

Umberto Pignatelli

# GLADIATORS

of the Dominions



BEASTS & BARBARIANS



GRAMEL

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of the Dominions



# BEASTS BARBARIANS

A Sword and Sorcery Savage Worlds setting

BY UMBERTO PIGNATELLI

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Dedicated to: Corinna and Marysia little barbarian princesses.

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# PLAYERS GUIDE

*The sun-scorched arenas of the Dread Sea Dominions await you in this book!*

*In these pages you'll fight ancient monstrosities from the pits of Tricarnia to entertain the bored Priest Princes, you'll risk your life against beasts in the Imperial Arena of Faberterra for the enjoyment of the crowd, or you'll match your skills against the pit fighters of Syranthia, the best in the world.*

*You are a gladiator: men shout your name, women faint at the sight of you.*

*But when you enter the pit, under the merciless sun, you are alone against your opponent. Today, will it end with your blood or his dripping on the sand?*

*So what are you waiting for: grab your gladiator helm, your shield and sword, and go bare-chested to spill your blood for glory and money!*

*The Season of Blood: In this appendix you'll find all the rules you need to run a GM-less league of gladiator fights in the arena. Hire your pit fighters, buy assets and resources, and lead your team to victory!*





# INTRODUCTION

*Shangor was uncomfortable. The mighty barbarian checked the helm enclosing his head one last time and fixed the strap of his shield.*

*The massive gate in front of him was still closed, but he could hear the sounds coming from outside.*

*"Will you go in of your own will, or will we have to persuade you?" a grumpy voice asked behind him. Shangor saw the pit guards, muscular men armed with long spears, cautiously looking at him.*

*"Open that gate, dogs, and I'll show you how a barbarian dies!" Shangor answered.*

*"Good. Exactly what I meant." One of the guards nodded.*

*A gong sounded. Three times. Time to fight. Two guards opened the gate, while the third one remained behind Shangor, the spear's point touching the mighty Northlander's back.*

*"Go in, barbarian!" the guard ordered "And come back alive. I bet on you!"*

*Shangor moved inside. The sand of the Imperial Arena of Faberterra was hot under his sandaled feet. Hot and smeared with the blood of countless gladiators and beasts slain over the millennia of the empire's existence for the amusement of the crowd.*

*The Northlander barbarian had seen many things during his life, but nothing, not even the battles of southern Kyros, had prepared him to face the multitude of people*

*in the arena of Faberterra; even after seven victorious fights, it always amazed him.*

*The sun temporarily blinded the barbarian, while the crowd started shouting his battle name: "Thunderfist! Thunderfist! Thunderfist!"*

*Shangor raised the battle axe and the cheering of the crowd become strong as a desert storm. Coins, fruits, even jewels rained over him, thrown by his supporters. But the barbarians' eyes were only for the veiled lady sitting on the Black Lion's dais, not so far from the Emperor's box.*

*Lady Ophiria, wife of Pantarkos Imelios. His lover.*

*With a lazy move the noblewoman threw her scarf down into the pit, revealing her perfect, if somewhat bored, visage.*

*The piece of silk floated into the arena, drifting over the hot air, and fell at Shangor's feet. He picked it up and inhaled the inebriating smell of his lady, still remembering their hot night of love.*

*Then the crowd fell silent. Pantarkos Imelios, the weak, white-haired husband of Ophiria, smiled evilly while another gate of the arena opened with a creak.*

*It was the Beast Gate, where the worst monstrosities of the arena came from.*

*"What devil have I to fight today?" Shangor thought.*

*From the shadows of the Beast Gate a deep, terrible growl came.*

*Shangor gripped his battle axe firmly.*

Welcome back to the Dominions! This sourcebook explores the arenas of *Beasts & Barbarians*, where mighty warriors fight for their lives for the entertainment of the crowd. In these pages you'll find expanded rules to handle gladiators and their exotic fighting styles, and exciting ways to create epic battles in the blood-smeared fighting pits of the Dominions.

But there's more: you will also find suggestions on how to create an entire campaign around gladiators, taking them from simple convict warriors to the peak of celebrity, where, rich and pampered, they'll eventually gain their greatest prize: freedom.

So what are you waiting for? Grab your trident and net and prepare to face the world of the Gladiators of the Dominions!

To use this sourcebook you need at least the *Beasts & Barbarians Golden Edition*.

## A NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

To save space, several abbreviations are used in this book to refer to other books of the *Beasts & Barbarians* line. They are listed below:

*GE: Beasts & Barbarians Golden Edition*

*BOD: Beasts of the Dominions*

*JCT: Jalizar, City of Thieves*

*TB: Tattered Banners*



# THE BOOK OF LORE



# BLOOD RITES

The origin of the gladiatorial games dates back to the ancient Keronian Empire. Crumbling tablets found in the Library of Syranthia speak of savage fights between convicts and terrible beasts and demons evoked by the Keronian priests, in order to appease their evil deities.

In truth, speaking of “games” in this case is wrong: they were mere sacrifices, with the difference that some of the victims had the chance, often illusory, to survive the trial, giving some additional spice and amusement to the supernatural creatures receiving the blood offering.

The most famous of these rites was the Night of the Fourteenth Moon, where fourteen warriors fought for their lives in a wild, savage melee. The sole survivor of this combat was given the questionable honor of becoming the Mate of Hordan, joining the avatar of the evil goddess in a night of unearthly pleasures.

Naturally the Mate of Hordan never survived to see the morning, consumed by the lust of the Mother of Darkness.

Also famous is the legend of the Maze of Tirain, a great arena built in a dormant volcano. The legend says it was a very complex labyrinth dug in the rock, with a ceiling made of a layer of transparent alabaster. Gladiators and convicts were thrown inside the labyrinth, full of traps and terrible creatures, with the promise that if they found the exit they would be free. But this was a lie: the Maze was built by the demon lord Tirain, Master of Doors and Cages, and has no real exit.

The priests and the other spectators could see the deaths of the gladiators, comfortably

seated on tiers of seats built into the internal walls of the volcano, spying on their deaths through the alabaster ceiling.

From these very ritualized forms of combat to more mundane ones isn't a big step: the crowd has always liked the taste of blood, regardless of whether it is spilled for a reason or not.

The first report of a non-religious gladiatorial game in ancient Keron is the Race of Blades. Held in Keron City, the capital of the old empire, it was a chariot race, fourteen laps long (because this number is holy to Hordan), run with scythed chariots. Anything was permitted in the race, and usually it ended with a sole chariot surviving. To make it even more bloody, the walls of the arena were full of long metal spikes, making any wrong maneuver a deadly error.

Probably the Keronians had many other devious blood games, but luckily their Empire ended five thousand years ago and the memory of them has faded.

But their successors continued the tradition...

## GLADIATORIAL GAMES TODAY

With the fall of the Empire, civilization and culture dwindled for centuries, but the bloodlust of crowds never disappeared: gladiators today fight for the amusement of the people, not to appease the gods, but nevertheless the Blood Sports continue to be reckless and deadly. Every culture has developed its own style of gladiatorial games, described below. Note that not every race and culture practices Blood Sports (for example, the Valk don't). In

addition, for each entry there is a legend, hook or some other interesting fact.

## ASCAIA

The Amazons have a particular relationship with Blood Sports: they never forget that their independence started from the arena of Ascaia City. Galla and Ilenya, the first Sister Queens, were respectively the wife of the cruel governor of the island, who loved to send women to die in the arena, and a female gladiator. Once the rebellion was over, the institution of Blood Sports was removed, but they survived in two forms: The Dance of the Bull, and the Race of the Cliff.

The Dance of the Bull has a legendary origin: in 2099 AF the bloodline of the Sister Queens was near to extinction. Neither queen seemed able to give birth to an heir. Augurs were consulted, and the response was that the displeasure of Etu was upon the queens. When this news slipped out of the royal palace, the realm fell into turmoil, and rumors of civil war and rebellion started.

One morning, the two queens decided to go in disguise to visit a remote temple of Etu on the northern cliffs of the island to beg the goddess for mercy. They weren't alone: Cyria, their fourteen-year old maid was with them, bringing the gifts for the temple. Suddenly on the road a sound of thundering hooves was heard: an enormous bull appeared, foaming at the mouth, and charged the queens with homicidal intentions. Cyria, without even thinking, put herself in front of the queens, and, when the massive beast arrived, she grabbed its horns and vaulted over its head. The beast, surprised and confused, left the queens alone and charged the girl again. Cyria, displaying an incredible agility, again

jumped over the bull's head. This strange dance went on for more than an hour. Then the bull, exhausted, fell down on the ground, panting. Cyria called the Queens with a feeble voice and said: "My ladies, this bull was sent by Mother Etu to test us. Now that he is down, touch his horns, and the curse upon you will be removed." The queens reverentially did this, and exactly ninth months later, they gave birth to two girls, the future Sister Queens of Ascaia.

From that day, the Dance of the Bull became an institution in Ascaia: during the Fertility Rites festival, in spring, the old Arena of Ascaia is reopened and young, slender girls dance upon the horns of bulls. It isn't a Blood Sport in the true sense: the bull is not harmed, it is only driven to exhaustion. There isn't even a true winner: during each Rite ten girls dance with ten bulls, and if no dancers are hit it is a very good omen for the year to come. Despite being non-violent, bull-dancing is very dangerous: the dancers are very agile, but a single error in this sport is punished by death. In following centuries, different versions of bull dancing appeared on the mainland, but they are quite different and always end with the slaughter of the bull. Amazons strongly despise this open mocking of their holy tradition.

The Race of the Cliff is a completely different thing. Ascaia is renowned for her horses, which can compete for beauty and strength with the purest breeds of Kyros. Many breeders are on the island and frequent quarrels erupt about which horses are the best. To keep the situation under control, the Queens established a riding competition each year on the road running around the cliffs of the island. It is a very dangerous ride because the path is on the edge of the overhanging cliffs, and it isn't uncommon for both rider and mount to plummet down into the sea,

never to be seen again. But winning this ride is a great honor, and the breeders of the winning horse receive a substantial prize from the royal coffers. For this reason the Race of the Cliff is often marred by dirty tricks: drugged horses, sabotaged saddles and obstacles on the path aren't uncommon.

In recent years, the Queens have started inviting foreign guests to watch the competition, usually ambassadors of other realms or friends of the Amazons. This is important both for Ascaia and for the foreigners: the Amazons can showcase the power of their island, and receive some good orders for their horses, and the foreign ambassadors can talk on neutral ground. During this occasion the Queens' peace is severely enforced and no act of violence is admitted, even between bitter enemies.

**The Lame King Hunt.** The story of the Lame King Hunt is reported by some of the men captured by the Amazons as breeding mates and then released or sold as slaves. According to this story, the Sister Queens have the secret tradition of keeping a favored lover with them for a year. The man, whom they call the King of Ascaia, is pampered, nurtured and his wishes are obliged in every way. Then, exactly a year after his "crowning" (or earlier if the Queens find a more appealing replacement) the Queens offer the King the chance to regain his freedom: the man is brought to the outskirts of the Grove of Maidens, near the western border of the island, and released. On the other side of the Grove there is a stairway, leading to the sea, where a small barge is ready. If the King manages to get to it, he can escape the island, safe and rich. During the night the Queens, with their entourage of warrior-women and bloodhounds, hunt down the King, and if they find him, they

kill him and use his blood to fertilise the soil of the island. The King is unarmed and unarmored and, to keep things interesting, his left leg is wounded so that he is slowed and he leaves a good trail for the hounds. The Amazons have always refused to confirm this story, but there must be some grain of truth in it. Some say that the infamous General Rhea (see *Vengeance of the Branded Devil* scenario, *GE*, pages 189-206) was exiled for having indulged in this bloody sport, but this is an unconfirmed rumor.

## CAIRNLANDS

In the depths of the Cairns of the northern lands, there are large pits, surrounded by big bones planted in the ground, which are smeared with ancient, rust-colored blood. They are collectively called the Pits of Bones, and there is one of them in almost every tomb.

The actual use of these places is unknown: even the Sages of the Great Library of Syranthia don't know if they were sacrificial grounds or real arenas, but the important thing is that today, in the same pits, Cairn warriors and prisoners alike throw away their lives in senselessly bloody fights in front of their clan and the dead eyes and bones of their Ancestors.

Winning these fights, in the most brutal manner possible, is a sign of great power and honor for any Cairnlander warrior, and it is also a way to appease the Ancestors: in almost all of these arenas there is a burning fire on which the winner sacrifices the heart, the liver and the innards of his fallen enemy.

Cairnlander pit fighters do their best to look terrifying: they dye their skin with pulverized bones and talcum to appear



pale as corpses, build their own armor using bones of both human and animal origin, paint their faces with blood and howl in an absolutely nightmarishly way.

But the worst of them are the dreaded Soul Eaters: if you pay heed to the stories, these warriors, who are often also warlocks, marry dead women, who whisper in the nuptial bed their most dreaded secret: how to rob and consume the souls of dying people. You can recognize a Soul Eater by the strange tattoo he has around his mouth: according to some it is the mark of the kiss of their wives, according to others it is the sign of their evil magic.

After defeating an opponent, they quickly bow over them, and suck away their last breath in an obscene kiss. Soul Eaters fight in the Pit of Bones only because in this manner it is easier for them to enact their unholy art, but they are also formidable foes in open battle, even if they are as much feared by their comrades as by their opponents.

**Pale Hair.** There are voices of places where the Ancestors themselves crawl outside their shrouds to feast on the fresh meat of the defeated pit fighters. Every traveler of the North has heard the story of Pale Hair, the strange white-haired warrior woman who appears, always at dusk, at the gates of the remotest Cairns asking to fight in the pits against the strongest warrior of the clan. Dressed in armor made of bones, she is a fighter of inhuman skill and strength: people say that her wounds don't bleed, and there are even stories of her being beheaded, then reattaching her head to the neck without a flinch. Nobody has ever won against Pale Hair, and she always leaves before dawn, taking away the bodies of her fallen victims, never to be seen again. Refusing her access to the Cairn, or a duel, isn't a viable option:

clans which do are wiped out by a strange pestilence, or killed one by one by unseen assassins. Pale Hair doesn't need to fight with a Cairnlander; any strong warrior is good enough for her, so many clans have the habit of keeping a prisoner, often a stranger, handy in case the blood-craving witch decides to knock on their door.

## CALDEIA

Caldeians are the descendants of Tricarnian escapees, so it might be thought that they imported the Blood Sports tradition from the main country.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Caldeia is formally a monarchy, but *de facto* it is a theocracy ruled by priests of unholy gods and a caste of warrior nobles. Caldeians know they are in constant danger: their territory is under threat of retribution from the Ivory Savannah tribes, which they have continuously raided for slaves for centuries, and the Independent Cities are always ready to exploit any weakness Caldeia might show.

Only the fear of their dark sorcerers and the ruthless efficiency of the Caldeian army and navy keep their enemies at bay.

This is possible only in a very militaristic and organized society, where there is no place for such a decadent custom as Blood Sports. Even slaves are a valuable commodity, to be used in the Khav fields, sold in the Northern flesh markets or sacrificed on the black altars to satisfy alien deities and terrorize the other slaves and the lower castes.

So, apart from the occasional slave thrown into the pit of a demon (although in this case the fight is too unfair to qualify as a "game") the only remaining form of

gladiatorial combat is the Officers' Fights, simply known as the Duels.

During these competitions, held once a year, the best soldiers of the army duel, usually to first blood but not uncommonly to the death, single-handed, in a specially-built Arena, called the Hall of Skulls, in the outer courtyard of King Caldaios' palace. They are the finest of the various battalions, and wear the traditional monster-shaped helms of the Caldeian officers, the Shalak.

These fights, witnessed by the entire army and the highest representatives of the church, are very important because they deeply influence the prestige of the various corps. A valiant Officer doing well in the Duels obtains prestige and a promotion for himself, a pay raise and a day's leave for his men, who from that day on will be ready to follow him to Hell and back.

**The Hooded Spectator.** At certain times, during the final fights of the Duels, three cloaked figures, one tall and two short, appear in the shadowy window of the Tower of Whispers, where it is said King Caldaios lives. They observe the duel in silence for a while, then one of the short ones rings a small bell. When this happens, it means that the duel in progress must be to the death. Voices say that the three shapes are respectively King Caldaios and his two personal servants, but nobody can be sure. Whispers also say that sometimes, after triumphing in the Duels, the winner is called into the King's Palace, and never comes back.

#### HEROES' JOURNAL:

##### CALDEIAN DUELLING ETIQUETTE

*There is a sort of code in the Caldeian Duels. The fighters have only a small selection of weapons available: the long sword, the boarding axe, a wide-bladed spear called Kalakis and, only for the most skilled swordsmen, the Caldeian Saber. Depending on personal taste, the fighters can decide to add a dagger or a small shield in the off hand. The only thing on which they must agree is armor: fights are always between duellists equipped with the same level of armor (no armor, light, medium or heavy) and naturally their monster-shaped helms. Usually the choice of armor is made by the older fighter.*

## THE IRON EMPIRE

The Iron Empire has always been permeable to cultural innovations coming from annexed countries, so with the conquest of Tricarnia, Blood Sports arrived in Faberterra.

They were a huge success: in few years this new, decadent custom became very popular and arenas and fighting pits multiplied in all the territories of the Empire. The passion for gladiatorial games infected both commoners and nobles alike. Even the Imperial family wasn't immune to this cruel fascination: in 1710 AF Emperor Salkar I the Beloved started the construction of the Imperial Arena upon the old Iron Arena, which took twelve years to complete and became the biggest and most complex one in the entire Empire. Even today it is considered one of the marvels of the Dominions, second only to the Sea Guardian of Askerios.

The Imperials, often with the aid of foreign specialists, pushed the concept of the arena to the extreme, and their Blood Sports are very spectacular and varied:

the Imperial Arena is large enough to stage combats between small armies, its pits are crawling with monsters of every type, brought there by merchants from the remotest areas of the Dominions.

The entire structure is a marvel of engineering: connected to the aqueducts of the city, it can be filled with water and used to stage naval battles between small galleys or, in some cases, against one of the water-dwelling monstrosities lurking in the pits.

Second only to the Imperial Arena is the Great Circus, where chariot races are held. Despite not being as bloody as the Race of Blades in the City of Princes, they are often very colorful, and gruesome incidents abound: often the horses are drugged and the charioteers are free to use their long whips both on their horses and on the opposing riders. A race without at least one dead rider is considered boring.

Aside from being a distraction, Blood Sports today are a very important part of the consensus strategy of the Emperor: in the current era of turmoil in the Empire, and of general decadence, free distributions of food and gladiatorial games serve well to keep the crowds momentarily happy.

**The Sun Curse.** During the years after the Salkarian Reformation (1560 AF) those legitimate priests of Hulian who didn't agree to change their religion to the Divine Couple were forced to go into hiding, at least the ones who survived the rage of the Empress. A good number of them refused to abjure their religion, and Empress Salkaria had them jailed. The priests were held prisoner for two years. Then in 1562 AF Emperor Domestan, the original founder of the Empire, died, leaving his young son, Domestan II, on the throne. The first act of the young monarch

was to condemn all the Priests of Hulian to face the lions in the Iron Arena. The servants of the Smith of Words refused to fight for the amusement of the boy Emperor and his wicked mother, and died, devoured by the beasts, without raising a finger. But before they died, they placed a terrible curse upon the Emperor and his bloodline. According to this, the day that the sun goes dark over Faberterra's Arena will mark the end of the Empire. This is called the Sun Curse, and although more than one thousand years have passed and this has never happened, the Imperial family still fears it.

### HEROES' JOURNAL: JUDGMENT OF THE CROWD AND JUDGEMENT OF THE LORD

*Blood Sports are savage fights, but they are also, and mainly, shows. For this reason, once one of the gladiators falls down and is defeated (Incapacitated) his fate is decided by the crowd, which can ask for his death or his life, depending on the Celebrity of the victim (see page 57).*

*Alternatively, there is the Judgement of the Lord, so-called because this behavior is typical of Faberterra (where it is called the Judgement of the Empire). According to this rule the highest ranking person attending to an Arena (usually a noble) can order the death or safety of the fallen one, and he does this by showing his thumb up (life) or down (death).*

*Naturally the final choice is in the hands of the winner, but while going against the Judgment of the Crowd only causes a loss of celebrity, going against the Judgment of the Lord can have far worse effects, instant death included.*



## IVORY SAVANNAH TRIBES

The Tribes of the Ivory Savannah are nomadic hunter-gatherers. Having no cities, they lack arenas, but this doesn't mean they don't appreciate a good show of men spilling their blood on the sand.

Traditionally, during the first moon of autumn, the Tribes gather peacefully on the main ford of the Buffalo River to thank Uletu, God of Strength, for the quarry they captured in the previous months, and to invoke his favor for the last hunt before winter, when the gnu herds migrate south.

These days, called the Moon of the Red Bull, have a great religious importance but they are also a time when marriages are arranged, trading is done and political decisions are taken. It is also a time of truce: fights are forbidden and even the fiercest enemies must camp side by side without bloodshed.

