1 (d6) or TL2 (d8)*, AP 2 1 action to reload, includes scope

*Variable depending on tech level of the weapon.

them – such containers are usually used to transport batteries, which otherwise will lose their charge in less than a day when exposed to open EDF.

DISRUPTION PATCH (TL1)

Similar in principle to radiation badges, the disruption patch is a small square plastic tab the size of a bottle cap, often hung from necks or from wrists. Each bastion developed their own unique approach to the patch though a common practice is a colored dye (red being the obvious choice) that breaches into the top layer of the patch when an extremely sensitive microwave thermionic diode is disrupted via enchantment. The patch detects increased disruption from localized increases in magic though one must be careful to keep the vacuum seal each patch is sold in enclosed as a patch will often naturally disrupt after a day in the open.

FORCE SHIELD (TL5)

Mann originally developed this technology, with Porto following soon after. They never traded it with anyone and technology theft remains the probable cause of its proliferation. The system consists of two ground-planted generator coils which, when placed up to 4" apart and activated, create a barrier between them, impenetrable from one side but allowing those behind it to fire through. The system has enough power per charge for two minutes of continuous operation.

Notes: Attackers suffer a -4 penalty to Fighting and Shooting rolls against targets behind the shield.

FORCED DEFENSE SHIELD (TL1)

This techan invention has found use in echa, strapped to knights unaware or uncaring of its origin. It is a heavy titanium shield with grooves on its bottom, allowing for a firm root into the ground. There is also a locked slit which can open once it has been planted, allowing the user to make ranged attacks with a gun or crossbow while remaining in cover. If planted into the ground, the shield remains upright and acts as cover to anyone behind it.

EQUIPMENT	COST	WEIGHT	TL
Anti-echan network	2000	50	3
Anti-gravity generator	8000	30	5
Automatic watch	200	1	2
Big ear	3000	2	3
Camera ball	900	1	3
Camera ball	1500	2	5
Disruption muffler bag	150	2	2
Disruption muffler crate	300	10	3
Disruption patch	5	1	1
Force shield	9000	10	5
Forced defense shield	300	12	1
Gravity lens	4000	2	5
Grip gloves	2000	1	3
Holographic generator	10,000	30	5
Laser sight	300	1	1
Lie detector	1000	1	3
Light sticks	5	1	0
Metal detector	500	2	3
Nano-healer (5 doses)	2000	1	5
Scope	75	1	0
Scope	300	1	3
Suppressor	100	1	0
Two-way radio (2)	300	1	2

GRAVITY LENS (TL5)

An ingenious invention Mann stole from Porto and Moteogo, the lens resembles a 10x13 photo frame with a handle on one side when unfolded from its compact package. When attached to a wall, it allows to the user to peer through it as if looking through a window. It detects secret doors, compartments, caches and so forth as well as snares and pits.



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GRIP GLOVES (TL3)

This Selkirk prototype allows the user to climb walls with ease.

Notes: The gloves grant the user +2 to Climbing rolls (in addition to being able to use its TL die for Climbing rolls).

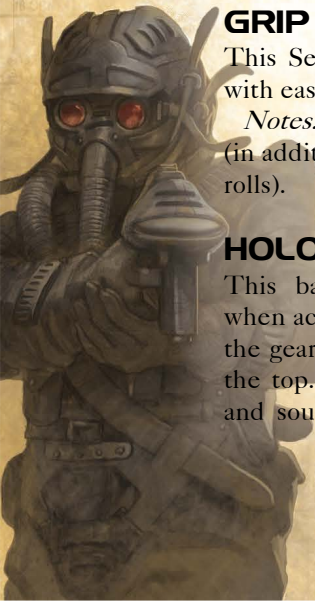
HOLOGRAPHIC GENERATOR (TL5)

This backpack-carried device deploys its own legs when activated. The fabric of the pack conceals most of the gear. Only a reflective sphere on a pintle rises from the top. The device can make a 9" (50 ft) circle look and sound like some other sort of natural terrain and

can hide structures, equipment, and creatures within the area: multiple generators can be set up to conceal larger areas. All sounds within the dome are muffled from the outside. The effect is not solid, so interacting with the hologram reveals its illusory nature. The device can run for five hours on one large battery and cannot be moved while activated.

LASER SIGHT (TL1)

Laser sights may be used in conjunction with scopes. They paint targets with precision where the weapon's fire will strike. This also doubles as a psychological attack, as most individuals find a green target on their



chest to be a great incentive to negotiation. A sniper may, if they wish, swap it for an infrared diode, which is invisible to everything except for night vision. The standard sight uses a green diode solid-state laser which is effective for the maximum range of any weapon.

LIE DETECTOR (TL3)

No paper, needles, or wire; this device is a simple palm-shaped item that is placed gently on the subject's body.

LIGHT STICKS (TLO)

Scientists battled for years to uncover a new chemical combination that provided the light of glowsticks without the danger of disruption (despite being very low-tech, the traditional mixture mysteriously became inert after five minutes of exposure to EDF). When activated, the chemicals mix with a fluorescent dye and illuminate a 40-foot circle for about an hour. They usually glow red, green, or blue. Light sticks are popular in echa and often impress many where flamboyant spellwork fails.

METAL DETECTOR (TL3)

This small device extends a small probe that scans for metal objects.

NANO-HEALER (TL5)

Beyond just patching holes, these nanobots enter the body via an injection gun and repair it from within. Despite results verging on the miraculous, these are lower technology creations compared to some of the prototypes Porto is testing. The bots quickly run out of power after a few minutes, and disrupt instantly on exposure to echan flesh, making them impossible to use on any creature that generates EDF. A single injector comes with five doses.

Notes: This device functions as the greater healing power: use the device's TL for the roll to determine its effectiveness.

SCOPE (TLO or TL3)

Attached to a longarm, a targeting scope assists in aiming, effectively turning any such weapon into a sniper gun. The TL3 version uses a digital rangefinder and microcomputer to compensate for basic environmental factors, allowing for even more precise shots.

SUPPRESSOR (TLO)

These attachments muffle the flash and sonic blast of explosively propelled firearms. By slowing the expanding gases exiting the barrel, the suppressor stems the acoustical signature, but does not silence it completely – reducing it to merely loud instead of deafening. Anyone within the attack's range is still aware that a shot has been fired, but not necessarily from where or by whom.

TWO-WAY RADIO (TL2)

Civilian and military radios use frequencies chosen specifically to avoid eavesdropping and interference with other machines or day-to-day electronics. Military models can tune to any frequency: civilian and emergency service radios are each restricted to a certain range. With the expanse of the echan landscape, keeping this communicator bottled in the low bands or with reduced power is no longer required. It has a clear range of 5 miles in open echa, 20 miles within a bastion. Even basic models can withstand some punishment and water pressure.

BOOSTERS

Boosters are medical treatments that alter the basic functionality of the human body, either with chemical compounds, genetic therapy, or nanobots. Boosters do not work on non-humans (not even gimfen) and only the most basic concoctions work on echan humans.

DRUG SHOT (TLI-5)

A less popular option than micromachines or viral injections is drug therapy. This is because, unlike the other two options, a drug shot is temporary, lasting only one hour. It is also both cumbersome and painful and can have long-term side effects. Drugs are hit or miss with echan humans. If an echan human takes a drug shot, it has a 50% chance of failure. The process is accomplished via a jet injector and several doses can be loaded into a gun. Injecting a drug shot takes an action, and requires one round to take effect. Each purchase supplies five injections.

MICROMACHINE BOOSTER (TL5)

One of the most advanced versions of the nanobot booster, these permanent micromachines are self-replicating and self-powered, tapping into the energy of the human body they are injected into. Micromachines are not sensitive to disruption due to their insulation inside the human body but will disrupt if the human becomes an echan.

VIRAL/GENE THERAPY (TL3-4)

Viral Therapy can accomplish similar results but doesn't create some of the more breathtaking effects that MM injections do. Genetically engineered viruses rewrite a specific genetic code before terminating themselves. They were used initially as therapy to correct genetic errors, curing various hereditary diseases. Further advances allowed for beneficial viruses that could improve the human body beyond what is normally possible. Despite the controversial nature of this practice, it found use among many military circles, especially those being forced to deal with the monsters of open echa. Because echan humans have their genes rewritten by Attricana, this therapy does not work on them.



AGILITY

This booster improves overall reaction time and swiftness.

Benefit: Whenever you make an Agility roll, you roll an additional die of the type corresponding to the booster's TL and keep the better result. Additionally, you gain the following abilities:

Quickstand: As many times per session as the booster's TL, standing up from prone does not cost you 2" of movement, and you can get up when it is not your turn.

Acrobatics Talent (TL3+ only): Once per session you can reroll any Agility roll you just made without spending a benny.

Flash (TL5 only): You can spend a benny to increase your Pace by 2" for 5 minutes.

ALERTNESS

This injection boosts mental awareness, concentration, and memory recall. It sharpens the mind and prevents distraction.

Benefit: Whenever you make an Investigation or Notice roll or a Smarts roll related to perception, you roll an additional die of the type corresponding to the booster's TL and keep the better result. Additionally, you gain the following abilities:

Eyes in the Back of your Head: You always draw cards for initiative, even when surprised.

No Distractions (TL3+ only): You can spend a benny to gain the benefits of the Level-Headed edge for 5 minutes. At TL5, this benny also gains you the benefits of the Quick edge.

ENDURANCE

This booster improves overall health, boosts resistance to poisons and other toxins, and enhances recovery from injury.

Benefit: Whenever you make a Vigor roll, you roll an additional die of the type corresponding to the booster's TL and keep the better result. Additionally, you gain the following abilities:

Genki: You ignore the first time you become Fatigued per day.

Ascetic (TL 3+): You can spend a benny to not have to make Fatigue rolls for the day for food, water, or shelter.

Anti-Poison (TL4+ only): You gain the tech level of the booster as a bonus to Vigor rolls against poison.

BOOSTER	COST
Drug Shot, TL1	100
Drug Shot, TL2	200
Drug Shot, TL3	600
Drug Shot, TL4	800
Drug Shot, TL5	2,500
Gene Therapy, TL3	6,000
Gene Therapy, TL4	8,000
MM Booster, TL5	25,000

LEARNING

This booster improves memory recall and the capacity to learn new skills. You are able to do difficult equations in your head without a pencil.

Benefit: Whenever you make a Smarts roll or a Knowledge roll, you roll an additional die of the type corresponding to the booster's TL and keep the better result. Additionally, you gain the following ability:

Limitless: As many times a day as the booster's Tech Level, you can gain a +2 bonus to your next Smarts or Knowledge roll.

REGENERATION (TL4-5 only)

Overactive cell proliferation or advanced micromachines rapidly repair injuries when they present themselves.

Benefit: You gain slow regeneration (as the monstrous ability). Additionally, you gain the following ability:

Trollskin (TL5 only): You can spend a benny to gain fast regeneration for 1 minute.

STRENGTH

This booster increases muscle tension and reduces tendon strain on bones. It also improves overall body chemistry by burning calories faster and more efficiently to increase energy.

Benefit: Whenever you make a Climbing roll or a Strength roll (including a melee damage roll), you roll an additional die of the type corresponding to the booster's TL and keep the better result.

INJECTIONS

Injections are an affliction and act similar to poison. Injections can be delivered manually with a melee attack or via an air dart gun. Instead of inflicting damage, you impose the injection's effect. Only creatures with a Toughness of 6 or less can be affected by injections. If you hit the same target again with the same injection before the effect wears off, the target automatically fails

its next Vigor roll against the effect. Injections do not work on undead or incorporeal creatures. A missed attack with an injector does not destroy the injection.

All listed costs for an injection assume TL1, and provide five doses. For a higher TL injection, multiply the listed cost by the desired TL. For each additional TL added, the strength of the injection increases by -1.

DETONATOR

A vile injection, this introduces nanites into a subject which are exceptionally susceptible to EDF and detonate when disrupted.

Strength: -1

Failure: The target takes a Wound if it takes any action more strenuous than moving for 1 hour.

Success: The target takes a Wound if it takes any action more strenuous than moving on its next turn.

Raise: Fatigue.

ECHAN SUPPRESSOR

This fae-only injection, traced to Mann, uses the altered rules of science in echa against the subject. The injection is a toxoid vaccine against epidemic parotitis (the mumps); disruption (which occurs instantly when injected into fae) activates the suppressed toxin, eating the creature from the inside – and because the fae's magical immune system does not recognize the toxic bacteria as a threat, it makes no attempt to fight them off even after the initial toxemia wears off.

Requirement: This injection only works against living fae without the Ixindar special ability/hindrance.

Strength: -2

Failure: 1 wound and paralyzed for 2d6 minutes, after which the target must make another Vigor roll or take another wound.

Success: Paralyzed for 2d6 rounds, after which the target must make another Vigor roll or take 1 wound.

Raise: Exhaustion.

FEAR

This batch of psychotropics will make the victim think everyone around him is a demon...unless the victim itself is a demon, in which case, it may see angels.

Strength: -3

Failure: The target takes a -4 penalty to all Spirit rolls and skills that have Spirit as their linked attribute for 2d6 minutes.

INJECTION	COST
Detonator	50
Echan Suppressor	250
Fear	500
Narcosynthesis	50
Open Mind	1000
Overdose	100
Paralysis	250
Pain	1000
Sleep	1000
Slow	25
Viral	150

Success: The target takes a -4 penalty to all Spirit rolls and skills that have Spirit as their linked attribute for 2d6 rounds.

Raise: The target takes a -2 penalty to all Spirit rolls and skills that have Spirit as their linked attribute for 2d6 rounds.

NARCOSYNTHESIS

Truth serum, multiplied by fifty.

Strength: -3

Failure: The target cannot tell lies for 2d6 hours.

Success: The target cannot tell lies for 2d6 minutes.

Raise: The target suffers a -2 penalty during Tests of Will for 2d6 minutes.

OPEN MIND

This injection is a concoction of barbiturates, amphetamines, and LSD. When injected, the target becomes extremely susceptible to suggestion.

Strength: -4

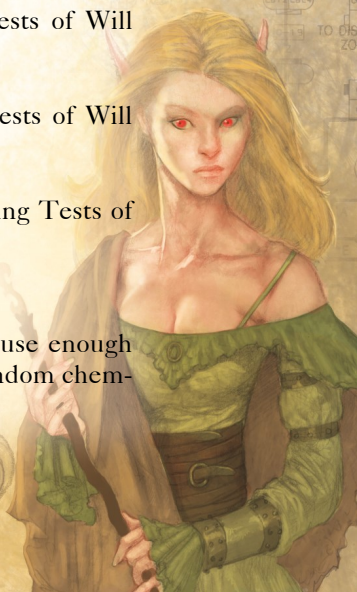
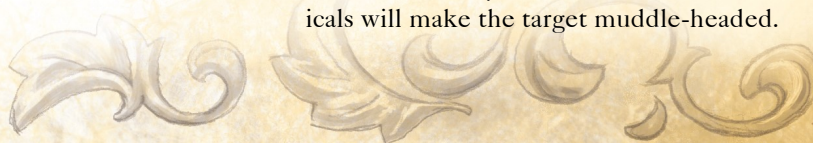
Failure: The target automatically fails Tests of Will for 2d6 hours.

Success: The target automatically fails Tests of Will for 2d6 minutes.

Raise: The target suffers a -2 penalty during Tests of Will for 2d6 minutes.

OVERDOSE

Just about anything can be a poison if you use enough of it. At the very least, this concoction of random chemicals will make the target muddle-headed.



Strength: -1

Failure: 1 wound, and the target takes a -4 penalty during Tests of Will for 2d6 minutes.

Success: The target takes a -2 penalty during Tests of Will for 2d6 minutes.

Raise: The target takes a -2 penalty during Tests of Will for 2d6 rounds.

PAIN

This injection does not inflict pain, but rather hypersensitizes their dermal nerve network, making them feel all sensations with uncomfortable intensity.

Strength: -4

Failure: The target's Toughness is reduced by 2 for 1d6 hours.

Success: The target's Toughness is reduced by 1 for 1d6 hours.

Raise: The target's Toughness is reduced by 1 for 1d6 rounds.

PARALYSIS

This broad-spectrum mélange of neuromuscular-blocking drugs is able to inflict nearly instant paralysis in a target.

Strength: -2

Failure: Paralyzed for 2d6 minutes.

Success: Paralyzed for 2d6 rounds.

Raise: Fatigue.

SLEEP

This heavy dose of diazepam and various opioids might actually kill a horse.

Strength: -3

Failure: Knocked out for 2d6 hours.

Success: Knocked out for 2d6 minutes.

Raise: Fatigue.

SLOW

This strange medley of drugs causes muscle relaxation by depressing the central nervous system.

Strength: 0

Failure: The target's Pace is halved, she cannot run, and she takes a -2 penalty to Agility, Climbing,

Fighting, and Swimming rolls for 2d6 hours

Success: The target's Pace is halved, and she takes a -2 penalty to Agility, Climbing, Fighting, and Swimming rolls for 2d6 minutes.

Raise: The target's Pace is reduced by 2 for 2d6 minutes.

VIRAL

It is common for doctors to inject a near-dead virus to improve a subject's immunity. This is just like that, but the opposite. Because of their natural immunity to all mundane diseases, this injection does not affect fac.

Requirement: This injection only works against living non-fac creatures.

Strength: -1

Failure: The target contracts a short-term debilitating disease.

Success: Exhaustion.

Raise: Fatigue.



Several hours later, just outside the forest, Aiden heard the whining of a failed bearing. The vehicle surged then decelerated, bucking the passengers inside. A small pop echoed from the cockpit above. Clear English curses followed and the vehicle stopped. Hairless jumped down from the upper hatch and opened the lower door from the outside.

"What's the problem?" Aiden asked. Hairless snapped open a hand-sized plastic container and pulled out a disc-shaped piece of plastic. It was red around the edge and white in the center. He placed the disc close to one of the passengers, but nothing changed, then to another with the same result. When the innocuous plastic approached Aiden, the red expanded to fill the disc. Hairless brought the sensor down and seized Aiden's collar roughly.

After being tossed to the dirt, Aiden shouted, "What's the matter with you?!"

"Son of a bitch," Hairless snapped. He grabbed Aiden's bag and dropped it abruptly on the dry crimson soil. "You book my ride and don't bother telling me you're magic?"

"I'm not!" Aiden glanced at the other passengers. They stared back at him, confused, angry, and scared.

"That ident card even yours?" Hairless snapped as he took a step to the fallen boy.

"You can't forge those!"

"Where is it then? What you got on ya?" Aiden sat there, unable or unwilling to answer. Hairless kicked Aid-

en's shin. "Where is it?" Aiden fumbled in his pack and drew out his spellbook. He might have yet to turn, but the words and Chen's spark hidden inside were still enchanted. "You got to be kidding. You want to be a wizard?"

"Yes," Aiden muttered almost to a whisper.

"From a bastion?"

"Yes," Aiden answered more resolute as he got back to his feet. "What's wrong with that?"

"The hell's your problem?"

"I'm not a radiant. I haven't turned."

"Regardless, you're walking now. Back or forward, your choice. Forward's safer."

Aiden looked to a barren gravel field, the bushes and the scattering of short trees. "This isn't Antikari."

"We're at the border. Safe out of Cyon."

Aiden's eyes wandered around at the expanse. It was nearly a desert. Echa had a tendency to glorify extremes. Woods to wasteland, plains to peaks, with hardly a bush or hill to mark the transition. Aiden could see a dark patch of forest at the edge of the horizon. "There's nobody here."

"Don't care," Hairless replied as he closed the lower door and began scaling up the ladder to the upper hatch. "Soil my machine with what you got. Should've taken a wagon."

"I didn't think it would break down. Honestly. I thought these were insulated?"

"Only from the outside. You could blow the whole works with a spell if you were stupid enough." Hairless opened the hatch and sat in the copilot's chair. He stuck his head out. "No need to be too scared. Bogg's rarely migrate this far from cover. Just keep your eyes open for puggs."

"Puggs?" Rodents of the fae tree, a wingless locust swarm, a growing infestation that plagued the land. If found alone or in small numbers, puggs were no better than rabid dogs, dogs with fingers to hold any weapons they found. Aiden had read stories.

"Oh, don't worry," Hairless replies. "A swift kick usually kills one. You've a gun or a blade?"

"Blade," Aiden answered. It wasn't much. Minx made him carry one. It wasn't more than a dagger; it was off balance, not very sharp, and not worth enough to be stolen. Aiden had desired one of the untarnished swords from Chen's collection. Brandishing it confidently against an opponent was effective if it was held right. He never really held it right.

"Know how to use it?"

"Not really," Aiden mumbled.

"Well...neither do they." Hairless went to close the door.

"Which way!" Aiden shouted.

Hairless poked his head out and pointed. "The road, eight hours. Make good progress, you'll beat nightfall." Aiden's head followed the man's point to a river of mismatched rocks that wound under a skeletal canopy of leafless trees.

"That's a road?"

"You expecting golden bricks? Just stick close to the path and pray it doesn't end." Hairless tapped his throttle

and the engine belched. "At least this way, we don't have to detour. You were the only one going to Antikari."

"Glad I could help," Aiden muttered low enough to not be heard. Hairless closed the hatch and the vehicle lurched forward without giving its passengers time to prepare. The scrambler swiveled past Aiden, picking up speed after it passed, leaving a small cloud of dust in its wake.

* * *

It wasn't much of a road, but someone once strewn these rocks here with a purpose. The trees and bushes were pulled aside creating a path wide enough to accommodate a wagon. It was not an often used road.

Aiden kept his walk brisk. He didn't pass any travelers or found any evidence that there ever had been any for a hundred years. He couldn't see Angel.

Aiden wasn't sure why he had noticed the rock. It was a small round stone not unlike a million others on the path. It was smooth and grey with specks of black. It would offer a couple skips if tossed skillfully across a lake. It stood straight on a point against an ocean of flat brothers. Aiden reached down and picked it up. The bottom wasn't flat. He rolled his thumb across its surface and wondered how it found itself standing and how it could remain that way all this time. Was it chance or was it magic? Aiden placed the rock back. It immediately fell over. He tried again, but failed. Aiden finally kicked the stone casually off the path before continuing down the road.

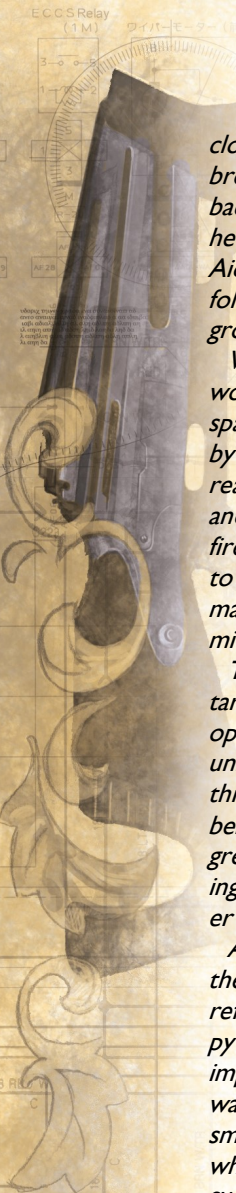
* * *

Aiden was not on the Continental Cross--the moderately traveled highway that bisected Canam which he had read about. In order to save time, the scrambler crew had gone northeast and made Aiden walk south. Aiden wondered if it truly was eight hours or eight days at his pace.

Night fell with no Antikari. Aiden hoped to find gas-fed fires atop of posts and the revelry of rowdy humans behind tavern walls. When he entered the forest the road began to narrow. The light from Attricana beamed down from a cloudless night. Aiden could almost read by it. It looked as any star. It warranted worship as he imagined the constellations did when people could still make most of them out. Now this single brightness reigned orphaned in the night. It was not like the other stars. This star required no cresting backbone over the darkness to stay up. Aiden walked but every step was predicated by the dread of breaking a twig and beckoning predators. The canopy above was thickening, dimming the light as Aiden braved deeper.

The lake Aiden approached was almost inviting. He stared at its stillness, its perfectly smooth skin. It unnerved him. He felt the wind but the water refused to obey. Aiden's mouth crumpled and he swallowed. His canteen had been emptied by dusk. He approached the beach slowly and unscrewed the top off the decanter. The strap fell off his shoulder and dangled precarious





close to the mirrored surface. Aiden stopped before breaking the surface. He carefully pulled the canteen back. He was positive he'd read something about this, but he couldn't recall the details. He would rather be thirsty. Aiden backed from the beach and continued alongside, following the fading path. It led him back into the dense growth.

When Aiden began his journey, he had refused any working technology. No flashlight. The perky and loyal spark that hovered around him tried to settle his nerves by shining as brightly as it could, but even that only reached a few feet. The spark was only an aide in reading and lighting candles. In a pinch, it might be able to light a fire, but that could cost its life and Aiden wasn't prepared to cast it to oblivion just yet. He still had no capacity to make one on his own. Aiden kept his pace slow but committed as Attricana became nearly completely obscured.

The vegetation started to clear, instilling some momentary hope in him that the road would return. Instead, it opened into a small clearing dominated by a jarring and unbefitting metal tree. Vines had begun winding their way through the shell. A few charred segments of titanium sat behind it. Aiden recognized it as only the tail end of some great beast. Beast, Aiden had to get out his fantasy thinking. It was an aircraft, or was rather a portion of one larger than he had ever seen back home.

Aiden's spark knew it was important and buzzed around the silver hull, delighted that it was able to cast its own reflection. The tail had opened a hole in the forest canopy when it fell, breaking apart bushes and branches on impact. Aiden could tell it wasn't an Angel aircraft. There was something too faultless about the hull, perfectly smooth, without an exposed rivet or puckered seam save where the rest of the hull was torn away. The skin was a sword-thin carbon composite, a sandwich weave beyond the likes seen in Angel. A jagged opening offered Aiden cover from the elements.

He let his satchel fall aside and took a moment to eat. He unfurled the foil of an Angel nutrient supplement--500 calories of everything one might need in the wilderness, bound tightly in a pressed package of grains, nuts, and dried fruits. It was genetically engineered to maximize dietary needs without the pesky drawbacks of weight. It was supposed to be filling. It wasn't.

Still savoring the last few bites, Aiden began pushing through the fragments of debris around the crash. The faintest violet glow concealed in a broken crate caught his eye. As Aiden approached, he fell under the shadow of the steel sentinel, leaving only the purple light upon his face.

His hand rolled through fluttering pieces of snow that felt neither cold nor wet and refused to melt in the warmth of his hand. Sprinkles of the white packing foam fell onto the soil.

The item dropped to his knees; the violet light grew beyond a glint. The spark considered it competition and flew down to illuminate the stone as best it could. Aiden noticed four pearl-colored claws clamped around the outer edges of the unrefined jagged gem inset. The fingers of the lizard curled around back, not to form a hand, but to merge with other fingers. Two golden loops could sup-

port a chain if Aiden were inclined to flaunt the jewel from his neck. Such an item was jarring amongst the jagged metal and broken technology.

Aiden stared into the crystal.

He felt it staring back.

* * *

Its body was the size of Aiden's fist with eight pencil-thin legs longer than a forearm. Every step taken was careful and quiet, slipping over branches and sidestepping leaves. It stalked up the wool and polyester coat Aiden was using as cover as he slept. A pair of black lidless eyes floating on truncated stalks glanced over the sleeping man. Its legs inched closer to Aiden's neck. Two spidery limbs reached up and tapped each other in front of Aiden's face. Aiden, eyes still closed, turned a nose up and blew out a breath. The creature repeated the soft drum but received no response. One leg from the arachnid stretched out and hung precariously over Aiden's nose. It tapped him gently. Aiden slept soundly. Then twice again.

Three firmer pats and Aiden cracked open an eye. He failed to focus on the blurry mass in front of him. As he adjusted, he stared at the vapid eyes and short jaws and two long legs in front that tapped each other once more to gain his attention.

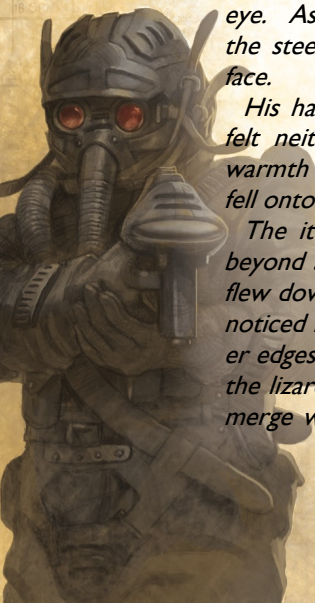
The scream that sprung from Aiden's throat was loud from adult lungs but pitched high from childish fear. Aiden swatted the creature to the ground and rolled to his feet, flailing arms and legs outrageously. He checked his limbs and digits, shouting as he squirmed away from the calm arachnid as it tapped its two front legs again. Aiden jolted his head around to check for an ambush. Surely, the tapping was the cue for a face-lock from a falling predator Aiden would be too distracted to notice. There was nothing, just Aiden and the arachnid, both waiting at a distance. The spark had taken the cue to rest with the rising sun. Aiden reached forward and quickly snatched his bag. He pulled the blade from within it. The chunk of purple stone sat by the bag. Aiden stretched a hand and took it as well, tucking it to the bottom of his pack.

Aiden walked backwards down the path. He took a moment to ensure he wasn't returning the way he entered. Aiden finally remembered the entry from that long forgotten manual and announced it as if the creature could understand. "Book of Many Bugs. Page 346. Harvestman." It tapped its legs. Aiden continued on the road. The creature matched his pace. Aiden paused and so did it, drumming its legs until starting up again to follow him.

"Get lost!" Aiden flailed his sword arm. It followed. "Get out of here!"

Aiden stopped, then it stopped and tapped its legs. Aiden shouted as loud as he could, stepped closer, and stomped a foot down. It jumped nearly to Aiden's face. Aiden squealed, bolting down the road like his hair was ablaze. The spider ran surprisingly fast and kept up with him for five minutes before giving up. As Aiden ran out of sight, the harvestman tapped its front legs again.

* * *



Emerging from the forest, Aiden squinted from the sun's glare. The road resumed as empty as before to a blurry horizon. Before the afternoon, he would eat three more bars and still be hungry. The plains passed to a valley. Dried grass turned to green fields. All Aiden could do was walk, and did so until coming upon the wreck.

Its steel axle had bent. The wooden spokes had splintered. Aiden circled the broken wagon with a wide berth. The horses had been torn from their harnesses, leaving bloodied bits and hair tufts on the straps. The half eaten hoof suggested a fast and messy meal by indiscriminate predators. Aiden was unsettled. The blood had the gloss of lingering moisture. A caravan had gone astray, no doubt. No wagon would chance solitude on a barren path. Aiden knew he was close to Antikari. A sane captain would take the extra day and follow the continental cross, the same detour the scrambler had made. The door was pinned closed by a rock-tipped spear half Aiden's height, too large for dog-sized puggs. They had been larger monsters.

Aiden orbited and checked the opposite door, unlocked. He almost missed the cage, half in the grass and overturned. The simple lock had broken with hammer falls with most missing their mark. Teeth indents around bars, dried spit at every corner, a dozen animals inside had molested each other for the shred of an inch of room. It hadn't been a detour. The slavers turned the moment their stocks were stuffed.

The door came loose off the hinges and fell. Aiden dropped his pack and swallowed as he leaned in. The spear had struck between the stomach and liver of the man but caught more of the latter. The spear had jammed the body against the wagon. "Oh god," Aiden mumbled.

"Huh," the body burbled after lifting his head. Aiden shrieked and fell back onto the door. He quickly composed himself and reentered.

"Oh my god! Can you talk? Can you..." He said nothing. "Say anything?"

"Mi y'ada," he groaned. Aiden held up his palms. "Hold that...don't move!" Frantic, Aiden paced around the wagon, unable to act, unable to freeze. He crawled back in. "I can't move you with the spear. Can't take it out either." Aiden reached for his pack and the dull blade meant for threats. He squeezed himself behind the body. He held the sword as high as he could in cramped quarters. He had hoped one slash would do it, but it only dented the spear, pushing the end further into the victim's chest. The man had lost any reserve for a scream and only choked. Aiden squirmed and tried for a harder strike, not that he had held anything back the first time. A second failed. A third cracked and the sword was wedged in the wood with a splinter holding the spear together. Aiden snapped it the rest of the way.

The man's head rolled flaccidly as Aiden pulled him onto the fallen door. He used the bloodied leather straps from the horses' harness and bound the man to the wood. Aiden swatted the man's lazy arm to finish the restraints.

"How far is Antikari?" Aiden asked. "An hour...two?" A cough was all that was afforded. "Just hold on." Aiden pulled another strap around the door and wrapped the

other end around his shoulders. The man wasn't scrawny and the door was spruce. Aiden pulled a shoulder muscle lifting it up. Stones barely shuffled as he struggled for an inch. "You've got to be kidding me."

"Esta finderlohn por mia lebon," he moaned.

"Yeah, you said it." Aiden began to walk, slowly at first. Within a few steps, the gravel gave and his shoes slipped, stumbling Aiden to the ground. He punched earth, quietly cursed, and raised himself and the door again. "Come on! Come on!"

Aiden got momentum and dragged the door over a trivial summit and to the base that followed. The next climb bruised his pectorals and sprained an ankle. The body slipped off at the second crest. Aiden was sure to meet another night at this pace.

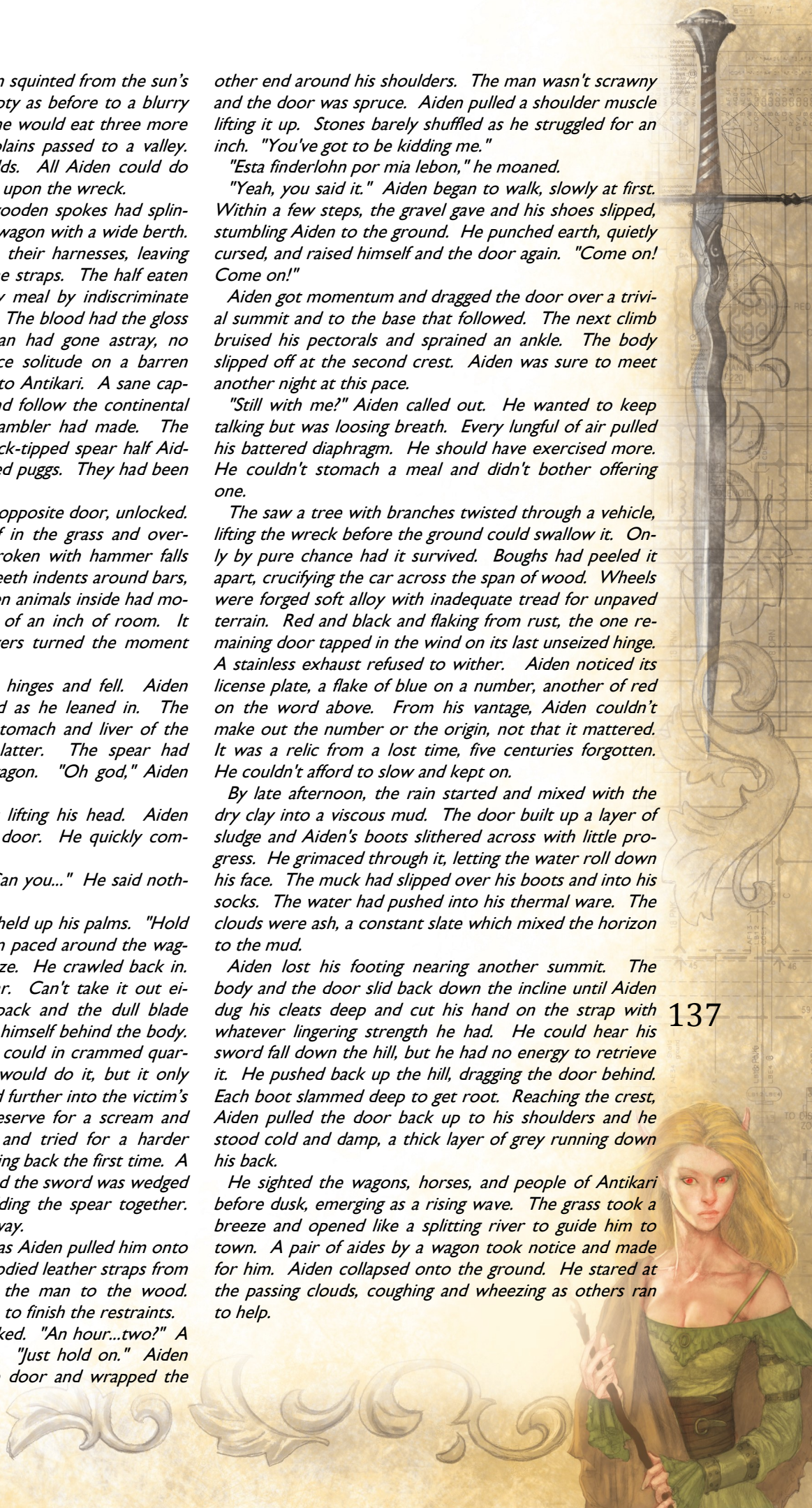
"Still with me?" Aiden called out. He wanted to keep talking but was loosing breath. Every lungful of air pulled his battered diaphragm. He should have exercised more. He couldn't stomach a meal and didn't bother offering one.

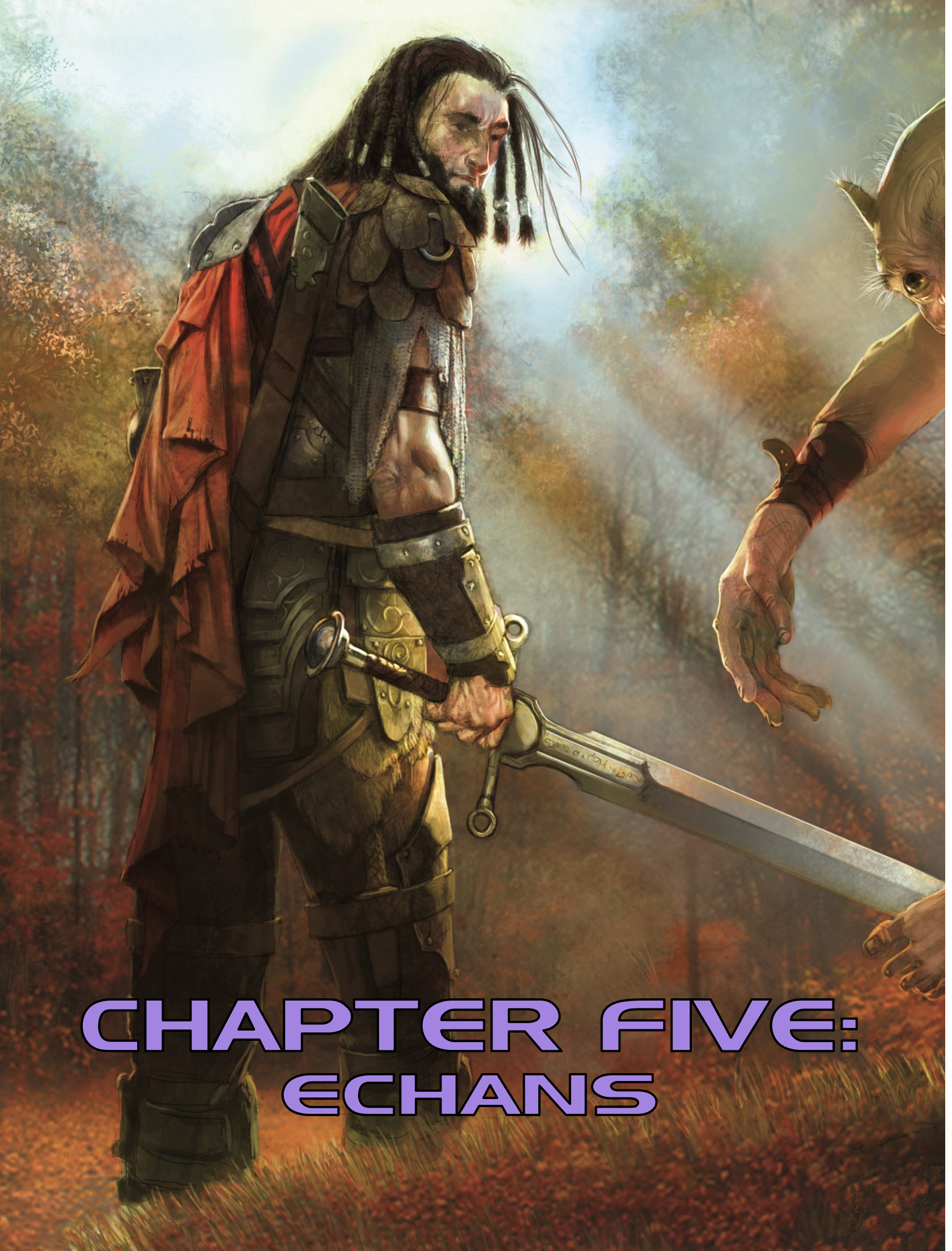
The saw a tree with branches twisted through a vehicle, lifting the wreck before the ground could swallow it. Only by pure chance had it survived. Boughs had peeled it apart, crucifying the car across the span of wood. Wheels were forged soft alloy with inadequate tread for unpaved terrain. Red and black and flaking from rust, the one remaining door tapped in the wind on its last unseized hinge. A stainless exhaust refused to wither. Aiden noticed its license plate, a flake of blue on a number, another of red on the word above. From his vantage, Aiden couldn't make out the number or the origin, not that it mattered. It was a relic from a lost time, five centuries forgotten. He couldn't afford to slow and kept on.

By late afternoon, the rain started and mixed with the dry clay into a viscous mud. The door built up a layer of sludge and Aiden's boots slithered across with little progress. He grimaced through it, letting the water roll down his face. The muck had slipped over his boots and into his socks. The water had pushed into his thermal ware. The clouds were ash, a constant slate which mixed the horizon to the mud.

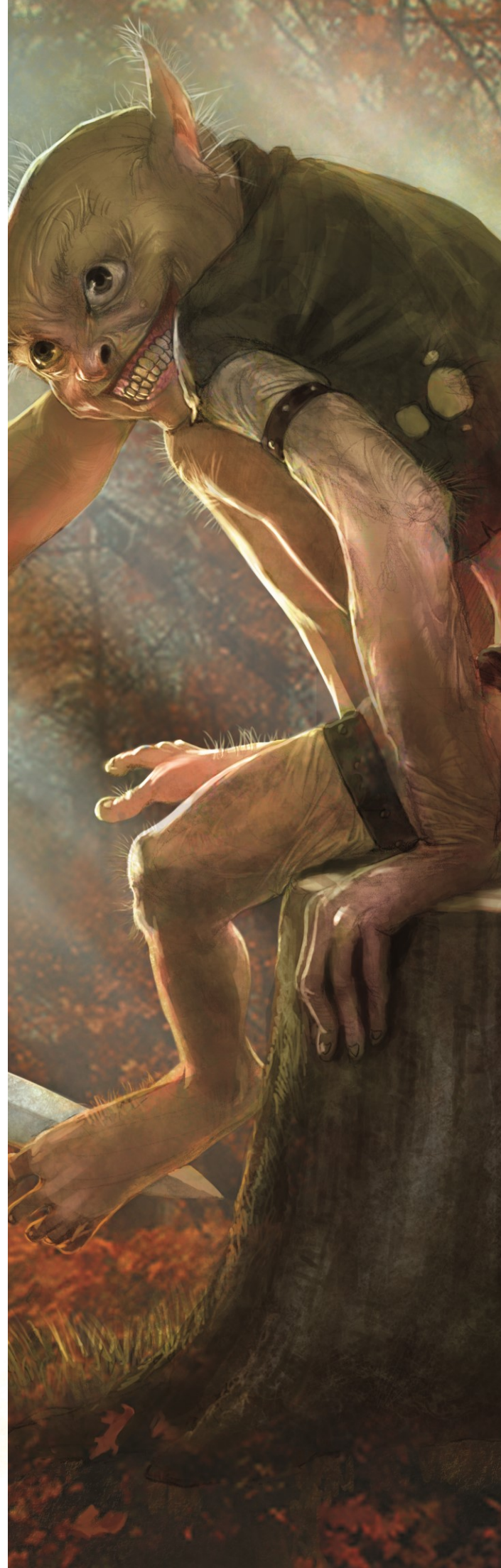
Aiden lost his footing nearing another summit. The body and the door slid back down the incline until Aiden dug his cleats deep and cut his hand on the strap with whatever lingering strength he had. He could hear his sword fall down the hill, but he had no energy to retrieve it. He pushed back up the hill, dragging the door behind. Each boot slammed deep to get root. Reaching the crest, Aiden pulled the door back up to his shoulders and he stood cold and damp, a thick layer of grey running down his back.

He sighted the wagons, horses, and people of Antikari before dusk, emerging as a rising wave. The grass took a breeze and opened like a splitting river to guide him to town. A pair of aides by a wagon took notice and made for him. Aiden collapsed onto the ground. He stared at the passing clouds, coughing and wheezing as others ran to help.





**CHAPTER FIVE:
ECHANS**



Though the fae are the most overt representatives of the changed world, they are not its exclusive participants. The human species may be much reduced from the days when humanity held sway over all of Earth, but humans still number far in excess of any individual population of fae. And humans are not the only non-fae species to grace the planet: a number of species of animals were uplifted to human or near-human intelligence by the opening of Attricana, although only one – the savage and imposing kodiak, descended from the Alaskan grizzly bear – is common in Canam.

HUMAN

"I do not understand, Nejima-san," said the damaskan child, her lip curling in distaste. "What is the purpose of this exercise, if it is not combat training?"

Nejima sighed and adjusted the straps on his boxing gloves. "It's many things, Denka-chan," he explained. "I find it serves me better than meditating for clearing the mind."

The little girl shook her head. "But, if you hurt someone—or if you get hurt—" Nejima smiled.

"That's part of the fun," he said. "You have to focus on your opponent so you don't get hit, and if you do you have to condition yourself so you don't feel it, and you have to trust that he'll do the same. It's almost spiritual, when you think about it." The elf still did not seem convinced.

"But... but... men... touching!" she stammered. "And in shiny underwear!" Nejima looked at the child's red-faced visage for a moment, and then burst out laughing.

"Yes, well," he said, when he had regained his composure, "Perhaps I should try to explain again when you're older."

HUMAN SPECIES ABILITIES


Human Versatility: You gain a free edge.

Regional Knowledge: You start with the Knowledge (home region) skill at d6. The region each nation belongs to is listed in parentheses after the nation's name.

Average Starting Age: 20 years

Estimated Life Expectancy: 80 years

Evolution is the adaptation of a natural animal to its environment. Further generations of a species may not necessarily be superior, but those that survive would be better suited to their surroundings with an advantage over the competition. This process eventually resulted in humanity – with no signs that evolution has ceased. Some humans firmly believe mankind's turn to magic will be the key to their final path to perfection, able to master the world of enchantment in all its forms while fae continue to be slaves to it. The majority of bastion-born believe mankind earned his right for total dominion of the globe and wait for the day when technology will recover the planet again. A few believe in a shared future where technology can exist side by side with magic, though with mankind as the true proprietors of the world. In echa, this belief is reversed. While some think the new races are intruding and should be eliminated or enslaved, many have embraced the new world, considering it the utopia and haven predicted in religious texts. Only when the dark hordes and their minions are eliminated and the hell gate closed will this world truly turn into Eden.



Physical Qualities: Outside the bastions, humans have continued to adapt themselves to their environment. Due to being less confined than the bastions, nearly all the pre-Hammer ethnicities can still be found in their original forms, some mingling in cosmopolitan nations, some isolated in their own communities. There have even been a few new ethnicities arising from exposure to magic, possessing skin, hair and eye colors, and physical traits previously unknown in humanity. Since almost every religion and ethnic group is represented on Canam, a player can select any ethnicity of his choosing. It is suggested that upon choosing an ethnic group, the player takes the time to research the unique strengths of the group.

Playing a Human: With such a wide range of possibilities, humanity is the best people to play. They have the greatest variety of options. In this new world, they have the most to gain (and lose) with the coming events to follow. In the end, humanity will be the force that will decide the fate of the world.

Most echan humans have wholly accepted their path with no desire to settle within the walls of industry. They take on magic without worry of the consequences. They believe techans follow an obsolete conviction, frantically clinging to a dying mind-set. Echan humans insist this new world is as real as the one that came before and it deserves to exist as much as anything else. Those with a faith in the unseen believe it to be the ultimate solution to humanity's avarice. If man continued alone, he would have destroyed the world in his greed. With magic and disruption, it keeps mankind humble and in check—Nature finally striking back for sins committed on its soil. Even those without religion believe this new world is the proper one. At the very least, it's far more interesting. Some just don't care about the fate of humanity and have turned their back to selfishly embrace the romance and exotic nature of their new neighbors.

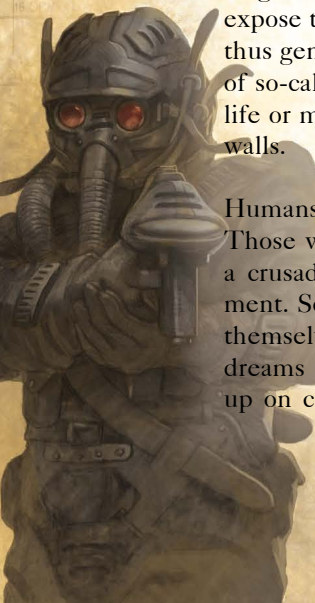
Then there are those on either side who simply have yet to make a choice. It must be stressed that though millions of humans would be considered 'echan' simply because they live in regions that accept the existence of magic as a reality of life, only those who actively use or expose themselves to magic are actually enchanted (and thus generate EDF). At the same time, there are plenty of so-called techans who hearken after either a simpler life or merely a less predictable one outside the bastion walls.

Humans often seek excitement for the sheer thrill of it. Those with devout religious belief may venture out on a crusade, either personal or part of a national movement. Some escape their bastions while others dedicate themselves to entering one. Humans follow whims and dreams more than any other species. They are caught up on causes while others let things pass. Their short

lives force them to condense as much experience as possible in a brief span of time.

Names: Human names continue to evolve today. Now with the commingling of many ethnic groups, first and last names can (and usually do) represent several cultures. The degree of infusion of Asian blood and languages into the general Canamite population means that old Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indian names are as common, if not more so, than those originally of European extraction.

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



KODIAK

In light above, I see fires by man and unman. I tell not apart. They better for sparking fires? I make fire here. No need to set them to sky. Here they cook and warm. We thank wood for burning. We plant again to make grow more. No wood in sky. Man pray fire. Seek fire. Wrong for this. No pray fire, pray wood. Wood better. Pray Wood.

KODIAK SPECIES ABILITIES

Alpine Survival: You have a +4 bonus to resist the effects of cold.

Bear Claws: You have claws that inflict Strength+d6 damage in melee.

Echan: You disrupt technology on you and around you. You have the Echan minor hindrance, but receive no points for it. If you take Echan as a major hindrance, you only gain points as for the minor hindrance. You can never buy off this hindrance.

Imposing but Clumsy: You have the formidable strength of your ancestors, which unfortunately is not designed for fine motor skills. You gain the Brawny edge (even if you do not meet the requirements), but you suffer a non-familiarity penalty on any roll that involves precise manual dexterity, whether you're trained or not.

Natural Runner: As long as you have nothing in your hands, you can run on all fours, giving you a pace of 10. You do not suffer the normal -2 penalty to your first attack with your claws while running.

Scary Bear: No matter how you try, you always intimidate people. You have -2 Charisma outside your species, but you add +2 to Intimidation rolls.

Wild Creature: The Doubting Thomas, Illiterate, and Poverty hindrances do not count against your maximum number of hindrances.

Average Height: 6'4" – 7'2"

Average Weight: 350 –450 lb.

Average Starting Age: 15 years.

Estimated Life Expectancy: 80 years

In the north of Canam, influence from Attricana has forced the native bears upright. At first, these creatures remained lawless. They quarreled amongst themselves and raided neighboring communities for food. Even today, kodiaks still lack sufficient success at civilized society. Most cling to the quest for survival with such an obsession that they care for little else.

A band's disposition relies on its leader, dictating how the tribe will act and where they will travel. Will they hunt or forage? Will they attack or trade? A few tribes close to the narros in Fargon or migrating into the sparsely settled lands down the Dianaso pass, understanding that their future depended on pushing past their fear of others, attempted a dialogue. The kodiaks developed into trained hunters and farmers. As they brought in food, the civilized folk repaid their allies with knowledge, clothes, tools, and finally weapons. Better armed, these civilized kodiaks overwhelmed their unfortunate rivals, whether they be boggs, skeggs, or other kodiaks.

Almost all kodiaks reside in Northern Canam with a few migrating through the rest of the continent. They are virtually unknown elsewhere. Their presence in any non-kodiak community is uncommon; the only place in Canam where kodiaks and non-kodiaks regularly mingle is in the confederacy of Seliqum, in and around the Dianaso Pass, and even there, most kodiak bands keep to themselves.

Kodiaks speak in a series of grunts and whimpers known as Argose; they can manage other languages only with difficulty, and always heavily accented. Few non-kodiaks comprehend their language.

Physical Qualities: As their name suggests, most kodiaks are derived from northern grizzly bear stock, though there are a few bands whose ancestors must have interbred with polar bears or black bears from their size and coloring. Kodiaks are enormous, with many towering over seven feet. They are covered from head to toe in heavy fur with large eyes and articulate claws.



Their snouts are shortened to fit a proper mouth that can articulate speech (albeit not terribly well). It is nearly impossible to tell a female from a male upon a cursory examination (females are incrementally smaller than males, but not so much that the average human or even chaparran would be able to tell), or for that matter even distinguish one individual from another: kodiaks tell one another apart by smell more than sight. There are a branch of elder shamans revered by the kodiaks as living deities. These are not true kodiaks, being proportioned more like normal bears, with shorter limbs and larger torsos. They also rarely wear clothes or wield weapons. Kodiaks only wear layers for protection. If they travel too far south, they stop wearing unnecessary clothes, except armor. While not dependent on magic to live, as fae are, kodiaks are still an inherently echan folk and disrupt technology just as the fae do. They are also immune to most, but not all, human ailments, although they can be carriers – but they also have their own unique disorders, which can be difficult for a non-kodiak physician to even diagnose let alone cure with-

out the aid of magic. Kodiaks also retain some vestiges of their ancestral hibernation instinct, and although they can easily overcome it, they tend to be sluggish in the winter months: however, they also are able to survive on practically no food during that time, having stored up sufficient reserves during the summer and autumn.

Playing a Kodiak: Kodiaks are the best species; there can be no argument. A kodiak enters the room and all eyes turn. Every mouth gulps its drink. Respect is bestowed without knowing anything further. It's a gigantic, bipedal bear. Its roar can be heard from across the room. Seeing one in battle fills enemies with dread. They are the biggest and the strongest. Who cares about anything else?

Kodiaks are a rare addition to any adventuring party. They seldom leave their tribes and when they do find themselves thrown together with non-kodiaks, they are often taken advantage of. Kodiaks may be the strongest



and most durable, but they are rarely the smartest. There has never been a kodiak wizard mentioned in any book, and even the darawren of Jibaro have only ever accepted four kodiak druids. They prefer loose-fitting armor to heavy plates. They avoid shields and relish two-handed weapons, especially heavy clubs and battleaxes. Kodiaks are brought into a party for their strength and not their colorful conversation. They say little, making others skittish around them. When they do associate with outsiders, it's often with other peoples bound to nature (chaparrans being the noteworthy example). Other semi-feral species often take a liking to kodiaks. There have even been a few rumors of kodiaks taking changelings or nariisa as mates.

No one dares cross a kodiak. They defend their friends with violent fervor, building themselves into a crazed frenzy like a mother bear with a cub. Kodiaks suffer from low intelligence but they should not be considered stupid. They are simple and talk in basic phrases but only speak this way because of apathy towards conversation. Kodiaks can't stand small talk. They despise politeness and rarely return courtesy. Words like "please" and "thank you" have no mirror in their tongue. A kodiak character has likely left his tribe because of dishonor or less commonly because of a command or need to wander the world. He may even be the last of his family.

Names: Kodiaks can tell each other apart easily, differentiating sex, age, and family line by scent. Because of this, they have no need for complicated names or family titles. They have single names of few syllables, which are easy to pronounce, and are not usually used within their own communities. One account claims the kodiaks only have thirty different actual names they continually recycle, but this has never been proven.

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

NEW EDGE KODIAK SHAMAN

(Professional Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d10+ (male) or d8+ (female), kodiak.

The kodiak religion is animistic, believing that spirits exist in all things and that by praying to them, their properties are revealed: to know the right prayers, the kodiaks turn to their shamans. The vast majority of kodiak shamans are female, due to the widespread belief that the ability to bear cubs makes them closer to the spirit of the Earth. You gain +2 to Charisma when dealing with kodiaks, and you gain +1 to all Healing, Knowledge (Nature, Occult), and Survival rolls.

KODIAK ARCHETYPES HUNTER

(Novice)

Kodiaks are omnivores, but while their ancestral form was designed by nature primarily to fish and forage, their bipedal mode and quicker metabolisms require more meat in their diet than the grizzlies of old were wont to consume. Consequently the vast majority of the members of a kodiak band are hunters. Kodiaks cannot effectively use ranged weapons and thus cannot hunt with bows: instead, they learn to mask their scent from other animals, use stealth to get close to them, and either take them down with their powerful claws and jaws, or leave the prey wounded and track it down when it expires from blood loss.

Species: Kodiak

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Nature) d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Swimming d6, Tracking d6

Charisma -2 (+0 vs other kodiaks); **Pace** 6 (10 on all fours); **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 7

Hindrances: Doubting Thomas, Echan*, Illiterate, Stubborn

Edges: Brawny (kodiak ability)

KODIAK DARAWREN

(Seasoned)

The number of kodiaks who have ever shown an aptitude for magic in the past five hundred years can be counted on one hand, and all of them have been trained in Jibaro. The darawren's path meshes well with kodiaks' animistic beliefs, but as they still have trouble with the basic concept of writing and maintain some of their superstitious awe of magic even when they understand its basic principles, they remain limited in their abilities. Although they never learn many spells, they make up for their deficiency by being very good at the ones they do know.

Species: Kodiak

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Intimidation d8+2, Knowledge (Occult) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Spellcasting d10, Swimming d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma -4 (+0 vs other kodiaks, -2 vs chaparrans); **Pace** 6 (10 on all fours); **Parry** 4; **Toughness** 6

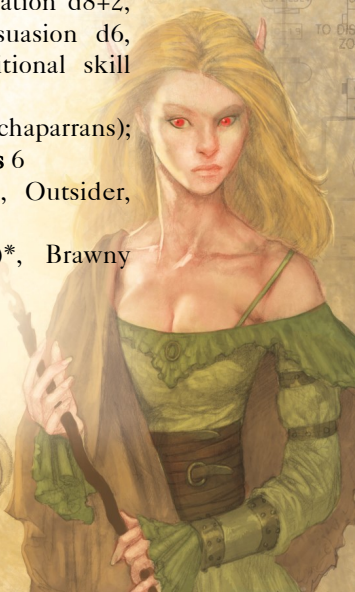
Hindrances: Doubting Thomas, Echan*, Outsider, Poverty, Stubborn

Edges: Arcane Background (Darawren)*, Brawny (kodiak ability), Power Points (x2)

Totem: Staff

Power Points: 20

Powers: Entangle, havoc, healing



SHAMAN

(Novice)

Kodiak bands do not really have leaders in the traditional sense, being descended from traditionally solitary creatures. Instead, in times of difficulty, they turn to someone with expertise for their advice, and with the importance of religion to their way of life, that someone is usually the band's shaman. The shaman does not speak to the spirits that kodiaks believe inhabit all things, or importune them for blessings – instead, she tries to understand them, to predict their vagaries, and to advise the band on the best course of action to take to avoid their wrath. Their approach to the spiritual world could even be thought of as scientific, and because of their understanding of the natural world, shaman are far less prone to superstitious fear than other kodiaks.