There is a single exception to this rule: if two tribes have a problem they can't manage to settle peacefully, rather than going to war, they can perform a Dance of Blood.

At dawn, the men of the two tribes meet on the riverside, in front of the whole gathering. Then they start dancing, asking Uletu for strength. The dance, guided by the sound of drums, goes on till dusk. It is an exhausting activity and it can happen that dancers pass out in the hotter hours of the day, this usually being a bad omen on the outcome of the Dance for their clan.

Then, when the sun goes down the real duel starts: two champions, one for each party, step up and fight wildly.

These men are called Letu Kaka, which in the savannah tongue means "Man of Strength". The tradition says that the Letu Kaka are only vessels of Uletu's will and their strength depends on how well the dancers performed during the day, but a wise clan chief chooses a strong man as Letu Kaka rather than a feeble one.

In ancient times Letu Kakas had to be members of the tribe involved in the duel, but nowadays this rule isn't respected anymore and anyone, even a stranger, can be chosen as champion. It is a dubious honor because the battle between Letu Kakas is always to the death.

The outcome of the duel settles the matter. The verdict is usually respected by the losing side, because ignoring it is a mark of infamy which can lead to severe ostracism by the other clans.

Rumors say that the White King, shortly after uniting the Savannah Tribes under his rule, tried to forbid this barbaric custom, but it is too rooted in the minds of the people, and in the end he was forced to accept them, and to ratify the outcome of the Dances of Blood.

**Kaleka Letu Kaka.** The name of Kaleka Letu Kaka is known in the entire Savannah. The meaning of the expression is "Man of Demonic Strength". Kaleka is renowned for being the greatest Letu Kaka of the entire savannah: more than seven feet tall, with a jet black skin and covered in tattoos, he isn't just a savage warrior, but something much worse. Legends say that he made a deal with the forces of the shadows, and he cannot be killed by mortal man. Witnesses claim to have seen him fall down, his heart pierced by a spear, and continue to fight.

Kaleka is a tribeless man and fights as Letu Kaka for whoever pays for his services. Finding him isn't easy; he lives in a hut in a remote valley where lions go to die, and his price is very high. He always knows what the most precious thing is for the asker and demands exactly that. Refusing to oblige after accepting the deal isn't wise; Kaleka's vengeance is terrible: the Alanzi clan tried to cheat him and all of them died, from the oldest crone to the youngest toddler, in the following season.

Kaleka should be very old now, almost ninety, but appears no older than thirty winters.

### HEROES' JOURNAL:

#### DANCING WARRIORS

*Dance is an important part of any duel, gladiatorial or otherwise, of the Savannah warriors. Performing a good dance grants the warrior strength and power, and instills fear in the enemy.*

*Every tribe has its own dances, which often have evocative names like "Dance of the Rampaging Lion" or "Dance of the Skulls", but rules-wise they fall into the classes described below.*

*Only characters from the Ivory Savannah can perform these dances.*

*Dances are performed with a Dance roll, which is a Trait roll (-2) using the lowest die of Spirit and Vigor. On a success or better, the effects of the specific dance apply, with a failure nothing happens, while with a critical failure the character suffers a level of Fatigue for a day. Characters with the Dancing Witch Edge receive +2 to the roll.*

**Cooperative Dances.** *Dances can be cooperative, with all the participants making a Dance roll. Every one of them suffers the effects of their individual result, but (apart from the Prophetic Dance) all of them enjoy the effects of the leader's roll.*

**Propitiatory Dance.** *This dance is usually made the day before a very important event, such as a battle, a hunt, a religious ceremony or similar. The character must dance for at least four hours. After this he must make the Dance roll. With a success he gains a Bennie, which can be used only during the day after and only to accomplish the chosen event, with a raise the player also gains +1 to all rolls of a Trait of his choice to accomplish the chosen event.*

**Battle Dance.** *A battle dance is a ritual done immediately before a combat starts. The dance lasts for how many rounds the character wants (maximum equal to the Vigor dice value, so a character with Vigor d6 can dance for up to six rounds); the effect of the dance lasts for the same number of rounds. Then the character makes the Dance roll as described above; with a success he gains +2 to Tests of Will for the same number of rounds, with a raise he also gains +1 Parry or +1 Toughness.*

**Prophetic Dance.** *This ritualistic dance is particularly risky and requires a reserve of inner energy, so only characters with Spirit d10+ can attempt it (but no requirement is necessary to help). The dance totally exhausts the energy of the performer, and upon reaching exhaustion, he receives a prophetic vision. The dance lasts at least eight hours of uninterrupted effort, after which all the participants are automatically Exhausted. At this point the dancer can make the Dance roll, in the case of success he counts as having cast the divination Power, which usually manifests itself with the trapping of a vision. Note that unlike the other dances, only the leader of the dance uses the Power.*

*In case of failure the dancer suffers another level of Fatigue, becoming Incapacitated.*

### HEROES' JOURNAL:

#### LONGNECK WARRIOR WOMEN

*Gladiator women are quite rare, and volunteer ones are even rarer. The women of the Shalangi are an exception. Belonging to a tribe of the central Savannah, a Shalangi woman of marriagable age is usually sold*





*by her own father to an arena master on the understanding that she will be traded back after exactly a year.*

*The Shalangi women are very tall, slender, and absolutely deadly: they are trained from infancy to use Chakrams, both the throwing version and the spiked one, and any Shalangi worthy of her name crafts them herself, using bone, as her grandmothers taught her.*

*In the arena they act as Disk Fighters (see page 39) and are very lethal. They have the custom that, whenever they kill an opponent, they take off one of his metal possessions (usually a weapon, but also a ring or another implement is good) and ask the arena's smith to use it to forge them a neck metal ring, that they wear proudly. Every killed man means a disk, so after a while their necks are stretched and elongated abnormally. After the year has passed, the arena masters bring them back to the Savannah, to their family, where they are given back part of the price they paid. The woman keeps any money she earned in the arena, which constitutes her dowry, and her neck rings, which she will wear proudly for all her life.*

## KYROS

The Land of Elephants is one of the few places where Blood Sports existed even before being imported from Tricarnia into the Empire. Kyrosians had a very old religious tradition, according to which, a moon after the death of a relative, a human blood offering to the gods must be made, to Etu in particular. The blood symbolizes the eternal renewal of life, and through it the deceased could return to life.

A demi-god, Kaleysha of the Red Sword (see page 33), Son of Etu, is in charge of spilling blood and bringing it to Etu.

In past times, this type of offering took the form of human sacrifices, but it evolved into ritual combats, where prisoners, and

even priests of Kaleysha, fought to first blood or to the death, depending on the desires of whoever hired them.

Naturally, only very rich people could buy slaves or hire fighters to perform this rite, and, over the years, these strictly religious rites became more spectacular, and now they are a common form of entertainment in Kyros. Nobles and rich merchants celebrate the death of a relative by organizing spectacular games, which the citizens of the poorest classes attend free of charge. Usually the Blood Offerings, as they are called, are introduced by dances of beautiful girls and end with the free distribution of palm wine and round bread. Naturally these free festivals have a great political importance, because through them the support of the crowd can be won.

Officially, the control of the games is in the hands of the priests of Kaleysha, and only they can give permission to organize a game, but the cult, especially since the restoration of the Autarchate, tends to be quite permissive and nowadays the recent death of a relative isn't necessary anymore. For a good tip, the Red Swords (as the priests are called) will allow a Blood Offering for a very old ancestor to be performed, or even allow the repetition of the rite for someone who has already received it. For this reason, important families tend to make a Blood Offering for their dead each year, securing great prestige for themselves.

There is another reason why the Red Swords so easily grant their approval for new games: the cult is granted by law a good share of any money gained from the games, making the cult of Kaleysha a rich one.

**The Elephant Prince.** For the reasons above gladiators in Kyros are considered demi-religious figures so, except during games, nobody can kill them without incurring the wrath of the Red Swords. This rule is quite strict and not even the Autarch dares violate it. Exploiting this custom, Kratides, second cousin of Ganymedes II, the mad Autarch of Kyros, willingly decided to enter the Arena of Kenaton, to avoid the wrath of the ruler of Kyros. A number of years have passed since that day, and the Elephant Prince, as he is called from his habit of fighting wearing a helm resembling an elephant's head, has never lost a single fight. He is loved by the crowd, and, it seems, protected by the Blood Swords, so nobody, even the most skilled assassin, has ever managed to reach him. Ganymedes is frothing with rage at the thought of having a male relative alive: he fears that sooner or later the Elephant Prince, counting on the support of the southern provinces and the cult of Kaleysha, will leave the arena at the head of an army of gladiators and seize the crown. Every week he shouts at his generals to attack the House of Kaleysha (as the great arena of Kenaton is called) and kill the hated Kratides, but luckily up till now the members of the Autarch's Council have managed to dissuade him.



## LHOBAN

In the remote peaks of far Lhoban there is no space for fully fledged arenas like those in the northern Dominions. In addition, the concept of having people killing each other for the amusement of the crowd is alien to the Lhobanite way of life.

But the philosophy guiding the Jademen is of continual self-improvement, so the concept of a competition, a healthy one, is present in their culture. Monks fight daily in training matches to hone their skills, and from this the step to competition is quite small.

So in Lhoban there aren't arenas as such, but there are plenty of tournaments of martial arts. Some of these competitions are held during particular festivities within the monasteries. The commoners are allowed to see them, but they

must stay quiet to avoid disrupting the concentration of the fighters.

Other tournaments are held between monasteries, the most famous one being the Tournament of the White Moon, held every three years, where the representatives of the seven most important monasteries of Lhoban duel for supremacy. The tournament's seat changes cyclically among the monasteries and is an important source of income: during the tournament a great fair is held, and merchants and common people alike must pay a small tax to the monastery's coffers. Winning the Tournament of the

White Moon is a great honor and the monastery holding the title is awarded the honor of keeping the White Moon Ark, an old engraved strongbox which is said to store a single beam of moonlight. In truth only the Enlightened One knows what is stored in the Ark because opening it is strictly forbidden.

Tournaments are more common every day, and this has started troubling the older and wiser monks: they see many of the younger brothers, not only impressionable Chela but also experienced monks, dedicate ever more time to martial training for competitions, forgetting that their main goal should be self-improvement and fighting the many evils which already lurk in the Lhoban Mountains and in far countries. For this reason some masters are starting to forbid their disciples to join competitions, but this is a decision that many youths find unfair: sooner or later someone will rebel, and this could create a sort of schism in stable Lhoban society. There are rumors that priors and abbots of the monasteries have asked the Enlightened One to make a ruling on the question, but so far he has not answered in any way.

**The Pits of Lhobanport.** Lhobanport is ruled by merchants, people far from the path of Enlightenment. The city is bustling with activity and always full of foreigners coming to trade. The strangers brought with them their barbaric love for Blood Sports and contaminated the rich lords of the city. Now Lhobanport is full of fighting pits where martial artists fight amongst themselves to death, or against terrible beasts captured in the mountains, for the entertainment of the crowd. This type of entertainment is also very popular among the lower castes and the quantity of bets placed is very high, making the fighting pits a very profitable business.

This institution is totally contrary to the ethos of the Jademan philosophy: the Enlightened One sent emissaries to officially complain about this custom, but he resides in his monastery in the City of Clouds, very far away, so the merchant lords of Lhobanport played dumb. Obviously monks are forbidden to fight in the pits of Lhobanport, but there are rumors that the poorest monasteries, where the specter of famine is always hovering after particularly hard winters, send their best fighters to fight in the pits incognito to earn enough for the survival of the monastery.

Naturally, they are only rumors, but if they are confirmed, those monasteries will face the displeasure of the Enlightened One...

### HEROES' JOURNAL: SPIRIT DUELS

*Physical fights are for creatures still on the lowest rungs of the ladder of Enlightenment. True masters have no need to physically challenge their opponents to test their strength: they can pit their wills directly one against the other. Apparently there is nothing happening: two people staring intently one at the other, but in truth they are fighting a terrible mind battle, and this is evident to everyone with enough insight and perception. The loser of this contest is immediately recognized because his soul is forced to bow in front of the victor, usually with a physical sign of it (like dropping on his knees, lowering his stare and so on).*

*Rules-wise a Spirit Duel can be started only by a character with the Enlightenment skill (but his opponent need not have it). Each opponent starts with three Spirit Duel Tokens.*

*Then, each round of mind combat, an opposed roll between the Spirit scores of the two opponents is made (see the table below for modifiers). For each success and raise, the winner of the conflict takes one of his adversary's Tokens. Spirit Duels are very stressful; whenever a character rolls 1 on the*



*Spirit Die, regardless of the Wild Die, he must immediately make a Vigor (-2) roll or suffer a level of Fatigue.*

*Whenever a character drops to zero Tokens, he has lost the Duel. The winner automatically receives a Bennie.*

### **Spirit Duels Modifiers Table**

CIRCUMSTANCE	SPIRIT ROLL MODIFIER
Character Rank	+1/Rank
Higher Enlightenment dice	+2
Iron Will Edge	+1

## **NORTHEIM**

Norheim is a savage land. The fierce men of this country have no time to spare for decadent games of blood for the entertainment of the crowd. For them, the idea of enjoying other people dying is totally alien. But the concept of honor isn't: any warrior appreciates an open show of courage.

Thus, the existence of the Bear Pits: they are holes in the ground, usually ten feet deep or more, the walls covered in pointed sticks like a porcupine's skin, where great black bears of the north are held.

Usually these animals are kept without food for a week or more. Then, when warriors enter, they are frenzied and attack wildly.

Bear-fighting is a tricky affair; these creatures are enormously tough and strong, and in addition warriors usually face them bare-chested with only a melee weapon and a shield. The secret is keeping the beast away and forcing it against the walls of the pit. Despite this advice, a lot

of bear fighters end their lives with their heads ripped off by a bear's claw.

Going into the pit is a way to demonstrate valor, but counts also as a holy trial: any man accused of a crime can ask to enter the Pit. In the case of victory his innocence is proven, because surviving means that the Thunder God showed his favor.

Even prisoners and slaves can ask to face the Pit: in the case of victory they are set free. Despite this opportunity very few of them ask for this dubious honor, as the chance of survival is very slim.

Away from their homelands, Northlanders are very popular in the Arena. Their strong will and survival instinct, plus their muscular appearance, makes them perfect to inflame the imaginations of the always blood-thirsty crowds of the Dominions. For this reason Northlander slaves, both males and females, are highly prized because they always die with a great show in the arena. On the other hand, they are very dangerous and difficult to control; wise pit masters always keep their eyes open and stay out of range of the chains of a Northlander slave, because they are vicious as rabid dogs and ready to die for the pleasure of killing their captors.

**The Queen of Trolls.** There are voices that among the dreaded Troll Mountains, in the far north, there is a city, well-hidden among the peaks, ruled by woman, her skin dark as her soul. She is called the Queen of Trolls, because stories say that these brutish creatures are the inhabitants of this place and worship her as a goddess. The inhuman slaves kidnap the few travelers bold enough to venture into the mountains for the enjoyment of their Queen, who delights in throwing them into her personal Arena. There they have to face one of the many monstrosities

she collects for her little games, the worst one being the mysterious creature known only as the Slithering Death. The few who survived to report the name cannot tell more than this, because their reason is lost forever.

## SYRANTHIA

Civilized Syranthia imported Blood Sports from the Iron Empire. They quickly gained huge popularity, and today the Great Arena of Syranthia City rivals the Imperial Arena of Faberterra for the majesty and importance of its games.

The Syranthians particularly enjoy fights with beasts: lions, tigers, bulls, even the great constrictor snakes of the Lush Jungle fight and die in the Arena for the pleasure of the crowd. But these beasts, despite being dangerous, are quite ordinary; the crowd constantly demands more exotic creatures. For this reason the job of animal provider is a very profitable one. These highly skilled professionals roam throughout the Dominions looking for the weirdest monsters and abominations: some of them even dare to organize expeditions to the Island of Maimed Ones, bringing back mutated beasts, while others wander to the Lush Jungle to capture the creatures of the jungle or sail to foggy Tricarnia to buy from the aloof Priest Princes some of the monsters dwelling in their breeding pits.

The gladiators of Syranthia must be highly trained to fight with these dangerous creatures, and for this reason in the rural areas of the Empire there exist real gladiatorial schools, where the fighters are taught the various specializations of the gladiatorial arts (see sidebar). Each school excels in a particular type of combat and some of them are very old. The teachers,

called Lanistae, are often former pit fighters who pass their knowledge on to the fresh recruits.

Unlike the rest of the Dominions, in Syranthia even free men join the gladiator schools, because this career, although very dangerous, is a very profitable one and a free gladiator obtains a share of the winnings from any match he wins. Note that although some Syranthian gladiators are free men, when they sign up as gladiators they renounce their personal freedom, as if entering the army: the school provides them with food, lodgings, weapons and, the most important thing, training, which is charged to them at a price. Until this is repaid (through earnings from victories) the free gladiator is treated as a slave.

Fierce rivalries, which in some cases become real enmities, exist between schools, which are often reflected even among the supporters. When a fight is scheduled between gladiators of rival schools, often there is turmoil and fisticuffs among the fans before, during and after the event. This is considered part of the fun, but sometimes this transforms into real popular revolts, as happened in 2507 AF, during the famous Night of the Burning Blades, when supporters of the Iron Fists of Askerios, fighting with the fans of the Sons of the Black Plume, set fire to the city market of Askerios, causing great damage. The city guards needed a whole day to stop the fire and capture the hooligans, and, when the situation settled down, they discovered that all the slave gladiators of the Iron Fists had exploited the situation to escape.

**The Beasts of Valerio.** Recently a new beast provider has appeared in Askerios. His name is Valerio and voices say he was a former Sage, expelled from the Library and stripped of his rank for

some unknown reason. Whatever his past, Valerio is getting a name among pit owners, because he provides the strangest and weirdest creatures for the arena. His specialties are real monsters, which he usually sells to depraved nobles for their personal arenas and other, more private entertainments. The monsters of Valerio are human-beast hybrids: savage apemen, horrible crocodile-men and even a strangely attractive leopard-woman. Valerio is vague about the origin of these creatures, and his prices are always very high. There are a number of competitors, pit owners and game organizers who would pay a goodly sum to discover the origin of Valerio's beasts.

## HEROES' JOURNAL: GLADIATORIAL SCHOOLS OF SYRANTHIA

*A number of gladiatorial schools exist in Syranthia. Here follows a brief list detailing the most important ones. The Game Master is free to invent others to add some spice to his games.*

**Iron Fists of Askerios.** *This school is probably the oldest one in Syranthia. Its origin dates back to the Imperial conquest when a famous executioner called Gherto used to kill the condemned by smashing their heads with cesti, a kind of iron fists. Today the Iron Fists are among of the most beloved gladiators of Syranthia, they fight unarmored, only protected by an impressive looking helm and using cesti. They have a long-time grudge against the Sons of the Black Plume.*

**Sons of the Black Plume.** *gladiatorial school is composed mainly of myrmidons (see page 39), they are usually dressed in gaudy, white-lacquered armor and shields, and sport a black plume on their helmets. In the recent past Sulak the Bold, a Son of the Black Plume, killed Iarto Mill Hands, an Iron Fist, against the Will of the Crowd (see*

*above), and this initiated an ongoing feud with the rival school.*

**Fishers of Death.** *This gladiatorial school teaches its men the art of the retiarius. Fishers are particularly nasty because they smear the tips of their tridents with the poison of the ball-fish, which causes hallucinations in the victims. Fishers are dangerous and feared by all other gladiators because they have a great streak of cruelty: after trapping and poisoning their enemies, they don't finish them quickly, but love to slowly strangle them with the nets, a show that obviously the crowd loves.*

**Red Huntresses of Victoria.** *Victoria is a legendary Amazon gladiator who fought in Syranthia centuries ago, winning one hundred and sixty six fights. The Red Huntresses of Victoria are exclusively women and for the most part slaves. The owner of the school, Pantarkos Iulianos, buys slaves for their striking beauty as well as their weapon skill and promises them freedom and riches after a certain number of combats. He is a trustworthy man and a good number of the women remain with him even after completing their contracts. The Red Huntresses are skillful skirmishers. They are always dressed in red, skimpy armor and sport red hair (often dyed). The crowd loves them both for their fighting skill and their striking appearance.*

## TRICARNIA

Tricarnians are the heirs of the Keronian Empire and in their misty lands Blood Sports have always existed, and reached peaks of subtlety and deviousness that don't exist in other lands. While Imperials like spectacle, Tricarnians love pain, and a Tricarnian arena game is often only a particular type of torture.

Tricarnian arenas, apart from during great festivities, aren't usually attended by the common folk (who are in large part slaves), but are a solitary pleasure of nobles. It isn't



uncommon for a Priest Prince to hold a game for a single guest or for a group of close relatives. The cheers and shouts of the crowd in this case are replaced by a chorus of singers or large orchestra which plays the strange, alien music of old Keron.

Some gladiators who survived the Tricornian arenas say that you should put wax in your ears before fighting in the pit, because some of these songs are in truth ancient spells and curses, which can drive a fighter mad, paralyze him or do even worse things. It is only one of the many subtle means the Priest Princes use to influence the outcome of the battles.

Why are arenas so important for Tricornia? The reason is that they are strong political weapons. As an alternative to war and large scale bloodshed, arena fights are used to settle disputes. If a Priest Prince isn't satisfied with the behavior of one of his peers, he can challenge him to the arena. There is a complex set of rules for challenges, depending on the rank of the contenders, their bloodlines, the time of the year and so on, but the bare bones are that two gladiators (or two squads of gladiators or two monsters or any similar combination) fight, usually to the death, in an arena, and the result of the combat settles the dispute. The challenger usually chooses the day, while the challenged one chooses the place (and Tricornian arenas can be very dangerous by themselves) and the type of duel.

In the past, seats in the High Council of the Priest Princes were won and lost in similar ways and the fortunes and misfortunes of great Houses were made.

Given the importance of the matter, gladiator training in Tricornia is a well-known art. The concept is often pushed to the limit: why train an average soldier into

an average gladiator when you can actually *breed* an outstanding one? Tricornians have no problems with using selective breeding techniques, sorcery, Lotus and even worse things to twist men, women and beasts into ugly monstrosities adapted to be perfect killers in the arenas. Through this means a special caste of slave-gladiators was created: like the Blind Maulers (blinded at birth to be accustomed to fighting in total darkness), the Bald Heads (who are subjected to mysterious torturing rituals which make them immune to pain) and the fabled Sweet Deaths (women nourished in their infancy on mixtures of exotic Lotus poisons, making their saliva poisonous).

**The Black Arena.** Some miles away from the City of Princes there is a small island, called the Island of Sorrow, covered in ancient Keronian ruins. Stories say that in times of yore the island was the peak of a very high mountain, over which stood the astronomical observatory of a powerful Keronian lord. Deep under the surface there is an enormous cavern, made of the purest black stone, its original use unknown, but which is today the holiest and most dangerous arena of Tricornia. Only the High Prince can grant the use of this arena and he usually he does so only for duels of critical political importance. The Black Arena is usually deserted, gladiators and staff arrive at the place shortly before the combat and they set off immediately after: there are strange things lurking in the deepest levels of the Arena, where nobody goes, and people staying around tend to disappear, never to be seen again.

## ZANDOR

Zandor is an enormous country and in times of yore, before the Valk invasion, every city had its arena.

But, among Zandorians the main interest was in chariot races. Usually held within circuses or run around the perimeter of the cities, these fierce competitions were almost as dangerous as gladiatorial games: in fact no trick was too low for a Zandorian charioteer to win a race. In particular they used to drug horses with Lotus concoctions to achieve great results, resulting in spectacular races but also driving the poor beasts to exhaustion and often to death.

After the Valk invasion this state of things changed: people were too worried about their lives and personal safety to waste precious resources on horse races. When the situation stabilized in the various city states surviving the Valk scourge, slowly the ancient traditions started again: races returned to flourish, usually held during particular festivities, and the first small arena appeared. Initially these fighting pits were used for a unique function: when a Valk raider was captured pillaging within the borders of the city, he was kept alive and then thrown into the pit to fight against a local champion or a dangerous beast. This had the double benefit of dispatching a dangerous enemy and boosting the morale of the population.

From these first public executions, Blood Sports evolved and now almost every city has a Justicar, the champion of the local arena, who kills the condemned in spectacular fights. Naturally this system has a double edge: the law says that if a man beats the Justicar in a fair duel he is pardoned and set free. It is a very rare occurrence, but it happens. Usually this

means that the winner is hired as the new Justicar, but if the previous executioner is very popular, it can also lead to riots: in these cases keeping order is very difficult and this leads to the summary execution of the unlucky winner.

What's said above is valid for all Zandor, Jalizar excluded.

In the City of Thieves things are different: Blood Sports are very common, nobles enjoying private fights in their mansions, while crowds of lowlife cheer at men punching each other to death in the infamous Fighting Pits of the New Docks quarter. In particular Jalizarans enjoy a peculiar type of combat where a man and a trained beast (the commonest ones being fighting birds and dogs) fight against another similar pair. As is the custom of the Rotten Flower of the North, huge bets are placed on the outcome of these duels, but the outcome is usually fixed and controlled by the Thieves' Guild, which obtains a good cut of the earnings.

**The Damned Ones of Shunzar.** Shunzar was one of the many Zandorian towns wiped out by the Valk horde, but unlike the other cities Shunzar was taken by surprise: only the sentinels were on the city walls, while all the population was in the local arena enjoying a gladiatorial game. The Valk, after quietly dispatching the few guards sneaked inside the city and reached the arena, where the unsuspecting people stood. Obeying the orders of Tagga, a really cruel Valkyria, the raiders barred the doors of the arena and set fire to it. Tagga laughed madly while hundreds of people died horribly and offered their souls to Sha Mekri.

Travelers stopping at Shunzar to use its still-functioning wells usually know of this fact and stay well away from that haunted

place, because strange sounds and lights appear during nighttime.

## BLOOD SPORTS AND OTHER CULTURES

*Apart from what's said above, the other races also participate in gladiatorial games, even if against their will. Their behavior and use is detailed below.*

**Caleds.** *The barbaric spearmen of the northern woods are very dangerous customers, both to capture and to handle in the pits. The first thing any slaver does after taking one of them is cutting away their tongue: in this manner, if the prisoner is a druid or other practitioner of evil magic he cannot do any harm. Second, Caleds must be guarded with the same caution as lions, tigers and other dangerous predators: they are notorious for attacking their masters, throwing away their lives in futile attacks to try regain their freedom: their race were slaves for so long in the past, that today they won't endure that condition anymore. But if you manage to keep them alive and secure, when you unleash them in the arena, naked and armed with a spear, they are capable of amazing feats, sating the bloodlust of the crowd.*

**Cannibals of the Islands.** *The black-skinned men of the south haven't filed their teeth just for show: they actually enjoy the meat of the fallen. If their master allows them to eat their victims, they are more than willing to fight in the arena; other gladiators fear and despise them because they know what sort of hideous habits they have. Cannibals must be kept isolated and well-guarded to protect the other prisoners, in particular the Noxii (see page 29), from their mouths, or, when alone, they must be kept safe from the hatred of other prisoners. In certain countries, such as Tricarnia, Cannibals are allowed to eat their victims in the arena, after the combat, but in most of the civilized world this is considered too disgusting.*

**Nandals.** *Nandals kept in captivity initially lose their spirit, becoming indolent and sleepy. This continues while they are*

*regularly fed. But try keeping them without food for a week, and you'll have meat-craving, grunting brutes ready to smash their opponents to death bare-handed and suck the marrow from their bones.*

**Nomads of the Red Desert.** *Nomads are rarely used as gladiators. If this happens it is because their tribe has been destroyed during clan wars and the survivors sold in the flesh markets of the Independent Cities. For a nomad, losing his freedom isn't a simple accident of life, but is a serious stain to his personal honor, second only to losing their Kullah (the traditional dagger they wear) or having their daughters dishonored; for this reason they always fight hard in the pits to prove their worth to the world. Even if a Nomad manages to regain his freedom, when returning to his land he will always keep secret the fact of having been a prisoner, because this is a mark of dishonor on himself and his family. Nomads are rough fellows driven by survival instinct, and this makes them dangerous opponents; in particular they are excellent archers, more than decent swordsmen and absolutely deadly with a dagger.*

**Valk.** *The horse people don't truly understand the love of civilized races for Blood Sports. For them, killing is only a means to reach a goal: you gut a man to get his woman or his horse or to avenge an insult, but there isn't any particular enjoyment in this. The closest thing to Blood Sports they have are the sacrifices to demons that Valkyries make, but they are always made using non-Valk slaves or even beasts.*

*So Valk in the arenas are usually slaves captured in some way and condemned to die; this happened in particular during the invasion of Zandor, where in a few cases the horsemen were repelled and captured. When in such a dire situation, a Valk reveals all his warrior spirit, killing to avoid being killed. It is somewhat difficult to teach them that crowd doesn't like a quick death, but when they understand this (and are adequately rewarded) they can become among the finest and the cruelest gladiators, especially*



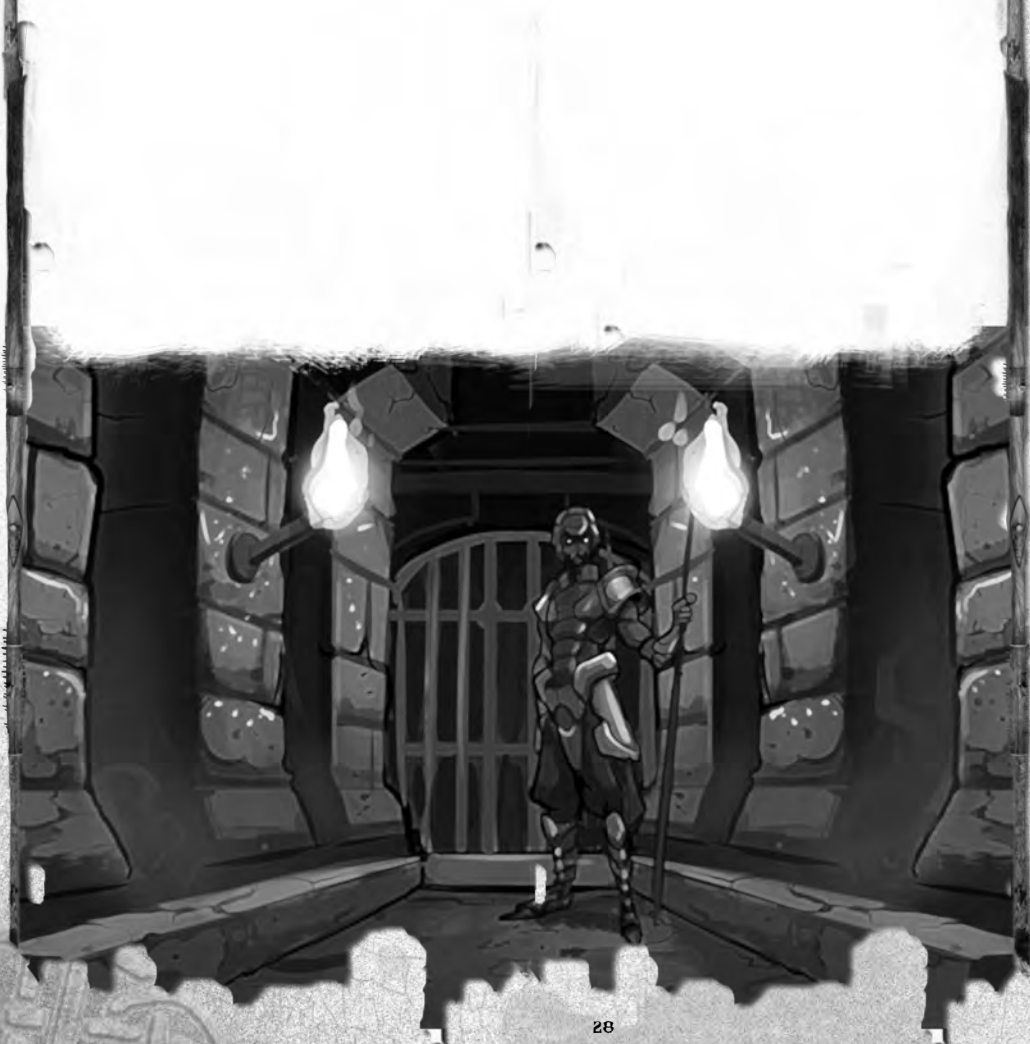
*in the role of horsemen, for which they are naturally gifted.*

**Pygmies.** *These diminutive fellows are highly prized slaves for the Master of Games because they are ruthless fighters, especially when trained in fighting side-by-side with beasts, in particular the big constrictor snakes of the jungle or giant hairy spiders, which make the ladies faint when they crawl out of the pits. For such an isolationist race they can be very adaptable, and a few of them remain in the arena even after regaining their freedom, working as animal handlers and trainers or being employed as assassins by nobles and sects. There are also rumors that they have imported from their homeland*

*some ritual Masks which now survive in the arenas of the civilized countries (see Bestiary page 148).*

### THE BLOOD WHEEL

*The wheel of seasons goes on continuously, so too the great gladiatorial games. There are certain events which are held each year at the same time. This corpus is collectively called the Blood Wheel. It can be particularly useful if you are playing a Wandering Caravan type of Campaign (see page 77).*



REGION	GAME	DESCRIPTION
SPRING		
Ascaia	Fertility Rites	Bull dancing festival.
Zandor	Justicar's Games	Held in the city of Zoramor (see <i>BOD</i> page 21), the winner becomes the Justicar of the City for the next few months.
Tricornia	Steelmask Games	Held in the Black Arena, it is a series of death duels, to assign the prestigious Steelmask, an ancient relic. The Steelmask, as the gladiator wearing it is called, is the personal executioner of the High Prince of Tricornia. The title is held until the Steelmask is killed.
SUMMER		
Tricornia	Race of Blades	Deadly chariot race in the circus of the City of Princes, with sharp blades on the walls.
Kyros	The Great Blood Offering	Gladiator games in honor of the death of the Autarch's father.
Lhoban	Tournament of the White Moon	Martial arts tournament held between monasteries to decide the guardian of the White Moon Ark. Held once each three years.
AUTUMN		
Ascaia	Race of the Cliffs	Chariot race around Ascaia, using the Amazons' horses.
Ivory Savannah	Dance of Blood	Dancing and fighting competitions among warriors on the banks of the Buffalo River.
Faberterra	Great Imperial Games	The greatest games of the Dominions, held in honor of the Emperor's birthday.
WINTER		
Caldeia	Officers' Duels	Duels among the officers of the Caldeian army.
Syranthia	Great Syranthian Games	The most important games of Syranthia, where all the gladiatorial schools compete for victory. They last three weeks and are held in Syranthia City and Askerios in alternate years.
Cairnlands	Trial of the Horned Skull	Gladiatorial games held in the depth of an abandoned necropolis in the heart of the Land of Cairns. The games are so called because they are held in honor of a horned skull, which is said to be that of an ancient Ancestor warlock. The games are organized by an order of hooded priests, called the Black Cows.

## LIFE AS A GLADIATOR

In this chapter you'll find information on the day-to-day life of gladiators in the Dominions.

### SOCIAL STANDING

The great majority of gladiators are slaves. The reason is simple: very few people want

to risk their lives for the pleasure of the crowd. Gladiators usually start their career by being imprisoned for some reason, the commonest being that they are prisoners of war, and then they are given the chance to win their freedom by fighting. The biggest arenas, where there is the need for many fighters to fill in the entire schedule of shows, aren't very picky: common robbers, religious fanatics and generic dissidents are also thrown into the pits. They usually don't have any combat training and are

supposed to die in gruesome ways. They are collectively called Noxii, which means, more or less, “people-doomed-to-die”.



Noxii, as the name implies, don't have a great life expectancy; very few of them survive their first combat. Note that a good number of Noxii never enter the arena; many of them are employed as servants, workers and so on. The decision to throw a Noxii in the meat grinder is taken by the Master of the Pits, so if he sees that a slave has some useful skill he keeps him alive. For this reason Noxii tend to be hard workers: they know that being lazy is the quickest way to meet a lion or some other gruesome death in the pits.

Tough soldiers, after surviving a fight and proving their value, are usually offered training in a specific role (see below) and become a prized commodity for their owner, who secures them good food, wine, a decent (even luxurious) place to live and the company of the other sex. In many arenas gladiators are entitled to a share of the earnings from the combats, and use it to buy themselves these luxuries. When the success of a pit fighter skyrockets, his life becomes like that of a star: women, princesses and commoners alike, do whatever they can to get into his bed, and princes and rulers

want to pass time with him, use him as a bodyguard or use his celebrity with the crowd to achieve some political goal.

But whatever rank they achieve, they remain slaves, the private property of someone, and cannot leave the arena; the only solution is becoming free (see below). A slave gladiator, in the Iron Empire, cannot marry and cannot own property (such as houses and plots of land).

What's said above is true for the great majority of the pit fighters; as seen in the preceding chapter, in the Dominions there exist a good number of part-time gladiators: Northlander bear fighters, Amazon bull dancers, Caldeian officers and so on. These persons are usually free and aren't subject to the limitations above, but they rarely gain the wealth and celebrity of the great fighters of the Imperial or Syranthian arenas.

### KEY FIGURES OF THE ARENAS

*Here follows a list of the most typical figures of the arenas' world.*

**Editor.** *The Editor is the person actually paying for the games. He can be a nobleman, a rich merchant, or even a priest in some cases. If the Editor isn't satisfied with a match it is usually bad news for everyone, the Master of the Games included.*

**Master of the Games.** *The Master of the Games is responsible for the entire arena. This includes the organization of the games, keeping the crowd at bay and so on. It is a very lucrative office, but also a very stressful one: if games which cost thousands of Moons aren't entertaining or something goes wrong, the Master of the Games pays for it himself, and if the Editor is bad tempered, he can be thrown into the pit of some terrible beast to offer extra entertainment for the crowd.*

**Master of the Pits.** *Immediately under the Master of the Games, there is the Master of the Pits. He oversees all the fighters and beasts*



*in the arena. If one of them escapes or dies by accident, he is in trouble, but he usually transfers the blame to a subordinate. He also bargains and does business with the various Pit Owners. In very big arenas, like the Imperial Arena of Faberterra, there are two Masters of the Pits, one in charge of the gladiators, and the other of the beasts (sometimes this second one is called the Master of the Beasts).*

**Pit Owner.** *Gladiators are usually someone's slave. Since gladiators are usually kept in pits between fights, their proprietors are called Pit Owners, even if they own the contents, rather than the container. In certain lands they are called more politely Patrons, School Owners (in Syranthian gladiatorial schools) or simply Corpse Providers.*

**Lanista.** *These are the trainers and sparring partners of the gladiators (see below).*

## GAINING FREEDOM

The main thought of any pit fighter, regardless of how delicious the food his patron got him the evening before or how gorgeous his latest concubine, is getting out of his situation and recovering his freedom.

There are various ways to achieve this result; the first one is obviously escaping. It is also the most dangerous. Gladiators are prized commodities, so they are closely watched. Although they train with weapons every day they aren't allowed personal weapons outside the games, and the guards watching them are usually tough and smart. An escaped gladiator is a tricky affair; first he is very dangerous, because unlike other slaves he is trained to kill and has no particular remorse in using his skills, and second he is very valuable, so patrons offer high rewards to whoever retrieves a runaway pit-fighter. Third, the celebrity of a gladiator is a double-edged weapon: once he escapes he is easily recognized so unless he leaves the area very quickly he will have hunters hot on his trail.

Once captured, an escaped gladiator is usually harshly punished; regardless of their monetary value, pit owners maim, wound or even kill them. If the gladiator has someone important to them, such as a concubine, she is tortured instead of the gladiator. The goal of this retribution is simple: to make an example for all other gladiators in the arena.

So, very few gladiators manage to escape, unless they have friends and a solid plan, but there are rumors that an organization called the Burned Hand, connected to the cult of Tosar (see below), helps gladiators to escape the pits.

The commonest way for a gladiator to regain their freedom is by respecting the rules. Apart from the gladiator-slaves of Tricarnia, who are born slaves and doomed to die in chains, almost any other arena provides a way out; this is necessary, because men without any hope lose any interest in fighting, or, even worse, can try to rebel *en masse* against their captors; the Empire has already seen one Gladiators' Rebellion in the past (see sidebar on page 35) and doesn't want to see another.

Usually the patron of a gladiator promises the slave his freedom after winning a certain number of fights or after the fighter wins a certain sum of money for him. These milestones are high, usually winning thirty fights or earning ten thousand Moons, but somewhat believable if the gladiator is strong and lucky.

In Faberterra, the fixed price is registered in the Master of the Games' Logbook, traditionally written in red ink, and accurately updated after each fight.

Once the gladiator gains enough money for his master to reach the price he is free.

The number of fights won is tracked by making a particular mark on the slave-collar of the gladiator, and when he has thirty or more, he is free. This is called Going Around the Collar, and it is a very rare event.

Apart from paying the Price of the Book, as it is usually called, or Going Around the Collar, there is a final option for a Gladiator to be set free: the Mercy of the Emperor. The Emperor of Faberterra has the right to free a gladiator, regardless of the obligations and debts he has to his owner. This is a prerogative he rarely uses, but sometimes he does, and it is enough to persuade pit fighters to fight at their best during the Great Imperial Games, which Domestian attends personally.

## FOOD AND LODGINGS

Gladiators die horribly in the arena, but at least they eat relatively well. The base of their diet is a mix of barley, boiled beans and, occasionally, particular Lotus spices to fortify the body and enhance reflexes and pain threshold. Given this, pit fighters tend to be rather meaty, not really fat but surely heavier and bulkier than real-world athletes.