Species: Kodiak (female)

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d4

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d4, Healing d6+1, Knowledge (Nature) d6+1, Knowledge (Occult) d6+1, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Survival d6+1, Swimming d4, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma -2 (+2 vs other kodiaks); **Pace** 6 (10 on all fours); **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Cautious, Echan*, Illiterate, Poverty

Edges: Brawny (kodiak ability), Kodiak Shaman*

REGIONAL GROUPS

Most of the nations of Canam are small points of light in a wild and untamed world. Borders are not always well-defined: sometimes the lore and social values of a nation are valid beyond its immediate sphere of influence and sometimes the next village over has completely different social norms and cares nothing for the history of the neighboring nation. When determining whether a given regional Knowledge skill applies to your situation, use the following list of regional groups as a guideline (there may be overlaps):

Central: Kannos, the Finer Fire Pits, Limshau, and Orchis.

Dianaso: Fargon, Seliquam, Quinox, and Selkirk.

East Cross: Eastern Limshau, Gnimfall, Halyc, Mann, and York.

Kesakas: Dawnamoak, Sierra Madre, southern Nankani Mountains, and the Gloam.

North: Alpinas, Ashur, and Dagon.

Northern Shield: Abidan, Apocrypha, and Azhi Dahaka.

Sky Network: Laudenia.

South: Baruch Malkut, Ogium, Skyrose, Laurama, and Tranquiss.

Western Reach: Angel, Crax, Cyon, Laurenoak, Locus Mallis, Torquil and Xixion.

West Cross: Antikari, Burgunasis, western Limshau, Plicato, and Salvabrooke.

ALLEGIANCES

Canam is a wild and dangerous place, and the most important consideration for anyone trying to survive in it is who their friends are. Where you come from and what banner you adhere to has a major impact on your ability to make your way in the world. Techans operating in the fantasy world are obviously out of their element, as are the (much rarer) echans who manage to make their way into a bastion, but take a knight of Abidan or a Limshau librarian, plunk her down in Baruch Malkut, and see how long she survives without some very rapid adaptation.

The following is a general overview of the major nations of Canam, along with some archetypal characters who might come from those places.

ABIDAN

(Northern Shield)

"If you still wish to pay some tribute or prove your devotion, then take my side as a knight of the line. In my view, I ask too much, for the trials are taxing and the glory less a token, but I ask you the same. Will you join and stand?"

The boundary between the civilized kingdoms of central Canam and the wild wasteland of Apocrypha, Abidan is known for reviving and embodying the ancient codes of chivalry, as exemplified in its first ruler, the Paladin King Vincent Savarice. The knights of Abidan are the spiritual successors of the knights of the cross, the brotherhood of Roland, and the Round Table. Abidan is known as a land of faith, but which faith is not prescribed: though the majority of the population is Christian, Muslim, or Jewish, there is no 'official' religion, and the crown encourages open study and debate of all faiths equally. Abidan occupies the territory formerly known as Michigan and Indiana, south of the bloated Grand Lakes, with the capital of Janoah occupying the isthmus formerly known as Detroit, now known as the Tethuss Bridge.

Names: Englo-Lingo and Semitic are the dominant languages in Abidan, albeit more archaic and formal dialects that emphasize the classical French and Arabic elements, and it is not uncommon, especially among the nobility, to hear names that would not have sounded out of place in the ancient pre-Hammer crusader states. Given that the kingdom still sees a constant stream of immigrants from elsewhere in the continent, names of



any ethnic extraction (or combination thereof) are possible.

Examples: Claude Guiscard, Elise Beauchamp, Fatimah Mosoul, Mahan Vaaris Farcon, Roland Amuad, Sarah Minaschent

NEW EDGES

ARCANE BACKGROUND: ACADEMY OF LOGOS

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+, any religion.

Arcane Skill: Spellcasting (Smarts)

Starting Power Points: 15

Starting Powers: 3

Totems: Book, Staff

During the reign of Vincent Savarice, an order of priests in Abidan, with the support of their paladin king, began investigating the position of the magical Pleroma language in various fae faiths. They wanted to determine if Pleroma and its abilities might have any spiritual connection with the Abrahamic religions still widespread across the world. Some priests, clerics, and rabbis denounced the practice as heresy, but as one noteworthy and respected cleric supporting the practice put it, “God could wink out the sun and stop the Earth from moving – throwing a lightning bolt from a wand pales in comparison.” A similarly modest Jesuit complimented the remark by adding, “Wizards are merely priests in denial.”

- **Act of God?:** When you roll a 1 on your Spellcasting roll, regardless of the result of the wild die, you must immediately make a Spirit roll. If you fail, the spell is still cast, but you are Shaken (this can cause a wound) and you lose control of the spell, which manifests itself in a manner determined by the GM.

Canonical Powers: All powers (except zombie) are supported by the academy, but not all powers are supported by each religion, nor does each religion have a canonical list of powers for all practitioners. You should assemble a list of powers that are thematic to your particular implementation of faith. Once set, you can only take a power not on that list by taking the New Power edge, and you can never take the zombie power.

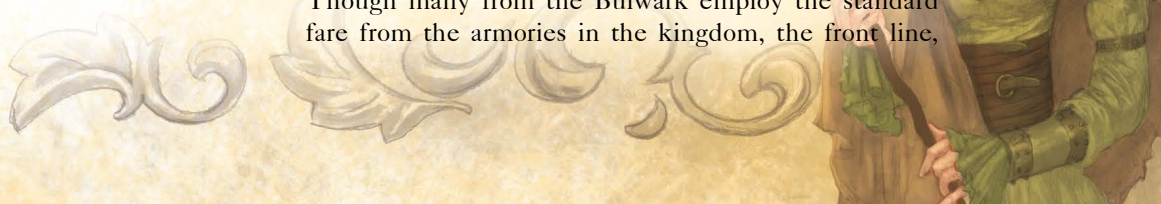
Trappings: Logian powers reflect the standard of holiness of the practitioner’s religion. For most religions, Light trappings are the norm, but for some, elemental themes would be more appropriate. However, it is impossible to conceal Logian spellcasting by any means: the caster is always obvious.

NEW EQUIPMENT

JANOAHN MASTER SHIELD

Weight 16; **Cost** 300; +2 Parry, +2 Armor to ranged shots that hit (+3 to both if in a shield lock with one or two allies).

Though many from the Bulwark employ the standard fare from the armories in the kingdom, the front line,





146 and most knights and paladins sworn to the Wall, guard with a more advanced shield exclusive to Abidan. The master shield is lens-shaped giving it increased rigidity. It is also wrapped with hide leather and additional steel belts for reinforcement. Most shields destined for the Wall are also spiked.

ABIDAN ARCHETYPES

ABIDAN MISSIONARY

(Novice)

Roughly equal parts warrior, healer, teacher and administrator, and tasked with protecting the innocent and encouraging hope and virtue throughout the kingdom, Abidan missionaries are gathered by a mutual desire to help others in need. They can be found throughout Canam, displaying their devotion through deeds that speak far louder than any sermon could.

Species: Human (echan)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Healing d6, Knowledge (History) d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d6, Survival d6, +3 additional skill points

Charisma +2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Echan*, two minor

Edges: Command, Charismatic

KNIGHT OF THE WALL

(Seasoned)

On the bridge Tethuss, the holy warriors of Janoah live their lives in defense of a single cause—to hold the wall against the pagus hordes threatening to sweep down the continent. Bound in by mountains on one side and gulping waters on the other side, all but the bravest





pagus see the isthmus as the easiest route to the unprotected south despite its towering fortress rampart.

Species: Human (echan)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d4, Knowledge (History) d4, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Riding d6, Swimming d6, Taunt d4, +1 additional skill point

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 7; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Echan*, two minor

Edges: Block, Carapace*, Common Bond

TASKIN-KADA WATCHER

(Novice)

The city of Taskin-Kada is the home of a very unique society charged with counter-intelligence for the entire nation of Abidan. They are not spies but observers. They never steal anything other than the unaltered history revealed before their eyes. With a reputation for honesty and accuracy, the word of a watcher carries weight in any Abidan court. Outside of Abidan, however, they have no official presence and should anything happen to them in the course of an ‘unsanctioned’ operation, they know they cannot rely on support from home.

Species: Human (echan)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Lockpicking d4, Notice d10, Persuasion d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8, Throwing d4

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2; **Toughness** 4

Hindrances: Echan*, one major, two minor

Edges: Alertness, Jack-of-all-Trades

BARUCH MALKUT

(South)

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

Occupying most of the swampy continental southeast, the ‘Blessed Kingdom’ as it is known is a theocratic dictatorship that has been ruled by one man for over two hundred years: Darius Konig, widely considered by the rest of the civilized nations to be a worse threat to Canam’s peace than the pagus and their dragon masters. Konig subjugates his people through a religion that preaches that Man is the master of magic, that technology is evil and disruption is God’s curse upon decadent men, and that the fae are demons sent to tempt Man-kind from its proper course. Citizens of Baruch Malkut are taught to live in fear and ignorance: literacy is forbidden, and all teaching is disseminated solely by preachers of the state-approved faith. Order and orthodoxy are enforced by brutish thugs and terrifying assassins. The Blessed Kingdom’s borders cover the lands once known as Florida, Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina (such of it as did not fall into the sea in the world’s reshaping).





148 **NEW EDGES** **KNOW THEIR TRICKS**

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+, Human from Baruch Malkut

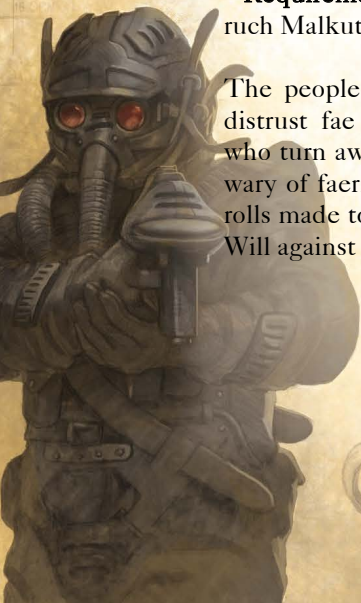
The people of Baruch Malkut are taught to hate and distrust fae from their earliest years, and even those who turn away from the nation's bigotry continue to be wary of faerie magic. You gain +2 to Smarts and Spirit rolls made to resist magic cast by fae, as well as Tests of Will against them.

THUGGEE

(Professional Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Strength d6+, Human from Baruch Malkut

Baruch thugs are generally bandits picked out of the swamps by Darius Konig's Order of the Cloth, given rudimentary religious brainwashing, armed with a variety of weapons including easily concealed blades and a garrote, and sent out to bully the general population and strangle any non-enslaved fae they come across. You gain a +1 bonus to Parry against attacks by fae, and a +2 bonus to opposed Fighting rolls to inflict damage during a grapple (+3 against a fae opponent).



NEW EQUIPMENT

ALVARA BLADE & DEATH'S HEAD RING

Cost: Military

The standard equipment of the Order of the Cloth, the king's personal bodyguards and assassins, the blade and the ring are basic magical items sheathed in gold to dampen their magical presence, allowing their wielders to escape even the most stringent magical detection. When inactive, they look like a simple, unadorned golden bracelet and ring. When the wielder activates them with a mental command, the ring projects an illusion of a red hooded cloak and a golden skull half-mask over the wielder's own clothes (which adds +2 to all Intimidation rolls), and the bracelet either stores or retrieves a weapon or small item carried in the appropriate hand from a pocket space within itself. Once the Cloth's target is dealt with, the assassin can deactivate the items to easily escape the scene unnoticed.

THUGGEE GARROTE

Damage Strength*; **Weight** 1; **Cost** 30

The thuggee warriors of Baruch Malkut are taught to kill by stealth, and their preferred method is ambush and strangulation. The garrote is a length of wire that normally lies coiled inside a spring-loaded sheath on the wielder's forearm and can be drawn out at a moment's notice. Once drawn, the spring mechanism locks in place and the wire can be wrapped around the victim's neck. Against a target unaware of the attack or otherwise unable to defend itself, the attacker rolls an extra Strength die in addition to normal dice on Fighting rolls to initiate a grapple, opposed rolls to maintain a grapple, and damage rolls to grappled victims.

BARUCH MALKUT ARCHETYPES CLOTH ASSASSINO

(Seasoned)

The Order of the Cloth are the crimson-garbed inner retinue of King Darius, with powers of life and death over all his subjects – which, since Baruch Malkut claims rule over all the Earth, makes them the favored agents of justice against the King's enemies outside the Blessed Kingdom's borders as well as within them. It takes extreme provocation to forswear the Order, normally the most devoted fanatics in a nation of fanatical devotion, but occasionally one of them develops a conscience. This erring child is inevitably tracked down by the remainder of the Order and taught a lesson in what it means to betray Darius Konig.

Species: Human

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (South region) d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0 (-2 vs non-Malkut); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 7; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Bigot*, Death Wish, Echan*, Wanted (Major)

Edges: Acrobat, Ambidextrous, Assassin

Special Equipment: Alvara blade and death's head ring.

THUGGEE

(Novice)

Though their name is derived from an obscure religious cult, the Baruch thuggee have more in common with the more prosaic term that the name inspired. The swamplands that make up much of Baruch Malkut's land area are rife with bandits, and it is from these dregs of society that the thuggee are recruited, brainwashed in the state religion, trained to be intimidating brutes and stealthy killers, and let loose on the land to enforce the King's law. Sometimes one goes rogue – the brainwashing wears off, or the lure of plunder outweighs loyalty to the throne – and others are swiftly despatched to administer swift and brutal justice upon the betrayer.

Species: Human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (South region) d6, Notice d4, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Swimming d4, Tracking d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0 (-2 vs non-Malkut); **Pace** 8; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Bigot*, Echan*, Illiterate, Wanted (Major)

Edges: Brawny, Brawler

Special Equipment: Thuggee garrote.

(EX-) TRAFFIC HUNTER

(Novice)

King Darius founded Baruch Malkut on the elimination of the fae races, but relented in the face of the opportunities offered by the businessmen and landowners of the new properties he had conquered. Fae slavery is consequently a fact of everyday life in the Blessed Kingdom: captured chaparrans work the plantation fields, damaskans serve as house attendants, and even the imbecilic puggs are used for menial tasks. This industry is fed by traffickers in fae flesh, who capture their wares or buy them from bandits and then transport them to the great markets of the eastern seaboard. A few, however, turn this repugnant trade on its head, using the cover of a slave trader to smuggle escapees to safety beyond the Kingdom's borders.

Species: Human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6,



Strength d6, Vigor d4

Skills: Boating OR Driving d4, Fighting d6, Healing d6, Knowledge (South region) d6, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Tracking d8, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0 (-2 vs fac); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 4

Hindrances: Bigot (major),* Echan*

Edges: Know Their Tricks*

Special Equipment: A slaver caravan or barge.

CONTINENTAL CROSS

(East Cross/West Cross)

The only regular land route that traverses the full length of Canam, the Continental Cross is a series of trade roads maintained and patrolled by the major nations and free houses it passes through. The people who travel the Cross range from merchant caravans to mercenary companies to wanderlust-driven nomads. The majority of the Cross lies within the kingdom of Limshau, and is relatively safe along this stretch – elsewhere, there is a persistent danger of kaddog and bandit attacks, and sometimes more frightful monsters (both human and non).

CONTINENTAL CROSS ARCHETYPES

CARAVANEER

(Novice)

There are those who make their living traveling the Cross, ferrying goods and passengers more or less safely from one end to the other. These tend to be less grim warriors and more savvy businessfolk, willing to hire on the protection they need at reasonable prices and band together with others traveling the same direction for safety in numbers. In a lifetime of traveling, they acquire a plethora of stories... and allies.

Species: Gimfen

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Driving d6, Gambling d4, Knowledge (Continental Cross) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Repair d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6, +3 additional skill points.

Charisma +2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2; **Toughness** 4

Hindrances: Echan*, Small, one major OR two minor

Edges: Quick

Special Equipment: A caravan or similar vehicle.

CROSSROADS DRIFTER

(Novice)

Many individuals are raised in a stable environment, dependant on reliable income from parents that are always present. Crossroad drifters are not usually among these lucky people. If they actually had a family, they were nomads or merchants, and more likely they were raised by a caravan as a whole rather than their parents. Because of slow travel time and the long distances be-

tween locations, thousands of children are born with no real home to speak of. They learn to walk early in life and never stop moving. They keep few ties: their loyalty is to their caravan or traveling companions. Their home is a temporary bed, wagon, or stable rental. Crusades, causes, or jobs they take on are often considered peripheral, and they never believe them obligatory. Drifters refuse to be tied down to rules or by the laws passed down by some egotistical government, despite any veneration of its rulers. They outlive their welcome early as they don't consider diplomacy a useful talent. If feathers are ruffled, they simply pack up and move on.

Species: Human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Healing d6, Intimidation d4, Knowledge (East Cross, West Cross) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d4, Shooting d6, Survival d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2; **Toughness** 4

Hindrances: Echan* OR Techan*

Edges: Common Bond

YOJIMBO

(Seasoned)

For those who travel the Cross but lack the skills necessary for their own defense, many trained warriors are more than happy to supply those deficiencies in exchange for a fair wage. Sometimes they are travelers themselves, paying their way in skill at arms. As most of these ply their trade between Limshau and the more dangerous western reaches of the road, they are most commonly known by the Sinitic term 'yojimbo' (bodyguard) and many are trained with the Japanese-styled weapons and martial arts favored in Limshau.

Species: Half-Damaskan

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (West Cross) d6, Notice d8+2, Shooting d6, Survival d6, +1 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*

Edges: Polyglot (Damaskan feature)*, Yojimbo*

DAWNAMOAK

(Kesakas)

"Like a mother forgiving all the sins of the child, nature absolved man of his past transgressions. The hammer was an act of God, not of nature."

Although chaparrans can be found in most of the forests of Canam, the majority reside within the massive forest that occupies most of the former American southwest, between the mountains and the gulf. Dawnamoak was probably one of the first fac communities established



after Attricana's opening. The chaparrans gathered in a location of heavy magic and began shaping the wood to their whim. The towers of Jibaro are the equivalent of Mecca in the chaparran culture. It is their holiest city and fervently defended by fanatical fae to the extent that non-chaparrans are prohibited from getting close to the towers. Most never even make it that far into the forest. There have been a few notable exceptions—specifically druids and respected holy men from various races. Each tower focuses on a specific facet of chaparran culture, one for the unique chaparran spellcraft, one for the chaparran holy warriors, and the other the virtually inaccessible central tower and pillar of the chaparran faith. Saturated through the rest of Dawnamoak are perhaps hundreds of even thousands of chaparran villages, shifting and amalgamating so often as to make detailing them pointless.

NEW EDGES

ARCANE BACKGROUND: DARAWREN

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Chaparran, or trained at Jibaro

Arcane Skill: Spellcasting (Spirit)

Starting Power Points: 10

Starting Powers: 3

Totems: Book, Instrument, Orb, Staff, Weapon (bow only)

Many wizards across the world classify the Towers of Jibaro as the greatest collection of arcane magic, even compared to the repositories of Limshau and Laudenia.

However, the knowledge locked inside Jibaro is accessible only to a select few, the elite spellcasters of Jibaro, the darawren. Although still employing totems, the mandatory standard of all wizardry, Jibaro teaches an altered viewpoint of their purpose, being only a repository of words, and not the focus of magic. Jibaro instructs its students that magic rises from the Earth, not falls from the gate. The wizards of Jibaro are taught to channel Pleroma—the language of magic—through material components brought up from the Earth. This can be as extravagant as jewels but often enough it only a handful of dirt or sand. A darawren often carries a pouch of soil when entering a dungeon or building.

- **Oaken's Toll:** When you roll a 1 on your Spellcasting roll, regardless of the result of the wild die, you lose control of the spell and its energy is channeled through you into the ground. Your skin becomes partially petrified, reducing your Pace to 2", although you also gain Armor +1. You are Shaken by the transformation (this can cause a wound). You remain in this state for a number of rounds equal to the result on your wild die.

Canonical Powers: Any except zombie. You cannot take this power even with the New Power edge.

Trappings: Elemental earth and water, and plants. The following special effect also applies to darawren powers.

Earth Magic: A darawren who casts a protective or divinatory spell in an area full of natural foliage reduces the cost of the spell by 1 point. If she has to cast any





spell and does not have access to at least a handful of dirt, sand, unworked stone or gems, the cost of that spell increases by 1 point.

TREESHAPING

(Weird Edge)

Requirement: Novice, Spirit d8+, Chaparran

Chaparrans create nearly all their tools and weapons from wood. Where these cannot be formed from fallen branches, they can beseech the trees themselves to yield up part of their bodies, even molding it into the desired form in response to the treeshaper's request. Given a tree large enough that the amount of wood removed will not seriously harm it, you can craft any medieval-level equipment which could conceivably be made entirely of wood (or of wood with a small amount of stone) just by asking the tree, thus acquiring the item at no cost. The item requires time to grow, equal to its normal cost divided by 20 in days, and you must spend at least one hour each day reminding the tree of the shape you want. Complex items may require a Spirit roll (to explain to the tree exactly what you want). Wooden armor and weapons are slightly less durable than their smithed equivalents: the Toughness of wooden armor and shields is reduced by 2, and if you roll a 1 on both your trait die and the wild die when wielding a wooden weapon (apart from weapons that are normally made of wood, like bows and clubs), it breaks.

DAWNAMOAK ARCHETYPES LOREKEEPER

(Novice)

Because chaparrans do not write anything down if they can avoid it, most of their history is preserved through songs and stories. It is the responsibility of the village's lorekeepers to remember centuries or millennia of history and tradition. Lorekeepers serve many roles, from healers to speakers of law to entertainers. A few may learn the rudiments of magic, but most do not. To ensure that the tribe's knowledge is not lost through accident or malice, an elder lorekeeper usually has between two and twelve apprentices at a time, many of whom are sent out into the forest to learn the lore of Dawnamoak from the most enduring teacher of all – practical experience.

Species: Chaparran

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Healing d6, Knowledge (Dawnamoak) d8+2, Knowledge (Nature) d8+2, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma -2 (+0 vs chaparrans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2;

Toughness 5

Hindrances: Echan*, two minor

Edges: Scholar



REKII

(Novice)

Those with the keenest eyes and whose interest in the world is not curbed by experience often become rekii (the chaparran term for the whippoorwill, although the name originally referred to a different prehistoric creature that is now forgotten). A rekii's purpose is to scout some way ahead of a hunting party or warband, leaving trail sign for those following and using hand signs or animal calls to spot for archers behind, enabling them to make accurate shots against targets that they themselves cannot see, but the rekii can.

Species: Chaparran

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Tracking d8, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma -2 (+0 vs chaparrans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Curious, Echan*

Edges: Rekii*

TREESHAPER

(Seasoned)

Rather than smiths and carpenters, chaparrans have treeshapers – part crafter, part counsellor, adept at convincing living trees to yield up their bounty for the chaparrans' use. While this trade requires the same eye for detail that a mundane crafter might use in order to envision the final product, because the actual shaping involves diplomatic skills rather than handicraft abilities, treeshapers often find themselves consulted on matters not strictly related to the shaping of wood, such as trade relations, political decisions, even simple personal problems.

Species: Chaparran

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Knowledge (Nature) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Repair d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0 (+2 vs chaparrans); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*

Edges: Charismatic, Treeshaping*

FARGON

(Dianaso)

"Bring down sin and rock. They both crumble under the pick of truth. Climb up brothers. More treasures await those in Oaken's good graces."

Fargon is incredibly isolated, with most people only hearing or reading stories about it. Cut off by forest, rock, and beast, it resides in the far north, in a region once called Alaska. Most narros come from Fargon, a

legendary empire of dwarves that, after a brief rebellion, suffered no setbacks in their expansion across a virtually empty landscape. Simply put, the empire ran out of narros. As result, many of their largest cities look empty, and their realm and the lands nearby are filled with ruins built centuries ago and then simply abandoned to the elements. The narros of Fargon are very serious and dedicated to perfecting themselves, whether as warriors, artisans, athletes, scholars or philosophers. Many of those narros encountered in southern lands are self-outcasts who seek atonement for a failure, real or perceived.

NEW EDGES

DOPPELSHIDO

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+, Fighting d8+, narros from Fargon or trained by a ravnorra.

You are matched to a specific type of weapon early in your training and learn to master wielding every part of it at once. You gain +1 to Parry with your favored weapon. Additionally, if you take an edge that normally requires a different type of melee weapon than your favored weapon, you can use it with your favored weapon.

FARGON DISCIPLINED

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8+, narros from Fargon

The cold north is fertile ground for growing dedication. Choose one skill: you can use Spirit as the linked attribute for this skill instead of its normal attribute during character creation and advancement (you still use the normal attribute for any other effects). Additionally, if the skill has some negative effect on a roll of 1 on the trait die, you do not suffer the effect unless your wild die also rolls 1.

HATAMOTO

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, Agility d10+, Doppelshido

You have entered the elite ranks of the ravnorra. Whenever you make an extra Fighting attack granted by another combat edge with your favored weapon, you do not take any penalties usually inflicted by that edge, and you gain a +2 bonus to the damage roll.

FARGON ARCHETYPES

DISCIPLINED MAGE

(Novice)

Fargon's tradition of discipline is not limited to the physical arts. Fargon's mages frequently adopt the practice, with the result that despite lacking prestigious magical academies as other nations have, a Fargon mage can be the equal, if not the superior, of any wizard found elsewhere in Canam.



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Species: Narros

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Persuasion d8, Spellcasting d10, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Echan*, two minor

Edges: Arcane Background (Mage)*, Fargon Disciplined (Spellcasting)*

Totem: Book

Power Points: 10

Powers: *Armor, elemental manipulation, smite*

RAVNORRA (Seasoned)

The ravnorra are elite soldiers who have mastered the traditional martial arts of the narros and served loyally and with distinction for many years. They are rewarded for their service with the opportunity for greater service and the trust of their overlords. In time, the ravnorra will become a great lord of the land and attract vassals

of her own: until then, she continues to serve her own lord's interests in the wider world.

Species: Narros

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Etiquette) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Taunt d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 7; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Echan*

Edges: Counterattack, Doppelshido (narros krollish)*, Hatamoto*, Sweep

WRESTLER

(Novice)

Of all the cultural exchanges between the narros of Fargon and the humans of Selkirk, the most enduring and amiable has been the sporting culture. While they haven't taken as much to rugby, Selkirk's other national sport—all-in wrestling—has found great favor with the narros, to the point that they host an annual tournament in Thos Thalagos and invite the finest fighters throughout Canam to participate. Narros wrestling is a far more flashy affair than the pure Selkirk brawling style, influenced somewhat by their native wuxia traditions, but is ultimately still a brutal test of strength and endurance.

Species: Narros

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Gambling d4, Healing d4, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Sports) d4, Notice d6, Taunt d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Echan*, Overconfident, two minor

Edges: Martial Artist, Selkirk Brawler*

FINER FIRE PITS

(Central)

"Foolish Humans. The best route is down, never up. I read their history—always building up. Up...why? What is up there? Clouds. Clouds. Water. I can dig and get that and it would cost far less."

The narros of the Finer Fire Pits fit the clichéd mold of the dwarves read about in fiction. They grow their beards; they mine for riches; they treat other races like dirt though never to the point of goading armed conflict. At least these dwarves bathe, and despite their crusty demeanor to non-narros, those who live in the Pits endorse an open gate-policy to outsiders. Everyone is welcome as long as they provide a function. It is not a tourist attraction, and the population disdains sight-seers. Traders, merchants, miners, farmers and even armies are all welcome. A sprawling kingdom contained within a single underground metropolis, the Pits occupy a patch of land once known as Rockford, Illinois,

stretching out for seventy-five kilometers in every direction: the largest single echan community in Canam.

FINER FIRE PITS ARCHETYPES

GUILD DIVINER

(Novice)

The closest thing Finer has to a magical tradition is the Dowsing Guild, which consists entirely of Earth-specialist mages whose sole purpose is to find mineral seams to mine, underground waterways to tap, and natural passages into which to expand. While most of the guild is firmly ensconced in the Pits, they occasionally hire out members to dungeon-delving adventurers, who value the diviners for their skill in rustling out blocked or hidden passages.

Species: Narros

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (Underground) d8, Notice d8, Tracking d8, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Otaku (Underground), one minor

Edges: Arcane Background (Mage)*

Totem: Staff

Power Points: 13

Powers: *Detect/conceal arcana, elemental manipulation, environmental protection*

MASTER SMITH

(Seasoned)

The business of the Finer Fire Pits is smithing, but a Finer smith is not some sequestered tradecrafter. She must be aware of the context in which her work will be used, so it is not uncommon for a smith to travel for a time with the customer who orders a suit of armor or a weapon to learn the idiosyncrasies of the customer's fighting style and know how to compensate for weaknesses, judge where there will be excessive wear on the end product, and when possible, make alterations after the fact. Some adventuring companies even hire master smiths on a semi-permanent basis to maintain their equipment, in exchange for a portion of the profits.

Species: Narros

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, Knowledge (Smithing) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Repair d8, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 7

Hindrances: Echan*

Edges: Brawny, Two-Fisted



MERCHANT GUARD

(Novice)

One way the narros discourage long-term visitors is by designing their dwellings exclusively for a narros' stature. Unfortunately, this tends to make things uncomfortable for the few (but still more numerous than in Fargon) half-narros residents, who often take work above ground as a result. Caravan guarding between Finer and its main trading partners (Kannos, Abidan, and Limshau) is a lucrative opportunity for such folk.

Species: Half-narros

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Riding d4, Shooting d6, Throwing d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Cautious, Echan*, one minor.

Edges: Armored Sympathy*

FREE HOUSES

(Various, mostly East Cross/West Cross)

Most of Canam is uncharted wilderness. Here and there, a traveler might come across a small town or village, or a collection of villages nestled around a keep for protection. These free houses may be allied with a larger kingdom but owe no allegiance nor tribute, and govern themselves. The number of free houses in Canam is not known, and there is little in common culturally between any of them.

NEW EDGE

WINTER CHILD

(Weird Edge)

Requirement: Novice, echan human from Quinox, can only be taken as human's starting free edge.