This is naturally the average diet; very popular and rich gladiators are allowed to eat what they want, meat of every type, wine and whatever they can buy. On the other hand, warriors in the pits of Tricarnia are only thrown some grubs and rice to survive, and must fight for it with their companions like hungry dogs, a show that always entertains the guards.

Concerning lodgings, don't forget that gladiators are basically slaves, so they are kept in cells, usually under the arena or in a special prison in a wing of some nobleman's palace. Very famous pit fighters are allowed to live in luxury rooms, surrounded by silk, braziers and

any other implements of civilization they want; some of them are lodged better than many nobles. Despite the richness of their living quarters, pit fighters are always carefully guarded; after all they are a prized possession, and one that might decide that escaping is better than dying gruesomely on the sand. Pit guards are tough soldiers, more than adequate to beat the hell out of their prisoners, and they are always numerous and fully equipped, while gladiators out of the arena are carefully kept away from any weapons.

## MEDICINE AND HEALTH

Pit fighters, especially those in the top ranks, are precious, so they usually enjoy good health care; physicians and surgeons tend their wounds after fights, and, in the direst cases, even Lotumasters are called to quickly put a wounded gladiator who needs to perform in the arena back on his feet. Note that not every fight in the arena is to the death: many of them are only to first blood, and gladiators are taught in the pits to wound enemies without permanently maiming them; the important thing is that they bleed, because crowd enjoys it. In addition, given their diet (see above), the extra layer of flesh (or fat) gladiators develop protects their vital organs from blows.

A pit fighter who can win without killing his opponent has a double advantage; first he is respected by his peers (who then usually try not to kill him in combat) and second he is a prized commodity for his owner, who can ask for a bigger purse when arranging fights.

## GEAR

Gladiators are fitted with weapons and armor typical of their role (see below): so a retiarius is given a net and a trident, while a myrmidon is fitted with heavy

armor, short sword and shield. Arena weapons tend to be of poor or average quality at best, the only exception is when a gladiator is rich enough to buy his own personal equipment, or is so famous that a supporter (or a lover) gifts it to him. But even in this case arena equipment tends to be of the overly-decorated, showy type; shields and armor covered in layers of gold and silver, or helms shaped to resemble mythical beasts, are quite common among the top-rankers of the arena. Remember that despite their importance and richness, no gladiator is allowed to keep his weapons outside combat; the risk of rebellion (see sidebar) is always too great.

## RELIGION

Gladiators are a mixed bunch: among them there are men and women of every race, so the gods worshipped in the fighting pits are many and varied. Ivory Savannah warriors chant and dance for Uletu, begging for strength; Amazon prisoners pray to Etu to survive the battle; and Jalizaran swordsmen bargain with Ranikos to have a chance to escape the Arena. Only the Northlanders don't pray, because they know the Lord of Thunder never answers.

But there are two deities explicitly linked to the gladiators' world: Kaleysha and Tosar.

**Kaleysha of the Blood Sword** is a Syranthian deity. Son of Etu, he is depicted as a very young warrior, little older than a teen. He has a peculiar function in the complex pantheon of Kyros: he stabs the living with his sword and, keeping the blade dripping with blood, brings it to his mother. There he fills his helm with the blood and offers it to Etu to drink. He only keeps a single drop to smear it on the Kavra, the bejeweled navel of his mother (see *Beasts & Barbarians #2 Citadel of the*

*Winged Gods*). This complex symbolism means that through death and blood, life always regenerates itself. As explained above (see page 19), gladiatorial games in Kyros are organized by priests of Kaleysha to commemorate the death of relatives with blood offerings, and this is the main focus of the cult; in many an arena of the Empire you can find a priest of Kaleysha, armed with his red-bladed sword and sporting a red helm, giving his blessing to the games and introducing the most important bouts. Priests of Kaleysha are also warriors, at least in theory, and the greatest act of faith they can offer is fighting and spilling their own blood in the arena, but nowadays very few of them do this; they prefer to organize games (and take the cult's share of the profits).

Given their contacts, they are also providers of mercenaries (they receive other income from this side job) and slaves, especially gladiator slaves. Kaleyshans are a very rich cult, especially in Kyros, Syranthia and Faberterra, where the Blood Sports are more common and the arenas big and rich. Note that gladiators usually pay only lip service to Kaleysha; in truth they have not much love for a god who wants their blood spilled, but the crowd and spectators love him.

**Tosar of the Burned Hand** is a totally different type of deity. The Sages debate if he is a true god or only a demi-god, but his story deserves to be told. As mentioned above (see page 15), during the Salkarian Reformation (1560 AF), the priests of Hulian who refused to accept the new cult of the Divine Couple were thrown into the arena, and doomed to die atrociously to entertain the crowd. As recorded by the Sages, they refused to take weapons and died pronouncing the Sun Curse. But not every priest did so; Tosar was one of the few Smith Priests of Hulian who refused to surrender. A valiant



warrior himself, he fought bravely against every enemy the Master of the Games of the Faberterran arena and Empress Salkaria herself threw at him.

Quickly he became a star of the arena, and his celebrity reflected also on the reputation of his cult, a thing Salkaria could not allow to happen. Finally, Tosar was forced to face the worst demon of the arena of Faberterra; he fought Yakkahrra, a terrible monster belonging to the cursed race of the Daughters of Hordan, coming directly from the pits of the City of Princes of Tricarnia.

Terrible was the fight, but against all the odds the priest of Hulian killed her. The crowd went wild while the Empress was full of rage, because voices whisper that Yakkahrra was half-sister to Salkaria herself.

The very night after the victorious fight, Empress's agents sneaked into the cell where Tosar was held, immobilized him in his sleep and burned on a brazier his right hand, the weapon hand, the culprit which killed the Daughter of Hordan.

The week after, Tosar was thrown into the arena again. This time the Empress was sure to have him killed, but the Smith Priest raised his burned hand high, so that everyone in the arena could see it, and showing the power of Hulian, he moved the fingers, charred as they were. Then he drew the sword and killed every opponent Salkaria pitted against him.

Frothing from rage the Empress could not resist this final insult and ordered the archers defending the perimeter of the pit to shoot Tosar down.

The Smith Priest was hit by dozens of arrows, but even before he touched the ground the crowd rose, shouting, and the

other gladiators in the pits took up arms against the guards. Without knowing it, Empress Salkaria had violated the holiest law of the Arena: she had killed a victorious gladiator.

A terrible rebellion erupted (see sidebar); the crowd took the side of the gladiators, and it was only thanks to the protection of the Imperial Phalanx that Salkaria and the young Emperor Domestan II managed to escape to the safety of the Imperial Palace.

So the First Gladiators' Rebellion started; it lasted for two months and forced the Empire to use the Phalanxes in Faberterra to restore order.

And what about Tosar? Despite thousands of people having seen him fall, full of arrows, his body was never found. Wild rumors started, some swore to have seen him crawl away from the arena wounded as he was, while others even said that he was the leader of the Rebellion. His fate is unknown even today, but his fame became so great among the gladiators that from the status of hero he became a real deity. He is the Hope of the Gladiators, the Liberator, or simply the Burned Hand. Gladiators worship him secretly, because the cult is forbidden in every arena. They do it in subtle, hidden manners that pit owners and guards don't notice. If there is a target dummy in the training ground that no gladiator uses or a set of weapons everyone refuses to take, you can bet they are a holy statue of Tosar or implements of his cult. There are rumors that a full-fledged temple of the Burned Hand lies somewhere in the maze of tunnels under the Imperial Arena of Faberterra. There, on an altar made from the shields of his old gladiator companions, Tosar rests. But this is only a legend, nobody has ever seen it, or, at least nobody will ever admit to it.

The priests of Tosar are more a secret sect than a religious order. They live in and around the pits: they are servants, Noxii, lanistae, and obviously gladiators. They recognize each other using a secret code of gestures and have a tattoo, in some well-concealed part of the body, representing a black hand. The Burned Hand, as it is called, helps the gladiators as best as it can. Rumors say that, as Tosar was a disciple of Hulian, they know secret magic that can help a mortal man to win against demons and abominations, and that he will help a pit warrior who has to fight against such a threat.

But they have another, very important, role: they are an organization which helps slaves in general to break free. Voices say that they have a very large network of supporters taking fugitives to the Brokenchain Mountains, in northern Tricarnia, where the new freemen can choose whether to go their own way or join the fight for freedom side by side with other ex-slaves. For this reason the cult of Tosar is outlawed in almost all the Dominions.

## **HEROES' JOURNAL: GLADIATORS' REBELLIONS**

*Being armed slaves, gladiators always pose the threat of raising their weapons against their masters and starting a rebellion. This has happened a number of times in the Dominions' history; the most important occasions are described below.*

**Ascaian Rebellion (1528 AF).** *The most celebrated revolt in the history of the Empire occurred on the island of Ascaia, when the woman gladiator Ilenya, aided by the wife of the local Governor, Galla, rebelled against males and gained independence (see GE, page 16).*

**Tosar Rebellion (1560 AF).** *Despite being long ago, this rebellion still causes nightmares for the Emperors of Faberterra. Started by the famous Smith Priest Tosar, a convict in the arena, because he refused to abjure his faith in Hulian, it was a massive uprising of the*

*gladiators of the Iron Arena in Faberterra which, supported by the masses, captured a good part of the Imperial city for a couple of months. The intervention of the Phalanxes was necessary to reconquer it. The figure of Tosar created a cult, secretly followed in the arenas of the Empire even today (see page 33).*

## **Demetros Rebellion (2260 AF).**

*Demetros was a former Phalanx officer, who for some reason, was stripped of his rank, made a slave and sold to the gladiator school of Emirokeles in Syranthia. A skilled swordsman, Demetros had another, more dangerous, skill: he was a natural leader. In those days the Emperor was Ornestan III, the Flamboyant, a great fan of Blood Sports who toyed with the idea of being a gladiator himself. During a visit to the famous school of Emirokeles, Demetros and some of his best men managed to disarm the guards and capture him. So the greatest gladiator revolt of the Empire started: using the imperial hostage Demetros ordered all the gladiators of the Syranthian Schools (there were more than twenty) freed.*

*Paralyzed, the counselors of the Emperor accepted the order and this was a great error, because the gladiators joined Demetros' forces. In the meantime the slave farmers working in the fields of Syranthia also rose up, and so, in a matter of weeks, the Empire faced the biggest rebellion since its foundation.*

*In the end the Emperor was freed, paying the rebels an enormous ransom. Accepting this was probably the only error Demetros made, but history says that at this point the former officer had understood his rebellion was doomed to fail and was already planning to escape.*

*In fact this was exactly what happened: with the Emperor secured, the Phalanxes were free to intervene. A year-long civil war started, with the Iron Phalanxes pushing Demetros' rebels, gladiator and freed farmer alike, toward the coast. In the end, near Askerios, the rebel army was crushed. Every rebel captured alive was beheaded on the spot to make an example, but Demetros and his best men managed to take ship and escape towards the*

*Independent Cities; they never reached them. The story says that they brought with them the enormous ransom paid by the Iron Council, which was never found.*

**The Gladiator King (2507 AF).** *Cronnal Crowkiller is a famous Northlander gladiator, formerly the property of Pantarkos Eleanos, ruler of the coastal town of Tikara, in Syranthia. Eleanos, an old man, was married to Lemela, who was thirty years younger than him. The noblewoman, to avoid the boredom of her condition, started an illicit relationship with the gladiator, the most important of her husband's pit. Things went so far that in the end Lemela helped Cronnal to break out of the arena, hoping to escape far away with her barbarian lover, but Cronnal had a different idea; during the night, he sneaked inside the Pantarkos' palace and gutted him on the spot. Then he declared himself King of Tikara. The city guards and Eleanos' only heir, a nephew called Duranos, tried to react, but with the help of the other pit fighters Cronnal easily defeated them.*

*For three years Cronnal has been King of Tikara, and he and his gladiators rule the citizens with an iron fist, repaying them for every drop of blood spilt in the arena. When what they get from the Tikarans isn't enough to satisfy them, they attack merchants' caravans and raid nearby cities. They are a real threat now and if nobody stops them, Cronnal could extend his influence even farther.*

## TRAINING

Pit fighters of a certain skill, or volunteers who join one of the Syranthian schools, endure a strict regime of training. It consists partly of physical exercises (weight lifting,

running, cold baths and so on) and partly of combat training. Note that combat in the arena is very different from real, day-to-day combat; pit fighting must be showy and spectacular, not efficient. A gladiator who kills his opponent in the first few seconds of the fight is considered a boring one and surely won't become very popular.

The trainers of the arena are called *lanistae* and are usually retired gladiators who pass their skills on to the new recruits. Lanistae can be the best friends or the worst enemies of a pit fighter; the best friends because if their pupils win and get rich, they became rich too, the worst enemies because if a lanista is given an ungifted student, he will try anything to have him dispatched quickly, so as to be assigned a new, more profitable student. In the same way, they don't tolerate any laziness and will drive any not-so-zealous pupil to exhaustion.

Gladiator training is very specialized, and pit fighters, especially in the bigger arenas, are taught a particular fighting style, which is often linked to a role and a character they must impersonate in front of the crowd. Gladiatorial Roles are described in detail in the next chapter.





# CHARACTERS

# GLADIATOR CONCEPTS

As was said in the Book of Lore, not every gladiator is the same, instead a number of specializations and subtypes exist. This chapter describes the commonest types of gladiators of the arenas and several other characters linked to the ruthless world of the fighting pits. These ideas can be used to create new player characters, extend the background of existing ones and by the GM to create interesting NPCs on the fly.

**Bestiarius.** This type of gladiator is trained to fight the most unpredictable opponents of the arena: savage beasts. A bestiarius fights unarmored and is usually equipped with a spear or a short sword and a round shield or a gladiator armguard. Bestiarii are quite appreciated by the crowd.

**Beast Warrior.** A beast warrior is a soldier of some type, trained to fight with an animal companion, both melee and ranged. The most iconic type is the Jalizaran Falconeer, a swordsman who fights with a trained hawk, but also quite common are black-skinned female archers fighting side by side with a leopard. Finally there are also stories of Pygmy war prisoners fighting with giant constrictor snakes from the Lush Jungle.

**Bear Fighter.** This isn't exactly a codified gladiator type: bear fighters are northlander warriors who dare enter the spiked pits to fight enraged bears. While any warrior can be asked to do this to prove his worth, real bear fighters are professionals who do it regularly, acting as tribal champions or selling their skills to the arenas of the civilized countries.

**Bull Dancer.** Typical of Ascaia, Bull Dancers are young, very agile, girls, who dance and vault over the horns of raging bulls. Bull Dancing isn't technically a Blood Sport, because the bull is only driven to exhaustion, but outside Ascaia Bull Dancers are equipped with a knife, which they use to gut the helpless beast.

**Caled Spearman.** Every civilized man has heard of the savage Caleds of the far North, but almost nobody has seen one of these naked warriors in action. Caled Spearman are warriors trained to fight with a spear, almost naked, mimicking and mocking the naked spearmen of the Caleds. Many of them paint and tattoo their bodies to be more impressive. It isn't necessary to say that a true Caled deeply hates these gladiators and a Spearman cannot expect any form of pity if defeated by one of these savage barbarians.

**Chain Fighter.** This type of fighter is usually fitted with half armor and armed with an Arena Chain (see New Gear). They use it both to entangle and to deal terrible blows to their enemies. The origin of this specialization is debated by Syranthian Sages: according to certain sources it comes from slaves of Tricarnia, while others say it is a bastardized version of a martial arts style of Lhoban.

**Charioteer.** Charioteers aren't imposing or strongly-built, by they don't need to be: their strength isn't in their arms but in the scythed chariot they drive, usually drawn by two horses. Charioteers are used mainly in big arenas, and a common event pits one of them against several men on foot. In certain cases the charioteer isn't alone, but brings an archer or a javelin-thrower with him. A popular combat form in Kyros, called Running Demons, consists of pitting two chariots, each of them with

a charioteer and javelin thrower, against another pair of the same type.

**Cavalryman.** These are mounted gladiators, usually archers, even if sometimes they are armed with swords. To keep the games fair, cavalrymen are usually unarmored. Cavalrymen aren't much loved by the crowd, which thinks they are overly powerful compared to infantry, but there are exceptions, especially if the cavalryman is good enough to kill his opponent by trampling him to death.

**Disk Fighter.** Chakrams and throwing blades are flashy, popular weapons, loved in the arena for the arched trajectory they can make. Disk throwers are usually equipped with light or no armor and a set of chakrams, two Spiked Chakrams (see new Gear) or a single Amazon Blade. Disk Fighters, for some reason, are mainly females: Amazons are quite skilled with these tools, as are some tribeswomen of the Ivory Savannah (see Longneck Woman Warriors on page 17).

**Lanista.** The trainers and sparring partners of the gladiators, in certain cases they are also the owners. Some of them are former pit fighters themselves and know a lot of tricks from the deadly world of the arenas. The figure of the Lanista, being a procurer of human flesh, is quite ill-reputed and put on the same social level as a pimp.

**Myrmidon.** Myrmidons are heavy, slow fighters. They are fitted with heavy armor, complete with helms, and large shields. They usually fight with a sword or (rarely) with an axe. Myrmidons must be imposing physically to move with all this metal on, and are usually big men. They are loved by the crowd, because one of them is often pitted against several less well-armored opponents, and still wins the combat.

**Noxius.** The meaning of the word, in Syranthian, is "those doomed to die". It indicates those unfortunate people thrown into the arena lacking the proper skills to survive a fight. Usually they end their lives being eaten by beasts. Noxii do all they can in the pits to avoid this fate: they are servants, healers, errand-boys, in some cases even concubines.

**Pit Guard.** Gladiators are slaves, a very precious and dangerous type of property. The men watching over them must be strong, quick and ready to react, because a single moment of distraction is enough to be killed. The pit guard does this thankless task.

**Pit Thug.** This gladiator isn't a real professional because he doesn't fight in a conventional manner. Often he never enters a real "arena" in his entire career: instead he fights in back alleys, fighting pits and so on, against other desperate men of his type or against dogs or the like. He fights in an unconventional, often very dirty manner, and has a single specialization: survival.

**Pugilist.** Pugilism is a form of unarmed fighting quite popular in Faberterra. It originates in the old training methods of the Phalanxes, but over the centuries it evolved as a separate fighting style. In truth the Faberterranean pugilist isn't totally unarmed: the fighter is equipped with a cestus, a special iron glove made with leather straps reinforced with metal studs, and is protected by a small leather shield. Pugilism is very violent and often pugilism matches end with the death of one of the participants.

**Retiarius.** The archetypal gladiator, the Retiarius is unarmored, apart from an enclosed helm and occasionally a gladiator armguard, and he is armed with his two



trademark weapons: a trident and a combat net. The Retiarius' tactics consist of entangling and blocking his victim with the net, and then killing him with the trident. They have a reputation for being ruthless, because, given their combat technique, they usually kill helpless victims in cold blood. The Syranthian Retiarii are even worse: they strangle their victims with the net.

**Skirmisher.** Armed with bow and a handful of arrows (or with a sling and some stones) the skirmisher is a gladiator who fights unarmored and is usually pitted against heavily armored, slower warriors. He must hit them from a distance and escape before they reach him. Often this type of fight lasts a long time, with the skirmisher running around the arena, while his victim, punctured by one or more arrows, chases him. Old gladiators say that winning against a Skirmisher is a matter of endurance: the first who tires is dead.

**Slave Catcher.** Sometimes slaves escape and must be caught; if the slave is a very precious and very dangerous one such as a gladiator, it only means that the reward is higher. The unsympathetic person doing this job is the Slave Catcher, who must be a tireless hound, a smart hunter, and strong enough to deal with a cornered two-legged wolf when he finally finds him.

**Spear Runner.** A Spear Runner comes into the arena unarmored, but has two different choices of weapons: three javelins, or a single spear. This means two different fighting techniques; with the first he basically has three chances to kill his opponent from a distance, while with the second he must go up close and personal, but he has the advantage of the longer reach. In both cases, he has to move (and run) a lot, even if not as much as a Skirmisher.

**Swordsman.** This very balanced gladiator is trained to fight with a round shield and a short sword, wears an enclosed helm and (rarely) light armor or a gladiator armguard. Swordsmen are usually faster than Myrmidons but far less protected, and mobile enough to avoid the tricks and traps of Retiarii, making them excellent opponents for every gladiatorial type.

**Twin Master.** These agile fighters are quite rare in the arena, because mastering this technique requires a lot of skill. Twin masters are equipped with light armor and are armed with a dagger in each hand, collectively called "the Twins", with which they can do amazing tricks of blade fighting. Many of them are also acrobats.

**Tusk Fighter.** Typical of Syranthia, Tusk Fighters are bare-chested warriors fighting with a particular type of Iron Fists called Elephant Horns. They wear elaborate, closed helms made to resemble an elephant's head. The legend says that, when wearing their elephant helms, they inherit the endurance of the enormous beast, becoming almost unkillable. They are usually paired against Chain Fighters.

## EVOLVING CHARACTERS: INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE ARENA

*The character concepts introduced above are for newly created gladiator characters, but can also be used in an already ongoing campaign: if the heroes for some reason enter the world of the arena they can evolve, changing their original concept into a new, more complex one, which includes a gladiatorial theme.*

*For example, after several adventures Shangor, barbarian of the northern lands, is captured by slave hunters and sold to the Imperial Arena of Faberterra. Escaping is impossible, at least for the moment, so Shangor is forced to face this world. The lanistae of the arena see in him the potential*

*to be a good Swordsman, so he begins training in that direction. After few months Thunderfist, also known as Shangor the Swordsman, is an arena star, far more famous than the simple barbarian he was before.*

*When he finally manages to regain his freedom he returns to his old barbaric ways, but now he has the skills of a gladiator and in Faberterra people will remember him as the famous Thunderfist who fought in the pits some time ago...*

### HERO'S JOURNAL: SLAVE CHARACTERS

*Although the majority of gladiators are slaves, in this book you won't find a Slave Hindrance. The condition of slavery is too complex to be handled as a single Hindrance; it includes social, economic and political parameters. Plus it is very variable; the condition of a pleasure slave of a Syranthian noble, pampered and well nurtured, is very different from that of a Tricornian leech fisher or a gladiator of the Imperial arena.*

*In addition, for player characters, slavery is often only a temporary condition: the common tropes of Sword and Sorcery include enslaved heroes breaking their chains and powerful barbarians reduced to slavery by devious and cunning sorcerers.*

*If you want to create a slave character you can easily do it by taking some of the following Hindrances: Clueless (slaves are often ignorant), Enemy (for runaway slaves), Poverty, Outsider, Yellow (because slaves tend to be timid).*

## EDGES

This book introduces several new Edges, and expands and modifies an already existing one, Former Gladiator, to focus on the arena theme.

### CONDITIONAL EDGES AND HINDRANCES

*The Savage Worlds core rules encourage designing Edges which work only in particular situations. This book expands that concept a bit, introducing Conditional Edges and Hindrances.*

*This simply means that an Edge or a Hindrance works only in a specific situation or under a certain requirement. It can be applied to any Edge and Hindrance. They can be recognized because they usually include the word "only" in a sentence in parentheses explaining the condition.*

*For example, the Enemy (Arena Only) Hindrance is a Conditional Hindrance, as is the Charisma (Tricornian Only). The mechanic of the Edge or the Hindrance remains the same, only the field of application is more tightly focused.*

*Conditional Edges and Hindrances shouldn't be acquired by the characters spending their regular advances; instead they are received, usually for free, during the game as an effect of their actions (for example, winning in the arena).*

### Conditional Edges and Improved Versions.

*If a character already has the basic version of an Edge with an improved version and acquires the Conditional version of it, he can use the Improved version so long as the condition is met.*

*Example: Dingus of Jalizar has the Luck Edge. After some fights in the pits of the City of Thieves he gains the Luck (Arena Only) Conditional Edge. This means that outside the Arena Dingus uses the Luck Edge, while in the pits he benefits from the Improved Luck Edge.*



## BACKGROUND EDGES

### BORN IN THE PITS

**Requirements:** Novice, Strength d6+, Vigor d6+, must have grown up in the pits.

This character has grown up in the gladiator pits and his scarred, muscular body has been tempered by the whips of his tormentors and the bullying of the other gladiators. You can knock him down but he'll rise up to fight again. He ignores the penalty for being Fatigued and, if a Wild Card, his Vigor is raised by one die step when making Soak rolls. On the down side, those Born in the Pits always have some scars both physical and emotional, for this reason he suffers -1 to Charisma.

## COMBAT EDGES

### DEATH GRIP

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Agility d6+, Fighting d8+, Strength d6+

The character is extremely deadly in grapples, both armed and unarmed, and rarely does an opponent leave his embrace still breathing.

The character can use Fighting instead of Strength or Agility when maintaining or escaping from a grapple. In addition the base damage of grappling is Str+d4 or, if he is using a weapon which already causes grappling damage, the damage is raised by one die step. So, if a character with this Edge uses an arena chain (grapple damage Str+d8) he deals Str+d10 damage while grappling. If he is using a whip (damage Str+1) he deals Str+d4+1 in grapples. The standard minimum strength requirements of weapons apply.

## GORY FIGHTER

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Fighting d8+, Intimidation d8+

The crowd enjoys spectacular, gruesome deaths; beheaded victims, gouts of blood, eviscerations and even worse things are their bread and butter.

This fighter is a master of these types of spectacular killings, which makes him popular and instills fear in his enemies.

Once per round, when he incapacitates an opponent he can make a free Intimidation Test of Will against an enemy of his choice within 6".

Once per combat, if fighting in the arena, he can choose to renounce the Test of Will in exchange for an immediate Stir the Crowd roll, which is in addition to the one per combat normally allowed (see Setting Rules).

If the fallen enemy was a Henchman or a Right Hand, the rolls above receive +1, if he was a Wild Card the bonus rises to +2.

The first Gory Kill (a kill followed by a successful Intimidation roll or Stir the Crowd roll) in a combat counts as a Good Deed in almost any arena (see page 60).

## SHAFT MASTER

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Agility d8+, Fighting d8+

The Shaft Master is very skilled in exploiting the advantage of long levers and this Edge works when using any weapon listed under Polearm in the Gear section of *GE* and the core *Savage Worlds* rules. This basically means spears, pikes, staves and any variation of the same.



The Shaft Master can add the Reach of his weapon to attack or damage rolls (his choice), but only when using it with two hands.

## SHIELD WARRIOR

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Agility d6+, Fighting d8+, Strength d8+

In the hands of a skilled warrior a shield is a tool of both defense and offense. Through fast bashes and deft inclinations of the shield he can create openings in the opponent's defenses and strike a decisive blow. In game terms a Shield Warrior can decide to forego the Parry bonus granted by the shield to add the same bonus to a Fighting, a damage or even a Trick roll (in this last case the shield must be the trapping of the Trick). The reduced Parry lasts till the next turn of the Shield Warrior. In addition he receives +2 to shield bashes, opposed rolls and damage when using a shield (see *SWD* page 75).

## PROFESSIONAL EDGES

### (FORMER) GLADIATOR

**Requirements:** Novice, Agility d6+, Fighting d8+, Intimidation d6+, *additional requirement:* he must have at least one Combat Edge

The hero is a veteran of the sun-scorched arenas of the Dread Sea Dominions he

doesn't know the meaning of the words "fair fight", but he knows how to scare opponents to death. If he succeeds in an Intimidation test against an adjacent opponent, he receives a free Fighting attack. This attack does not incur a multi-action penalty.

The above is the standard version of the Edge, already appearing in *GE*, page 66. What follows is the expanded version, which applies to any character meeting the additional requirement.

First, remove the "Former" word from the Edge name: he is fully trained pit fighter, still fresh from the teaching of the lanistae.

In addition to what's said above a Gladiator has been trained by the lanistae in a specific role, so he can choose a specialization from the table below. A specialization grants the effect of particular Edges for free, but they are conditional, usually depending on the gear used. Note that, with the exclusion of Rank, the Gladiator must also have all the prerequisites of the Edge gained.

*Improved Edges and Specialization.* If a character already has the Edge granted by the specialization and an Improved form also exists, he gains the Improved version. So, if a Gladiator (Skirmisher) already has the Extraction Edge, while meeting the requirements of the specialization he gains the Improved Extraction Edge.

## Gladiator Specialization Table

TYPE	CONDITION	EDGE GAINED
Beast Warrior	Must fight with an animal companion	Command (animal companion only)*
Bestiarius	Shield and spear/short sword, opponent must have Smarts (A).	Giant Killer, Counterattack
Bull Dancer	No armor, no weapon in hand	Loincloth Hero/Bikini Heroine
Caldeian Fencer**	Light or no body armor, Caldeian Saber, long sword battle axe or spear and optionally a small shield or dagger in the off hand	Counterattack
Caled Spearman	Spear, no armor	Shaft Master
Cavalryman	Light or no body armor, must be on horseback	Born in the Saddle
Chain fighter	Light or medium half armor, arena chain	Frenzy
Disk Fighter	Light or no torso armor, chakrams	Strong Arm
Myrmidon	Heavy body armor, large shield, long sword or battle axe.	Armor Use***
Pugilist	Iron fist, small shield, no armor	Block
Retiarius	No torso armor, spear and combat net	Two Fisted
Skirmisher	No torso armor, bow	Extraction
Spear Runner	No body armor, spear <i>or</i> javelins	First Strike (spear only) <i>or</i> Extraction (javelins only)
Swordsman	No body armor, short sword, medium shield	Shield Warrior
Tusk Fighter	No body armor, two iron fists, elephant-shaped pot helm	Nerves of Steel****
Twin Master	No body armor, two daggers	Florentine

### Notes

[\*] The Command Edge granted by the Gladiator Edge of the Beast Warrior works as a prerequisite for Leadership Edges only for beasts. If the player wants to have them working for everyone he must take the standard Command Edge.

[\*\*] Caldeian fencing isn't a true gladiator school; the officers of the Caldeian army are with the Gladiator Edge are trained in this particular gladiatorial role.

[\*\*\*] A non-Wild Card Myrmidon receives two Bennies which he can use for Soak Rolls only when using the Armor Use Edge.

[\*\*\*\*] An Extra Tusk Fighter instead of the Nerves of Steel Edge gains Henchman status.

## PIT TRAINED

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Former Gladiator, Smarts d6+

The character was trained by several lanistae and is now a master of many fighting styles. This Edge can be taken multiple times, but not more than once per Rank: each time the hero chooses it he can learn two other specializations from the table of the Gladiatorial Specializations on page 44. The maximum number of Specializations a gladiator can learn is equal to half his Smarts die (so a Gladiator with Smarts d6 can know up to three Specializations). Note that a character can benefit only from one specialization in a given round, even if he meets the requirements for more. As a free action, at the beginning of his round he can switch from one specialization to another.

## POWER EDGES

### GENTLE TOUCH

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Enlightenment d8+, Martial Artist

Strong, unseen energies flow in the bodies of every being. Certain monks, practitioners of these ancient techniques, can gather these forces through slow, circling moves and unleash them with a simple brush.

In gaming terms, *after* a successful unarmed attack a character with this Edge can declare he is using the Gentle Touch and spend a Power Point. In addition to any damage, the attack counts as a Push, with the monk using the higher of his Enlightenment and Spirit dice versus the opponent's Strength. If the monk scores at least a raise, he also recovers the Power Point he spent.

The Gentle Touch is also very useful for peaceful applications. Using the same forces, the monks can help a wounded body to restore its strength; a character with this Edge gains +1 to Healing rolls.

### SOUL EATER

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Smarts d6+, Spirit d8+, must be a Cairnlander

This character learned from the whispering voices of dead Ancestors how to rob a dying man of his soul and how to consume it to increase his own life force.

When someone dies, the Soul eater must snatch the last breath of the dying one with his own mouth; this requires a full round of physical contact and an opposed Spirit roll (Soul Eaters with the Sorcery skill can choose to roll on that instead of Spirit) with the victim. If he wins he performs a minor soul snatching, if he wins with a raise, *and* the opponent was a Wild Card, he performs a major soul snatching.

At this point the GM reveals the highest Trait of the victim (if there are more Traits with the highest value he reveals all of them and the Soul Eater picks one). With a minor soul snatching the Soul Eater raises the same trait by one die step (as per the *boost/lower trait* Power), with a major soul snatching the Trait is raised by two steps. Note that if the selected Trait is one that the Soul Eater doesn't have, he acquires it at d4.

The raising is permanent until the Soul Eater decides to consume the soul. He can do this at any time by making a Spirit roll (which doesn't count as an action). In the case of success he receives a Bennie which must be spent immediately.

A Soul Eater can only have a single soul snatched at any one time (regardless of



whether it is major or minor) plus an additional one for every two Ranks above Seasoned (so two at Heroic and above).

Note that a Soul Eater automatically classifies as an evil character and is susceptible to the Holy Warrior and Champion Edges. In addition the *banish* Power destroys any trapped soul (it cannot be converted into a Bennie) and causes a non-soakable Wound to the Soul Eater per trapped soul he has.

## WEIRD EDGES

### BURNED HAND OF TOSAR

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Spirit d8+, Vigor d8+, Nerves of Steel, Priest, must be a follower of Tosar

The legend says that Tosar, the gladiator Smith Priest deified through martyrdom, fought in the pits using his burned hand, and that the flame inside it was a doom to any creature of evil.

Today, sometimes a priest of the god undergoes a similar ordeal to receive such a power. He willingly puts his hand in the fire, burning it to the bones: if he doesn't die of the wound or the subsequent infection, the hand heals and remains hideously scarred. But, most importantly, the flame continues to burn silently under the charred skin, and the fire can be awakened to life.

In game terms, with a full round action the priest can set his own hand on fire with a simple act of will. The pain is excruciating, and the priest suffers an automatic Wound (which can be Soaked as normal but can be cured only through natural healing). The hand of the priest is now transformed into a burning torch which can be used in combat doing Spirit+d6 damage and with the normal chances of setting fire to targets.

It counts as a magical weapon, and creatures with the Undead or Demon Monstrous Ability are considered very flammable targets for this kind of fire.

In addition the priest can throw the fire, using the Throwing skill, with a range of 6/12/24.

The flame lasts for a number of rounds equal to the Spirit die of the priest. The flame can be evoked however many times the priest wants, but each further use in the same session imposes a cumulative -2 penalty to the eventual Soak roll.

### COUNT THE DEATHS!

**Requirements:** Spirit d6, Strength d6+, Vigor d6+

A blood soaked hero, digging deep in enemies and dedicating each kill to his god or patron-demon is a cliché of Sword and Sorcery. This Edge simulates this highly heroic behavior. Immediately after killing an enemy in combat, as a free action, the character can make a Spirit roll (at -2), but adds +1 per additional opponent to the roll if he killed more than one enemy in the same round.

In the case of success the gods (or fate, or maybe it is simply a morale effect) look favorably upon the hero and he gains +1 to damage rolls *or* +1 to Toughness, both if he scored a raise.

Characters with the Priest Edge roll with +2.

The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to half the Spirit die of the character plus 1/Rank. So, for a Seasoned character with Spirit d8 it lasts  $8/2+1=5$  rounds.

The Edge cannot stack with itself: if the hero is already benefitting from the bonus

he cannot use it again until the effect expires.

## HERO OF THE PITS

**Requirements:** Special

The character was sent into the arena and actually won all his fights, becoming a living legend. This Edge cannot be acquired normally; it is awarded *for free* to gladiators winning all their fights in the arena and achieving Celebrity +5 (see Setting Rules). Usually the Hero of the Pits is marked with a brand or tattoo, to signify his deed permanently, with a different design for each arena.

In game terms the Hero of the Pits gains +1 to Toughness and to Charisma. In addition he can add half his Charisma (rounded down) to Tests of Will.



# GEAR

This chapter details new items and gear typical of the fighting pits. As a rule of thumb these items are Rare outside the arenas. Gladiators usually don't "buy" equipment (they are mostly slaves), instead they are given pieces of gear for the arena only. Items are retrieved immediately after the fight ends, because nobody wants an armed gladiator outside the pits!

The prices are useful in case the players desire to buy these items outside the arena.

There is a new feature for items in *Gladiators of the Dominions*:

**Showy.** Any weapon or armor can be Showy. Showy items are impressive, precious looking ones: armor lacquered

with gold and silver, helms shaped to resemble impressive beasts and so on. Arena spectators are impressed by Showy items. Rules-wise a Showy item costs double the basic price and grants +1 to any Stir the Crowd or Celebrity roll (see Setting Rules).

If a hero has more than one Showy item the bonuses don't stack (apart from Item Sets, below).

*Item Sets:* If the hero has at least three Showy items (any combination of weapons and armor) he doubles the bonus.

*Example:* a gladiator fitted with a Showy sword, shield and suit of armor receives a bonus of +2.

## MELEE WEAPONS TABLE

TYPE	DAMAGE	WT	COST	NOTES
UNARMED				
Strangler's Ligature	Str+d4	-	10	See Notes
BLADES				
Caldeian Saber	Str+d6	4	400	See Notes, Rare outside Caldeia.
Red Blade of Kaleysha	Str+d8	6	450	See Notes, Rare outside Kyros
Spiked Chakram	Str+d4	2	250	Two grant +1 Parry and damage, can be thrown, See Notes



## EXOTIC WEAPONS

Lariat	-	3	100	Parry -1, Reach 5, +2 to Tricks, Disarm and Grapples, See Notes
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### FLAILS

Arena Chain	Str+d8	10	350	2 hands, Reach 2, ignore Parry and cover Bonus, -1 Parry, See Notes
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### POLEARMS

Claw Staff (wood)	Str+d6	6	600	2 hands, Reach 1, +1 Parry, Monk Weapon, see Notes
Claw Staff (metal)	Str+d8	12	900	2 hands, Reach 1, Monk Weapon, See Notes

## WEAPON MODIFICATION

HOOKED WEAPON	SPECIAL	+20%	+20%	SEE NOTES
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## RANGED WEAPONS TABLE

TYPE	RNG	DMG	COST	WT	STR	NOTES
Spiked Chakram	3/6/9	Str+d4	250	2	d4	-1 Throwing, See Notes
BLADED SHIELD						
Small	3/6/12	Str+d4	150	12	d4	See Notes
Medium	2/4/8	Str+d6	300	18	d6	See Notes
Large	1/2/4	Str+d8	600	30	d8	See Notes

## ARMOR TABLE

TYPE	ARMOR	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
Blind Helm	+3	6	100	Blind Hindrance, See Notes
Caldean Officer Helm	+2	4	400	Rare, See Notes
Gladiatorial Helm	+3	4	250	-1 Notice Rolls, See Notes
Red Helm of Kaleysha	+2	2	200	Rare, See Notes
Hooked Armor	Special	+20%	+20%	See Notes

## MUNDANE ITEMS TABLE

ITEM	COST	WEIGHT	NOTE
SPECIAL ADVENTURING GEAR			
Pit Leeches	200	-	Three doses, See Notes, Rare outside Tricarnia
SLAVES AND BEASTS			
Gladiator Slave	CV x 50	-	See Notes
Arena Beast	CV x 60	-	See Notes

## VEHICLES TABLE

VEHICLE	ACC./TS	TOUGH.	CREW	COST	NOTES
War Barge	2/6	10(2)	8+8	3000	Heavy Armor, See Notes
Ram	-	-	-	Special	See Notes

## WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

**Arena Chain.** A length of heavy chain with a metal hook on both ends, this arena weapon is very vicious, because it is difficult to parry (although unwieldy to use) and can be used to entangle the opponent and constrict him to death; it allows grapples at its Reach, grants +2 to any Fighting and opposed rolls when making a Grapple attack, and causes Str+d8 damage to grappled opponents.

**Caldeian Saber.** This type of slightly curved sword is the trademark weapon of the officers of the Caldeian army. It is somewhat thinner than regular swords of the Dominions, so the blade must be at least of iron to not break against other weapons (multiply the price accordingly). It is the favored weapon for very fast, agile fighters; if the user is in light encumbrance he can freely reroll (as if he used a Bennie) any attack made with the First Strike and Counterattack Edge and even free attacks against fleeing enemies, but only once per

round. In Caldeia this weapon is strictly limited to military officers, seeing it in the hands of strangers causes -4 to Charisma.

**Clawed Staff.** This very rare and exotic weapon is found only in Lhoban, and it is Rare even in these exotic lands. Basically it is a long staff ending in a carved claw, fitted with razor sharp talons. The legend says that the first specimens of these weapons were the desiccated arms of some demon. Clawed staves are basically weird-looking spears, but, in the hands of an Enlightened One, they demonstrate their real power. In fact the monks of the Far East can use their spiritual energy to power these weapons and actually animate the claw! *Before* rolling to attack, an Enlightened One can decide to spend a Power Point to animate the claw. If he hits, the weapon deals +2 damage to the victim and grants +2 to any Disarm attack roll. In case of multiple attacks (or multiple targets as per the Sweep Edge), the monk must pay 1 Power Point per target he wants to affect. These staves exist in two forms, the

lighter ones, made of carved wood, and the metal-cast ones, which are far heavier. Both are Monk Weapons, but they are usually wielded by evil monks, followers of the Obscurement (see *JCT*, page 83).

**Hooked Weapon.** Gladiators' weapons are often full of hooks, spikes and similar things, making them more impressive and more likely to rend flesh and to tear away pieces of the enemy's armor. In game terms a hooked weapon deals +1 damage when the user scores a raise. On the down side, a Hooked weapon, given the number of protrusions, breaks on a roll of 1-2 on the Fighting dice rather than on the standard 1 (see *GE*, page 101). Almost any melee weapon can exist in a hooked version; from swords to clubs and maces, even spears.

**Lariat.** A length of rope, ending in a hook, used to capture and break beasts - and riotous slaves and gladiators too. A lariat can be used to perform Agility Tricks at Reach with +2, Disarm attempts with the same bonus, or, as an alternative, to strangle opponents (+2 to Grapple rolls). This last option requires a Called Shot (-4) to the head. The best way to get rid of a lariat is cutting it, but they tend to be quite sturdy (Toughness 6).