Though humans can allow magic into their being, they have been resilient against branching into sub species. The people from the House of Quinox may be a sign of a future to come. Their own history is a muddled mess of conjecture and flamboyant myth, but what is known is that they appeared out of the far north, chased south by weather and starvation. During the journey, their bodies became supernaturally immune to cold. Winter children make up about 10% of the population of Quinox (and all of the noble family). They are easy to identify by their ice-blue eyes, slightly blue-tinged skin coloration, and white or white-streaked hair. A winter child is perfectly comfortable in temperatures well below zero, is immune to the effects of frostbite and hypothermia, and gains +2 Armor against cold-based damage.

FREE HOUSE ARCHETYPES

ORCHIS TEMPLAR

(Novice)

The "sand-castle," as it is often mocked, can be first spotted on the horizon, flapping into vision from the waves of heat from dried desert soil. The Orchis family prefer the term "Desert Flower." The towering glazed walls look grown from the sand. Legend holds that the castle was born from dragon's breath and given to the human Orchis family on condition that none who bore the family name ever leave the limits of the castle, not allow it to deteriorate or be taken by enemies. They have kept the promise to this day, with the result that their keep is uncomfortably overcrowded, despite a thriving trade in arranged marriages to other noble houses. Several of the Orchis family have forsworn their names and the chance of an advantageous marriage to serve the house's unique religious order, a strange variant of the fae Berufu faith. Mostly this is undertaken to get out of the castle on their own terms, but occasionally, a true devout joins the order.

Species: Echan human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Faith d6, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Orchis) d6, Knowledge (Religion) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d4

Charisma +2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Echan*

Edges: Arcane Background (Paladin)*, Noble

Power Points: 15

Powers: *Armor, succor*

PLICATO SHIRRIFF

(Seasoned)

The land that now belongs to House Plicato was once a minor damaskan duchy, seized by a human warlord centuries ago. In those days, fae slavery and concubinage was far more commonly accepted than it is today, and the Plicato family was known to partake of such pleasures liberally. However, a century and a half past, the king's favorite concubine agreed to bond and marry him, and produced many half-fae children over the years, and subsequent intermarriage with other damaskan free houses has made Plicato's rulers fully damaskan once more. The general population of the kingdom is split fairly evenly between human and damaskan, with a sizeable half-fae population and a few chaparran communities. Despite its elven roots, Plicato has a poor reputation for magic, but a strong tradition of archery – unusual for damaskans, but understandable considering the house's proximity to Dawnamoak.

Species: Half-damaskan

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Plicato) d6, Knowledge (West Cross) d6,



Notice d8+2, Shooting d8, Streetwise d8, Tracking d6

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, one major or two minor

Edges: Alertness, Ambidexterity, Marksman

QUINOX RIME MAGE

(Novice)

Quinox's spellcasters (of which there are more per capita than any other human kingdom) have developed an affinity with the power of ice. Much of their magical tradition was learned from the frost dragon Ramka of Rime, an elemental dragon who vehemently opposes the grouping of her kindred with the typhox order and arrogantly proclaims the ruling Sheridan line of Quinox equivalent to the blood royal (although she lacks the power to grant such a blessing). Some of the dragon's arrogance naturally tends to rub off on her students.

Species: Echan human

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d4, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Knowledge (Quinox) d6, Notice d6, Spellcasting d8, Survival d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Arrogant, Echan*

Edges: Arcane Background (Mage)*, Winter Child*

Power Points: 10

Powers: *Armor, bolt, stun*

Trappings: Rime mages always use the additional effects of standard cold/ice trappings.

KANNOS

(Central)

"Give me a horse and I will ride God down."

The largest of the major kingdoms by area, though one of the smallest by population, Kannon is known for the mercantile savvy of its citizens and the quality of its livestock. Horses are particularly prized in Kannon, and its cavalry is considered one of the foremost military forces on the continent – but much to the annoyance of its more hawkish leaders, it has never had the opportunity of putting that reputation to the test in true warfare. Among the aristocracy there is an immodest hope that Baruch Malkut will finally declare war on one of Kannon's many allies so they have an excuse to go into battle. Although ostensibly a human kingdom, Kannon has voluntarily annexed several minor fae houses in its various expansion phases, and its citizens' egalitarian attitude means that anyone with money (or looking to make some) is welcome in the kingdom.

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NEW EDGES

DEATH HUNTER

(Professional Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, Spirit d6+, Vigor d8+, trained in Jairus

The grim Death Hunters of Jairus venture into the cursed Sana Marsh on a quest, possibly a doomed one, to purge its evil. You gain +2 to damage rolls and +2 to Toughness against undead, Ixindar creatures, and necromantic and nihilimantic effects.

HALFMASTER

(Combat Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+, trained in Kannos

Halfmasters are trained in the martial art of habaukeedo, which focuses on mobility and rapidly switching between using a polearm at long and close range. Whenever you make a Fighting attack with a reach weapon against a non-adjacent foe (even if you don't succeed), you gain +1 to Parry against that enemy's attacks until the start of your next turn and you can move 1" in any direction.

KAVALIER

(Professional Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Riding d8+, from Kannos

The Kannos Kavaliers are the elite cavalry of the northern nation. You use the higher of your Fighting and Riding skills when fighting from horseback. Additionally, you can spend your own Bennies on behalf of your mount, and you never have to make a Riding roll to stay mounted when your mount is wounded.

KANNOS ARCHETYPES

DEATH HUNTER

(Seasoned)

Jairus was a poor mining village with a small but promising lumber industry. Centuries ago, word came from the lips of dying refugees from the south of the collapse of a great kingdom of men. The bravest and best of Jairus took it upon themselves to see the extent of the calamity. They expected to see razed buildings and scorched soil. They were not prepared for the Black Marsh of Sana. A curse had taken the entire land, spreading into the soil, flora, and the sky. Thick, black oil – unable to burn – seeped from the ground. The few plants that did grow had no color or leaves. The Jairus militia found only empty huts and keeps, no bodies. Then they saw the shadows move. Silver claws lashed from the darkness and only a handful of the group escaped to tell the tale. The first legends of the marsh were born and generations later, brave warriors take it upon themselves to venture into the marsh in hopes of destroying the source of the corruption. To prepare themselves for the traumas of the marsh, recruits are taught to control their

fears by undergoing a battery of ordeals to tax their mental stability. Outsiders claim this leaves emotional scars so cavernous that incoming terrors simply fall into the depths.

Species: Tenenbri

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Sana Marsh) d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Swimming d4, Tracking d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma -2 (+0 vs other death hunters); **Pace** 6;

Parry 6; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Echan*, Outsider, one major, one minor.

Edges: Death Hunter*

MERKANTE

(Novice)

Kannos has an interesting relationship between money and politics. Those who engage in business are forbidden by the kingdom's constitution from engaging in politics, and landowners – the only ones allowed to hold political office – are forbidden from engaging in any business other than the managing of their land. Most nobles are former merchants who have sold their businesses and bought land and a title, treating it as a sort of working retirement. The side-effect of this is that businesses are very rarely inherited – indeed, ambitious younger children (or older ones who don't want to wait for their parent to pass down the new coat of arms) are encouraged to start from the bottom and earn enough to buy out their parents' stakes.

Species: Narros

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Gambling d6, Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Business) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Streetwise d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Greedy, Echan*, Stubborn

Edges: Charismatic

MUTAHARRIK KAPTAN

(Seasoned)

Leading the Kannos Cavalry are the Mutaharrik Kaptans. Most have spent more hours on horseback than other people have on their own feet. Regardless if she raised her steeds from birth or bought it from a stable, as an elite from Kannos, a Kaptan can prepare any animal for combat within a week. She does not afford herself any luxuries over the troops under her command, but wears the same light armor, rides a horse with no barding, and charges alongside the line rather than behind it. The Kaptan and her animal are one combined spirit and she need not whistle for its attention or whip it to speed, requiring only a few words or a



nudge. It may even act on its own if needed. The elite officers of Kannos forego all other pleasantries in favor of their bond. It's even been said a Kaptan's steed lives for the entire life of its master, dying the second its Kaptan does.

Species: Echan human

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Knowledge (Kannos) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d8, Taunt d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, one minor.

Edges: Halfmaster*, Kavalier*, Sweep*

Special Equipment: Warhorse

LAUDENIA

(Sky Network)

"We look upon those below and they appear as ants...I find no illusion in this comparison. The manners and ways of insects should not bother us. It's a game of numbers and those with the most hoard over those with little. With an ear to heaven, we see how pointless it all is. Chaos begets magic and those who control the chaos control the universe."

No one is really sure where Laudenia is. Like an aerial Brigadoon, dozens if not hundreds of people across the globe claim to have spotted it briefly and then been unable to find it again, but the only reliable accounts have it drifting somewhere between Selkirk and Fargon, among the coastal mountains of the former Pacific Northwest. Most of what is known about Laudenia is just conjecture. The laudenians took to the sky in constructed keeps and flying vessels to avoid contact with the ground: fae anathema come about because of the devolution of the fae upon exposure to new environments and magical influences. Being the oldest, the laudenians are now the fewest, and fled to the skies in order to prevent further degradation. At first glance, Laudenia resembles a city of technology, but closer inspection reveals a community built on pure magic – assuming anyone from the ground is allowed close enough to make such an inspection.

LAUDENIA ARCHETYPES

LAUDENIAN XENOPHOB

(Seasoned)

Most laudenians are merely disdainful of the world below them, but there are a few individuals who not only dislike, but actively hate and fear the Earth and the creatures that walk upon it. Even the naturally socio-

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pathic laudenians find the attitude of the full-blown xenophobe unnerving, and consequently most find themselves banished to the very realm which distresses them by its very existence. The more well-adjusted xenophobes work out their issues by exterminating what civilized folk would term ‘monsters,’ but for a dangerous few, the line between person and monster can be very thin. Because of their aversion to all things earthly, xenophobes stay out of melee, preferring to kill from a distance or by means of traps (or, in some cases, tricking victims into fatal accidents).

Species: Laudenian

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d6, Taunt d8, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma -2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2; **Toughness** 4

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Echan*, Phobia (minor: touching the ground), one minor.

Edges: Arcane Background (Laudenian Magos)*, New Power (x4)

Totem: Staff

Power Points: 13

Powers: *Armor, bolt, confusion, detect/conceal arcana, fear, fly, invisibility, mind reading*

LOST ONE

(Novice)

Occasionally, curiosity overcomes a laudenian’s natural abhorrence of the ground, and she ventures away from her homeland, only to discover once her curiosity is satiated that she can no longer find it again. Such lost souls are forced to wander, sometimes for years or decades, before a chance to return home presents itself. While such individuals rarely entirely get over their phobia of land below—no power on earth will ever induce a laudenian to eat meat, for example—it at least becomes manageable, and although the laudenian standoffishness never entirely goes away, a lost one eventually learns to relate to others, at least to trusted companions.

Species: Laudenian

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Tracking d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma -2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Curious, Echan*

Edges: Common Bond

URMAGE

(Novice)

Laudenians are still known as some of the most powerful mages on the planet. Unlike any other casters, the laudenian mages are known to be the most numerous in proportion to their population and the most powerful on





average. They know this and make a point of reminding those who know, don't know, or don't care. The urmage is a school that focuses on the elemental aspects of magic, concentrating the power of Pleroma to be able to easily transform energy from one kind to another.

Species: Laudenian

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Spellcasting d10, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma -2; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Arrogant, Echan*, Phobia (minor: touching the ground), one minor.

Edges: Arcane Background (Mage)*, New Power x2.

Totem: Staff

Power Points: 13

Powers: *Armor, bolt, elemental manipulation*

Trappings: Urmages can switch freely between the standard acid, cold, electricity, fire, and sound trappings, but all currently active spells must use the same ones (so if you have an armor spell active that is a shield of electrical energy, your bolt power is a bolt of lightning, for instance).

LIMSHAU

(Central, East Cross/West Cross)

"Only by uniting and merging our knowledge with those of humans, narros, and gimfen, can we build a future."

Limshau is the largest damaskan realm in Canam, the most open and permissive society known to human or fae, and is considered the crossroads of the continent. Dedicated to the preservation and propagation of knowledge, each major city is a massive library dedicated to one or more special branches of knowledge. Limshau is a large nation with indefinite borders. The Continental Cross bisects the kingdom which occupies most of the lands once known as Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, and Illinois. The white-walled city of Limshau itself was built upon a grassy plain that was, in the distant past, the location of the town of Wichita, Kansas.

NEW EDGES

ARCANE BACKGROUND:

KOANA SCHOLAR

(Background Edge)

Arcane Skill: Spellcasting (Smarts)

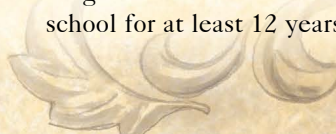
Starting Power Points: 10

Starting Powers: 4

Totem: Book

Limshau sports the greatest number of wizard academies in Canam, though not the largest nor most respected actual schools. No particular school stands out from the crowd in Limshau. All of them are respected in different ways. Nearly three hundred years ago, they allied to found the Koana District—a geographically unbound organization of all the schools in the Limshau kingdom. A Koana student is expected to remain at the school for at least 12 years (although 'field study' is part

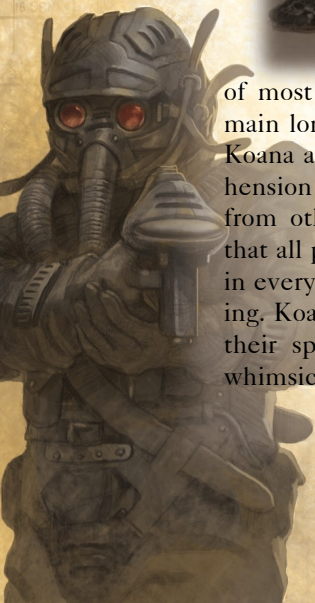
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of most curricula), though they are encouraged to remain longer if they wish. Upon finally graduating, the Koana apprentice is believed to have a greater comprehension of the arcane arts than equivalent graduates do from other schools, endowed with the understanding that all power from Attricana attempts to encourage life in every possible form, from the beautiful to the revolting. Koana teachings encourage this ideal, which is why their spells have an unusual slant for being slightly whimsical.

- **Spark of Life:** When you roll a 1 on your Spellcasting roll, regardless of the result of the wild die, you lose control of the spell. The spell is cast regardless of whether the wild die succeeds, but it does not take effect until the GM decides it should (which can be any time before the end of the session). The power points used for the spell are still spent and cannot be recovered until the spell decides to cast itself.



LOW-TECH MELEE		DAMAGE	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES			
Limshau katana		Str+d6+2	3	500	AP 2			
Limshau nagamaki		Str+d8	8	300	AP 1, Reach 1			
Limshau naginata		Str+d6	6	200	Parry +1, Reach 1			
Limshau tanto		Str+d4	1	50	Parry +1			
Limshau wakizashi		Str+d6	2	200	Parry +1			
Limshau yari		Str+d6	5	100	Parry +1, Reach 1			
RANGED FIREARMS	RANGE	DAMAGE	ROF	COST	WEIGHT	SHOTS	MIN STR	NOTES
Limshau crossbow	15/30/60	2d6	1	300	5	5	d4	AP 2, 1 action to reload

Canonical Powers: *Armor, banish, barrier, blast, bolt, boost/lower trait, burst, damage field, darksight, deflection, detect arcana (not conceal), dispel, divination, drain power points, elemental manipulation, entangle, environmental protection, farsight, fly, greater healing, growth/shrink, havoc, healing, intangibility, light (not obscure), pummel, quickness, shape change, slow, slumber, smite, speak language, speed, stun, succor, summon ally, telekinesis, teleport, wall walker, warrior's gift.* Taking a power not on this list requires the New Power edge.

Trappings: A Koana scholar can use just about any trappings and effects she likes. There are two special effects relate to Koana school magic.

No Illusionists: There is no Koana School of Phantasm, and while a scholar is not prevented from dabbling, any illusion-based trappings cost +1 power point unless the power was taken with the New Power edge.

Living Magic: Whenever you ace on the wild die for a Spellcasting roll, the spell develops a particular quirk – either take one defined by the GM, or roll a d6 to determine the exact effect (reroll if not applicable to the spell):

1. The spell costs one fewer power point (minimum 1).
2. The spell affects an additional target.
3. The spell gains an additional free effect related to its normal trappings.
4. The spell either imposes a level of fatigue or drains 1d4 power points from its target.
5. The die type for the caster's or target's next trait roll related to the spell's effects increases by one (for instance, casting a speed-based spell might also boost the caster's Agility or Climbing die type).
6. The spell sustains itself without imposing penalties on your Spellcasting rolls. If the spell's effect is instantaneous, you can cast it again on your next turn without taking a penalty for additional actions (and since the spell has already been cast, you could cast another spell on the same turn if you wished). The second casting still costs power points as normal.

Note that this quirk is not optional: you have to take the effect even if you don't want it.

CUSTODIAN

(Professional Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Climbing d6+, Fighting d6+

The Custodian order is the martial arm of Limshau's librarians, trained in a special martial art that emphasizes mobility and the use of two weapons (usually a katana and wakizashi, or both ends of a naginata). You do not suffer a multi-action penalty when fighting with two weapons or a double weapon. Additionally, whenever you ace on a Climbing or Fighting roll, you gain a +2 bonus to your next roll with the other skill before the end of your next turn.

LIBRARIAN

(Professional Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, Knowledge (any one) d8+, trained in Limshau

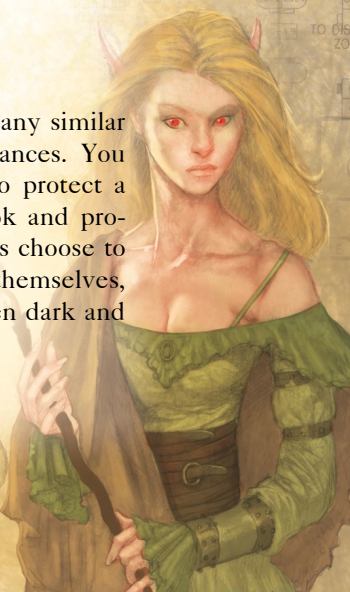
The librarians are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of a particular area of a Limshau library, and are experts in their section's knowledge. Choose one of your Knowledge specialties at d8 or higher. You reroll any result of 1 on the wild die when making a roll with that skill until you get a result other than 1 (thus, you cannot get a critical failure on that Knowledge roll). If you have a d10 in Smarts, choose two Knowledge specialties; if you have a d12, choose three (all specialties must be at d8 or higher).

NEW AND ALTERED HINDRANCES

BOOK LOVER

(Major)

You cannot allow harm to befall a book (or any similar receptacle of knowledge) under any circumstances. You will throw yourself in the way of danger to protect a book, given a choice between saving a book and protecting your comrades you will almost always choose to save the book (after all, people can help themselves, but books can't), and you cannot permit even dark and forbidden knowledge to be destroyed.



ILLITERATE

This is a major hindrance for characters from Limshau.

LIMSHAU WEAPONS & ARMOR

Modern Limshau weapons are adapted from the traditional weapons of the primarily Japanese immigrants that Ravenar Limshau brought back to his city from Angel centuries ago, and still bear the same names. All Limshau weapons look plain and functional, sporting neither jewels in their pommels nor intricate weavings on their handles, but the swords are extremely sharp and feature holes along the blade to lighten the weapon without sacrificing tensile strength. Additionally, modern Limshau weapons benefit from advanced forging techniques and significantly higher-quality steel than their original namesakes, making them much less brittle and giving them significantly more longevity than an equivalent from the old world.

Limshau equipment is significantly lighter and less restrictive than its equivalents.

LIMSHAU BUCKLER

The Limshau buckler is not a common sight but it has found popularity with some custodians. The buckler occupies a hand and is designed for offense as well as defense.

LIMSHAU KAWABARI ARMOR

Overlapping layers of leather pieces sewn together to form fit the wearer, Limshau kawabari looks as unique as it feels. A master leathersmith must individually fit each suit of Limshau leather to its owner, making Limshau kawabari distinctive against other leather armors. The most distinguishing features are the numerous belt latches over the whole body. It is only available in white (for within the city) or black (for outside missions).

Kawabari armor properly fitted to its owner grants her a +1 bonus to Climbing rolls where there is an opportunity to affix climbing gear to its multitudinous latches, and a +1 bonus to all social rolls within the kingdom of Limshau. It is only available to Limshau custodians, and is otherwise identical to normal leather armor.

LIMSHAU REPEATING CROSSBOW

This unique weapon has found popularity recently with custodians in the outer cities, and has since spread into wider circulation. This single-hand crossbow carries a strap around the user's arm, allowing the weapon to be reloaded with a single hand, making it the only full-size crossbow that can be loaded and fired repeatedly with a single hand.

LIMSHAU ARCHETYPES

HUMAN CUSTODIAN

(Novice)

While the vast majority of Limshau's custodians are damaskan, a not inconsiderable number of them are human or half-damaskan. While they lack the damaskans' unusual relationship with gravity which enables many of the techniques of *gorna sersannis*, they usually master the style faster than most damaskans can, and make up for the lack of physical flexibility with a more improvisational approach to combat. Many of the human custodians also have Japanese ancestry and view Limshau's adoption of Japanese-styled weaponry as a way to connect to their lost heritage.

Species: Echan human

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4,

Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (History) d6, Notice d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Heroic

Edges: Ambidextrous, Custodian*

Special Equipment: Limshau kawabari armor.

SALON COURTESAN

(Seasoned)

One thing that sets damaskan societies apart from other kingdoms is the complete deregulation of almost everything that other species consider 'vice'. As fae are immune to most diseases, addictions, and toxins in small amounts, the damaskan cultural philosophy allows for all pleasures in moderation. One of the more popular pastimes in Limshau society, apart from reading, is the *saliss'kamai*, which translates roughly to 'symposium' as the term was understood by the ancient Greeks – a party at which the participants hold philosophical discussions and debates amid copious partaking in food, alcohol, and whatever other personal indulgences the attendee wishes. Such events are frequently overseen and facilitated by courtesans who own or are employed by professional salons or inns, and are expected to be well-read, well-traveled, and skilled in a variety of disciplines.

Species: Half-damaskan

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8,

Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Gambling d6, Healing d6, Knowledge (Literature) d6, Knowledge (Music) d6, Knowledge (Central region) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Street-wise d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +4; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 2; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Pacifist (major)

Edges: Ambidextrous (damaskan ability), Attractive, Polyglot (damaskan ability)*, Very Attractive

SCHOLAR WARDEN

(Seasoned)

The Guild of Ilm, formed in 365 A.E. by Fisher Calibannis, took on the duties to administer and coordinate the external operations of custodians on the periphery of Limshau and beyond. Before, the custodians would defend the cities and the farms but never actively seek out knowledge beyond their borders. Librarians would commit to such crusades all the time, though their quests usually took them to private collections and other libraries to seek their prizes. The Guild of Ilm was an elite order tasked with retrieving knowledge from riskier locations, dungeons, and abandoned (or not so abandoned) castles. Librarians take the safer assignments: the Guild of Ilm sends their custodians only where a librarian's life would be in danger or if the situation itself requires a more aggressive hand. Of all the custodians in Limshau, those of Ilm are truly warrior scholars, earning the nickname, "Scholar Warden."

Species: Damaskan

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Archaeology) d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma -2 (-1 vs other fac); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Book Lover*, Echan*

Edges: Ambidextrous (damaskan ability), Custodian*, Quick

Special Equipment: Limshau kawabari armor.

SELIQUAM

(Dianaso)

"Most fantasy worlds in fiction are all too small, so that walking from empire to empire wouldn't take more than a day, lest the book be more about the journey. That's where I'm from, a fantasy world within one."

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

founded by the ravnorra of Fargon to protect the regular trade trains between Fargon and Selkirk, but whose purview has been extended to not only guarding the many mountain passes, but making raids into Xixion to recover artifacts left over from the narros' expansion era.

NEW EDGES

ARCANE BACKGROUND: DRACONIAN MONK

(Background Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8+, Echan human

Arcane Skill: Spellcasting (Spirit)

Starting Power Points: 15

Starting Powers: 1

Totem: 'Book' (see below), Staff

On a hilltop near a ford across the Seliquam is a large structure with a spire that extends over a hundred feet above the ground. The people who live in the small nearby village call it 'the Abbey,' and it is home to one of the strangest groups of people to be found anywhere in Canam – the Monachis Draco, or Draconian Monks. At first glance, the monks appear to follow something akin to the Rule of St. Benedict – they live lives of isolation, hard work, meditation and prayer – but a closer examination reveals some pertinent differences. First, while the monks self-identify as Christian, their dogma is intermixed with elements of dragon worship. Second, their order practices magic and mystical wuxia martial arts, tattooing themselves with Pleroma words in the same way that dragons scribe the symbols upon their scales – for those who lack magical talent, these are simple patterns, but for the gifted, their very bodies can become their totems.

- **Dragon Soul:** You believe your power comes from within, the power of Attricana channeled through the soul of a long-dead dragon that has merged with your own. When you roll a 1 on your Spellcasting die, regardless of the result of the wild die, you suffer a backlash of power through your body and are automatically Shaken (this can cause a wound). Your skin becomes tough and scaly for one hour after this happens, reducing your Pace by 2" but giving you Armor 1.

Trappings: A monk's trappings reflect the dragon soul she believes she hosts. Elemental dragons use the normal array of energy-type trappings, while all archon dragons use light. Typhox dragons are not represented by the order. Additionally, whenever a monk casts a spell, the Pleroma characters tattooed on her body glow, making it impossible to conceal the use of magic.



TRAIN GUARD WARRIOR

(Professional Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+, Fighting d6+, Shooting d6+

The Train Guard's fighting style is based loosely on the narros doppelshido technique, but expanded to include dual-wielding of pistol and sword and the use of a rifle as a staff or spear in close-combat, as well as the stability training necessary to fight effectively on the top and sides of a moving train. You can make ranged attacks with rifles in close combat, and when using a pistol and sword or a rifle for two-weapon fighting, you do not suffer the usual -2 off-hand penalty. Furthermore, you do not suffer the 'unstable platform' penalty for firing from a moving train, and can never suffer a critical failure on any roll made to keep your footing while riding a train.

SELIQUAM ARCHETYPES DRACONIAN NOVITIATE

(Novice)

The Monachis Draco are a mysterious lot. Central to their religion are two essential points of dogma: first, they equate the dragon god Amethyst with the Christian god; second, they believe that they are host to the reincarnated souls of dead dragons, and that with sufficient strength of mind and body, a human could eventually restore the shattered soul of Amethyst and serve as host to the reborn god. Few monks ever leave the immediate environs of the Abbey, devoting themselves to lives of religious meditation and magical study. However, occasionally one is sent out into the world on the orders of the mysterious Abbess, to perform some esoteric task usually without any explanation for why it should be performed, or sometimes without any specific assignment at all. The monks view this event as a sacred pilgrimage intended to strengthen mind and body in preparation for the divine resurrection.

Species: Echan human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Knowledge (Religion) d6, Spellcasting d8, Swimming d4, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Pacifist (minor), Poverty

Edges: Arcane Background (Draconian Monk)*, Martial Artist

Totem: 'Book' (tattooed on body)

Power Points: 15

Powers: *Armor, boost/lower trait*

TRAIN GUARD SNIPER

(Seasoned)

The Train Guard is unique among echan military orders, in that their training revolves around the integration of firearms with more medieval combat tech-

niques. Due to the cosmopolitan makeup of the Guard and the high EDF index throughout Seliquam, the most advanced guns the Guard can wield are revolvers and bolt rifles, but even this is a significant advantage over Xixion. An expert Guard sniper can pick off an enemy from the top of a moving train with ease, and instantly switch to using her rifle as a quarterstaff or polearm against foes attempting to scale the sides of the cars.

Species: Damaskan

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Healing d6, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d8, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma -2 (-1 vs other fae); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6;

Toughness 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Heroic

Edges: Ambidextrous (damaskan ability), Marksman, Train Guard Warrior*, Two-Fisted

Special Equipment: Bolt rifle

TRAIN GUARD OUTRUNNER

(Novice)

Though the Train Guard's training regimen was designed and perfected by the ravnorra lords of Fargon, only a fraction of the Guard is made up of narros (for all



that they are often commanders) – in fact, the largest demographic are kodiaks, who make up fully thirty percent of the force. One or two kodiak outrunners are often assigned to a Guard team, as they are fleet of foot and can easily keep up with the slow-moving steam trains that run up and down the Dianaso pass.

Species: Kodiak

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Swimming d6, Tracking d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma -2 (+0 vs other kodiaks); **Pace** 6 (10 on all fours); **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 7

Hindrances: Doubting Thomas, Illiterate, Poverty, Vengeful (minor)

Edges: Berserk, Brawny (kodiak ability)

WASTELANDS

(Various)

"We are the brush in which the master paints. Cleaned of all pigment, we await a stain to define us. If our gods fail to direct us, the blood of society will paint the canvas."

The wilds of Canam are full of many dark and dangerous regions. No goodly folk live in such places; they are the preserves either of monsters or wicked creatures whose 'societies' are born of violence and malevolent will. Often, a nameless and shapeless evil will infest a portion of the wild, turning into an unhallowed land of danger and death. Travelers learn to avoid such places, or tread carefully if they have no choice but to cross them. The cold plains and forests of Dagron to the north, the hazardous pagus-strewn realm of Apocrypha to the northeast, and the western lands despoiled by the pugg hives of Xixion are the most prominent wastelands in Canam.

WASTELAND ARCHETYPES

CRYPTHARON RANGER

(Seasoned)

The free pagus of Apocrypha lead a life of constant vigilance, entire tribes ready to pack up and move at short notice to evade the attention of the typhox dragon overlords and their bound pagus brethren. Some have entered into agreements with the humans of Janoah, acting as scouts in the lands beyond the Bulwark in exchange for supplies and weapons. Of course, they still look like the enemy to the few human scouts who venture beyond the wall, so they must be adept at evading both their foes and their allies. Only the toughest pagus tend to survive long with such a lifestyle.

Species: Pagus

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Nature) d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Taunt d6, Tracking d6, +1 additional skill point.