**Red Blade of Kaleysha.** These slender saber-like swords are found only in Kyros and then only in the hands of the warrior priests of Kaleysha, Son of Etu, Bringer of Life through Death. The blades are of an intense red color, which, the tradition says, is caused by the blood of the countless lives taken by Kaleysha and offered to his mother.

In truth the coloration is due to the peculiar fabrication technique of the blade, which is tempered in the warm blood of a bull slaughtered in honor of the god. The

color of the blood in some manner enters into the metal and marks it forever. In the past the blood was that of a mighty warrior sacrificed on the altar of the deity.

Red Blades are very strong (despite being made of bronze they are treated as iron for the purposes of breaking) but their power is only expressed fully in the hands of a true believer.

When wielded by a character with the Priest Edge belonging to the cult of Kaleysha, they have AP 1, and if the priest has the Count the Deaths! Edge the duration of the Edge's effect is doubled. Stories also say that a Red Blade in the hands of a priest of Kayesha cannot break, but these aren't confirmed. Red Blades of Kaleysha are found only in Kyros, where they are Rare. A follower of the cult seeing one in the hands of a non-believer usually reacts at -4.

**Spiked Chakram.** This weapon is basically a chackram built to be used in melee. It is somewhat larger and thicker than a standard one, and has a flat part, used as a handle, and a long metal spike on the opposite side. It can also be thrown, but has a shorter range than the regular version. Spiked chackrams are lethal if used in matched pairs, one per hand. In this case the wielder receives +1 Parry and +1 damage.

**Strangler's Ligature.** A string or leather cord with a handle at both ends, or in certain cases, a long strip of silk. Whatever the material, the purpose of this item is simple: wrap it around the neck of the opponent and strangle him. More an assassin's weapon than a gladiator's, the strangler ligature is quite common in the pits because everybody, even an unarmed, heavily guarded gladiator, can improvise one easily. In game terms a Strangler's



Ligature deals Str+d4 damage during grapples and imposes a -2 penalty to the opponent's opposed rolls to get free. To be an effective weapon, it must be used on the neck (Called Shot at -4) so the common technique consists of stealthily approaching the victim from behind (hopefully getting The Drop) and then strangling him.

## ARMOR DESCRIPTIONS

**Bladed Shield.** A round shaped shield surrounded by a halo of long, serpentine blades, used only in the arena and by the Ebon Redeemers, a slave warrior caste of the Tricornian army. Usually made of reinforced leather with bronze blades, it is also called Flame Shield due the similarity of the blades to tongues of flame. It has all the functions of a shield but weights a lot more. This disadvantage is compensated for by two advantages: first, it can be used as melee weapon, dealing Str+d4 damage, and secondly, in the hand of a skilled (and strong) warrior it can be thrown at enemies, employing a long, full-shoulder move. It is Rare outside Tricornia.

**Blind Helm.** Originally used by the Tricornian Blind Maulers, a particular caste of gladiators, this is now used in many arenas. The Blind Helm is totally enclosed and the user is totally blind (as per the Hindrance). It also has a security lock so that the user cannot take it off (must be Lockpicked). As a positive side effect, it is very sturdy (+4 Armor) and makes called shots to the head almost impossible (the helm must be broken first, and it has Toughness 9). Usually the Blind Helm is used in unfair fights where a big, heavily-armored fighter with a Blind Helm is pitted against an agile and lightly-armored fighter.

**Caldeian Officer Helm.** The habit of having army officers fitted with impressive, beast-shaped helms, dates back to the Keronian Empire. It was probably a practical measure; the helm makes the commander easily recognizable by his men on the battlefield. Today only two races maintain this tradition. Not surprisingly they are the Tricornians and the Caldeians. In particular, the Caldeian army gives their officers a very recognizable helm, called the Shalak, which is made to resemble a particular type of beast, each of which is the symbol of one of the regiments of the army. In game terms the Shalak is a standard helm, but if worn by a character with the Command Edge, it grants +1" command radius per Rank and +1 to Intimidation rolls. Note that this item isn't currently sold, but only issued to officers. Wearing one of these without being an officer is a capital offense in Caldeia.

**Gladiatorial Helm.** Arena helms come in a number of forms: beast-shaped, with a visor, enclosed and so on. The specific appearance of the helm is left to the player, but rules-wise a Gladiatorial Helm, despite being sturdy and protective, causes -1 to Notice rolls because it hinders peripheral vision and muffles sounds.

**Red Helm of Kaleysha.** This conical, pointed metal helm has an intense red coloration because it is forged in the same manner and on the same day as the Red Blades of Kaleysha (see page 51). According to legend, Kaleysha used it to collect the blood of dead warriors and smear it on the holy navel of his mother Etu. In game terms, when the Red Helm is worn by a character who is a follower of Kaleysha with the Priest Edge, he receives +2 to Spirit rolls when praying for help (see GE page 73) and if he scores a raise he receives another Bennie, which can be shared with another character. There

are also rumors that the dying blood of a valiant warrior collected by a Priest of Kaleysha in his helm has great powers, but this is unconfirmed. Red Helms of Kaleysha are found only in Kyros, where they are Rare. A follower of the cult seeing one worn by a non-believer usually reacts at -4.

**Hooked Armor.** Armor can be fitted with hooks and spikes. Apart from making the user look more impressive, hooked armor has the chance to entangle and even break incoming weapons. In game terms, when fighting an opponent wearing Hooked Armor, the weapon breaking rule applies on 1-2 on the Fighting die, instead of just on a 1 (see *GE*, page 101). Wearing Hooked Armor is also useful during Grapples: the wearer gains +1 to Grapple rolls and to Grappling damage.

## MUNDANE ITEM DESCRIPTIONS

**Arena Beast.** Crowds love to see animals and creatures of any sort being slaughtered by (or slaughtering) gladiators in the pits. Hunters and beast providers take great risks to find and capture savage animals for one reason only: they are handsomely paid. The price of a beast is 60 times its Combat Value (see page 55). Increase or diminish this for very rare or very common specimens. Use the same guidelines if the heroes want to buy a particular beast outside the arena. In this case note that the price is for a wild animal (which is likely to attack its owner); a tamed example can cost up to twice this. If the heroes capture a beast of some sort and try to sell it, they can expect to receive around 50% of the price (or you can use the trading rules in *JCT*, page 92).

**Gladiator Slave.** Slaves are a precious commodity in many parts of the Dominions. A good fighting slave is very valuable. You can easily calculate the price of a gladiator slave by multiplying his Combat Value (see page 55) by 50. If the gladiator is already known in the arena, add (or subtract if negative) his Celebrity to his Base Combat Value. Note that the multiplier can change a lot depending on the region and particular events: in areas where there are lots of slaves (such as Caldeia and Tricarnia) reduce it by 10 or more.

**Pit Leeches.** Tricarnians are very fond of nasty creatures, in particular they love leeches, at least the higher castes; the lower ones are terrified of them, because the worst punishment a Tricarnian slave can suffer is being used as leech fisherman, which means simply throwing the slave in leech-infested waters, retrieving him (or his body) covered in blood-suckers and then removing them. Tricarnians do lots of creative things with leeches; they have learned that nurturing them with Lotus-mixed blood can achieve several effects. Pit Leeches in particular are used as painkillers: when a wounded soldier must fight urgently, one or more of these nasty beasts is administered, which drains bad blood and injects soothing substances. Rules-wise Pit Leeches grant you the Improved Nerves of Steel Edge for 24 hours. On the down side, the numbing effect of the Leeches is so strong that the user doesn't feel his actual condition and can easily drive himself to death; after the effect of the Leeches ends he must make a Vigor roll with a penalty equal to double the number of Wounds suffered. If he fails he suffers a level of Fatigue, plus one if the modified result is zero or less. This can lead to exhaustion and even death. Pit Leeches are stored in earthenware vases, and must be fed with blood (not necessarily human)



once every three days. Each vase contains enough beasts for three uses. They are Rare everywhere, even in arenas, apart from in Tricarnia.

## VEHICLES DESCRIPTIONS

**War Barge.** These barges are small ships used in Naumachiae (see page 107). They are propelled by a sail but during battle they are moved by rowing (they host up to eight rowers). To keep their speed high (important for ramming), the crew must make a group Boating roll. With a success they maintain their current speed, with a raise they accelerate by 2 points, up to Top Speed.

**Ram.** A nasty metal point, attached to the bow of a ship, used to smash enemies' hulls. To hit with a Ram the helmsman of the attacking ship must win an opposed Boating roll against the helmsman of the defending ship. If the attacker wins, the defending ship suffers 1d6 damage per 2 points of Speed of the attacker, plus another d6 if the attacking helmsman won the opposed roll with a raise or better.

The Ram is a Heavy Weapon and costs 10% of the base cost of the ship to which is fitted.



# SETTING RULES

This chapter introduces several setting rules specific to the arena. As always the GM decides whether to use them or not.

## COMBAT VALUE

Combat Value (CV) is a quick-and-dirty way to evaluate the fighting power and lethality of characters and creatures alike. It is useful for a number of things, from calculating the price of gladiator slaves and beasts, to the working out the odds of a fight in the arena.

To calculate the Combat Value of a character you must sum the following factors:

Die type of the most used combat skill .....	+
Toughness .....	+
Average damage* .....	+
(Number of Edges, Powers and Special Abilities**) x3 .....	=

---

Base Combat Value

[\*] Calculate average damage as half the maximum result of his best weapon. For example, a character with Strength d6, is armed with a short sword (Str+d6) and a dagger (Str+d4), his average damage is calculated on 2d6, so 12/2=6.

[\*\*] Apply as follows:

Consider only Edges and Abilities with an actual use in combat (for example, Brawny and Iron Will apply, Connections (Merchants) doesn't).

Improved versions of Edges count as two Edges.

Size (+X) counts as X Special Abilities. Weaknesses and in general negative Special Abilities count -1.

To obtain the final Combat Value multiply the Base Combat Value by the appropriate number for the character's type, as shown below.

Extra .....	x1
Right Hand .....	x1.5
Henchman .....	x2
Wild Card .....	x3

*Examples.*

*Shangor the Barbarian (Fighting d8, Toughness: 7, Average damage: 8, Number of Edges: 4x3=12, Wild Card), has a Base Combat Value of 35. Being a Wild Card, the total is multiplied by 3. Combat Value: 115.*

*A Wolf (Fighting d6, Toughness: 4, Average damage: 5, Number of Special Abilities: 4(-1 per Size(-1)) = 3x3=9, Extra), has Base Combat Value of 24. Being an Extra, the total is unchanged. Combat Value: 24.*

### GM'S TIP: ACCURACY OF THE COMBAT VALUE

*Combat Value can be used as a guideline to balance encounters and as an alternative method for calculating the costs of models for Showdown. If you choose to do this, be warned that it isn't very accurate, because it sacrifices the granularity of the calculation method in Showdown for speed and ease of use.*

### GM'S TIP: COMBAT VALUE AND BATTLE VALUE

*Battle Value is an abstraction introduced in TB. You can use Combat Value/15 to calculate the base Battle Value of individual troops (round down).*

*Examples:*

*Light Infantry (Fighting: d6, Toughness: 6, Average damage: 6, Number of Edges: 0, Extra). Combat Value: 18 Battle Value: 1*

*Medium Infantry (Fighting: d8, Toughness: 7, Average damage: 8, Number of Edges: 1x3=3 Extra) Combat Value: 26, Battle Value: 2*

## DUELS

*Savage Worlds* is designed to handle fights with a lot of opponents, and having them fall down with a single blow is a positive feature. But fights in the arena must last longer to entertain people, especially one-to-one combats.

The GM can promote any character in the arena to Henchman status so long as this doesn't bog down the game. There isn't a precise method for deciding when to apply this rule, but when the total number of fighters is four or less it can be used without problems.

## SPILLING BLOOD

Crowds love blood: a gladiator spilling a lot of it quickly becomes popular. In game terms the character must declare his attack is going to Spill Blood before making the attack roll. He suffers -2 to attack and -4 to damage rolls.

If the attack manages to actually Shake the opponent or better, it is considered a Good Deed (see below).

## FLESH WOUNDS

The greater part of fights in the arena aren't to the death, and they aren't even meant to severely injure the other fighter; you have just to spill some blood, and disable your opponent but not in a permanent manner. This actually depends on the decisions of individuals: some pit fighters are so nasty (or untrained) as to fight wild-eyed in any situation. Obviously they aren't very popular among their peers.

As a matter of fact, no character with the Bloodthirsty Hindrance, under the effect of the Berserk Edge or with Smarts d4 can use the following rules.

In game terms when gladiators are fighting in a "friendly" way consider each Wound a Flesh Wound.

Run combat as normal, applying damage as usual, but when a character is Incapacitated and rolls on Vigor he adds an additional die to the roll, called the Flesh Wound Die, equal to the Vigor die. If the Flesh Wound die scores the same result as the Vigor die apply the actual result as normal, otherwise consider the Incapacitation roll to have scored a success.

This rule simulates non-lethal wounds, but leaves a little space for accidents and bad luck.

This applies to multi-wound characters (Wild Cards and Henchmen).

For Extras it is a little different: when they roll for Vigor to check their survival (see Aftermath, *SWD* page 78) they roll the Flesh Wound Die too: if the roll scored isn't a double, they are considered to have scored a raise (so they are fully restored to health).

If a character suffers a mix of Flesh Wounds and normal Wounds, ignore this rule and consider him actually wounded.

*Example: Zandorra the Amazon is badly beaten after an amicable duel in the arena with Shangor. The gladiatrix suffered three Wounds and is Incapacitated, but her friend inflicted only Flesh Wounds. Zandorra rolls on Vigor (d6), with the Wild Dice (d6) and the Flesh Wound dice (d6). She rolls 4 (Vigor dice), 3 (Wild Dice) and 2 (Flesh Wound Dice). Having suffered three Wounds she would subtract 3 from the roll, resulting in 1 as her best result. She would have died! Luckily, since the Flesh Wound result is different from the Vigor die result (2 vs 4) she is considered to have rolled a success, so no serious consequences for her apart from some new scars.*

## CELEBRITY

Gladiators, at least ones surviving a few battles, quickly become famous and are worshipped by the crowd. The actual success of a pit fighter is handled abstractly through his Celebrity value, which can be either positive or negative. It usually ranges from from -4 (the reputation of a

coward, or someone hated by the crowd) to +4 (worshipped by the crowd), but rarely it can reach -5 or +5.

The higher the Celebrity of the gladiator, the more he is known and loved by people. It also represents his reputation and importance within the micro-universe of the arena: a gladiator with negative or very low Celebrity is mistreated by guards and lanistae alike, he receives meager food rations, nobody will tend his wounds after fight, and he can even suffer some serious mobbing by his colleagues. On the other hand a gladiator with high Celebrity will be respected, well-nourished and lodged, and he is even allowed servants and concubines.

The effects of the various Celebrity levels are summarized in the Celebrity Table below. Here is an explanation of the various columns.

**Celebrity Modifier:** This is a Charisma modifier, applied to anyone who recognizes the gladiator. It is also applied to Celebrity rolls.

**Effects:** Celebrity also brings advantages and problems, in the form of Edges, Hindrances and special modifiers; they are all described below.

**Promotion:** The number of success and raises you need to score in the Celebrity roll to achieve the *next* Celebrity level. Note that if you have values of -4 or +4, you need to score a minimum to maintain the current level. If you fail to do so, you automatically drop a level (which can have dire consequences if you are at -4).

**Typical Rank:** Success with the crowd isn't always linked to real skill, so no real Rank requirement exists to reach a certain Celebrity, although it is easier to be



promoted if the Rank of the gladiator is at least equal to the Typical Rank. The GM can also use the Typical Rank as a rough

guide to how powerful an NPC with this Celebrity should be.

## Celebrity Table

CELEBRITY MOD.	EFFECT	PROMOTION	TYPICAL RANK
-5	Unworthy of the Arena	Not possible (see notes)	-
-4	Outcast	Success to maintain the current level otherwise he becomes Unworthy of the Arena	Veteran
-3	Enemy Hindrance (Minor)	Raise	Seasoned
-2	Disliked	Success	Novice
-1	Outsider Hindrance	Success	Novice
0		Raise	Novice
+1	Luck Edge (Arena Only)	Two Raises	Seasoned
+2	Pampered	Three Raises	Seasoned
+3	Greater Luck Edge (Arena Only)	Four Raises	Veteran
+4	Arena Star	Two Raises to maintain the current level, with four Raises he becomes Hero of the Pits	Heroic
+5	Hero of the Pits	Not possible (see notes)	Legendary

Here follow explanations of the various effects of Celebrity:

**Unworthy of the Arena.** The Gladiator is totally unadapted to life in the pits, and he is judged Unworthy of the Arena. In this case his fate is totally in the hands of the GM; he can be sent to the mines, used as a sacrifice in some unholy rite or simply killed and his body thrown into the beasts' cages as meat. A gladiator in this state should quickly look for a way to escape from the pits if he values his life...

**Outcast.** This man is only a step away from being considered Unworthy of the Arena. Nobody cares for his physical health, and he only receives the worst scraps of food, the leftovers of other slaves and of beasts.

He suffers -2 to all natural Healing rolls and, in addition, at the beginning of each session he must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue due the casual beatings inflicted on him by guards and other slaves.

On the plus side, the Outcast must be very strong to survive this harsh condition: the first time a character drops so far down, he can make a Spirit (-2) roll. In case of success he permanently gains a die type in Vigor. If he fails he doesn't gain the die type, but can retry at the beginning of the next session.

**Disliked.** This gladiator counts for very little in the arena: guards, lanistae, and other gladiators don't like him very much.

He is given poor food rations and his wounds are left untended. He suffers -1 to all natural healing rolls.

**Pampered.** A Pampered character is respected, well nurtured and treated. He receives +1 to all natural healing rolls because his wounds are tended well and he is given good food. He is allowed to own clothes and servants, and he is given decent lodgings in the pits.

**Arena Star.** He is the epitome of gladiators. Men speak of him with reverence and girls faint at the mere sight of him. He receives +1 to all natural Healing rolls and can make an additional healing roll every five days, because he is cared for by the best surgeons and Lotusmasters of the city. He is lodged in gorgeous rooms, eats only the best food and he is often given marvelous concubines (if he doesn't already have important lovers, such as noblewomen or princesses).

**Hero of the Pits.** The Gladiator is publically acclaimed as a Hero of the Pits. This means two things: first, he is rewarded with the Hero of the Pits Edge for free (see page 47), and second that the crowd asks for his freedom. Usually the Master of Games agrees to these requests, because refusing can mean a revolt. Note that the gladiator *can* refuse his freedom: in this case his Celebrity returns to +4, but he is given a special Bennie, the Pit Hero (or Heroine) Bennie.

The Pit Hero Bennie works as normal, but when it is spent to reroll, it grants +2 to the result. This Bennie is kept between sessions until spent, and the mere fact of owning it gives +1 to Charisma.

A character who is acclaimed Hero of the Pits several times receives the free

Edge only once, but receives the Pit Hero Bennie each time.

## CELEBRITY RANGE

Usually a gladiator is a celebrity in his own city and its immediate surroundings. If outside this range, draw a card from the Action Deck: if it is red, his fame has reached even this place. For far away countries (GM's judgment) he is recognized only with a Heart.

## CELEBRITY DEPLETION

Celebrity must be nurtured and maintained. This means that if a gladiator quits fighting, his Celebrity drops by one level per month, till it reaches zero. This reduction also works for negative Celebrity, meaning in this case that the bad deeds of an unpopular pit fighter slowly fade away from the memory of the people.

*Example: Shangor the Barbarian has Celebrity +2, while his dreaded friend Kurasta the Poisoner has Celebrity -2. The lanista owning the two gladiators decides to keep them away from the pits for a month, selling their services as bodyguards to a noble. When the pit fighters came back to the arena, the crowd has partially forgotten their deeds: Shangor's Celebrity drops to +1, while Kurasta's raises to -1.*

## BECOMING A CELEBRITY

The section above showed the benefits of being famous (and the dangers of being unpopular). Now, it is time to explain how a gladiator can earn his place among the legends of the arena!

Player characters start with Celebrity 0.

Depending on their deeds, they will gain or lose Celebrity quickly.

The commonest way to achieve Celebrity is by fighting in the pits, and possibly winning.

If the gladiator survives a fight, regardless of whether he won or lost, he *must* make a Celebrity roll. This is a normal Trait roll using any one of Spirit, Intimidation, Persuasion or Taunt (player's choice).

This represents the attitude of the gladiator towards the crowd: if he simply roars his fury, it would be an Intimidation roll, if he makes a courtly bow after a kill it could be Persuasion, and so on.

The choice of the Trait and the actual behavior of the gladiator in the fight or immediately afterwards can lead to some good role-play (and can mean a handy extra bonus, up to +2).

The roll is then applied to the modifiers listed in the Celebrity Roll Modifiers Table below.

If the roll is successful, and the hero achieves the number of successes and raises listed in the Promotion column of the Celebrity Table at his current level (see page 58), he is automatically promoted by one level.

If he is successful but he doesn't manage to reach the number of raises required, his celebrity doesn't change, but raises aren't lost; for each success and raise he gains a Notch on his Sword (see below).

If he fails the roll with a positive number, his Celebrity remains the same.

If he fails the roll, with a critical failure or with a negative number, he loses a level of Celebrity.

No character can gain or lose more than one Celebrity level per roll.

### Celebrity Roll Modifiers Table

CIRCUMSTANCE	MODIFIER
Gladiator's Charisma (including Celebrity)	Charisma Value
Losing the Fight	-4 (or -Gladiator's Rank x2)
Deeds	From +4 to -4
Relative Power	From +4 to -4

The Modifiers are explained below.

**Losing the Fight:** Surviving, but losing a fight, is a bad thing for a gladiator's reputation. The character receives a penalty equal to his Rank x -2 (Novice: 1, Seasoned: 2 and so on) *or* -4, whichever is worse. So, a Veteran gladiator losing a fight rolls with a penalty of  $3 \times -2 = -6$ .

**Deeds:** Gladiatorial fights are mainly shows, and the crowd loves impressive acts during combats.

A Deed is anything showy the gladiator did in the fight: a particular good trick, a gesture of chivalry (such as letting a fallen opponent rise up), Spilling Blood (see above) or even a Gory Kill (as per the Gory Fighter Edge, see page 42).

Each Good Deed grants +1 to the roll. On the other hand Bad Deeds, like quickly dispatching an enemy, hitting an opponent from behind and so on cause -1 to the roll.

Usually the GM judges, depending on the type of arena, what is considered a Good



or Bad Deed. In case of doubt, draw a card from the Action Deck: if it is red it is a Good Deed, if it is black it is a Bad Deed.

**Relative Power:** Simply sum up the Combat Value of each side, and subtract the higher from the lower. Count one point of modifier for each 50 points of difference, round to the next integer. The result is negative if the character is stronger than the enemy and positive if he is weaker.

*Example. Shangor (Combat Value 115) is pitted against six ferocious Nandals (total Combat Value:  $31 \times 6 = 186$ ). The difference is 71, against the barbarian. It is a hard fight, six versus one, so Shangor receives +1 to the Relative Power modifier.*

## NOTCHES ON YOUR SWORD

As can be seen reading the table, the road to Celebrity is a steep one, requiring more raises every time. This can be achieved with a single, great exploit, but also by slowly building a reputation.

Every time a character scores at least one raise in the Celebrity roll, but not enough to promote him, he marks it on the character's sheet as a Notch on his Sword. Characters can have a number of Notches up to their Spirit die type (so a character with Spirit d6 can have up to 6 Notches). Each Notch can be spent in future Celebrity rolls to gain +1 to the roll. The decision to spend notches can be made *after* the roll is known.

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Here are some examples of how gladiators lose and gain Celebrity.

*Examples: Shangor the Barbarian (Celebrity +1) wins a battle in the arena against three rabid Nandals and makes a Celebrity roll. The player chooses to roar at the crowd, raising the severed head of one of the dead Nandals (using Intimidation). Shangor scores 14. Two raises! Shangor is promoted to Celebrity +2.*

*In the same day Shangor's friend, Zandorra the Amazon (Celebrity +1) dispatches a dangerous leopard and makes a Celebrity roll. Zandorra's player announces that she mocks the crowd, inviting them to come down in the pit with her (using Taunt). Zandorra scores 10. One raise! Since Zandorra needed two raises to be promoted the unused raise becomes a Notch on her Sword.*

*The last one to fight this afternoon is Kurasta the Poisoner (Celebrity -2) who quickly dispatches Kurd, a Tricarnian retiarius, using poison, thus receiving the curses of the crowd. Kurasta's player tries to explain his deed by speaking to the crowd (uses Persuasion). He scores -2 and has no Notch on his Sword to invest! Kurasta loses one Celebrity level, going down to -3. From tonight he must sleep with one eye open, because Kurd certainly had some friends who want revenge (Kurasta receives the Enemy (Minor) Hindrance).*

# CROWD MECHANICS

The Crowd can be really important during a fight in the arena. Encouragements and curses alike can deeply influence the morale of the fighters.

## STIRRING THE CROWD

Once per combat every non-Extra gladiator can try to Stir the Crowd. This is

an opposed Taunt roll against the highest Taunt skill among the enemies. With a success he immediately gains a Bennie. In case of large groups of characters they make a cooperative roll. If a side wins the Bennie, it is considered "shared" among the group until spent.

Bennies obtained by Stirring the Crowd must be spent before leaving the arena or they expire.

## JUDGMENT OF THE CROWD

A staple of many gladiatorial movies and books; when a fighter falls down, the crowd, with its shouts, decides his destiny. At this point the Lord (usually the Editor or the Master of Games), judging the pleas for mercy and the invocations for death, shows his thumb up or down, ordering the winning gladiator to spare or dispatch the loser.

The following rules simulate the tension of these moments. Both fighters must make a Spirit (or Persuasion, their choice) roll modified by Charisma. The GM draws three cards from the Action Deck and puts them on the table, face up. At this point both the loser and the winner draw a card from the deck plus one for each success and raise on the previous roll. They must make the best poker hand they can, using the drawn cards plus the cards on the (which are shared).

If the Incapacitated fighter wins, it means that the crowd decides to spare him, if he loses, it means that the crowd wants his death. Then the Master of Game or the Host puts his thumb up or down accordingly.

The winning gladiator at this point should execute the will of the crowd: refusing to carry it out can cause dire consequences. At the least, he immediately loses one

Celebrity level and one Bennie. In many arenas refusal is punished by death.

The GM should use this rule with moderation during climax scenes.

### GM'S TIP: JUDGMENT OF THE LORD

*Actually, during the Judgment of the Crowd the person really deciding is the Lord; he can ignore what the crowd asks for and decide by himself. This isn't very popular and can enrage the spectators terribly. When this happens, the GM should secretly draw a card from the Action Deck: if it is a face card it means that a major revolt happens in the arena (see page 91)!*

*This can be the right moment for some desperate gladiators to escape...*

## BETS

People go to the arena because they like seeing men spilling their blood, but also because it is a good way to get rich, or at least to lose all their money trying to. Nobles, commoners, lanistae and even some gladiators, using intermediaries, put bets on fights.

Note that bets aren't simply on who wins or who loses, the people of the Dominions gamble on a number of things; who draws first blood, how many blows are necessary to break the shield of a gladiator, and so on.

A good gambler can earn a living from it, but the majority of them will end up broke.

The following quick-and-dirty rules, a slight variation of the core *Savage Worlds* gambling rules, allow the group to experience this engaging part of the world of the arena!

Follow the steps below:

**Finding a Bookmaker.** The first thing to do is find a bookmaker and place your bet: in most arenas, brokers accept bets up to 250 Moons, so no roll is required to wager such a sum or less. If the player wants to gamble more, he must make a Streetwise roll; with a success he finds a bookmaker accepting up to 1000 Moons, add another 1000 Moons per raise. Characters with the Lowlife Edge add +2 to the roll.

Note that the higher the bet accepted, the riskier the wager (see below).

**Risks of Betting.** At this point the GM secretly draws a card from the Action Deck, plus one per every 1000 Moons the bookmaker accepts; the more money is involved, the greater the risk of the whole business. If a Deuce is dealt it means bad news; maybe the bookmaker fled with all the money, he accepted too many bets and cannot pay the winners or maybe there was even some match-fixing. Whatever the reason all bets are lost, regardless of the result of the dice in subsequent steps.

**Gamble!** At this point the actual bet must be placed; the player decides how much to bet, and how much risk to accept; obviously the more risky the bet, the more it pays, but the less likely it is to happen. This is done in an abstract way: the gambler (not the GM) chooses a modifier between +4 (very likely, pays very little) and -4 (very unlikely, pays a lot).

Then he makes a Gambling roll, with the chosen modifier, and checks the results below.

*Critical failure or negative result.* Disaster! The gambler loses all his money!

*Failure.* Not very good. The gambler loses half the sum he bet.

*Success.* The gambler recovers the money wagered, plus he receives 25% gaining for each -1 modifier he chose. On the other hand, for each +1 he chose, he receives 25% less.

*Raise(s).* As above, but the gambler also gains 100% of the amount bet per raise.

*Example: Dingus of Jalizar wants to place a very high bet, 500 Moons, his savings and those of his friends, on the outcome of a duel in the Imperial Arena of Faberterra. First he looks for a broker who will accept such a high bet. He rolls on Streetwise (+2 because he has the Lowlife Edge) and scores a success, so he find his man, Jakko the Fat, accepting high bets in the shady colonnades near the arena's gateway. The GM draws two cards from the Action Deck, and picks the Deuce of Clubs. Dingus doesn't know it, but he is going to lose all his money!*

*The oblivious Dingus chooses a modifier (-2), deciding to bet on a quite unlikely event: the number of wounds a certain gladiator will suffer before falling down. The Jalizaran adventurer rolls on Gambling, scoring a raise!*

*This means that he recovers the 500 Moons he bet and gains 100% (for the raise) +50% (25% for each -1 he chose). Total:  $500 \times 150\% = 750$  Moons plus the 500 Moons he originally bet.*

*Not bad for a night's work! But when the adventurer goes to collect the bet he gets a nasty surprise: Jakko the Fat cannot be found anywhere! Has that son of a dog escaped with the money or has something nasty happened to him? With a sigh, the Jalizaran thinks about how to break the bad news to his comrades. Maybe he should see if he can find Jakko...*



## GM'S TIP: BETS AND FOOLING THE HEROES

*The card drawing mechanics add some extra uncertainty to betting, this is to avoid heroes becoming too rich. The GM is encouraged not to use this to punish the players; being fooled in a bet should be used to create some new plot thread or add an interesting twist to an existing one.*

## HERO'S JOURNAL: MATCH-FIXING AND BETS

*As every Jalizaran can tell you, since the first time a man bet on a combat, race or other similar event, someone has tried to fix the match.*

*Match-fixing is an excellent way to get rich. While the exact nature of the fix is left to the GM and the inventiveness of the players, rules-wise, if you know the outcome of the match in advance you double the earnings from your bet. On the other hand, fixing is also a good way to get in trouble; during the Risks of Betting step, if a three is dealt, someone has discovered the fix, with effects left to the GM's discretion.*

## AFTER THE DUEL EVENTS

Surviving a day of fights in the arena is an experience to be remembered. At the end of a day of combat (training days don't count) each surviving hero *may* decide to draw a card from the Action Deck and see if something special happens to him. Only Clubs (bad events) and Hearts (good events) count. Note that this is in addition to any After the Adventure event.

**Deuce – Hearts and Minds.** The deeds of the gladiator in the arena moved the attitude of the crowd towards him in some way. If the card drawn is a Club, the people boo and taunt him, causing a loss of

Celebrity level. With a Heart the opposite happens; the spectators particularly enjoyed his performance, and the gladiator immediately gains a Celebrity level. Note that this event cannot move Celebrity higher than +4 or lower than -4.

**Three – Something Shady.** The hero is contacted by someone from the darker parts of the arena world; this can be some bookmaker asking him to fix a match, an arena guard wanting to sell him favors, members of the Burned Hands preparing an escape plan or whatever the GM devises. This illegal contact asks the character to do something potentially dangerous in the next session. If the character accepts he gains a new, permanent Connection, if he refuses he permanently acquires the Enemy (Minor) Hindrance, limited to the arena's world. If this event happens again, accepting or refusing the favor can grant a +2 to the Connection roll, or worsen the Enemy (Minor) to Major.

**Four to Five – Rest.** The character fought well, so he is rewarded by his owner with good food, wine and maybe some company. He automatically recovers all Wounds he suffered.

**Six to Seven – Munificence** This result applies only if the gladiator won all the fights of the day. In certain cases the crowd throws money, flowers, or even jewels to the winning gladiator. Or, more discreetly, an admirer sends him gifts. This is one of those lucky cases! Gladiators are allowed to accept these gifts and to keep them.

The first thing to decide is the die type of the Munificence Die. It starts at d6, and is raised by one step for each of these factors: the card drawn is a Heart, the gladiator has a Patron/Love Interest (see below). At this point roll a number of Munificence Dice equal to the Charisma (Celebrity

included) of the gladiator (minimum one), sum up them and multiply the result by 10. Remember that each die can ace! This is the total worth, in Moons, of the Munificence.

*Example: Zandorra draws a 6 of Hearts. She has a Patron/Love Interest at the moment, so her Munificence dice is d10. She has Charisma +4 (+2 for being Attractive, plus +2 Celebrity). So she throws 4d10, resulting in: 10, 8, 10, 5. The two tens ace, she rerolls them for a total of 15, 8, 14, 5. The sum is 42, which, multiplied by 10 gives 420 Moons! Zandorra is getting rich!*

**Eight – Enemy/Friend.** The gladiator did something during the day that earned him the friendship (or enmity) of someone. It could be that he spared a wounded opponent or that he killed the brother of another pit fighter. Whatever the reason, if the card drawn is a Club he gains the Enemy (Minor) Hindrance, if it is a Heart he gains the Connection Edge. Either lasts till the end of the next scenario.

**Nine – New Trick/Niggling Injury.** The fights of today weren't without consequences. If the card drawn is red the gladiator learned a new trick from his opponents. Mark on the character sheet a New Trick: the hero can decide to spend it at any moment to gain +4 to a Trick maneuver. These sorts of tricks work only once, so it must be cancelled after use. If the card drawn was black, and the character suffered a Wound during the fight, this means that the blow was harder than it seemed, or maybe the cut got infected. Whatever the cause, he must immediately roll on the Injury Table (see *SWD* page 69); the effects last for the current and the next session.

**Ten – Favor of the Crowd.** Applies only if the character won all the fights of the

day. The character is favored by the crowd, and this fact should be written on the character sheet. The next time he must face the Judgment of the Crowd he draws three extra cards. The Favor of the Crowd is lost when used in this way.

**Jack – Nickname.** Crowds love iconic figures and they give the gladiators nicknames: Some of them became so popular that, even years later, former gladiators are recognized by their nickname. The gladiator who draws this card receives a nickname, or if already has one, he chooses an additional effect from the list below. The first thing to do is decide what the nickname is. Several methods are presented in the sidebar on page 67. Rules-wise the character must choose one of the following effects: +2 to Stir the Crowd rolls (arena only), +1 to Intimidation rolls, +1 to Taunt rolls, +1 Charisma. Each effect can be chosen only once. Nicknames are usually only known locally, they use the rules for Celebrity Range (see page 59).

**Queen – Lover/Patron.** The character is the object of a strong interest from someone. If the card drawn is red, the character becomes the lover of someone important; a noblewoman, a rich merchant's wife or something similar, while if it is black he finds only a rich protector (so no romantic relationship is involved). Note that a lover isn't necessary beautiful and young, or a patron kind and forgiving, but she (or he) is usually Filthy Rich (as per the Edge) or has up to three different Connections (the player must choose one of those two options). The gladiator can use the assets of his Lover/Patron; every time he wants to use their Edges (for example to buy a particularly costly item) he must make a Persuasion (or Smarts (-2)) roll. With a success or more he can freely use the Edge, but if he

rolls a critical failure, the lover/patron is so upset that she abruptly cuts off the affair.

If this card is drawn twice with the same suit, the Lover/Patron is so influential that the gladiator can use both the Connections and the Filthy Rich Edge.

### **King – the Arena is a Harsh Mistress.**

Arena fights are harsh but effective teachers, better than many hours of training with lanistae or sparring partners. Only a gladiator who suffered at least a Wound (or was Shaken by a wounding effect) can benefit from this card. First, any roll to heal the wound suffers -2 because it is really vicious, if he was only Shaken the cut is worse than it looks and after the combat becomes a non-Soakable Wound. But the pain teaches the gladiator a couple of things about fighting. In game terms, the next time a character advances, if he chooses to acquire a Combat Edge, he can ignore the Rank requirements. If he chooses to raise a combat skill (Fighting, Shooting or Throwing), it counts as being lower than the controlling attribute, regardless of the actual value. If he chooses other types of advancement, the effect of this event is wasted.

**Ace – Secret.** The hero inadvertently witnesses or discovers a secret of one of the many dwellers of the arena: it could be the secret of a guard, a fellow gladiator, even of his own lanista or pit owner. If the card drawn is red, the secret is a potential lever to blackmail or obtain something from a character (+4 to reaction rolls toward that individual), if it is black, it is potentially dangerous.

**Joker – Gift.** The hero receives a lavish present of some sort from an admirer, a lover, a patron or even his owner; this could be a mundane item (like Showy armor), a horse or carriage, a slave or even

a house. If the card drawn is red, the hero is particularly lucky and receives a Relic of some type. In game terms, consider the average value of the item as around 200 Moons x (Charisma + Celebrity).

### **HERO'S JOURNAL: NICKNAMES**

*Nicknames add an extra layer of personalization to a character. Even years later (in game time) a character can be recognized by his nickname, earned for deeds done in the past. The commonest way for a hero to earn a nickname is in the arena, but other occasions are possible, for example, in the army or in a Band (see TB). Nicknames must be cool, impressive and possibly evocative. Giving a hero a mocking nickname isn't in the spirit of the Sword and Sorcery genre (but can be done, if you are running a humorous campaign).*

*Here follows several ways to determinate the Nickname of a character.*

**Player's Choice.** *This is the commonest method: the player invents his own nickname. If he is stuck, he can use the Random Method (see below).*

**GM's Choice.** *As above, but the GM decides what the nickname of the gladiator is.*

**Party Choice.** *This is the funniest method: each person at the table (GM, players and even spectators if present), secretly writes his name and a proposed nickname on a piece of paper and hands it to the GM. At this point the GM reads them aloud (keeping the author anonymous) and each person at the table casts a vote. The most voted-for nickname becomes the chosen one. In case of ties, the GM's vote counts double. The person inventing the winning name, whether he is a player or the GM, receives a Bennie.*

**Random Method.** *If you are completely stuck you can roll a d12 two times, and check the table below. The two entries must be combined to form a nickname. Different alternatives are given, to avoid silly or inconsistent nicknames (but that can always*



happen, this being a random method; in this case simply reroll from scratch).

Example: Shangor the Barbarian receives a nickname, and the GM decides to randomly select it: rolling 2 and 2 he is given the option of Weather phenomenon and Body part (pick one). Among the possible combinations, the one suiting best Shangor

is Thunder and as body part his fist: So, from today the Imperial Arena of Faberterra will know him as the famous Thunderfist...

## Nickname Random Generator Table

DIZ	FIRST RESULT	SECOND RESULT
1	Meat/Bone/Blood...	...killer/slayer/basher/slasher
2	<i>Weather phenomenon</i> (pick one)...	... <i>Body part</i> (pick one)
3	<i>Race</i> (pick one)...	...son/daughter/father/mother
4	Big/Small/Hard/Fast...	...drinker/eater
5	Dark/Light...	... <i>Armor part</i> (pick one)
6	Swift/Slow...	... <i>Weapon</i> (pick one)
7	Mad/Holy...	...whisper/laugh
8	Night/Dawn...	...dancer/jumper
9	Savage/Deadly...	...tear/laughter
10	<i>Number</i> (pick one)...	...wind/wave/mountain
11	<i>Color</i> (pick one)...	<i>Beast</i> (pick one)
12	The...	...forgiver/avenger



# GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

# RUNNING THE GAME

This chapter tells the GM how to effectively use the arena, and the gladiators' world in general, in his game.

## THE ROLE OF THE ARENA

There are several levels of possible use for this book, and each of them will change your gaming experience in some way.

**Gladiator Background.** This is the least intrusive way. Your game will not be built around gladiators, pits and so on, but some of your player characters will have a gladiatorial background. This basically means they have access to all the rules, Edges and gear from this book, and can use them in normal adventures. We took particular care to keep the material balanced with the rest of the system, so you needn't worry that a gladiator character is stronger than the others.

**Occasionally in the Arena.** This will be probably the commonest way to use this sourcebook. Arenas and fighting pits are a staple of Sword and Sorcery stories: heroes are usually captured, thrown into the pits and must escape in some manner. Note that this style of game presupposes that the presence of the party in the pits is only temporary. In this case you will find the

new rules, Edges and gear, and most of the Setting Rules useful. Probably you don't have to bother with the Celebrity rules, because if the heroes spend very little time in the pits they won't be very famous (or if they do, they will be forgotten quickly). Nevertheless the rules are made so that they can learn and have a tangible sign of their time in the arena (such as earning a Nickname or learning a New Trick).

**Arena-Based Campaign.** This is the "hardcore" use of this book: the arena and the gladiators' world is the focus of the campaign, and all the party is involved in the pits. Note that this doesn't mean all the players must be gladiators (but they can be if they want); you will learn in this chapter there is much more you can do in the arena, apart from killing and getting killed. Note that an arena-based campaign doesn't need to be totally set in the pits: as explained below, an arena-based campaign must include ways to break out and temporarily leave the Blood Sports. In this type of game you'll use all the rules of this book, and you should pay particular attention to the Celebrity Rules because getting famous (and the pace at which you achieve success) will be a key factor in your game.