Charisma -3 (+3 vs other pagus); **Pace** 7; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 6

Hindrances: Elderly, Illiterate

Edges: Cryptaron*, Fleet-Footed, Florentine, Two-Fisted

EX-THRALL

(Novice)

The skeggs that rule the cold northern prairies, known collectively as the 'Bugbears of Dagron', are notorious slave-takers. For the most part their predations are focused on other kaddog, and raiding one another's tribes is a common pastime, but the border holds of Kannos are also particularly susceptible to raids. Small mercy, but the likelihood that the captors will shortly be attacked themselves in turn means that for a canny and healthy slave, the opportunities for escape are plentiful, although the escapee must then learn to fend for herself in the harsh environment.

Species: Echan human

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Healing d6, Knowledge (Central region) d6, Knowledge (Nature) d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, +3 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 4; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Poverty

Edges: Quick

KADDOG-SLAYER

(Seasoned)

The pugg-infested region known as Xixion covers almost half of the land west of the Nankani Mountains, but no roads cross it. Their growing armies push ever to the north, south, and east, encroaching on the bastions of Selkirk and Angel and the lands around them. The least of the kaddog, the puggs are ultimately descendants of the damaskan line, a fact which many damaskans find hard to stomach. Consequently, many damaskan warriors have taken up arms to hold back the tide of the destructive little vermin, which if not contained may come to dominate all of Canam within a century.

Species: Damaskan

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Knowledge (Xixion) d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Survival d6, Tracking d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma -2 (-1 vs other fac); **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Echan*, Heroic

Edges: Ambidextrous (Damaskan ability), Fast Healer, Sworn Hand of Vengeance (puggs)*, Two-Fisted





WILDS

(Various)

Canam has no specific borders between its nations. Kingdoms patrol as much territory as they think they can hold, but wide expanses between their territories prevent most conflict. Dozens of villages claiming no allegiance fall between them. This creates more of a wide blur instead of a defined line. The only way to know if one enters a specific kingdom is to ask the citizens of a village. There are no border markers or sentries on many of the trodden paths, though well-patrolled roads such as the Continental Cross and its tributaries leading into the major nations will maintain border guards, especially those along the roads controlled by the house of Skyrose and eastern Limshau because of their nations' proximity to Baruch Malkut. This leaves tens of thousands of square miles unclaimed, a sea of wilderness in which islands of civilization flourish. Many of these would be dangerous locations in which to settle, thanks to the presence of magic or monsters.

WILDS ARCHETYPES

FREE-LANCER

(Novice)

Outcast or deserted from a lord or king, the free-lance travels from town to town seeking money or purpose. Often mistakenly dubbed mercenaries or sellswords, a free-lance began its life as military unit sworn to a specific flag. For reasons which may be good or bad, this lance found itself unbound from its original authority.

Did they abandon their assignment? Did they violate doctrine, or challenge the word of a lord? Were they arrested, sent to prison by a military court for a crime they didn't commit, only later to escape? Whatever the reason, wanted by their nation or kingdom, they survive as soldiers of fortune.

Species: Echan human

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d8, Survival d6, +2 additional skill points.

Charisma +0; **Pace** 6; **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Bad Luck, Echan*, two minor

Edges: First Strike, Extraction, Steady Hands

LOST BERSERKER

(Seasoned)

Kodiaks are formidable warriors, but not every opponent they face is a pushover even in the face of deadly fangs and claws. Sometimes a kodiak's band is all but wiped out in battle, leaving a lone survivor stranded deep in hostile territory; or sometimes the kodiak is driven out of her own band for some offense, and forced to make her way as a lone bear. Thankfully, grizzly bears evolved as solitary creatures, and though their descendants have since grown to a more communal way of life, the solitary kodiak still possesses the instincts of the primal bear.

Species: Kodiak
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Healing d6, Intimidation d6+2, Notice d6, Survival d6, Swimming d6, Tracking d6, +1 additional skill point.
Charisma -2 (+0 vs other kodiaks); **Pace** 6 (10 on all fours); **Parry** 6; **Toughness** 7
Hindrances: Doubting Thomas, Echan*, Illiterate, Poverty
Edges: Berserk, Brawny (kodiak ability)

WILD ELF

(Novice)

The common perception of the chaparran is of an unwashed tree-dweller dressed in furs, but in reality, the average chaparran is as interested in regular bathing, well-made clothing, exquisite architecture, and the other trappings of civilization as the average city-dweller (their approach to these interests is just a bit more homespun). But most outsiders don't get a chance to see the great towers of Jibaro or the other major chaparran settlements – they know only the lone hunters who lurk near the edges of the forest to drive away the unwary with stone knives and arrows. These chaparran barbarians immerse themselves in the natural world in the hopes of one day achieving the fated end of their entire species: to merge completely with the Earth. However, what with the world being the hazardous place it is, most of these will only achieve their goal in the form of the trees that will some day grow from the mouths of their corpses.

Species: Chaparran
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Healing d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Survival d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d6, +1 additional skill point.
Charisma -2; **Pace** 8; **Parry** 5; **Toughness** 5
Hindrances: Echan*, Illiterate, Poverty
Edges: Fleet-Footed

LANGUAGE

Many languages died following Attricana's opening. Others faded within a few generations while a few merged to create new variations. Before the gates, hundreds of languages dotted the globe: now, only a handful remain. Surviving vernacular soon divided into regional slangs and patois, eventually becoming recognized languages themselves with distinct lexicons, syntaxes, and phonetic pronunciations. English surfaced as the only surviving dominant language in Canam, though divided into dozens of regional dialects, coopting vocabulary from upward of a hundred different languages, from the old Latin languages to the tongues of Asiatic immigrants fleeing the spread of Kakodomania, to the few surviving pockets of native tribal speech.

Amethyst uses the Many Languages setting rule from *Savage Worlds*. To facilitate play, every player character speaks her native language and one of the two major dialects of English (if they are not her native language), plus a number of additional languages equal to half her Smarts die. However, some languages (especially fae ones) are especially hard to learn: such languages count as two choices when picking additional languages. The most common languages in Canam are as follows (those considered hard to learn are marked with an asterisk):

LANGUAGE	SPOKEN BY
English	Angel, Selkirk, Sierra Madre, York, Central, Dianaso, West Cross, and Western Reach regions (common tongue of western Canam)
Argose*	Kodiaks
Chaparra*	Chaparrans and chaparran branch species
Damaskan*†	Damaskans, Gimfen
Englo-Lingo	Mann, York, Central, East Cross, Northern Shield and South regions (common tongue of eastern Canam)
Ferran*	Kaddog and damaskan branch species
Gutturor*	Narros branch species
Ignotan	Shemjaza, typhox dragons, pagus
Indic	Rare in Canam (common tongue of continent of Indoaus)
Laudenian*	Laudenians
Narroni	Narros, Dianaso region
Old Fae*	Chaparran branch species
Onespeak	Baruch Malkut, South region
Paggin	Pagus
Pleroma*	Dragons, mages (mandatory for spellcasters)
Romanic	Rare in Canam (common tongue of continent of Lauropa)
Saeqaar	Shemjaza, nihilimancers (mandatory for corrupted spellcasters)
Semitic	Abidan, Abrahamic faithful
Sinitic*†	Angel, Genai, Limshau, Dianaso and West Cross regions
Slavic	Rare in Canam (common tongue of continent of Slav)
Tenenbra*	Tenenbri and tenenbri branch species

†Does not count as hard for a character who chooses not to be able to read/write the language or who has the Illiterate hindrance.

For more details on each language, see the *Amethyst: Untamed World Guide*.



RELIGION

While agnosticism is the norm among the bastion-born, in the realm of fantasy, religion both organized and individual is a far more common condition. The resurgence of magic has caused a great theological shift among humanity: while it is still impossible to definitively prove the existence of a god or gods, it is also not only impossible to disprove the same, but it cannot be said with any degree of certainty that one religion or another represents universal truth, since the blessings of magic (which most religions argue cannot be anything but divine) are bestowed upon all faiths equally. Consequently, adherents of different religions are far more likely to give one another's beliefs the benefit of the doubt than would have been the case in the time before the Second Hammer. Faith has also become far more personal and, except in the case of the zealots of Baruch Malkut, is almost never tied to any state ideology, so there is little in the way of official dogma even for old-established faiths: thus, many ideas which would have been considered heretical in times of yore are theological non-issues in the modern day.

Many religions of man survived, though none were unchanged. Most offshoots of major religions either merged or vanished, leaving only a handful. The modern dogma of these faiths rarely resemble their forebears in many or even most particulars, even to adopting certain traditions and conventions of their erstwhile competitors.

Buddhism, Shinto, and Chinese Folk Religion: Collectively, these traditions, derived largely intact from their origins in pre-Hammer east Asia, are the largest religious demographic in Canam. Shinto animism and Chinese ancestor worship, Confucian manners and Daoist philosophy frequently integrate with one another, and Buddhism as ever binds them together and gives them continuity, continuing to prove the ancient saying: "The religions are as the fingers of one hand, but Buddhism is the palm." The Asiatic religions are common in Genai and Limshau, with scattered adherents throughout the world.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: The major Abrahamic faiths are less popular in Canam than one would expect considering its pre-Hammer culture, but taken collectively they are still the second-most common human religions and third most common overall (after the fae pantheon). The spiritual center of Abrahamic faith in Canam is the nation of Abidan, which although it has no state religion, favors Christianity and Islam in equal measure among the nobility (with Judaism being less represented throughout the nation but dominant in the city of Taskin-Kada). While Abidanians tend to think of the Abrahamic trinity as different denominations of the same religion, elsewhere in Canam and beyond, the distinctions between them are more starkly maintained.

Berufu, Oaken, and Mecha: While their own adherents would be appalled to find these three lumped together, they share an origin story and have many points of doctrine in common – the principle difference is in focus. Berufu is the fae mother goddess, believed to be the vital force behind the creation of the fae. Oaken is her consort, who gives shape to the souls that Berufu births from her metaphysical womb ('Otsharus' in the ancient fae language). The Berufu and Oaken faiths chiefly differ in which partner was created first and which assumes prominence. Mecha was (according to the gimfen) their first child, but was stripped of its true name and gender for questioning the nature of the universe and passing on the secrets of reality to the fae – the gimfen believe this is why they have the power to use technology when others who adhere more closely to their 'mother' and 'father' cannot. The tenets of all three religions boil down to a handful of rote observances and a dedication to remaining true to one's nature as a fae – which fae are biologically bound to do in any case, and as such humans often are not aware that a particular fae is religious at all, since their rituals are entrenched as part of their everyday life.

Dragon Worship: Amethyst was the first dragon, and to this day the dragons themselves debate whether or not he was a god (though according to his disciple Lazarus of Pure, he claimed not to be). What dragons do not debate is that each one of them individually has the power to be a god to lesser beings – they are immortal unless slain, possess the power to remake their local reality at a whim, and have senses that extend into dimensions of reality that humans and even fae are completely unaware of. While most archon dragons are content to consider themselves as representatives of a divine power, other dragons (including all evil dragons) wholeheartedly accept the worship of mortals. The traditional way of naming a dragon – a proper name followed by a title representing a metaphysical demesne that they claim as their own – reflects this tendency. Dragons are worshipped across the world (particularly in Apocrypha and Ažhi Dahaka, where the most powerful typhox dragons rule over hordes of pagus), but the appropriate method of worship varies from dragon to dragon.

Attricana and Ixindar: Then there are those who do not place their faith in any particular deity, but worship the gates themselves as formless divinities with will but without personality. They strive to live by the principles embodied in each gate: creativity, spontaneity, and a regard for life in the case of Attricana; order, structure, and absolute law in the case of Ixindar. Unfortunately for adherents of Ixindar, their source of divinity is not without a driving intellect, as Attricana seems to be – the bodiless essence of Mengus exists within the black gate, and her seductive whisper speaks to those inclined to hear it, corrupting them into agents of her will.



Other Faiths: The number of religions in the world defy the ability of human or fae to enumerate, from small cults to continent-sweeping movements. Any religion with more than a few thousand followers that existed on Earth before the Hammer continues to exist, though almost never in exactly the same form, and often as a sect or denomination of a larger, related faith. With most of the old holy places lost to the Hammer's impact, and communication between distant branches of the faithful made more difficult, there is rarely any definable 'homeland' for any of these religions – they may be found anywhere in the world.

For more details on each religion, see the *Amethyst: Untamed World Guide*.

CURRENCY

Without an extensive system of banking and trade exchanges, each kingdom issues its own currency. Since the concept of paper money in any great quantity relies on a trust that market economies are simply unable to match, nearly all of these currencies are issued in coin. Long before man's evolution, the fae nations decided that regardless of what stamp was cast on the coin, the best way to ensure fair commerce was to make the value of the coin equal to that of the metal it is made from. It is not unheard of for travelers to pay their way in coins of equal value, but from a dozen different kingdoms. Because magic has difficulty forging valuable metals without the aid of a philosopher's stone (the holy grail of alchemy and still only legend), the fae restricted their coins to a small branch of metals: gold, silver, and copper. Gold is the standard, as it is completely impos-

sible to transmute. This was standardized amongst the gimfen, damaskans, and narros (the latter is believed to have pioneered the practice). Chaparrans and laudenians preferred barter to money in their own communities (and still do). Narros eventually added two more to the range, a dull silver coin made from palladium and platinum, and an ultra-rare angelite mint. In the modern world, the fae continued this practice and have endorsed a set of standards for the production and circulation of currency.

Rather than deal with the complexities of money-changing in a culture where trade is sporadic at best, most human nations have simply adopted the fae tradition. Coins trade at the fair market value of their constituent metals. They are all properly stamped for authenticity and are distributed in near identical weight to other coins of equal value. Though each nation issues its own currency with its own unique signature, a coin from Abidan and a coin from Torquil are of more or less equal purity and value. As the most prolific mines in Canam are operated by the narros and nearly all nations must deal with them for the raw metals necessary to make the coins in the first place, they alone have the economic clout to ensure the system remains equitable across the continent. Baruch Malkut is the only nation that still employs a standardized banknote system for higher denominations, issuing paper with no face value to represent stored riches. Baruch shopkeepers, though encouraged to report those passing unfamiliar money, often take foreign gold, as the coins can be melted and re-stamped. Despite a continued push to eliminate the exchange of this money within their borders, it still oc-



curs. The Malkut slavers, for example, freely accept foreign coins.

ECHAN CURRENCY

For simplicity, all echan coins trade equally with each other. Many kingdoms take foreign gold, melt it, and re-stamp it with their mark. Because of this practice, the Limshau chryso is the most widely circulated currency in Canam, followed distantly by the Narros foot. Here are some examples of Canam currency:

Copper/Brass/Bronze Coins

Abidan/Limshau/Gimfen penny (plural: pennies)
Baruch Malkut copper
Kannos kuedo
Narros copper tooth
Orchis casten
Torquil penny (plural: pence)

Silver Coins

Abidan dagot
Kannos kroenan
Baruch Malkut silver
Gimfen pebble
Limshau carmot
Orchis noman
Narros silver finger
Torquil sterling

Gold Coins

Abidan sovereign
Kannos kannon
Baruch Malkut dollar
Gimfen gold stone
Limshau chryso
Narros golden foot
Torquil crown

Platinum/Palladium Coins

Limshau tollar
Narros pallis spirit

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Unique Currency (Various)

Narros angelite opus (=500 gold)
Laudenian enchanted mark (=10,000 gold)
Gimfen pearl (=50 gold)
Quinox crystal (=5 gold)

Houses Antikari, Ogium, Plicato, and Solum all use various other nations' currencies. When Torquil was in its prime, it instigated a massive run of its coins, which was the dominant tender for nearly a century until the kingdom's collapse. Even after, it continued circulation for many decades and is still found today, though overwhelmed by the distribution of Limshau coins. Unique currency is often not accepted outside of the region of issue, except by collectors. The gimfen pearl is an actual pearl but with nearly pin-thin etch-work all over it, making its aesthetic worth far higher than the pearl's

intrinsic value. It is often used when flamboyant purchases are made, especially in front of prospective mates. It is commonly considered a sign of arrogance if used for mediocre acquisitions. The laudenian mark, usually used only for rare dealings with other cultures, is merely a glossy disk of brass but is enchanted with a permanent magical endowment, making it completely weightless. It cannot be broken or bent nor can it be picked from its owner's purse: the coins reappear in the owner's possession until willingly handed to another. Though the magic can be pulled off it and used in a constructive way, only the laudenian elder casters know how to accomplish this. The narros opus does not have enough angelite to forge an item but enough coins gathered could be employed in such a way; however, the coins are worth more in their issue than they are in their content and the cost of extracting the usable angelite from the coin would increase the cost of forging the item by upwards of 10%.

Quinox has a unique currency used in the high court and in prestigious markets. It is a small monocrystal three inches across. The unbroken crystal is completely pure with no grain boundaries—a perfect crystal lattice. The ingot boules issued by the state are identical with no markings for their authenticity. None is required, as no single person within and without the House of Quinox knows how the treasury creates such perfection. Chaparrans and laudenians prefer a barter system, but when forced to use money they employ their neighbours' (in this case, Limshau).

Games need not employ this system of currency; just assume the gold they acquire is universal. As an optional rule, GM's are welcomed to include the currency titles above purely as flavor to a scene, or they may impose a rule system upon them, forcing players to track what kinds of money they have and its local value. If so, a few guidelines should be followed:

- Unique currency is only accepted by the government in question and they are often unwilling to trade it over to more acceptable legal tender.
- No one outside of Baruch Malkut accepts their money and no legitimate vendor in the "blessed kingdom" converts their coins or bills to foreign money.
- Banknotes are legal tender, but are usually issued in the form of custom letters of credit and have an accepted range from their bank. Usually, this range is within 100 miles. Outside of this, the notes are refused. Several shops in large cities refuse to deal with large monies (over 500 gp) and will only accept banknotes from local banks. Banknotes are seldom exchanged back to coins unless given as loose change in a purchase.
- Gems and jewellery are not legal tender and must be traded for currency or banknotes.

EQUIPMENT AND LIFESTYLE

BASIC WEAPONS

Although the metallurgy techniques used by modern smiths have benefitted from centuries or millennia of development over their ancient counterparts, the types of weapons and armor that are commonly seen in medieval fantasy settings are all available here. As a rule, Limshau, Fargon, and some of the communities around Angel prefer Asian-influenced weaponry – everywhere else favors traditional Western fantasy fare.

BASIC ARMOR

Like weapons, armor has benefitted from developments over the centuries. While most echan armor isn't strong enough to stand up to high-powered techan weaponry, it can at least serve to turn a lethal blow into a flesh wound. Unfortunately, all armor is restrictive to a certain extent, and in the face of threats that can tear through it like paper (technological and monstrous both), many warriors choose to do without, trusting on maneuverability to keep them safe instead.

CLOTHING

What people wear varies from place to place, as ever. Each settlement has its own prevailing fashions. Those close to bastions have greater access to exported goods, and may dress in a manner that would not look out of place in pre-Hammer days. Even outside the reach of techan influence, clothing tends to be a bit more 'modern' than the echa-baka might expect. Denim, in particular, is the preferred fabric for laborers and lower-class folk, being both easy to make and hard-wearing, and the classical medieval wardrobe of loose shirts, hose, and ridiculous pointed shoes and feathered caps is far less common than button shirts, steel-toed boots, and long- or broad-brimmed hats – in other words, the average Canamite peasant looks less like a medieval serf and more like a cowboy, albeit in locally sourced threads. Upper classes also flaunt synthetic versions of traditionally posh fabrics such as velvet or ermine as status symbols, since these bastion exports are very expensive compared to the real thing.

FOOD AND DRINK

In contrast to clothing, food is more traditionally medieval, due to the lack of refrigeration, water purification, and other sanitary techniques. The staples across the continent are bread, corn, oats, tomatoes, carrots, potatoes, squash, beans, rice, cheese, eggs, poultry, meats that can be easily preserved, and either wine, beer, or milk. Some spices, such as black pepper, chilies, oregano, and cocoa, are sufficiently common that even lower-class families can get them regularly, but more exotic fare is still limited to the tables of the wealthy and noble. Still, the array of familiar recipes available to the average cook would also surprise the sheltered bastion-

born – although it would be uncommon to find a hamburger in an echan village, one can find a decent slice of pizza almost anywhere one goes.

TRANSPORT

Motorized vehicles are not entirely unknown in the echan world, but it is limited mostly to farming equipment. The most advanced combustion system capable of running for long in the EDF-saturated environment is the alcohol carburetor, and even this breaks down several times a day. Personal transport is limited to horses and oxen in most communities, although in larger cities (particularly in Kannos and Abidan), bicycles are common. Otherwise, people walk (or climb, jump, and tumble, in the case of many Limshau residents) wherever they have to go.

ENTERTAINMENT

Echan Canam has an average literacy rate of just over 50%, but much of this is skewed by Limshau, where everyone can read. Outside of Limshau, Kannos, and Abidan, generally no more than 30% of the population is literate. Traveling bards often transform the popular literature of the central nations into songs and plays to perform in outlying settlements. Sporting events are also popular: the medieval sports of jousting and archery are popular, of course, but so are folk favorites such as baseball, soccer, lacrosse, wrestling and boxing. Densely populated areas often establish their own teams and leagues, but beyond the major population centers, there is little regular competition except at town fairs.



"Did you know him?" A monitor guard asked him. A strong accent and muddled words meant this wasn't his first language. He tried too hard to pronounce every word.

"No," Aiden answered.

"We could not have saved him."

"Yeah...I know." He didn't.

"He was already half-dead."

"Thought perhaps you'd have a healer."

"Doctor tended. Too far gone."

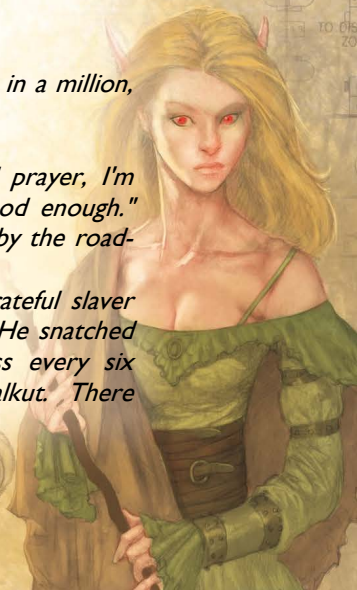
"Vivicator?"

"Magic?" The guard shook his head. "One in a million, fewer with men."

"Nothing else?"

"Not more than chicken bones and blind prayer, I'm afraid. Doctors leave for bastion when good enough." The guard said nothing more, leaving Aiden by the roadside.

Aiden's ward had been a notoriously ungrateful slaver recognized for his stocks of broken puggs. He snatched his chattel in Xixion and passed the cross every six months to trade with caravans bound for Malkut. There



was neither a reward nor grateful praise for his recovery. The corpse was tossed to a collective grave, a layer of lime the only consideration.

Antikari was unimportant in the world until progressive humans and fae from Limshau decided to set a road across the land, uniting its various kingdoms. The town nurtured a business of escorts and travel guides armed with allies and swords. Rising costs forced some committed pilgrims to chance the journey to Angel alone. At this late hour, gas powered lamps flickered with flame.

The continental cross was a beaten path that connected the bastion of Angel, through house Antikari and house Orchis, and finally to Limshau. Although not always safe, it was the easiest route to take with reduced risk. All Aiden needed to do was book passage and follow the single road to Limshau. He hobbled to the station, still forcing air into his lungs.

The Corrigan caravan was a string of a dozen slow moving conestogas, coaches, and carriages, laced together and towed by a group of oversized oxen. Endowed with magic, the two storey beasts never slept and seldom ate. They could pull a hundred tons for weeks before needing rest. It was what Aiden had waited his life to see, something truly unbelievable and impossible given the rules of science. It was real and alive and beautiful. The conestogas were double in height and the two monstrous bovine dragged them like living locomotives. Aiden had read about gargantuan snails with houses formed out of their shells and flying boats with stone wings which never flapped. This would do for now.

Ten silver Limshau carmot later and he had sleeping provisions that would travel during the night. Though the caravan was slower than galloping horses, it allowed a cushioned bed.

Antikari was a small house of questionable nobility in a town that ruled a dozen smaller farms. The main keep was a fenced house slightly larger than the surrounding buildings. Antikari also hated fae. Anyone approaching the town picked up that nugget of gossip. Any moral opposition to the population's xenophobic view needed restraining for those wanting to approach Angel. Travelers needed to unite as the raiders preferred smaller, less defended targets.

174 Most of the residents of Antikari believed anything non-human was responsible for man's fall from grace. Many of them wished to enter and live in Angel but their lack of useful knowledge prevented it.

The house baronet, Renan Torquil, inherited the keep when Stellen Antikari died from disease, leaving no heirs. Renan, his half brother and 2nd in line to Torquil, claimed the seat before any bastards or distant relations could object.

After taking in a proper meal of rice and chicken, Aiden found himself starrng at the restaurant's bathroom. The paper was rough hemp. There was no seat, no plumbing, and no cover, only a hole in the ground with a bucket of water beside it. It ran to a closed pit a few meters away. Aiden took a glance outside and then back to the task. The ring around the hole wasn't clean, with muddy boot prints and various other stains he would rather not touch with bare skin. Indoor plumbing with moving water was a

blessing Aiden instantly missed. There wasn't even a handle to maintain balance. Matters beckoned him and Aiden grimaced his way through it.

* * *

Caravans alive and rolling as well as sacked and burned could be spotted along the Cross's route. Wandering shops sold trinkets from the backs of wagons. Carts stayed together for protection, creating nomadic markets that roamed the roads.

A day after leaving Antikari, the Corrigan passed Arcid-ucha--a caravan of 35 wagons that sold fine clothes, rare foods, and even protective lodging with optional vendible flesh to keep merchants and adventurers warm and satisfied. It took four minutes for the road trains to pass each other. Flowers and drinks were share through windows. The drivers passed gossip and news about the road ahead. Aiden noticed various passengers waving and smiling. None of them were techan. All were human.

For the first few days, Aiden was forced to sleep alongside a farmer with leather skin forged from fifty years in the sun. After passing the village of Nymanis, Aiden slept beside two miners that smelled of week-old cheese. As the caravan left the land of Antikari and made for the free house of Orchis, Aiden was upgraded to a wool covered bed of straw in one of the conestogas with four other humans, three from Antikari and the fourth from Plicato.

After the second week, the caravan stopped in Orchis. The "sand-castle," as it was often mocked, was spotted on the horizon, flapping into vision from the waves of heat from dried desert soil. The ruling founders preferred the term "Desert Flower." Regardless of its name, the smooth towers of the relatively small keep soared over those in Antikari or any other buildings outside of a bastion.

A mockery of a legend claimed a demigod of child-like whim packed the sand with water and sculpted the keep with his own hands. Upon completion, he ordered a dragon to fire the castle to an ironstone ceramic. The castle was then given to the Orchis family on condition that neither the immediate family nor their direct descendants ever sleep beyond the limits of the castle. They ruled over a dozen smaller villages across seventy miles including stops along the continental cross like Archena, Kerria, and Bitterblush.

The Book of Free Houses, read to Aiden when he has nine. It was true to.

It was there when Aiden switched over to a larger stagecoach. It had two floors, a hallway, and four rooms with a narrow set of stairs and drapes separating the cabins from the beasts and their reigns. The population increased the further he approached Limshau. The caravan stopped at Blackbaronne and Kendelkorne, swelling in wagons and people. Aiden began recognizing cultures and landmarks from the books he had read. Still no fae. He shared the cabin with a pleasant looking musician wielding an acoustic bass guitar marked with colorful rosettes sprinkled with damaskan elvish. Aiden was still trying to pick up the tongue. It was one of the easier of the elvish languages.

"Ou frei casa y'habit?" the man asked.

"I'm sorry," Aiden answered, "I don't speak...whatever it is you're saying."

"Ou niima bastion?" Aiden was sure it was Englo-Lingo, a strange dialect no one at Angel knew.

"Yes...bastion, yes." The man plucked a few chords, evolving with each pass into a complex melody. It was far superior to any of the synthetic tunes Aiden had heard from his youth, only matched by the ethnic songs from Genai. "It's very good."

"Muzak esta sin knacko civila est verbessern de mecha"

"Whatever you said, I'm sure you're right."

Aiden appreciated the talent the man exhibited, and the level of hygiene was a blessing considering the weeks prior. It was between a surprisingly lengthy tune when the caravan shuddered and stopped. The coach drivers were all trained to pull their breaks in chorus but the vehicles still struck each other, causing Aiden to fall onto the floor. Aiden poked his head out to see what caused the halt.

It was a dumpy figure jabbing a dead jackrabbit repeatedly with a sharpened stick. Despite the state of the prey, the predator continued to perforate the body. The creature resembled a hairless dog walking on bipedal legs. Floppy ears ran down a flattened head. The caravan was understandably cautious. One could mean thousands. A forward guard readied a crossbow shot. Despite the racket of animals and passengers, the pugg ignored the group. They couldn't allow it to live, even if it did pay them no mind. It turned sharply and uttered a scream that crossed the laugh of a monkey with the shriek of a bat.

Dozens more vermin swarmed from the trees towards the caravan. Aiden fell back into the coach and slammed the shutter down. The voices and clatter of armed guards rushed past him.

"All able bodied men to the front!" screamed Captain Rothschild as he walked by the coach. "Grab a sword. If you can hold it, you can wield it."

"Esta sang froid!" said the musician as he took the call and departed. Aiden leaned forward to follow. The screams of the innocent forced a moment of pause and Aiden froze.

The captain poked his head through the door. "Out of the room, this duties' for all," he snapped. Out of reflex, Aiden grabbed his totem book as he left. "What's that?"

"Spell book," Aiden answered.

"A mage, we've hit the fools luck." He snatched Aiden's shirt and pulled hard. "Get behind a sword and throw some fire."

"I actually--" Aiden was cut short as he was tossed onto his feet out of the coach. He fell in behind a hefty fellow draped in mail and topped with a burgonet. His weapon was a well weighted often-used broadsword already blessed with pugg blood. The rodents were rolling over each other to get to their prey. A few wore scraps of clothes, many were naked, wielding sharpened sticks with the rare pack leader with a rock or steel tip. The guard cleaved one on his downswing and caught another as he brought his blade back.

In history, puggs had been attributed to brownies, boggles, leprechauns, and various other sprites. They were

the fastest growing species to emerge from the gates. All they cared for was breeding and eating and finding the easiest and fastest solutions to both. They painted no art, wrote no poetry, and carved no sculptures. If they ran out of prey, they turned on each other.

"I heard right...mage?" the guard asked Aiden behind him.

"Apparently. Watch out!" Aiden shouted as a pugg dove to impale a stick into the guard's shin. It was kicked away by a spiked boot.

"Human wizard," he responded with hardly a strain, "good marks on ya. Barking storms and cackling fire, eh?"

Aiden held a tuff of steel loops in his hand to ensure his cover remained in front. "I don't really follow you, no."

The guard leaned back. "Well, cast something."

"I could..." Aiden had a hard enough time concentrating on his normal thoughts. To keep such a word in his mind, to recall all his knowledge of it, and in its expression, alter the physical rules of the world, was out of his reach when ferocious monsters were within theirs. "You know, I'm not good with a sword, but perhaps I should--"

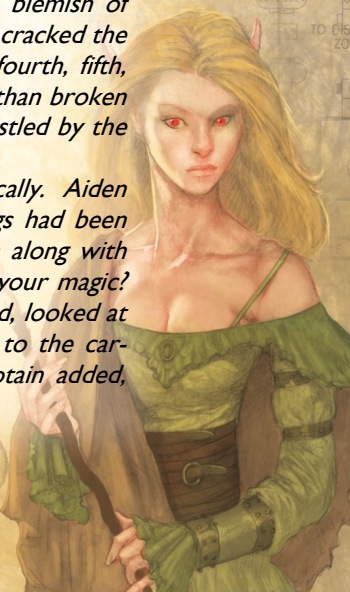
The guard turned sharply back. "Are you a mage or not? Throw down the pillars, boy--"

"Holy fuck!" Aiden shouted. The guard turned back to see the blurry point of a rock-tipped spear only an instant before it drove into his eye. The lumbering corpse fell back on Aiden, pinning his legs under 300 pounds of dead flesh and steel. The pugg pulled the spear from the wound and smiled teasingly. The terrified wizard kicked and struggled under the weight. His book was still in his hand. This pugg had more than a few scraps of cloth draped over it, the chief. Aiden waited for his rescue, for that moment in every book where the hero would be saved at the last second. A dragon would be good but a well placed arrow would--

The creature's spear drove an inch through layers of cotton and polyester and into Aiden's leg. The pain was shockingly intense. The pugg pulled it back quickly and strolled over the corpse to aim for Aiden's face. The leather-bound spellbook had a skeleton of wood. It was heavy for its size and durable. Only a handful of pages were pierced as the book was held up as a shield. When Aiden pushed the book back, the creature fell off the guard's body.


After dislodging himself from under the armored carcass, Aiden rolled back and slammed the tome as hard as he could upon the pugg's head. He brought it down again, hearing a crack, and another, which added a blemish of blood on the cover. All his strength in a third cracked the creature's bones and snapped the spear. A fourth, fifth, eighth, twelfth, and there was little left other than broken bones and blood. Aiden kept at it up until jostled by the shout.

"Hey...Wizard!" shouted the captain sarcastically. Aiden looked up from his kill. The remaining puggs had been driven off or killed. Three guards had fallen along with two passengers. "You done wowing it with your magic? It's over." Aiden lifted himself from the ground, looked at the nearly destroyed book, and limped back to the carriage. As he struggled up the steps, the captain added, "That was some spell you got there."





CHAPTER SIX: MAGIC



The term ‘mage’ covers a wide spectrum of spellcasters and magic users across the world. They may wish to protect good, or destroy everything around. They still, however, follow one common belief: The gates contain unlimited power and sit waiting to be harnessed. Wizards discovered long ago that certain shortcuts exist to channel energies from the gates. It is an almost scientific study of the ways of magic. Magic focuses its power through three sources: Pleroma (the language of dragons), magical materials, and innately magical beings.

The root of all spellcraft is the power to create something by speaking its name. This magic is imbued in the language of dragons. All wizards, be they elementalists or academicians, access magic in this way. To the uneducated, this language is simply called draconic. To everyone else, it is Pleroma.

Not only are there new elements like angelite, coruthil, and magnarros (born from previously rare minerals), there are also thousands of materials and combinations of elements that produce different results in the presence of magic. The arts of alchemy and magical crafting are born from these materials.

Just as some monsters are inherently magical creatures, some people possess magical abilities on their own, whether from birth or spontaneously manifested later in life: gneolistics, mystics, vivicators and the like are some such, although all the forms such ‘blessings’ take are many and varied. These appear at random, though some people claim that this gift must come from some divine source. Both creatures wicked and wise have claimed such power. They can offer mild magical enhancements or powerful spell-like effects to almost rival wizards.

NEW EDGES

ARCANE BACKGROUND: MAGE

(Background Edge)

Arcane Skill: Spellcasting (Smarts)

Starting Power Points: 10

Starting Powers: 3

Totem: Any

There are many traditions of magic, but they ultimately boil down to study of the words of Pleroma, encoding those words on a totem, and using the totem as a medium to channel the power from Attricana and bring the spell into the world. Just knowing the sound or shape of the Pleroma word is not enough – the mage must be able to clearly envision it in all three of its visible dimensions and comprehend its position in the invisible fourth (although it is theorized that Pleroma exists in more than four dimensions, hence the continued superiority of draconic spellcasting over human or fac efforts).

- **Imperfect Understanding:** Whenever you roll a 1 on a Spellcasting roll, regardless of the result of the wild die, you lose control of the spell, which expends its gathered energy through the most expedient method (as determined by the GM).

Canonical Powers: Any except *zombie*. You cannot take this power even with the New Power edge.



Trappings: If a mage chooses to specialize, she may choose any trappings she likes. However, overtly necromantic trappings are the exclusive domain of Ixindar, and thus unavailable to a mage bound to Attricana.

ARCANE BACKGROUND: GNEOLISTIC

(Background Edge, Supernatural)

Arcane Skill: Faith (Spirit)

Starting Power Points: 15

Starting Powers: 1

Totem: None

Some children – maybe one in a hundred thousand, or even one in a million – are touched by Attricana, able to channel the power of the gate without needing books or totems. The talent is very rare and very, very valuable – especially to folk without scruple who seek to exploit the child as a prophet, a tool, or a weapon of mass destruction. Those who manage to avoid falling into the clutches of such people, become very adept at hiding their true nature and surviving on their own, either suppressing their powers or posing as wizards, carrying a fake 'totem' and making sure that real wizards never find out. If the gneolistic had the misfortune to be identified young and exploited, she at least always has a place in some cult's hierarchy or a master's entourage... as long as she does exactly what she's told.

- **Indeterminate Consecration:** Your powers are channeled directly from Attricana and given shape by the force of your belief in something. When you roll a 1 on a Faith roll (for any reason, not just for power usage), regardless of the result of the wild die, the gaps in your faith are revealed. You suffer a

-2 to all Spirit-based rolls and all your powers cost 1 more power point than normal to use until you next ace on a Faith roll to use a power.

Canonical Powers: Any except *zombie*. You cannot take this power even with the New Power edge.

Trappings: Your powers are given a veneer of holiness based on your personal belief system. For most people, this means the standard light trappings, but a gneolistic from a culture that features fire heavily in worship might use fire trappings, and a natural/animist religion might use a variety of elemental trappings.

ARCANE BACKGROUND: INCARNATE

(Background Edge, Supernatural)

Arcane Skill: Special

Starting Power Points: 20

Starting Powers: 1

Totem: None

Like the gneolistic (of which she is just another variety), an incarnate has an innate connection to Attricana. Unlike the normal gneolistic, whose magic takes on the veneer of a religious miracle, an incarnate's magic manifests itself as an affinity to one of the magical elements: aether, air, earth, fire, or water. All her magic is tinged with this element in some way, even if the effect is merely cosmetic. Furthermore, each incarnate generally reflects her bonded element in both personality and appearance: a fire incarnate would be very quick-tempered and rash, an earth-bonded incarnate would be stoic and reserved, an aether incarnate would be hyperactive and sociable, a water incarnate would be placid





but mercurial, and an air incarnate would be flighty and elusive.

Elemental Tuner: Choose one of the five elements (Aether, Air, Earth, Fire, or Water). All your powers have trappings related to this choice (aether uses light and darkness – everything else uses the related energy-type). Each power you take is treated as a separate skill with no linked attribute (therefore counting as being lower than its attribute for purposes of advancement): you gain the skill at d4 for your first power automatically when you take this arcane background, and for each subsequent power when you take the New Power edge, but you must advance each power separately from then on. These skills have no linked attribute.

Canonical Powers: *Armor*, *banish* (aether, or related elementals only), *barrier* (all but air), *beast friend* (aether), *blast*, *blind* (aether, air, fire), *bolt*, *boost/lower trait* (affected trait must relate to the bound element in some way), *burrow* (earth), *burst*, *confusion* (aether), *damage field*, *darksight* (aether, air, fire), *deflection*, *detect/conceal arcana* (bound element only), *disguise* (aether, specific person only), *dispel* (bound element only), *divination* (aether), *drain power points* (aether), *elemental manipulation* (bound element only), *entangle* (aether, earth), *environmental protection* (bound element only), *farsight* (aether, air), *fear* (aether), *fly* (air),

greater healing (aether, water), *growth/shrink* (earth, water), *havoc*, *healing* (aether, water), *intangibility* (aether, air), *invisibility* (aether, air), *light/obscure* (aether, air), *mind reading* (aether), *pummel* (air, earth, water), *puppet* (aether, earth, water), *quickness* (air, fire), *shape change* (aether, earth, water), *slow* (air, earth, water), *slumber* (aether, water), *smite* (earth, fire), *speak language* (aether), *speed* (air, fire), *stun*, *succor* (aether, earth, water), *summon ally* (bound elementals only), *telekinesis* (aether or bound element only), *teleport* (aether), *wall walker* (aether, earth), *warrior's gift* (earth). You cannot take excluded powers even with the New Power edge.

ARCANE BACKGROUND : NIHILIMANCER

(Background Edge)

Requirement: Ixindar-bound hindrance

Arcane Skill: Spellcasting (Smarts)

Starting Power Points: 10

Starting Powers: 3

Totem: Any

The mirror image of the mage, nihilimancers channel the dark power of Ixindar through a corrupted mirror of Pleroma – Saeqaar, the language of Mengus and the shemjaza. While there are many spell effects that





Saeqaar can duplicate, it is ultimately a tool of syntropy, focusing on the elimination of random and creative energy and reducing all things to a base state.

- **Whispering Corruption:** Nihilimancers constantly hear the whisper of Mengus encouraging them to act in accordance with the will of Ixindar. Whenever you roll a 1 on a Spellcasting roll, regardless of the result of the wild die, the whisper overrides your own will: until you succeed on a Spirit roll, the GM can veto any action you take and propose an alternative action, which you must either take or do nothing but defend on your turn.

Canonical Powers: All except *greater healing*, *healing*, *light*, and *summon ally*. You cannot take excluded powers even with the New Power edge.

180 **Trappings:** The cold, darkness, and necromantic stock trappings are appropriate for nihilimancers. All nihilimancy spells also leave a stain on the souls of their targets, which lingers for about a week after being affected (or longer in some cases) and which can be perceived by fae, spellcasters, and animals, inflicting a -1 penalty to Charisma.

ARCANE BACKGROUND: PALADIN

(Background Edge, Supernatural)

Requirement: Code of Honor hindrance

Arcane Skill: Faith (Spirit)

Starting Power Points: 15

Starting Powers: 2

Totem: None

A paladin is a warrior who exhibits inexplicable powers and attributes these powers to her faith (like a gnostic, of which she may be just another form). There have been very few true paladins in history, and most of them have come from Abidan (Vincent Savarice himself was the first recorded example). Paladins don't use magic in the conventional sense. While they do channel Attricana's power, it mostly serves to strengthen their limbs, provide them with boundless stamina, and enhance their perspicacity.

- **Bound by Honor:** If you ever violate your code of honor, your Faith rolls can no longer ace (although the wild die can) until you do suitable penance for the sin (you must make a Faith roll afterwards to prove to yourself that you have no doubts of your repentance).

Canonical Powers: *Armor*, *beast friend*, *blind*, *boost trait* (self only), *damage field*, *darksight* (self only), *deflection*, *dispel*, *drain power points*, *environmental protection* (self only), *greater healing*, *healing*, *mind reading*, *quickness* (self only), *smite*, *speed* (self only), *stun* (centered on self), *succor*. You cannot take excluded powers even with the New Power edge.

Trappings: Generally speaking, paladin powers are used unconsciously and the effects are invisible or appear coincidental – there is no halo of light that surrounds the paladin as she smites her foes, wounds that she tends simply heal a bit faster than they would normally, an arrow aimed at her head is thrown aside by a sudden gust of wind, and so on. The paladin may not even be aware that she is using (or even possesses) such power, and if the coincidence is drawn to her attention, often attributes her good fortune to a divine blessing.

BLOOD ROYAL

(Weird Edge, Supernatural)

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+, Noble, and either Damaskan, Echan Human from Abidan, Half-Fae, Laudenian, or Tenenbri, or GM permission

Very, very rarely, an archon dragon will bestow its name and benison upon a noble family, imbuing all future scions of that line with supernatural charisma. In living memory, this has only occurred to the houses of Alkanost (Laudenian), Limshau (Damaskan), Shara-jaclypse (Tenenbri, but she has no known offspring), and Savarice (Human). As a descendent of one of the few noble families given the blessing of a dragon, your Charisma increases by 2. Additionally, designate a number of creatures equal to half your Spirit: these are considered your entourage until you take a two-hour ritual to designate different targets. Your entourage can add your Charisma instead of their own to their Persuasion and Streetwise rolls when acting on your behalf.



AURA OF FORTITUDE

(Weird Edge, Supernatural)

Requirements: Novice, Blood Royal

You can use the Persuasion skill in place of the Healing skill to heal the wounds of any of your entourage (you still add your Charisma to the roll). The target only needs to be able to hear you to benefit from the roll.

VIVICATOR

(Weird Edge, Supernatural)

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8+

More common than gneolistics, but still incredibly rare, vivicators directly channel the life-giving power of magic, but have no control over it – those with the power simply have to touch a wounded creature and it begins to heal. Many must learn to hide their gifts, for there are unscrupulous individuals and organizations that would happily harness those talents to their own ends. You add +2 to all Healing rolls (including for your own wounds). Up to five companions traveling with you add +2 to their natural healing rolls as well as long as you can minister to them, although this is magical healing and supersedes any other bonus for advanced medical attention (even if the other bonus is higher). Additionally, you never require special tools when using the Healing skill.

HAND OF THE UNSPOKEN

(Weird Edge, Supernatural)

Requirements: Novice, Vivicator

You can make a Healing roll to move a wound from one creature you are touching to another. If either target is unwilling, they may oppose with a Vigor roll, and you must get a raise on your roll to succeed.

TOUCH OF LIFE

(Weird Edge, Supernatural)

Requirements: Novice, Hand of the Unspoken

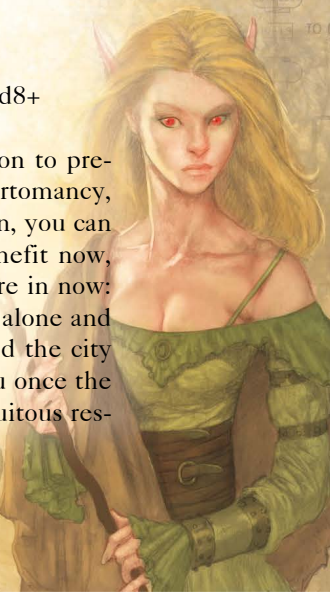
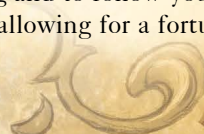
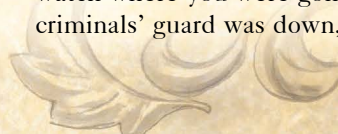
You can raise the dead. This does not require a roll: you simply touch a dead body and restore it to life, with all wounds healed. However, this always comes with a cost – and what form that cost takes and who pays it is up to the GM.

MYSTIC

(Weird Edge, Supernatural)

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+ or Spirit d8+

A mystic uses traditional methods of divination to predict the future, such as bones, runestones, cartomancy, or reading the flight of birds. Once per session, you can 'retcon' something that would be to your benefit now, having earlier predicted the scrape that you are in now: for instance, if you went into a den of thieves alone and were captured, you could declare that you told the city watch where you were going and to follow you once the criminals' guard was down, allowing for a fortuitous res-



cue. The retcon must be reasonable and not too complicated, since visions of the future are notoriously vague and difficult to plan around. The GM has the final word over what declarations are allowed.

SPIRIT BOND

(Weird Edge, Supernatural)

Requirements: Novice, Beast Master with a spirit animal

Your spirit animal becomes a wild card and does not suffer a -2 penalty when interacting with the corporeal world.

SPELLCRAFT

‘Pleroma’ is a pre-Hammer philosophical concept, representing the entirety of divine power. It was adopted first by human wizards and thinkers and later by the fae as the name for the draconic language, since the tongue itself has no internal name. Even spellcasters, renowned for their logical approach and cynical minds, use the term despite its divine connotation. To many of them, it may still be a light above our world, and to a greater extent, our universe, but there may be nothing divine or spiritual about it; even so, it does represent the ultimate power to change the universe with a word. Pleroma allows individuals to direct power normally reserved for gods in myth. This power lay with the dragons for millions of years before the fae pursued this path. These words have been described as the base code of the universe: the word is the thing, and the thing is the word. A prospective arcanist must first understand how the word works in all ways by contemplating it in every dimension, absorbing its meaning into his or her soul. Wizards all share a common desire to study the behavior of these ancient words and discover new ways to utilize their potential. The books of a spellcaster reflect this wish. The bigger the library, the greater the understanding the mage possesses of the arcane arts.

182 Pleroma actually exists in at least four dimensions, though humans and fae are only capable of perceiving three of them, giving each letter three views: this occasionally makes different symbols look identical when viewed at the same angle. Most mages have no knowledge of the true nature of Pleroma, as it is possible to cast any spell ever conceived by man or fae with a mere fifty-five letters, less than twenty percent of the total characters of the language. Some casters suspect even more powerful spells exist hidden in the script’s barely-glimpsed fourth dimension and point to foundation anchors as proof, constructed as receptacles for these rare and powerful spells. This may explain why one cannot copy the spell from an anchor, as it is impossible for a three-dimensional being to transcribe it properly even if they can (barely) conceive of it in mind.

Learning the true language of dragons and their written word is extremely difficult and even the oldest laudeni-ans can only claim partial fluency. The original Bibles of Drasago were created in the original tongue, though thankfully, they can be converted to the flat variety with a simple wave of the hand: more poetic passages lose much in the translation. The small number of souls aware of Pleroma’s true complexities point to the impossibility of this language occurring naturally as proof of their divine origin and the existence of God: no species could ever evolve a language requiring possibly dozens of dimensions to fully comprehend. Another theory is that the language was not naturally evolved, but rather constructed and tied to the universe in a way no one has been able to explain. Yet another theory was put forward by Kereptis Rifts, who postulated, “As three-dimensional beings, we project our language onto two dimensions. A naturally-evolved four-dimensional language would then logically only emerge from a species existing in five.” It is possible, however, that Rifts was not thinking big enough.

Because Pleroma defies the ability of human and even fae psychology to truly master it, instead, each mage is bound to a totem, a metaphysical cheat sheet that helps them visualize the multi-dimensional script that makes up a spell formula. The final key to the spell is the power word. The mage inscribes the word on his totem and memorizes it. When the mage speaks that word, the energy channels through the totem and the spell is cast. Each spell resembles a different symbol or sets of symbols, depending on the complexity or power from the spell – to those without understanding, they are meaningless squiggles, but to the arcane adept they leap from the totem’s surface, glittering in three dimensions and extending backward and forward in time. The most common focus totem is the spellbook: however, different cultures favor different totems. Nevertheless, each totem is unique to the caster – what precise form it takes and how mundane or extravagant it looks depends on the staidness or flamboyance of the wizard.

Certain high-level spells are so rare they can only be found inscribed on unique items spread around the world. Sometimes, wizards must quest for them as others would quest for magic weapons. A wizard’s honor insists these items either remain in their location or be taken to Kirjath-Sepher, Limshau, or some other protected vault for storage.

TOTEMS

The totem is the ‘key’ to spellcasting, the Pleroma word being the lock. No character can cast spells without their totem in their possession. You can only have one totem at a time, and if you lose your totem you must conduct a month-long ritual to replace it, as all the activation words have to be etched on it again. There are six totems generally accepted throughout the wizarding

world: the forms that each totem can take are many and varied, but they all fall into one of these categories. Note that while each tradition has its preferred totem, any wizard can use any totem – it's just highly unusual (and in some cases, taboo) to use a totem other than the standard for the wizard's order.

BOOK

The most common totem on Earth is the book. It is the most powerful totem and the easiest to master. Schools dot the planet dedicated to this belief. More wizards use book totems than any other. Limshau employs them almost exclusively: all damaskan mages trained in a Koana academy use the book, and as most human mages learn their craft from Limshau, the tendency has carried over. They believe that power from Attricana and Ixindar has its own rules and is not random, which means it can be eventually understood. All mages carry books, but the final Pleroma power words rest inscribed in the book wizard's totem.

Traditions: Academy of Logos, Draconian Monk, Ithrannas, Koana Scholar, Mage

Benefit: You begin with 1 additional known power (of any rank available to you: you can change this power when you advance in rank) and gains a +2 bonus to Knowledge (Arcana) rolls.

INSTRUMENT

The musical instrument totem is unique to a school of the Darawren tradition that views 'humanist' subjects such as psychology, art, and history, as reflections of the power of nature, and apply the same discipline to studying and shaping them as their more earthy compatriots do with plants, animals, and the weather. Although their spells do not require music or song, they frequently weave performance into their spellcasting, to edify, entertain, or confuse, as the need takes them.

Tradition: Darawren

Benefit: If you take an extra turn to cast any spell, you either reduce the power point cost of the spell by 2 or you gain a free raise on the power (if cast successfully)

ORB

The orb is an uncommon choice for most fae and is often found with wizards practicing the darker side of magic, the energy tied to the polar power of Ixindar. Orbs are also strongly associated with illusion and mind control magics, which most Limshau wizards consider, if not taboo, at least bad taste. Occasionally, a few tenenbri have been seen using an orb, but this choice is seen predominantly with negative casters or with humans that come about their training from a less than respectable source.

Traditions: Mage (human and tenenbri only), Nihil-mancer

Benefit: You gain +2 to any opposed roll for a power that is opposed by Spirit or the target's arcane skill.

SHIELD

Although wizards cannot use armor as a totem, they can choose a shield. The symbols usually start on the inside, but as the wizard learns more spells, they must eventually cover the front as well. The narros are regarded as the instigators of this totem, and only they and the occasional tenenbri or human mage use it. A shield totem can only be constructed of light steel, wood, magnarros, coruthil, or angelite.

Traditions: Ithrannas, Mage (human and narros only)

Benefit: You gain +2 to any opposed roll against a hostile power.

STAFF

Outside of the book, the staff is one of the most common totems used, being the oldest known application of the craft. Many less civilized communities capable of competent wizardry often use it. A staff also remains popular with the traveling wizard, as it's less clumsy and can easily be disguised as a walking stick. Staff totem mages continue to stay fashionable with many fae races, especially chaparrans and laudenians, the latter admitting the efficacy of no other totem except for the rare laudenian sword mage.

Traditions: Academy of Logos, Darawren, Draconian Monk, Ithrannas, Laudanian Magos, Mage

Benefit: You begin with 3 additional power points.

WEAPON

Although choosing a weapon seemingly appears without penalty, the benefits are double-edged. First, weapons have the smallest available surface area of any totem, limiting the number of spell triggers that can be encoded on it. Additionally, wizards with weapon totems often have a need to wield them in combat despite never being able to match a fighter on even ground. This does not stop a large number of wizards from using weapons, chiefly those for whom magic is a tool rather than an art. Narros and tenenbri, of course, argue about who developed it first. Narros began with the shield but claim the transition to weapon was an obvious one while the tenenbri claim they hold the sole claim on the weapon totem. Complicating the matter further is a small tradition of laudenian sword mages who claim that they originated the practice. Many human cultures embrace the weapon totem as well. A weapon totem must be composed mostly of wood, steel, magnarros, coruthil, or angelite.



Traditions: Darawren, Ithrannas, Laudanian Magos, Mage

Benefit: Your Parry increases by 1 until the start of your next turn after casting a spell.

ATTRICANA SPELLS

Most spells originate from Attricana. One can be an evil caster still bound to Attricana; he just can't cast Ixindar unique spells. Unique Attricana spells are those blessed enchantments exclusive to the white gate: spells that manipulate immaterial energies alien to this world, or inherently creative spells such as those that summon living beings (monsters are not actually summoned—they are created at that moment by will of the spellcaster, happy to return to the chaos of Attricana once that purpose is fulfilled).

All spells drawing upon Attricana appear alive when cast: they exist with enough intelligence to accomplish their task along with the drive to succeed at it. To fail would be worse than death, even if that death occurs anyway moments later. From dancing lights to lightning leaping from fingers, every spell carries some indication that an intelligence other than the spellcaster is at work. Some wizards, particularly of the Koana schools, nurture this intelligence, while others constantly attempt to refine their spell in an attempt to minimize the apparent outside influence – with only limited success.

ELEMENTS AND SCHOOLS

Magic is an organic study, but there are a few general conventions that practitioners tend to observe out of tradition. Among the darawren of Jibaro and those of like philosophy, the tradition of the **Five Elements** (aether, air, earth, fire, and water) is common, while more traditional wizards adhere to the **Five Schools** (Calling, Energies, Phantasm, Scrying, and Transfiguration). Most practitioners specialize in one of the disciplines, although this should not be considered a strait-jacket – most traditions can justify just about any sort of spell the mage may need. The different disciplines merely have their own particular focus.

Most mages should have 2-3 disciplines that they are familiar with, even if they specialize in one particular area. While there is nothing that intrinsically prohibits a spellcaster from knowing spells from every discipline, the character's focus should follow logically from their spellcasting aspect, and a tighter focus will make actually choosing spell effects a lot easier.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS

Aether: The quantum state. Commanding elemental life (quintessence, chi, vital power, emotional energy); manipulating light and gravity; controlling, healing and rending living tissue; spells of connection, space and

distance. Also sometimes known as the element of 'Wood' or 'Void'.

Air: The gaseous state. Manipulating elemental air, sound and electricity; spells of speed, balance and flight; weather magic; visual and aural illusions.

Earth: The solid state. Controlling and summoning elemental earth, stone, and metal; defensive and strengthening magics; spells of stamina and stability; animating earth constructs.

Fire: The plasma state. Summoning and commanding elemental fire; spells of violence and consumption; manipulating the body's energy; reading the future.

Water: The liquid state. Affecting and summoning elemental water; healing and cleansing magic; spells of fluidity and motion; farseeing.

THE FIVE SCHOOLS

Calling: Summoning and banishing creatures, objects, and material elements, spells of defense and warding against living (and unliving) dangers, commanding of constructs.

Energies: Controlling and creating energetic elements; affecting temperature and energy levels; energy attacks; spells of defense against elements; telekinesis.

Phantasm: Illusions both apparent and mental; spells of befuddlement and psychic influence; mental attacks and defenses.

Scrying: Perceiving other places and times; spells of lore and communication; counter-scrying magics.

Transfiguration: Alteration of physical properties, such as color or density; shapeshifting; healing magics.

SPELL DETAILS

The descriptions of the elements are deliberately imprecise: because such systems are traditionally very esoteric, any elemental mage should be able to accomplish just about any effect they can think of, the only difference being the physical manifestation of their magic. The schools are a little more concrete, but are still left somewhat vague, because while *Ametyst* does have a more scientific attitude towards magic than most fantasy settings, as with any science, academics are prone to argue over the precise details of classification – so as long as you can explain to yourself and your GM how a given power or trapping fits your concept, go ahead and take it. As the schools correspond roughly to the major categories of magic frequently used by fantasy fiction and games, feel free to draw inspiration from other sources when figuring out what powers and trappings may be appropriate for your magic.



CORRUPTED MAGIC

The deified language of Pleroma has a dark counterpart, brought to this world by Ixindar and Mengus' whisper. This tongue is both the metaphorical and literal mirror of Pleroma, but draws its power from the black gate instead of the white, further reinforcing the theory that Pleroma is not the language of dragons at all. The symbols of this corrupted tongue resemble that of Pleroma as seen through a mirror, and are able to replicate similar results, but it only imitates the might of Attricana without the energy of chaos behind it. Ixindar does not spontaneously create anything; it must infect and convert what it finds to its side. There was originally no accepted name for this language; as with Pleroma, the name of the thing is the thing itself. Later it received its own sobriquet, saeqaar, a word with no meaning that can be rendered in any human tongue. While Pleroma utterances can be colorful and dancing with life, saeqaar words when spoken are sonorant and uniform – those who have heard them and lived to tell the tale speak of them as sounding like the tolling of funeral bells, with only their disturbing harmonics distinguishing different words. Appropriate, then, that the typhox dragons found in this language the tools for creating the most corrupt of the magical arts, necromancy.

IXINDAR SPELLS

Ixindar has many exclusive spells. These are vile spells with few redeeming qualities. Spells related to death, necromancy, negation and null energy states are unique

to Ixindar and thus are not available to casters bound to Attricana. Otherwise, Ixindar casters can use any spell except summoning/creative spells and those with overtly good trappings. Casting Ixindar magic also locks the caster's thinking into the ways of the black gate, corrupting them eventually into an agent of absolute order. Corrupted magic has no flamboyance in its casting. There is no life behind anything emanating from a corrupted spell. However, the corruption of saeqaar does allow a spell to be bottled in, preventing the eruption of magical disruption. Like all energy from Ixindar, saeqaar does not disrupt technology. Instead, it prefers to disrupt the very soul attempting to control it.

FORBIDDEN MAGIC

These 'schools' draw their power from the black gate of Ixindar: they are not cast using Pleroma, and their use does not disrupt technology, but they are also abhorred by all right-thinking wizards and their use is grounds for summary execution even in enlightened societies like Abidan and Limshau. Even Baruch Malkut will not countenance their presence.

Necromancy: Imbuing false life in dead matter; extracting knowledge from the dead; inflicting disease and decay.

Nihilimancy: Unnaturally affecting entropic states; bringing matter or energy to an end; instant-death spells.





ARCANE METALLURGY & ALCHEMY

Most techan humans adept in the knowledge of chemistry were bewildered when magic refused to follow certain rules of nature. Controlled laboratory experiments confirmed that in the presence of magic (which many claim prevents controlled laboratory experiments), certain elemental properties change, some in minor ways, a few in major ways. Chemical reactions also change - not enough to impede the continued existence of life, but enough to change the rules of natural evolution, and even some basic chemical processes are altered in ways that are not obvious or straightforward. There are even numerous chemical compounds that, according to traditional science, simply cannot exist. Because of these newfound rules, the 'science' of alchemy has returned with vigor (and much to the chagrin of techans, actually works). Not only are there new elements like angelite, coruthil, and magnarros (born from previously rare minerals), there are also thousands of materials and combinations of elements that produce different results in the presence of magic. Those with the knowledge to forge items of enchantment are simply educated in the exacting ratios of alloys and ingredients required. Miscalculate by only 0.01 percent or 1 milligram, and the material becomes magically inert.

No longer the domain of mercury-addled mystics searching for immortality or ways of turning lead into gold, alchemy is a respectable, even scientific practice. Just as is the case with arcane metallurgy, certain chemical compounds when mixed in exactly the right proportions produce magical effects. One does not need to be able to perform magic in order to be an alchemist - all that is needed is knowledge of the correct formulae. In some communities, alchemy is a cottage industry, with good coin flowing in from passing adventurers buying copious amounts of restoratives. Potions are not always suspicious liquids in bottles, either - many alchemists fashion their consumables into candy or pastries, or infuse them into aromatic leaves to be made into tea, or smoked by those with the inclination.

Alchemical Crafting: An alchemist must have the Knowledge (Alchemy) skill in order to perform arcane metallurgy or create alchemical compounds. Alchemy can only be used to create consumables and basic magic items, and the kinds of effects available are limited by the type of item (see below) and the rank of the alchemist (so a novice alchemist would not be able to infuse an item with a power or edge that normally requires a Seasoned user). The cost of creating an item is as follows:

(consumable) = (50gp + 10gp per non-rank requirement) x effect rank x one-half alchemist's skill die type;

(basic item) = item's base cost + 200 x effect rank.

MAGIC ITEMS

Magic items are not common in Canam outside of specific communities with a high number of wizards, but certain items are far more common than others, and are even available for sale to the discerning buyer. Most basic magical items are created by the processes of alchemical reaction, with materials with natural magical reactivity producing supernatural effects if the ingredients are mixed or the metals alloyed with precisely the right percentages - this requires skill and delicacy on the part of the crafter, but does not require magical talent at all. More advanced magical gear requires a wizard to craft it, and consequently is usually made-to-order rather than to a standard pattern.

CONSUMABLES

In contrast to other magic equipment, consumables are relatively common, at least in the more civilized parts of the world. Potions are the most frequently seen one-shot items, at least by ordinary folk. Some wizards prepare spell scrolls to enable them to cast their spells dedicating so much effort. And while these are less common, there is a specialty trade in cantrip globes - glass balls containing alchemical mixtures that, when exposed to air, produce limited magical effects.

Potions: Potions produce a magical effect on the drinker without the need to cast a spell. Drinking a potion acts much like using a power, with the following exceptions:

- The drinker can only be affected by one potion at a time: if she drinks another before the effect of the previous one expires, the new effect supersedes the old one.
- A non-offensive power can only affect the drinker, and takes effect immediately. An offensive power (such as a potion that allows the drinker to breathe fire) is only good for one use, but can be held in reserve for up to 1 hour - if not used within that time, it is metabolized by the drinker's body. Alchemical poisons affect only the drinker.
- For beneficial effects, the arcane skill used to activate and determine the effect is the alchemist's Knowledge (Alchemy) skill or the drinker's Vigor, whichever is higher. For alchemical poisons, use the alchemist's Knowledge (Alchemy) skill.
- The power functions only at its most basic level. It does not use power points and cannot be augmented with power points.

The powers available for potions are as follows (effects that may be used in alchemical poisons are indicated with an asterisk): *armor*, *blind**, *bolt*, *boost/lower trait**, *burrow*, *burst*, *confusion**, *darksight*, *detect/conceal*, *arcana*, *disguise*, *dispel**, *drain power points**, *environmental protection*, *farsight*, *fear**, *fly*, *greater healing*, *growth/shrink**, *healing*, *intangibility*, *invisibility*, *mind*



reading, pummel, puppet, quickness, shape change, slow*, slumber*, speak language, speed, stun*, succor, wall walker, warrior's gift.*

A potion can also be used to give the drinker certain edges. The effect lasts **ten minutes x one-half the alchemist's skill die**. The edges available for potions are: Alertness, Ambidextrous, Attractive, Berserk, Brave, Brawler, Brawny, Charismatic, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Fleet-Footed, Frenzy, Hard to Kill, Level Headed, Nerves of Steel, Power Surge, Quick, Rapid Recharge, Strong Willed.

The cost to create a power potion is **10 gp per power point x power rank x one-half the alchemist's skill die**. The cost to create an edge potion is **(50 gp + 10 gp per die type requirement of the edge + 10 gp per other requirement of the edge) x edge rank x one-half the alchemist's skill die**. The alchemist can elect to create the potion at a lower die type in order to reduce the cost.

Cantrip Globes: Like potions, cantrip globes allow a magical effect to be created without casting a spell, but instead of being activated in the stomach, it is activated by exposure to air by breaking the glass globe. Using a cantrip globe acts much like using a power, with the following exceptions:

- The initial effect of the power is a cloud that affects all creatures that start their turns or enter a small burst template centered on the broken globe. The cloud expands to a medium burst template after one round (those initially affected are not affected again) and then dissipates.
- Powers that affect targets only affect those within the burst templates, regardless of the power's normal range.
- The effect's duration is determined from the round that the globe breaks, not the time it takes effect (so the effect ends the same round for all affected targets, regardless of whether they were affected on the first or second round).
- The arcane skill used for the power is the alchemist's Knowledge (Alchemy) skill.
- The power functions only at its most basic level. It does not use power points and cannot be augmented with power points.
- The powers available for cantrip globes are as follows: banish, barrier, beast friend, blast, blind, boost/lower trait, confusion, damage field, deflection, dispel, drain power points, entangle, environmental protection, fear, fly, growth/shrink, havoc, intangibility, invisibility, light/obscure, puppet, slow, slumber, speed, stun, summon ally (summoned on the second round, anywhere within the medium burst template), teleport, warrior's gift.

The cost to create a cantrip globe is **50 gp per power point x power rank x one-half the alchemist's skill die**. The alchemist can elect to create the globe at a lower die type in order to reduce the cost.

Spell Scrolls: Spell scrolls are only of use to wizards and can only be created by wizards (any character with a non-supernatural arcane background can create scrolls). They consist of the Pleroma formula for a given spell, scribed in alchemical inks that store magical energy. Any spell can be scribed to a scroll. When creating the scroll, the wizard infuses her own power points into the ink, so that when the spell is cast it uses the stored power points instead of the caster's own. Spell scrolls can use the augmented forms of spells by infusing more power points, but the effects cannot be modified at the time of casting. A wizard can use a spell scroll created by another wizard, but doing so requires a separate Smarts roll to decipher the particular formula (imposing the normal -2 multi-action penalty if the spell is cast the same round). Spells cast from scrolls still use the wizard's own arcane skill.

The cost to create a spell scroll is **25 gp per power point x power rank**.

BASIC ITEMS

Alchemy and arcane metallurgy are only capable of producing the most rudimentary of magical effects, but even these minor effects can be incredibly useful for day-to-day purposes. Weapons and tools that never blunt or break, that are easier to wield than mundane equivalents, that cast enough light to serve in place of a torch, or that resize themselves to fit any user may not seem that impressive compared with flaming swords, scrying balls, and flying galleons to someone reading a storybook, but to someone out in the world working with such tools, they are akin to the difference between using top-of-the-line technology versus something ten years out of date.

Mechanically, basic items grant edges to characters who lack them while the item is being wielded in its intended manner. For instance, a pair of magic goggles might grant the Alertness edge, a suit of magical armor could grant the Hard to Kill edge, a set of magical brass knuckles would give the Brawler edge, and so on. The user ignores all the edge's normal requirements while wielding the item, but the benefit applies only to the item's regular functions – if the item is dropped, or used in a manner significantly different than the one it was intended for, the magic confers no benefit (for instance, if you had a pair of enchanted daggers that granted the Two-Fisted edge, and then were disarmed of one of them, you would not continue to benefit from the edge if you picked up a different weapon in your other hand). Note that the magic only grants the edge, not any skill required to use it effectively or any other edges that it depends on.



asic items can only grant edges with a rank requirement of Novice or Seasoned, and can only provide a single benefit. The edges available for basic items are as follows:

Weapons: Ambidextrous, Assassin, Berserk, Block, Brave, Brawler (gauntlets/knuckle weapons only), Charismatic, Cleaver (melee weapons only)*, Command, Counterattack, Danger Sense, Dead Shot (ranged/thrown weapons only), First Strike, Florentine (paired weapons only), Frenzy, Marksman (ranged/thrown weapons only), Martial Artist (gauntlets/knuckle weapons only), Mighty Blow (melee weapons only), New Power (arcane background only), No Mercy, Power Points (arcane background only), Power Surge (arcane background only), Quick Draw, Rapid Recharge (arcane background only), Steady Hands (ranged only), Sweep (reach weapons only), Two-Fisted (paired weapons only).

Armor: Acrobat (Armor +1 only), Alertness (helmet only), Ambidextrous (shield only), Arcane Resistance, Attractive, Armored Sympathy (Armor +3 or more only)*, Berserk, Block, Brave, Brawler, Brawny (Armor +2 or more only), Carapace (shield only)*, Charismatic, Combat Reflexes, Command, Command Presence, Dodge (Armor +2 or less only), Extraction (Armor +3 or less only), Fast Healer, Fleet-Footed (Armor +2 or less only), Hard to Kill (Armor +2 or more only), Hold the Line!, Inspire, Level Headed (helmet only), Martial Artist (Armor +2 or less only), Nerves of Steel, New Power (shield, arcane background only), Power Points (shield, arcane background only), Quick (Armor +2 or less only), Rapid Recharge (shield, arcane background only), Strong Willed (helmet only).

Other: Acrobat (paired arm gear and footgear only), Alertness (headgear only), Ambidextrous (arm gear only), Arcane Resistance, Attractive, Brave, Brawler, Charismatic, Combat Reflexes, Command, Command Presence, Danger Sense, Dead Shot (headgear only), Dodge (footgear only), Elan (jewelry only), Extraction (footgear only), Fast Healer, Fleet-Footed (footgear only), Hard to Kill, Inspire, Investigator (headgear only), Jack-of-All-Trades (jewelry only), Level Headed (headgear or jewelry only), Linguist (jewelry only), Liquid Courage, Luck, Marksman (headgear only), Martial Artist, Mighty Blow (arm gear only), Nerves of Steel, New Power (totem or jewelry, arcane background only), Power Points (totem or jewelry, arcane background only), Power Surge (totem or jewelry, arcane background only), Quick, Rapid Recharge (totem or jewelry, arcane background only), Rich (jewelry only), Scholar (book only), Soul Drain (totem or jewelry, arcane background only), Strong Willed (headgear or jewelry only), Thief (arm gear only), Wizard (book, arcane background only), Woodsman (headgear only)

The crafter's Knowledge (Alchemy) skill die must be equal or greater to the highest die type requirement of the edge being imbued. The cost to create a basic magic item is (item's base cost + 10 gp per die type requirement of the edge + 10 gp per other requirement of the edge) x (edge rank + 1).

ADVANCED ITEMS

Wizards, or those with a Knowledge (Alchemy) skill of d12 can craft more advanced magical items, such as the ones described in the *Amethyst: Unleashed World Guide* or even ones the character defines herself. Advanced items can have virtually any properties the creator wants – granting multiple edges, or powers, or even unique effects not covered by the existing rules. The only limiting factor is the GM's discretion and the character's access to the materials involved. Making magic items requires not only the employ of skilled craftsmen or the attainment of tools required to craft the item, but also the acquisition of rare alloys and ingredients necessary to create the specific enchantment. An item not entirely made of coruthil or magnarros may still require trace amounts of it in order complete the item. Other rare earth metals like yttrium, iridium, and osmium may be required, forcing the party to search mines or seek out obscure shops. A forged item may even need to be quenched in heavy water, which is almost impossible to come by in quantity outside of a bastion. Players should be forced to quest as much for the materials for their magic items as the quests they need their magic items for.



It was hours after the caravan got moving again did a doctor see to Aiden's injury. As the healer pulled the broken layers of clothing away, they both realized how pathetic the wound was. The doctor didn't comment and went about with three stitches. Aiden didn't voice his concern if the needle or thread was sterile or if brandy was the best cleaning solution. The sutures were clumsy and the brandy hurt as much as the needle sewing his flesh. Aiden winced away the pain the best he could but a single tear still found itself rolling down his cheek. He lifted the cover of his spellbook. It was beautiful once, blind tooled with symbols from Chen that Aiden was still trying to decipher. The uneven and muddled pages were a requirement, filled with scratches and notes on the sidebars. Equations and shorthand filled every space. Sitting perfectly even and parallel were the symbols of Aiden's devotion, the words of Pleroma.

The leather cover was broken. The spine was cracked. A bushel of papers fell out as he placed the book on his lap. The spark flew out of a fallen page and whizzed around Aiden's head, around the room, before flying back to its written word on the scattered leaf. The blood had gotten through the hole and stained the first few pages. Aiden gathered the fallen notes and minor incantations and slipped them back into the

broken book. After he was left alone in the coach, Aiden glanced at the abandoned guitar and realized who one of the fallen passengers was.

"Shit..."

* * *

Captain Rothschild called Aiden to the reigns at mid afternoon on the next day. Aiden was still nursing a mild limp as he pushed through the drapes and stepped onto the front of the road train.

"Captain?" said Aiden.

"Yes, have a seat." The captain had a cushion. Leaf springs didn't soften every rock. The vantage was impressive. Three storeys up and Aiden could just see over the crest of trees. Looking down brought him square into the ass of a cow twice the size of an elephant.

"How's the wound?" The captain emphasized the last word.

Aiden stroked the bandage he could see through the hole in his pants. "It's nothing."

The captain shook his head. "Could have told me you couldn't do magic. My fault for not knowing better. Human casters were rare enough."

"I know the words, but—"

"Not in combat. If you want a light, make a fire. That's a useful skill. Carpentry, metalwork—hell—musician, there's some value in that. Do something productive. Wizard...same spells then are the same today. Nothing changes, never gets better. Can't build on a spell, son." Aiden nodded. He didn't wish to engage in an argument, not now, not here. Aiden had practiced the basic words for years. The pain had been distracting. The creature's scream had been unsettling. Those were good reasons but they were probably wrong. "So which house?"

"House?"

"A peasant-born would know a blade. You've got skin as pure as a fae's ass. You were raised in sanctuary. So which house? Antikari? Torquil? You don't look inbred."

"You need to slow down." The captain looked ahead to see the approaching dust plume, moving fast.

"Storm? Stampede, maybe?"

"I don't think so."

The captain stood up and shouted to the controller at the rear of the coach, "Full stop!"

The man at the back stood up and a chain of screams followed down the line, "Full stop!" The captain pulled on the huge brake and the coaches slowed with the animals. "You know what that is?" Rothschild asked. "If it's a chiggoth, we're all dead."

As it rose over the hill, Aiden recognized it. It was taller than all the trees around, with eight wheels that dwarfed even the caravan's beasts of burden. The goliath lumbered over the landscape with carbon-kevlar wrapped tires, scarring the earth with deep treads. The brute clumsily pushed and bullied its way through whatever stood in front. The scrambler Aiden had ridden in pranced gracefully in comparison. It was twice the height of the caravan and held twice the people. Its main body was lifted high over its axles, allowing it to drive over the forest rather than through it. Only leviathans like this ever made it this far from a bastion and even then, they were a rarity. It was flanked and escorted by a half dozen all-terrain

bikes with enclosed cockpits and chunky tires.

Aiden grimaced at the eyesore as it passed.

"My God, what a monster!" the Captain admired.

"Aptly said," Aiden replied. Monster was related to monstrosity, an abomination, something exaggerated, perverted, a sin against nature.

"Still beautiful in its own way. Nothing to fear with that. Not dragon or chiggoth. That's traveling in style."

"It's 2500 tons of iron and carbon driven by an energy that would vaporize this forest if it were released." Unlike the scrambler, this vehicle couldn't generate enough power from solar cells alone. Hidden deep inside, locked in an iron shell, was the energy of the sun.

"Still beats walking," the captain replied. Aiden turned to reenter the coach. "What would you call something like that?"

"Mark 13 Behemoth, via the Angel Strongyards " Aiden answered as he left the captain.

The captain turned and watched Aiden vanish into the vehicle. "Well, good luck out there, techan."

* * *

It was four days later when Aiden heard the shout.

"Custodians! What fortune!" Captain Rothschild shouted from outside. Aiden jumped from the bed and scratched frantically at the wood to slide open the shutter. The parade had passed into Limshau's borders during the night.

"The anathema flee further into the west," a sharp, clear, and charismatic voice answered, a master of the language, "chasing food and from that which feeds upon them." Aiden poked out his head to see. When that failed, he went for the door.

"Yeah, they were here, 'bout two dozen. Never seen them this far," the captain replied. Still with half his layers on, Aiden threw open the doors, missed the steps, and slammed into the dirt. He flinched from the pain still in his leg. It passed quickly as he saw them, as real as every wish wanted them to be.

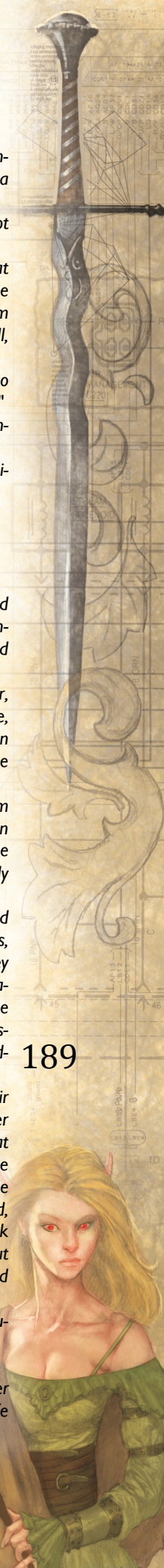
The damaskans noticed Aiden with their piercing almond eyes as he rounded the carriage. These two wore new clothes, pressed and clean—a common feature of the species. They abhorred getting dirty. The ears, their most distinguishing feature, tapered straight out a few inches from the sides of the skull to a sharp point. Both these guards were male. Supposedly, a female's ears were pointed higher and fluttered depending on her mood.

Their hair was dark and cut under shoulder length. Their skin was light tan. Aiden took note of their visible age, younger than himself. They wore the black kawabari and overcoat distinctive of the warrior scholars from the city of books. The kawbari Limshau armor was the uniform and signature of the custodian. Overlaying leather, both conditioned and boiled, covered nearly every inch of their bodies. The longcoat of thick split leather, ran down to the base of waist in the back, but flowed down past the knees in front. Their blades were locked and safe on their backs.

"Perhaps the speculation of a chiggoth in this region is accurate," the one custodian said.

"Either way, you here for escort?" Rothschild replied.

"No. You are three days from the city. You will find no other threats in your approach. We patrol to find the nest. We suspect it not far from your path. Have you suffered losses?"



"A few, yes."

Aiden just watched and admired the accuracy of those stories. They walked with such subtlety and lightness, they were hardly leaving impressions in the soil. Every arm movement was intended, no peculiar itches or nervous ticks, no idle hands. They stood straight and balanced without shuffling. Their very existence was a denial of common sense and if the gate above were to close, their deaths would come quick under the unforgivable wrath of logic.

"Unfortunate," the custodian said.

Other passengers had emerged from the convoy to get their glimpses. Some had seen the likes of them before. The women were smitten. The men were unsettled but unsure why.

"Should we worry over contraband?" the custodian added. Aiden noted they had no horses. They ran without a drop of water or sweat since the city and would continue to do so until nightfall.

"Never gave you reason to suspect before," the captain answered. "Still, you're in your place and welcome to check."

"We already are."

The third custodian wore white and was orbiting the opposite side of the caravan. Aiden turned back to notice and instantly became aware of his unbuttoned undershirt, his damaged pants, his unshaven face and morning hair.

She studied every passenger, scrutinized each vehicle, and did so with only a passing glance. She looked like a human girl barely at the sunset of her teens. Aiden couldn't find a single flaw on the modest amount of exposed skin. Gentle enough to be swept away by a stiff breeze, strong enough to push the breeze back. A sharp nose led to brilliant green eyes. Narrow in face but high in cheeks, her slender body floated towards him.

Aiden's jaw became unclenched. In a beat, he was fourteen again, ogling the sketches under the bedsheets. He became ashamed by his imperfections and hygiene. The light caught her flowing straight dark hair thrown back from a head turn. Strands pulled aside to expose the ears. Her smooth, light brown skin peeked from gaps in her armor. She was close and he appreciated the perfection. The coat had round buttons that continued up from the hips to the high collar, where it was topped by a firmly secured short belt. The collar continued half way up her long neck.

She passed him and stopped as they locked eyes. He wanted that to last forever. Everything everywhere led to this instant. It was beyond anything he had imagined or prepared. She broke the moment and looked down at his arm. When she reached for and grabbed it, the adrenaline could be measured in wattage. She pulled his sleeve and revealed the watch. "Romper?" she asked

"Pardon?" Aiden answered.

"Non functional." She shared the accent of the others, a strange sort similar to Minx's, but with an emphasis on perfect pronunciation.

"Yes."

She released him. "A wizard's book but bastion born. You have a tale."

"I do indeed." Aiden tried to form the best smile he could. His thoughts quickly migrated to remind him of the unbuttoned shirt and rumpled hair.

She tilted her head and a slight smirk to lift the spirits of the dead crept over her face. "Then the city will welcome you."

"Thank you," was all he could marshal as his brain rambled on with other distracting thoughts.

"Anything of concern, Raven" called out the lead custodian.

She answered him. "There is nothing tainted or corrupted. No advanced technology."

"Very good."

Aiden glanced at his watch. "Prohibited?" he asked.

"Not exactly," Raven answered as her smile faded. "Unprotected power cells are unsafe in environments such as these."

Aiden attempted to impress. "Actually, I know...I've...I've read."

"Then reminding you of it was avoidable," she answered directly and stepped away. Aiden furrowed his brow, unsure how to make of that.

The lead custodian resumed his conversation with the captain. "We will leave you to your journey," the custodian said. He called out, "let us continue, Raven."

Raven started for the other two. Aiden stepped up to follow her. "Raven, nice name."

She continued walking. "It is," she replied. Fae seldom sported curves. Detractors complained of their lack of definition, that females missed many of the voluptuous aspects of women, and males the tone and muscle of stout and sturdy men. All Aiden could think was how those critics never spotted a damaskan from behind strapped in kawabari leather.

The captain offered his hand to the lead. "Thank you again." When it wasn't accepted, the captain let it drop. The two custodians approached Raven.

Aiden watched her slip away. He didn't want to follow but he couldn't let it drop.

"My name's Aiden," he finally announced.

She looked back as she walked away. "I did not ask." He had read they had no concept of deception, that their outlook and behavior was foreign to those unaware. A year visibly older or younger could mean a century. A century of traumas and delights can change a person. His hand under no conscious control finally took the initiative and flattened his hair and buttoned his shirt. The elves vanished into the woods, her white leather the last to fade. The passengers and guards boarded the caravan. Aiden kept his eyes on the fluttering leaves.

The captain walked back around. "Hoping for an impression?" he asked, finally jostling Aiden out of his delirium.

"I don't know. I guess...yes."

"Next time don't ask a question you know the answer to." Aiden broke his stare to finally look at him. "Don't fret, you'll see more where that one came from." He patted the disillusioned wizard on the shoulder.

"Yeah, but..." Aiden had ceased being an adult some time ago.

...no higher than a princess, an exotic, a target that could never be struck...

"You'll remember this meeting, but it's not memorable. Sorry to say." The captain climbed on top of the lead coach. Aiden brought his eyes back to the forest. He wasn't sure what the captain meant. "Hey! Wanna walk the rest of the way?" was the final snap Aiden needed to recover his adulthood. He walked up the steps, back into the coach. "God have mercy on you in Limshau."

* * *

Thousands moved without a shove in the streets. No one needed to control the crowds, though wagons and horses often found it difficult to press through faster than a crawl. The buildings blended together. As Aiden wandered deeper, the city grew taller.

He navigated through the narrow cobblestone streets. He pushed against the chalk walls as beasts and wagons plowed by. Various silks were danced in front of him to entice a sale. Another peddler promised increased lovemaking in a pouch filled with powdered dragon testicles. A pair of custodians chatted with a merchant. An orange-haired child-like gimfen stood atop his cart, selling various silks gathered from his villages in the north.

Gimfen came from those playful tales about helpful spirits that would lend a hand in need or work without compensation making toys in the bitter cold inside some fat man's sweatshop. The gimfen was barely four feet with the thin body and eyes of a child.

A few legal tall-eared scarlet women promoted their pleasure from a second level window. They were damaskans. Aiden made himself stop. The fae smiled and flaunted their thin subtle curves to passing eyes that viewed them. They did what they wished and needed few laws to keep them ethical. Aiden forced his eyes back on the road as the temptation was increasing as he stared.

More books rested on the shelves of Limshau libraries than anywhere else on Earth. The namesake capital was the largest of all of them. Escapees from the bastions often smuggled forbidden manuals from their home to barter into Limshau to get a head start on a new life.

Twinkling chips of granite fell across his face as a heavy cart rolled over a stone bridge above. Limshau was as a stacked city, with a lattice of stone and wooden paths above the main roads. Aiden took the lure and diverted to one of the wooden overpasses to get a look across the ocean of stone, wood, and flesh. The market ran for miles with a hundred thousand humans and fae going about their lives.

There was nothing out there, Martin had said. Aiden leaned his weight on the railing and admired the labyrinth. It reminded him of Genai—a network of mathematical imperfection. The outer walls might have been faultless but city was a delightful mess. Obstructing statues standing in intersections. Living trees peeling apart stonework to gain their roots.

Aiden heard two long high-pitched notes boom over the market. It brought up his eyes along with all those of the street. Considering the volume, Aiden had expected a colossal horn atop a citadel, coiling around the tower to a tiny mouthpiece connected to an embouchure of a broad-lunged dwarf. The notes repeated, calling out for attention from the entire city. Aiden's eyes focused on an immense silhouette climbing over the shrouded sunrise. It bathed Aiden and the market in shadow. He recognized the colossal outline of an airship, the Abecedarian—an illustration Aiden had previously seen in a book. It was real to.

The golden coat of the 1200-foot long vessel floated past the outer wall. Only a small cabin hung underneath the smooth untarnished skin with most of the crew and passengers resting comfortably inside the superstructure. Aiden took a moment to drink in the sight. Such a vessel sat on the border of disrup-

tion, relying on unbroken physics to keep itself aloft. It was a thermal, lifted by heated air. The behemoth hadn't touched more than a single wheel on the ground in 115 years. Propellers bigger than men spun as the vessel slowed towards the mooring tower. The sun appeared again behind it, turning the dirigible black. It wasn't a forty foot French horn, but it would suffice.

* * *

The appraiser had a desk plate announcing him as Roland Gauss. Gauss rolled his fingers over the spine of the book. He opened the cover and checked for bends, ensuring the bleed was undamaged as it folded over the front. Aiden's book was without rips, and the leaf had significant strength. Gauss was impressed. The room resembled Chen's biblio but with more collections and total works over singular novels.

"The Glory of Her Sacred Majesty Queen Anne in the Royal Navy and Her Absolute Sovereignty as Empress of the Sea, Asserted and Vindicated by Joseph Gander, amazing," the appraiser complimented. "Printed in 1703 and only once, a treatise for an age no one remembers. You weren't brandishing this book openly, were you?"

"No," Aiden lied, and Gauss could tell.

"Good thing no one out there appreciates real treasure," Gauss answered as he examined the book. "Gold is such a distraction. How many riches wait ignored by the rabble? Chen must have faith in you to offer this as a trade."

Aiden still hadn't checked in. His pack sat across his lap, covering the hole in his pants. "You know him?" Aiden asked.

Gauss was pleasantly plump with three inches of growth across his face and a mop of chestnut hair. His teeth were straight and gleamed white across his dark beard.

"Every custodian worth his sword, every librarian worth his books knows him," Gauss said. "His life is priced more than the tomes in his collection." Gauss danced his articulate fingers across the embossed cover. "He's invested greatly in you, my friend. You looking for passes or currency?"

"I think both."

Gauss rolled his chair across to a nearby shelf and retrieved a ledger. "Well, passes translate to more for you. Compensation will be higher. Wizardry?"

"Uh...yes." Aiden was almost apprehensive to answer.

"What I love to hear," was his legitimate jovial response. "Human mages are rare in this world. A perchance for wonders and whimsy." Gauss loved words and enjoyed their expression. "You flipped?"

"Not yet."

"Well, it's not easy. I know too well." He opened his book and began logging in the details of the transaction. "Could never manage more than a card trick myself." After filling out some initial documents, he opened a drawer and revealed a piece of hard cardstock barely bigger than a pocket photograph. "This is an access pass. Hold that." He offered it to Aiden and he accepted. Aiden's signature, which he hadn't given, and his likeness, which he hadn't offered, etched upon the surface. "Pretty clever?"

Aiden flipped it around in his hand. "Actually it is."

"Can't even be stolen now. Hand it over." Aiden did so. Gauss dropped it in his drawer and closed it. "Check your pocket." Aiden followed and reached in, felt the card, and



removed it. Aiden smiled at the real magic. Gauss opened hands and leaned back in his chair. "Your approbations are drippings from a Christmas turkey. I do have a hand with card tricks."

"You a wizard?"

"No," Gauss laughed. "Parents forbid it. Dad recommended I pick up a serious profession like silversmith. In the end, he settled for alchemy. Not all magic comes from the spoken word. There are those naturally blessed and those that mix materials fallen from heaven." Aiden disputed the use of heaven as science had its own theories. He didn't voice those thoughts. "Don't get jealous. Pleroma is still the standard. You figure that out, kingdoms will open their legs for you."

"No pressure though."

"If it was easy, everyone would do it, and a genocide by fools would follow."

"I thought all genocides were by the hand of fools."

"Point. Unfortunately, to master Pleroma requires intelligence, not wisdom."

"If everyone could wave a wand, there'd be anarchy," Aiden quoted his memory.

"Exactly. Thankfully for every hundred students following the arcane, usually only one emerges a wizard. If you're interested in classes, start with Dr. Paraerra. He doesn't teach spellcraft but many say you can't walk the path without him." Gauss pointed at the card in Aiden's hand. "Regardless, that will get you into any branch. With Chen's recommendation, you have the red banner. Flash it to borrow private editions from homes if you require. Trust and respect is assumed."

"Thank you."

"You were expecting...exploitation?" Guess leaned forward as he toyed.

"The trip here...was—"

"Anyone claiming a journey is half the fun lost faith in the destination." Gauss pulled out a stack of papers and signed the bottom of each. He then offered them. "Six months paid room and board. Private accommodations, you have a guest?"

"No," Aiden answered, though trailing off at the end.

"Planning on one?"

"I don't think so."

Gauss tendered the currency next. "And carmot, only currency we deal in. Four hundred remains after lodgings. Keep it in ration." He filled out a receipt. "Even a white city has shadows." Aiden looked at the paper in Gauss's hand. "We have banks," Gauss added.

"Oh—" Aiden accepted it receipt.

"Didn't think I'd hand you a stack of gold and silver in a leather pouch, did you?"

Aiden laughed it off, "Sorry, of course." He looked at the receipt as his signature and face drew themselves onto its surface. He looked back to Gauss as the realization washed over him. "You said you knew alchemy?"

"A hankering is all I'll admit."

Aiden opened his pack and pulled out the stone he found in the crash. It still glowed with its own fire, uncaring for having been ignored. "What do you imagine this is?" He offered it without worry.

Gauss looked at it over indifferent. "A glowing rock."

"Thank you," Aiden answered blankly.

"It could be sapping your life force as we speak or gifting you with foresight. Suffer from either?"

Aiden smirked. "I believe the melancholy is purely self-induced."

Gauss handed it back. "I like the clasp. Someone thought it was important. There's a religion based around purple stones. Something about a dragon god, I think. Older faith, pre-gate. Never seen one glow. Could be naturally imbued. You ever get drunk?"

"No—"

"In human mythology, amethyst would stave off drunkenness. Many of those stories had some measure of truth."

"That they did."

"I'll take it off your hands if you need extra coin. Limshaw has an artifact library. I can tender a price when I know more."

Aiden casually slipped it back in his case. "I'll hold onto it for now." Aiden wasn't sure why. He trusted Gauss but preferred caution.

"Well, it's been nice having you," said Gauss. Aiden held out his hand and Gauss accepted. The appraiser turned over Aiden's hand to see the watch. "That can't be working."

"It's not."

"Well here time can stop if asked to. It's all in the wording." Gauss released Aiden's hand.

"Thank you, Mr. Gauss. It's been enlightening."

Gauss exclaimed as Aiden left, "It's Roland, and may the milk of mermaids quench your thirst."

* * *

Aiden stared at the toilet. It was wood and stone, but it had a seat. The chain flushed water from the large cistern above. It was primitive, using gravity fed water from towers about the city, but it was heaven compared to the past two months. The seat was hard. The stone was cold. He didn't care and neither did his bowels. The bed was cushioned with a down pillow. The white walls were more than a design aesthetic. A cool breeze flowed to every crack and corner. Aiden found a second floor room with a view of a market street. The circular stone window held no glass, only a wooden shutter to block out the noises if needed. It was never too loud and the overlapping voices in various languages reminded Aiden of traffic clatter in Angel. A pull of a similar chain ran a pump bringing clean water. The toilet and the sink was knowledge brought over by bastion-man, what the fae could never manage on their own. It wasn't stupidity but a lack of the obsessive drive to better one's life that only came from evolution. Fae found a simple solution and never attempted progress. The disruption of their very being on even the most basic mechanisms did the rest. Before men and their printing press, the fae stuck mostly with scrolls. Books for them were a luxury reserved for special editions as each had to be stitched by hand.

The sun hadn't set before Aiden shut his eyes. He slept for twelve hours. He woke without an ache and thoroughly cleaned himself in the communal showers on the lower level. Aiden felt scrawny and bare amongst the hairy, barrel-chested human men in the other stalls. The water was freezing as was everything else that morning. The city was still a slave to weather. He had a brazier and a few sconces in his room but they would do little against the cold when winter hit, mild that they were at this latitude.

There was no way to keep food cold so it was to the market

for produce every morning. Aiden raced for an empty seat, fought through his deficient proficiency of the sinitic tongue the server's used, and ordered a plate of what looked like raw sewage. He tasted garlic. He didn't recall seeing garlic. Aiden felt something crunchy and hoped it was intended. He left his remaining Angel grain bars for emergencies. He knew he had to acquire a stout stomach if he had any chance to acclimatize to echa. The caravan had helped but that was mostly bread.

By afternoon, he found the arcana wing, three blocks of libraries, stores, and schools. Aiden slammed his tattered tome of incantations and power words in front of a storekeep that specialized in totems. It jostled the spark out of the book, which quickly went back into hiding. Aiden was awaiting some castigation from the owner but only heard, "I've seen worse," as the clerk took the book and went about finding the rare components required to repair it. Later, Aiden wondered if the keeper had seen worse from many of his patrons, or just the humans, few that they were.

Before lunch, Aiden signed up for a philosophy lecture. The teacher was not some old man with worn and weary eyes pinching his nose when his heavy glasses strained his head. He was barely into his forties with dark skin with toned muscle. There were thirty other students of various ethnicities, ages, and races sitting with backs straight upon mats placed erratically about the room. Aiden had entered late and noticed the desks pushed to the walls.

"I'm Doctor Philippe Paraerra and if you have any hope of understanding this world, you have to begin with your awareness. Of how you perceive it. This class does not deal with specifics. It deals with color." Aiden furrowed his brow at the statement. Others followed. "Got you all looking crooked, didn't I?" A few laughed. "I'm serious. Color is a name we give our perception of the basics of what we see. Something is blue. Something is yellow. Something is black and something is white. In this world, what we see is interpreted by our brains. What we perceive we take instantly as reality. What we are taught we accept...as gospel, even to the extent of altering our perception of the world around it. Yellow and blue do not make green and the true color blue isn't even something our brains can handle. If you have any hopes of understanding this world, you have to accept that there are no absolutes."

"Anything is possible—" Aiden found himself whispering.

"Damned straight," Paraerra exclaimed with a clap.

It jolted Aiden as eyes focused on him. "Sorry," he said.

"Don't be. Anything IS possible. God has been replaced by the will of the very people he created. This is his parting gift, the keys to the kingdom. It's not a test. There's no virtuous morality at play, no good versus evil. For the first time, the world is malleable. Why do you think they send all wizards to me first before they put any spells in your head. You're a dreamer."

"Is that a problem?"

"No, but you're sitting near me for your stay in my class."

Aiden held up his hands in protest. "No, no, that's quite all right." Paraerra raised his hands as if preaching to god, and then firmly pointed to an open area next to him. Aiden sighed and shuffled to the position.

"Let me start with a rhetorical question. If there was no intelligent life in the universe, does the universe have meaning? We all know the adage about the tree falling in the forest. I

move beyond that by saying that if no one hears the falling tree, even though it makes a sound, the act of the fall and the sound it generates is utterly worthless. Intelligence is the universe's way of acknowledging its own existence, and a cosmos with no eyes to see it, ears to hear it, or brains to understand it...has no value. So if intelligent life is the ultimate goal of the cosmos, is there room or even a need for a greater intelligence? If there was a divine creator—a greater thought—behind everything, then that could devalue our own importance. This would lead me to say that there's meaning to the universe, but not a purpose. It may have a function, but not necessarily significance. That would transfer the responsibility onto us. We are not obligated to find purpose in our lives, but it may be something only we can seek ourselves, as no guiding light will show us the path.

"We now have the capacity to alter the universe, actually change how it functions. Only a cosmos aware of itself could control how it acts and if we're the gestalt of this consciousness, then God is only the sum of all the minds in the universe and had no capacity to think until we thought of it." Paraerra smiled. "...and I'm only four minutes into my first class."

The students laughed and Paraerra continued, "If you follow this logic any further, then the removal of god and science simultaneously allows us absolute freedom to pursue personal meaning without any obligation to the universe, which, as I said, may not have a purpose at all."

"So there would no predetermined path for anyone, by science or by God, real or not?" Aiden asked.

"There may still be a set path but one you may be only partially in control of. Think of it as...cosmic socialism."

"That sounds somewhat absurd."

"My thoughts exactly...but that's a conversation for another day."

* * *

As evening fell, Aiden sat at the edge of the window. The moon and Attricana were bright but a few well placed candles were still required for Aiden's reading. He didn't feel the need to flaunt the spark. He glanced at his open pack and the azure glow inside. Aiden walked over and pulled out the amethyst. He returned to the window and his book, placing the jewel on the open face. He could see the storms swirling away inside. He resumed his reading.

She was a fae. That much Aiden could easily tell. She was taking in the breeze from her larger window across the street. Second floor, the same as him. His height but half the weight, with a frame of a normal person that had been stretched. She leaned from her window to let her blonde hair dry naturally in the wind. Her neck was long and thin, uncovered by a flowing layer of silk which danced about the air. She wore nothing underneath the simple gown but nature's current refused to reveal anything by whisking away the cloth. It would only permit Aiden a glimpse of her slender legs below the knee and everything above the shoulders. As her hair dried and lifted in the air, the strands parted to reveal her ears.

Aiden didn't notice the amethyst sliding off his book until it clanged on the floor. He bolted from view of the window to snatch it back up. When he returned to his admiration, he noticed the human male entering the room behind her. He wore well pressed blues and purples, satin and linen with ac-



cents of leather. He removed his coat as she turned. She slowly embraced him. He paid generously. She placed him on the bed and walked to the window. Her's had two shutters. As she closed one, she looked across the street and met Aiden's eyes. He flinched but continued his stare. She smiled and rolled her fingers in a wave and closed the final shutter.

Aiden sat himself back on the window edge and dropped the rock back on this book. It slid down to his hand, brushing across his wrist. He stared at the storm caught within it. Tick.

Aiden wondered if he had been so lucky to find some unique item, a mcguffin to start him on a great quest. If this was, would he take it, accept such responsibility? If it was worthy for midgets and melancholy mages, why not? But in fiction, the storyteller ensures the survivability of his characters and Aiden had no such guardian watching over him.

Tick.

Aiden didn't spot it initially. His mind was lost not on the stone but on the lingering image of the prostitute in the window. Tick. Right next to the amethyst, the gem commanded all attention. Tick. When the second hand moved again, Aiden spotted his watch. Tick, the second had moved.

Tick, again. Aiden tilted his head rather than risk shifting the watch as it rolled over to 10:04 am. He saw the hand mark off another second. Aiden mouthed a curse as he palmed the Amethyst and moved it away from his watch. The second hand stopped abruptly before 10:05. He brought the stone back alongside the mechanism. Time resumed, closing to the end of the minute.

"How is that possible?"

* * *

It was a wing dedicated to concepts of Pleroma—the language of dragons and the basis of all arcane wizardry. It didn't have any books on specific spells, but on the various attempts to understand the bizarre tongue and its capacity to alter the physical world when spoken by one learned in the word's meaning. It was taken up by the fae in the time of Terros—the age before man when magic held dominion. Fae needed to create totems to affix their words. They had to hold that item when the word was uttered, a condition no one was able to explain. The dragons went around this by burning the words onto their skin. It was a power few others had been able to replicate. The book was a recent and popular choice.

By mid afternoon, Aiden was the only one reading, accompanied by a librarian with eyes fixed on filing cards and a custodian that circled the halls every hour. Aiden enjoyed an apple for lunch. As he removed a second from his pack, he noticed the amethyst. He pulled it out again and stared into the oscillating and churning storms. There was a pattern to them. The shades of violet and lavender would flow one way and then shift the next. It was intentional. Aiden closed his book, packed up, and left. If it was a mcguffin, he might as well find out now.

It was the end of his first week and Aiden wasn't getting lost as often as he used to. He still hadn't made any friends. The fae embodied some artistic idea of what beauty looked like—what God intended in his design but was always depressed in the result. The males commanded authority with chiseled features; the females were sculpted to draw the eyes of all those

around.

And they ignored him.

The men would only respond if addressed. The females wouldn't look his way. Aiden would occasionally nod to a few as he walked by in some aged sense of courtesy. They never smiled, never greeted him. Aiden had read fae and humans mixed here with half-breeds walking amongst the purebloods. What was odd about fae genetics was their refusal to abide by the laws of the human genome. Blond hair would surpass black, blue eyes over brown. The fae parent filtered out genetic defects or inherited disease. Aiden began to understand the unspoken tolerance between the humans and fae. They respected each other's distance. When they mixed, they did so infrequently.

In the religious wing, Aiden located the book based on the advice given to him from Gauss. The amethyst stone was the symbol of a religious order, the oldest faith on the planet. It connected itself to a god, a dragon of violent and lavender scales with eyes to match. Beautiful and majestic, it had wings to span across a city. All it needed to do was call something's name and it became real. It was the first dragon.

After the dragons came the fae—elves, fairies, pixies and boggles. They rose from the water, walked from the trees, and fell from the sky. Monsters would emerge and be defeated over an afternoon. It was the only reality they knew off with no frame of science to tell them different. Other religions sprang up after claiming higher authorities but Amethyst was the only one whose worship and faith was not required. It lived and breathed with or without its subjects.

But the stones the followers of Amethyst used never glowed. They were smaller with no ornate clasps around them. Even if they did shine, no magical rock glowed like this, not in any books Aiden had read. It was if a vast space occupied the gem, perhaps holding a secret energy Aiden hadn't understood. If this was connected to the Amethyst god, he would have to read more on echan history. That would take a while.

* * *

The Koana district was a geographically bound organization of schools catering to prospective mages. The curriculum involved long hours in study with little practical application. Introductory courses took six years and most students, even fae, never became spellcasters. Unlike other schools, which tried to apply a theological approach to magic, supporting a "gut intuition" and encouraging natural talent, Koana maintained that true masters only came from research and exercise. Aiden had considered joining but each time he held the application, he realized the courses only bequeathed the keys to longer, more rewarding classes taking another six years. Chen had already taught him the basics. It was a waste of twelve years for him to emerge only older and seasoned. Aiden wanted the pay-off now. He had access to the books but needed to determine for himself the proper arrangement for reading.

He remembered the fight with the pugg. Would his mind blank? Would he freeze when most needed? He may never need to take such a risk. He may spend the rest of his days behind these white walls. As he stared into the perfectly clear unobstructed night atop the apartment building, he realized it wasn't such a dreadful prospect. He would need a job, something that reflected his talent, something he'd want to do,

something not forced by society, with as little responsibility as possible. Maybe he'd be a writer, compose a tell-all introduction to wizardry to help humans adopt the talent.

* * *

Aiden had to tolerate how cold the mornings got. He had to forget about the dozens of red dots over his skin from the multitude of bug bites. He had to forget about the lack of hygiene at the restaurants he would frequent. The poor quality of the teeth of the people he would pass. He almost burned his spellbook with a candle one evening. He missed wireless communication. Everything he learned came from books decades or centuries old. A newsreader shouted out worthy daily events from atop a box a block down. It hardly measured to a five-minute surf on a computer in Angel, and even then it was limited to Limshau.

It had been three months. His savings wouldn't last another three. He could return to Angel. Would he take over Chen's biblio, a village forever enclosed by a cage of technology? Would he eventually snap and run back to his refrigerator and computer? What a waste of these years if he did that.

He was so sure of the choice when he made it. He would leave to be a great wizard, bringing down the pillars as the caravan guard had said. The scar itched again. He avoided the thought that a vacation was the better option. Ride the ETV free of disruption to Salvabrooke. Enjoy the hospitality of playful gimfen. Return with stories and souvenirs to share with others.

On a Saturday evening in late August, Aiden was struck by an illness he hadn't encountered before. There was no lab-tested medicine proven in test trials to ease his nausea. He began to sweat and shiver in his bed. He drifted through levels of consciousness, blurring his dreams with waking delusions. He lost the strength to move. There was no phone to call and no one checked up on him. Aiden believed it was from food—that unsightly looking falafel he should have skipped. The chicken didn't look properly stored. After that came back up, he fainted upon his bead. When memories of his mother came to him, her ghostly form passing through the walls of his apartment, Aiden couldn't help but cry.

* * *

On breaks from his studies, Aiden would divert to the artifact wing hoping a breakthrough would identify the lingering rock in his pack. He had been tempted to get it appraised. Something this rare could net him enough capital to hold off adulthood for another year. He knew this stone was important, that someone, somewhere, sought after it. Perhaps it was an heirloom for a kingdom Aiden would need to travel to. He would hand it over and in reward, ask for the hand of the princess. It always came back to that.

By now, he'd used up his leads in the artifact wing and moved into the colossal catalogue of known magic items in the world. Limshau didn't keep many of them, only records of what's, where's, and why's. The branch was two stories and five blocks. After a week, he dropped most of his arcane studies and dedicated himself on this growing obsession. No entries came close and it was alarming him, as if its absence was intentional.

"Ander Boek..."

"Are you speaking to me?" Aiden asked. His head rose from the pages. He looked across to the Limshau custodian orbiting the wing. Aiden grew accustomed to their patrols. He hardly gave them notice anymore.

"What?" replied the soft, passive voice. Aiden locked eyes with the speaker. She wore the white Limshau kawabari but hardly looked old enough to have earned the leather. It had been four months but Aiden recognized her instantly from the caravan inspection.

"What?" Aiden asked.

She raised her arm to apologize. "My apology," she said, "Continue reading." Her voice barely carried over the flapping pages from other tables. It was late. Paper screens supported by thin sticks of bamboo covered gas fed torches, diffusing their light.

"You're Raven?" he asked, unfortunately.

"You know this."

Aiden held up a finger. "Yes. That wasn't a question. That was me remembering. You addressed me."

"I apologize for interrupting sir. Continue your—"

"There's no need to apologize. Eight hours reading anything...I could have sworn I heard you say something." Aiden closed the book on his finger.

"No more than mumbles best kept quiet. I never meant them for your ears, sir. I repeat my apology."

Aiden smiled and leaned back. "Now, you have to tell me. Curiosity will haunt me to distraction." Aiden was not going to let this moment pass without a fight.

"It truly was of no importance," she said but didn't depart. Aiden didn't flinch as he smiled back. She shook her head. "I said." She paused. "Another one."

"Another what?"

"Told you it was of no importance."

"Now you must explain it"

"Must I?"

"You have somewhere to be? Indulge me."

She leaned forward and rested her knuckles on the back of the chair in front. She appeared to gather strength to reveal some deep personal demon but only said, "Book." Aiden raised his eyebrows and waited for her to clarify. He nudged a chin forward to encourage. "Another book."

Aiden glanced down and fluffed out his bottom lip. "It's a library—"

"I know—"

"Comes with books. Part of the appeal." Aiden tried to not sound arrogant. He balanced that fine line between conceit and charisma.

"I was making an observation at the assemblage of books you have been reading in the past few weeks—"

"Weeks?" Aiden was slightly elevated. Her eyes dropped slightly.

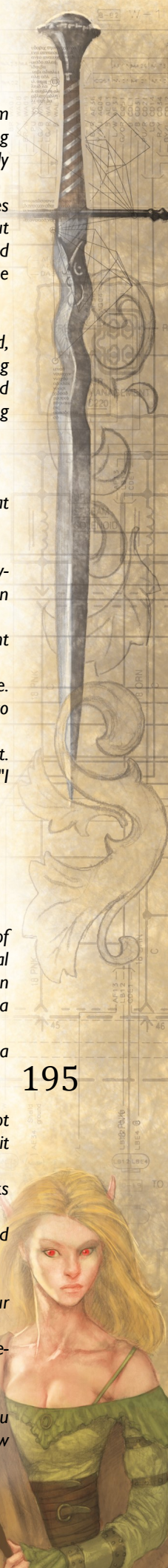
"And as I mentioned. I did not intend intrusion."

"Please." Aiden raised his hand. "Sorry—wait. Finish your thought."

"The books selected appear not random. You seek something specific."

"True."

"I imagine you are seeking the arcane arts. However, you avoided books explaining the Pleroma, meaning you know them already."



"Also true."

"You took out Expedition to North Tower. After, the Ars Pravus—"

Aiden raised a finger. "Don't look too much into—"

"Though you do not seem the type to want to remove my organs to extend your own life. You took out The Seven Paths of Wisdom, before that the Myre Codex, two very different tomes dealing with artifacts, both magical and otherwise. Now you keep a stack of Ravenar III's crusade accounts and a copy of the Athenaeum Manifest, both of which I have read."

"Wow." Aiden leaned forward, the charm replaced by curiosity. The charisma well dried up. "I got nothing."

"We are trained to notice such things." She pushed herself from the chair. "Have a good evening?"

"Sure you can't stay? I'd appreciate your opinion on something...related to all this."

"I am afraid not, sir." She turned and left.

Aiden leaned and bent and strained to catch her lines rounding the far corner of the aisle. They were as perfect as the day he first saw her. She had noticed him. She had remembered him. He settled back down. His mind was filled with possibilities. It was what occurred when one must visualize instead of realize. He had wished the perennial stomach knot wouldn't occur every time such an opportunity waved by unfulfilled. Rejection still stung regardless if the refuser was human or not.

Aiden saw what life did to humans after a handful of years. Would fae mindsets be so alien with decades and centuries of experience to change their outlook? Human recollection was fleeting—their brains only able to hang onto the fragments of memory. Fae ignored the menial, the minutia, and preserved anything consequential. Every loss of love, every stolen kiss, lingered for the length of their nearly endless lives. It was not hard to understand why they would keep humans at a distance. All the stories of romance, those could be the only ones. It wouldn't matter now. Aiden's discipline flopped as his mind wandered. For weeks, he'd put such thoughts out of his head.

"I will admit curiosity. Nothing more," she said, approaching from behind. He turned sharply to her. Not even the floorboards shifted or groaned to herald her advance.

She pulled the opposite chair from the table. Her movement flowed like water, nothing sudden, no jerking muscles. Nothing fell out of place. She flipped over the backrest and perched her feet atop the cushion like a predatory bird. Even her weapon, dangling from her side, came to rest without a tap. With her hollow-bones, she must have weighed less than fifty pounds. The chair didn't jostle an inch. She grabbed two pencils from a nearby container, hung out both at arm's length, and brought the ends to almost touch. Perfectly steady, the lead tips hovered point-to-point. Aiden looked amazed. Confused. He recovered and reached into his leather bag. He removed a black silk wrapping he had been keeping the stone in. He unfurled it. She looked into his hand.

"It is just a—" she started.

"No. It's not."

Raven was surprised at the relative inexpensive dark lavender, almost violet, gem resting in the clasp of four pearl-colored dragon's claws that clamped around the outer edge. The reptilian fingers were slightly embossed with letters of a foreign tongue that only glinted visible with the reflecting light.

She looked closer and noticed the movement. Glints of light jolted through the imperfections in the jewel, like currents of

electricity arcing from one side of the gem to the other. It reflected no light from the torches but did mirror her face perfectly.

"What is that?" she finally asked.

Aiden finally shifted focus from the fae he had captivated to the gem he rested on the table. He looked into it and received the azure glow upon his face. "I wish I knew."

* * *

It didn't matter how tired he was. There was vigor in her smile that empowered him to remain awake. She was sitting properly now, laughing at his anecdote.

"I have heard of the power of the spell book but perhaps not so...literally," she responded. They hadn't left that spot for hours. She was sitting across the table, the amethyst between them. The sun was due to rise soon.

"It was my first goblin. Revenge for all those sleepless nights when it prowled under my bed." He tried to laugh but the pain of the experience was still there. He related the tale as jovially as possible but that couldn't soften his anxiety of the event.

Raven shook her head. "Human fairy tales are so unusual."

"How so, the fact we have stories that detail your existence without any connection between our worlds?"

"More that your stories always end up with some strange motivation on the part of the fairy. They are making shoes. They are spinning yarn into gold. Trading in human children. I have read these stories. I share my ancestor's confusion upon returning to the world...to discover the fictions told about them by your ancestors despite never encountering them."

"Fairy tales aside, we got a lot right."

"I suppose," her eyes diverted to the window as a cusp of glow appeared over the outer wall, "but it makes one wonder if our existence only came about from your imagination. Perhaps our history is only a fabrication we embrace to justify our lives."

"Wouldn't it be an insult to know you've been living a false life?"

Raven glanced at the thousand tomes lining the one wall beside her. "We live too long to remember every moment. Mine already has gaps. For my elders, their losses are measured in eons. Who is to say those are not the unintended mistakes of a lethargic writer?"

Aiden firmed his lips, not wishing to be argumentative. "I prefer to subscribe to echological influence—"

"How our history inspired your fiction through an immeasurable, ethereal thread. A term your people invented with little evidence to reinforce it—"

"If that were true." Aiden paused, realizing his escalation. He softened his reply as she turned to him. "If that were true, then it only leaves two explanations. It's all a coincidence... or it's all a lie... and I don't much like either one."

Raven nodded. "Your people prefer the latter."

"You mean techans or humanity?"

"The former. Of all humans, we know little of those still embracing their machines. What I would not give to see inside one of those cities. It would truly be a noteworthy event for a custodian."

"They would probably shoot you if you tried."

"You speak so negatively. Your city is safe. It prospers despite what surrounds it. Would you not prefer it with your

people?"

"My people long for a time when the only things that frightened them were themselves and Bronze Age myths. I weighed the options and chose the one with dragons." She offered an angelic smile. Aiden attempted to change topics, "Did you find their mother?"

"No, the puggs are still at large. We could not locate their mother."

Aiden could tell she wasn't happy about that fact. He didn't know if it was something he should push about. He tried another approach. "I thought custodians always wore black when they leave the city. At least, that's what I read."

"It was my first outing."

"Really...ever outside Limshau?" Aiden leaned in.

"Yes. It was a test."

A year or two could mean decades for a damaskan. She was barely into her adulthood in fae years. They don't place the stigma or attraction on ages like humans but he was still not about to ask her age. His guess was under a hundred. She was the same as him, a desire to leave her world, to encounter what was only read about. He tried to stop himself from smiling. "That's..." He wanted to say amazing or wonderful or delightful but didn't want to share with her their common ground, at least not yet. "Did you pass?"

"It is not about passing. It is about finding a cause. Custodians do not leave their city unless there is reason."

"Are you...looking for one?" Aiden teased.

She obviously knew where he was going. "Actually, I am."

He nudged to the rock. "I don't suppose this counts?"

She gave it a glance. "Assuming the answer does not lie here. You believe this to have that much significance?"

He wanted to tell her about his watch but something prevented him. "All evidence points to it having some."

"And have you used up all the resources in this city? There are a hundred million books, manuscripts, and scrolls on shelves in this city."

"I have it down to the artifact wing." Aiden picked the rock and began to wrap it in a black-stained silk. "It's not some random magical rock to light rooms with." Despite him doing it for the past four hours.

"Religious?"

"Maybe, but I don't think so," Aiden replied, though still not sure. He hadn't fully eliminated the prospect. "I know the dragon Amethyst--"

"That was not his real name."

"I can't pronounce his real name and there's that one quote where he says everyone is wrong so everyone is right, so...regardless, they use tiny amethyst crystals shaped into marbles which are hung around a neck."

Raven reached for his hand to grab a tuft of the silk cover. A finger brushed over one of his, sending shivers up his arm, through his back, and into regions that prevented rational thought. She opened his hand to point at the stone. "It appears to have loops."

Aiden's mouth cracked as his mind still hung on the touch. "It's..." he tried to focus, "kinda large for any human or elf to keep around their neck."

She released his hand. "Perhaps a dragon wears

it," she replied. "It is a dragon god."

He folded it back up. "I never thought of that."

"I never asked how you found it."

Aiden opened his pack and returned the amethyst. "Before the caravan." He met her eyes, which was hard for him to do. "Where we met, I was lost between Angel and Antikari. I found it in a wreck."

"A wagon?"

"No...a techan aircraft, going to or from Angel. Maybe from another bastion. If so, it would have been a long journey." As Aiden reminded himself of the memory, the facts about it concerned him again, questions which were not pressing.

"Why would it be carried by technology?" She repeated Aiden's thought. "Why would your people care?"

Aiden detached himself from studying Raven's curves. Whenever she leaned forward, she bent her back in a way to push out her middling chest. She did it unintentionally. "I don't know...I think that's one of the reasons why I know it's important."

"You recognized it to be an aircraft."

"Yes."

She rested her elbows on the table. Aiden avoided getting too close and moved back. "Born in bastion walls but with eyes for magic," she said. "I told you there would be a tale. Seems beyond even coincidence."

"I don't subscribe to fate, if that's where you're going."

She leaned back. "If you have reached an impasse with books, perhaps we should ask an authority."

Aiden heard very well what she said. He rolled the memory around before asking, "Are you helping me?"

"Do you wish it?"

It was the most jovial smile Aiden had managed since leaving Angel, more so than the caravan, more so than seeing Limshau for the first time.

"I very much do."



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