The majority of games will not fall neatly into only one of these categories, but will be probably be spread across several of them.



# THE ARENA AS A SETTING

The simplest way to design an arena-based scenario is by playing the combats: the heroes, pitted against stronger opponents each time, win their liberty in the end. This can be fun in the beginning, but after a while it is boring.

On the other hand, consider that you are playing in a closed environment; in most cases, the heroes might not be allowed to leave the arena (but there are ways for them to do this, see below).

The trick to creating a good gladiatorial scenario is using the arena (and the combats) only as the background of the adventure (or the campaign).

For example, you can design a good investigative scenario based on the arena; a famous gladiator is murdered the night before he fights the battle that could give him his freedom, only some dweller in the pits could have killed him. The heroes must find the culprit, and to do it they must enter the arena and join the other gladiators.

Once you learn the trick, you can design almost any type of scenario in the pits: a military/political one (the gladiators, or some of them, rebel, take an important personality hostage and must negotiate for their freedom), exploration/dungeon crawling (there is a story that somewhere in the catacombs or the older levels of the arena a great treasure is hidden; during the night the party must leave their pits, with the complicity of the guards or someone else, and go looking for it), even a love story (two gladiators, lovers belonging to rival pit owners, are forced to fight to

death, and the characters must prevent this tragedy).

In addition you can always play on the strong themes of the gladiator setting, Freedom and Celebrity, detailed below.

## ARENA KEYWORDS

*Here are a number of key words you should always take into account when designing or playing an arena-based game. They are there to give you the proper feeling of the savage world of the pits.*

- +Blood and Sand
- +Bored Nobles
- +Chariot Races
- +Death and Life
- +Exotic Beasts
- +Escaping
- +Glory
- +Friendship and Enmity
- +Judgment of the Crowd
- +Lanista
- +Muscles and Sweat
- +Sacrifices
- +Shouting Crowds
- +Slavery and Freedom
- +Sport

## PARTY DYNAMICS

The world of the arenas is a very specialized one: the protagonists are gladiators, outstanding fighters. This means that if you are setting part (or all) your campaign in the pits you should expect the heroes to be fighters of some type.

But not all the characters of your gaming group will have warrior-type characters, and you should do some work so that they have a chance to shine.

Remember, there is much more to do in the pits than simply fighting; there are intrigues to uncover (or plot), bets to place, healing and protecting the other members of the party, and obviously finding a way to make the Great Escape (see below).

Here are some other character concepts which can be useful in the pits.

*Rogue-types:* Servant, schemer, explorer of the hidden parts of the arena, negotiator (with the other gladiators and the guards), thief, poisoner (of rival gladiators), message bringer, bettor, information gatherer.

*Scholar-types:* Healer, information gatherer, counselor, Lotusmaster or sorcerer (in the case of characters with magical abilities), trainer.

*Social-types:* Lover, servant, spy, information broker, herald, entertainer.

## FREEDOM

One of the strongest themes of a gladiator game is freedom: pit fighters are almost always slaves, fighting for their liberty. So their ultimate goal should be *leaving* the arena, not staying in it.

There are various ways to achieve this goal, and each of them can give interesting ideas for your campaign.

There can be summarized basically in two groups:

**The Pact.** The whole gladiatorial system is based on a pact: “I, the Pit Owner, swear to you, the Gladiator, that if you fight well and win many combats, I’ll give you back your freedom (and maybe some money too)”.

Without this pact, and the hope of being free one day, the whole structure of the arena would collapse; pit fighters would rebel or let themselves die. On this foundation, there can be many variations and tweaks. Is the Pit Owner sincere? Will he respect the pact? Or will he try to keep the gladiator in chains for the rest of his life, despite the Price of the Book and Going Around the Collar? For this reason it is important to detail and outline clearly both the Pit Owner and the Lanista of the heroes (see sidebar).

**The Great Escape.** Gladiators are basically prisoners. They can be pampered and well-fed, but what an imprisoned man longs for is freedom. For this reason, sooner or later any gladiator will try to escape. Devising a good escape plan, and preparing for it, can be the meta-plot or narrative arc of an arena-based campaign, and the actual escape can be the climax concluding that part of the campaign, with the heroes finally regaining their freedom and moving on to other types of adventures. Escaping, especially if the gladiator is very valuable, isn’t easy; as well as the risks of sneaking away from the arena, the real problems start afterwards; a gladiator is a prized possession and slave hunters of many types will be on his tracks. In addition a famous gladiator is a face everybody knows, and this makes things even harder. Escapes can be a recurring event of a gladiatorial campaign, with the heroes being re-captured and thrown into the arena against worse beasts and opponents as a punishment for their insubordination.

## PIT OWNER AND LANISTA

### PERSONALITIES

*When designing the NPCs of your campaign it is very important to think about and detail the figure of the Pit Owner, the person to whom the gladiators belong. Is he generous, cruel? Is he a just man? During the campaign the Pit Owner should react according to the actions of the gladiators. They fight well? They will be rewarded. They refuse to slay a fallen friend/an enemy or similar? They are punished in some manner.*

*If you are in hurry, you can roll on the Allies Personality Table, but the most important thing you must decide is whether he is honest and he wants to honor the Pact. If you have no idea, you can simply draw a card from the Action Deck: if it is red, the Pit Owner can be trusted; if he is black he has no intention of ever setting the pit fighters free.*

*A similar thing must be done with the Lanista: he can be the gladiator's best friend or his worst enemy.*

## HANDLING CELEBRITY

Celebrity and becoming famous is the second strong theme of a gladiatorial based campaign. The Game Master should show his players the effect of celebrity during the game in many ways: the crowd cheers a famous character, women fall in love at the sight of him, merchants and peddlers offer him their wares for free.

Celebrity should also be a way for a gladiator to leave the filthy pits under the arena for a while; nobles and rich merchants invite him to their houses, while princesses and noblewomen send enclosed carriages to the arena to bring him from the pits directly to their alcove.

Also remember that a popular gladiator is a worthy resource for any politician; appearing side-by-side with a beloved character brings love and appreciation to the statesman.

But celebrity isn't always a good thing; being famous, as present-day stars know, can be awkward and cumbersome - people recognize you in the streets, even when you don't want to be recognized, and sometimes the attention of the fans is suffocating and can make your life hell.

In addition celebrity and success bring envy; when kings and princes understand that people, commoners and nobles alike, love a rag-covered pit fighter more than themselves they start brooding dark thoughts.

### GM'S TIP: INSPIRATION FROM OTHER MEDIA

*When designing an arena-based adventure or campaign it must be understood that you aren't completely in the Sword and Sorcery genre, but you are deviating a bit: you are talking of sports and escapes.*

*For this reason any movies, books and comics touching on these themes could be good sources of inspiration: from Victory to the humorous Hogan's Heroes, these sorts of stories can teach you how to press the right emotional buttons while designing an arena-based adventure.*

### GM'S TIP: BRINGING THE PLAYERS OUT OF THE ARENA

*One of the major problems of an arena-based campaign is that almost all adventures are set in a limited environment. This is particularly true for convict heroes, who cannot freely leave the pits. Here are some ideas to allow your heroes to leave the arena, at least temporarily:*



**Bodyguards.** *Gladiators are excellent fighters, so rich merchants and nobles alike often hire them from their owners as guards.*

**Lovers and Guests.** *Pit fighters with a reputation and with patrons or similar are often invited to dinners and feasts outside the pits. If the patron is powerful enough, usually the owner of the gladiator obliges by "loaning" him for the feast.*

**Secret Fighters.** *Some organizations, such as the Priest Smiths of Hulian, or the Thieves Guild of Jalizar, recruit gladiators, and keep them in reserve for very serious business. When they need heavy manpower for some dangerous mission, they secretly pick the gladiators from the pits and use them for their objectives, usually returning them to the pits after the mission. Obviously they compensate the gladiators in some manner and a few of them can even expect to be freed after a number of very dangerous missions...*

**The Backdoor.** *The Gladiators can discover a way out of the pits, an exit allowing them to visit the world outside in disguise and then to go back to the arena unnoticed. This is a great way to give the heroes some extra mobility and a chance to have some adventures outside the pits (and also it gives them the chance to smuggle some illegal goods into the pits). The only problem is that the GM must find a way to force the heroes to come back to the arena. The options are many: maybe the Pit Owner holds a gladiator's relative hostage, or poisons his food so that now he must take a daily antidote, or (for Loyal and/or Heroic) heroes, they simply gave their word they wouldn't escape...*

## CAMPAIGN THEMES

Here are some ready-to-play campaign frameworks you can use for your games. They aren't complete or detailed, but each of them suits a particular style of play and is based on strong ideas you can tweak for your own use.

## THE CRUEL LORD

This is probably the most archetypal theme for a gladiator campaign. The heroes are all convict warriors in an arena sponsored by the ruler of the city, who is a terrible despot, feared by his own subjects. The heroes, like the other gladiators, are promised freedom if they manage to win a number of fights of increasing difficulty. But in truth there is no chance for them: the Cruel Lord doesn't intend to free the adventurers. Maybe the Lord has a terrible creature in his service, almost immortal and used to terrorize both the population and the gladiators alike.

The characters, winning fight after fight, conquer the hearts of the population, and in the end they contact the local rebels, who want to use their popularity to make the people rise up against the Cruel Lord. Meanwhile the evil tyrant tries everything he can to smash the heroes in the arena, to show his people his almighty and frightful power.

**I'll Smash You!** The Cruel Lord doesn't want to simply kill the heroes: he could have them dispatched by his guards simply by snapping his fingers. He wants them humiliated in front of the crowd, so that the population is kept in constant awe of his power.

**Spirit of Sacrifice.** The Lord is so Cruel that he will try to undermine the heroes' strength, both physical and psychological, in any manner. Attacking their friends is one of the commonest ways: the characters should be ready to witness the sacrifice of their friends and even to sacrifice themselves for the safety of the group and to allow the rebellion to survive.

**The Enemy of my Enemy is my Friend.** Rebellions make strange bedfellows.

The heroes must be ready to ally with individuals even darker than the enemy they are fighting. These allies aren't the most reliable ones: treason and treachery are always a threat and the party must always keep their eyes open to avoid backstabbing.

## CHARACTER TYPES

This type of campaign requires a number of gladiator and warrior heroes, but also characters with a background in subterfuge (to collaborate with the rebels) and even a good tactician or two to handle the final part of the campaign when the party, leading the rebellious population, must wage real war against the Cruel Lord and his hirelings.

### GM'S TIP: THE KING AND THE TERROR OF THE ARENA

*In every arena worth the name there are a King and a Terror. Gladiators designate the strongest (not necessarily the most popular) gladiator of the pit as the King. He is someone everybody respects and fears and who should not be encountered by the player characters in a random combat: he is reserved for some climactic scene of an adventure.*

*Typically the King of the Arena is a skilled veteran with the Hero of the Pits Edge, but his exact capabilities are determined by the GM depending on the average level of the arena.*

*The Terror of the Arena is the biggest, scariest and most dangerous monster of the arena. Every arena has a Terror of some type: it can be simply a very dangerous, exotic beast, such as a black lion, or a real monstrosity, in some cases even a Demon. The Terror rarely fights in the arena. It is best used as a threat to keep the pits peaceful and the gladiators subjugated, and in certain cases even its true nature is kept secret: people are more terrified of being given as lunch to an unknown, faceless monster than of*

*risking life daily in the pits against human opponents.*

*Defeating the King or the Terror of the Arena should be ground-shaking events in the scenario or even in the campaign: according to how and when it happens, this could be rewarded with the immediate gaining of a Celebrity level or even with a revolt by the crowd...*

## THE WANDERING CARAVAN

Usually gladiators are locally based: they are kept in a particular arena and fight only there. But occasionally lanistae and pit owners assemble a company of gladiators and wander across the Dominions, visiting arenas and markets in far-away countries. These companies are usually a spectacle which deserves to be seen; apart from being composed of pit fighters of every different race and skill, they include entertainers of various types (tumblers, jugglers and dancers are the commonest ones), plus several merchants and peddlers. In other words they are real caravans, the Dominions' version of the circus.

One day, the gladiators of a Wandering Caravan may fight in the arena of a big city, to the cheers of the feasting crowd, while the day after they wrestle for a few Moons in the muddy backyard of a village tavern.

A Wandering Caravan is a great way for the players to enjoy very different types of adventures, each of them happening in a different stop during their travels or on the road.

**"We Are Not What We Seem".** In a caravan there are a lot of people, but their identities can be shady: the exotic dancer could be a fugitive princess in disguise, the seer gulling the commoners can be a real sorcerer and

even the heroes themselves could be other than they seem: apparently convicts forced to fight to obtain their freedom, in truth they could be spies sent undercover to infiltrate another city or demon hunters in disguise. Even the lanistae or the owners of the gladiators can be very different from what they appear to be.

**Freedom Troubles.** A Wandering Caravan offers many occasions for a gladiator to break free: during travel, in the camps and immediately before and after the fights are the best moments to try an escape. For this reason, if the owner wants to keep them he must think of a way to keep them bound; cages drawn by horses are very picturesque, but quite impractical. Maybe he holds a relative of the slave hostage at home, and threatens to kill him if the gladiator escapes, or he can drug him with a particular type of Lotus which causes a strong dependency or kills if not consumed in regular doses. Or, more simply, he can swear to set the gladiators free at the end of the journey. On the other hand, even if the slaves manage to escape, they find themselves in strange lands among foreigners and this could result in a situation worse than their former slavery.

Whatever way the pit owner chooses to keep his possessions, the conflict between the apparent ease of escaping and the problems of doing so is one of the recurring themes of this sort of campaign.

**Cosmopolitan and Exotic.** A Wandering Caravan is a melting pot of cultures, races and people, and they wander all over the Dominions, visiting far-away places. From their positions as slaves the characters experience the differences between cultures and customs even more.

## CHARACTER TYPES

Caravans include very different people, so, apart from gladiators, this theme is good for all types of heroes.

## THE LIBERATORS

A classic of the gladiator genre is the slave rebellion: the characters, convict gladiators, find the way to start, and possibly guide, a slave revolt, starting from the arena and quickly spreading beyond. The heroes must act on a number of different levels: they must actually fight for freedom (or start the rebellion with a single act of revolt), then they must organize the first nucleus of rebels, recruit new ones, and then deal with the opposition. This last task won't be easy: every government is afraid of slave rebellions, because they are totally apolitical and can cross any border. The characters can expect to have natural enemies join forces against them. You can have very different adventures with this theme and it can be designed and run very well using the Conquest Point rules described in *TB*: going further along this path, gladiators and rebels can be considered a sort of Band, with all the logistical and authority problems that implies.

This type of campaign can be used as follow-up to another gladiator campaign, centered on the arena (as in the Big Game): when the heroes finally achieve celebrity they can use it to unleash a rebellion. The biggest drawback of this theme is that the arena and the games are only an incidental theme, the excuse to start the whole thing, while the adventures are set in the outside world.

**“We Bring Freedom”.** The liberators propose themselves as freedom bringers:



their words spread like flame, enflaming the poorest subjects to join their cause. This requires the characters to be politically savvy, or at least good orators.

### **Starting is Easy, Going on is Hard.**

Rebellions usually spread fast to start with, then when the first emotional rush ends (and the most immediate oppressors are killed) things slow down. Logistical problems start to appear, the type you cannot abruptly solve with a sword blow: what do we eat? Where do we put this mass of runaway slaves come to join the rebellion?

**Gladiators versus Non-Gladiators.** The elite and strike force of the rebels are the gladiators: die-hard fighters accustomed to death and blood. But the greater part of the rebels are probably timid servants and humble slave farmers with families to care for. They aren't ready to fight to the last breath, probably with some mild concessions from their former masters they'll go back to slavery without many problems.

**Power is Insidious.** There are many ways for a rebellion to fail. Even if the rebels are a great fighting force, once a stalemate is reached the former rulers will try to bribe, assassinate or fool the rebels in some way. Even among men with the fresh taste of freedom in their mouths there are the envious and traitors.

**Rebellions Fail.** The sad truth is, slave rebellions fail almost every time: the only example of successful rebels is the freemen of the Brokenchain Mountains but they chose to escape from their former masters instead of staying and fighting. The ways in which the authorities ensure a rebellion fails can differ: the commonest way is killing the leaders, but a more devious one is offering them an official role

(probably the one of the ruler they have overthrown) making them an instrument of the establishment. Wise heroes should prepare an escape route for when the rebellion goes south.

## CHARACTER TYPES

This type of campaign is suitable for all types of characters: gladiators and warriors of any type will surely be useful, but when the rebellion starts any type of hero is useful: scoundrels and shady individuals to gather intelligence, social characters for diplomacy and negotiation, and even a supernatural hero to give the rebels an unsuspected advantage against their enemies.

## LIFE IN THE PITS

Gladiators fight in the arena for only a fraction of their time, during the rest of it they are kept under high security in the pits. This generic term indicates the prisons where the convicts are held: it derives from the fact that most gladiators' cells are in the underground levels of the arena.

Pits are usually divided into two areas: the gladiators' pits and the beasts' pits. For security reasons they are kept separated and even the personnel guarding them are different.

The pits are a little world of their own: despite being prisoners, gladiators are usually kept well fed (see page 32), but apart from this life is quite dangerous for them. They are lodged in large communal rooms, divided by sex (even if female gladiators are quite rare) and possibly natural enemies aren't kept together, but even so bullying, attacks and violence are

quite common. Lanistae and guards don't bother about this: a gladiator who doesn't earn the respect of his peers is unworthy of the arena.

The problem is that the pits aren't just inhabited by gladiators: Noxii and servants alike are kept inside, and being non-combatants, they find themselves in a really bad position. Noxii wanting to survive must find the protection of someone, a guard or a strong gladiator, or be ready for a short and painful life of abuse.

This is also valid for the lower ranks of pit fighters: prisoners of war, convicts and similar. The celebrities of the arenas are lodged in private cells that, despite being underground, are often lavishly furnished.

They are granted concubines and personal slaves which are protected by the reputation of their owner: no pit fighter will harass the servants of an arena star, unless ready to face his rage both inside and outside the pits.

Although the gladiators are left more or less on their own in the pits, they obviously aren't allowed to leave them. This rule often doesn't apply to servants and Noxii, who can usually leave the arena if their tasks require it (for example to throw out the dung of the beasts). In this manner a faithful Noxius can become very important, because he can work as a communication channel with the outside world.

Gladiators usually only spend the night in the pits: during daytime they are in the arena where they are constantly trained to hone their skills. Part of their exercise consists of gymnastics, while the rest includes combats against sparring partners and other gladiators under the

watchful eye of the lanistae and the arena guards. These matches are usually non-lethal but accidents can always happen, and, especially close to important games, lanistae watch those who spar against their favored pupils closely, because sparring partners and other gladiators alike can be bribed by rival lanistae to maim potential rivals.

**Syranthian Gladiator Schools.** What's said above is valid for the majority of the arenas of the Iron Empire. The only exception is Syranthia, where gladiatorial schools exist. Gladiatorial schools are usually located in isolated villas and palaces in the farmlands. They are organized like a mixture of gyms and military training camps. Gladiators live in simple, but adequate, rooms, usually in better conditions than their counterparts elsewhere in the Dominions. This doesn't mean their training is less hard, usually it is the opposite: Syranthian schools are often specialized in a few types of gladiatorial arts, for example the Fishers of Death are all retiarii, and the lanistae expect only the best from their pupils; those who fail face dire consequences.

## GLADIATOR PERSONALITY CONCEPTS

The social parts of adventures in the pits are about characters. The GM needs a number of interesting characters to interact with the party. Because creating on-the-fly character concepts can be difficult, below are twenty ideas of "typical" characters of the pits. No stats are provided for them, they are left entirely to the GM. There are exactly 20, so if you want you can pick

one at random by rolling a d20. Some of them are explicitly gladiators and others are servants and other non-fighting slaves, but their roles can be changed with ease.

**1 – The Noble.** This character belongs to the aristocracy and for some reason he is now in the arena: maybe he lost his fortune or, alternatively, he is in the arena to seek protection from a threat in the external world. The Noble lives lavishly even in the pits.

**2 – The Ladies' Man.** This gladiator is the women's favorite: he has lovers, a number of them, and they constantly visit and keep him busy. He doesn't mind if the woman is a princess or a washerwoman, as long as she is pretty.

**3 – The Religious One.** This gladiator has an obsession for religion: maybe he was a former priest of some outlawed cult, thrown in the pits to die, or simply a strong believer. He passes his free time praying and, according to his creed and personal inclination, he can actively try to convert others.

**4 – The Compassionate Guard.** Not all the guards of the arena are heartless scum. The Compassionate Guard, despite being good at his job, has a good heart and respects gladiators. This doesn't mean that he'll risk his life or job for them, but at least he won't harass the convicts out of sheer malevolence.

**5 – The Sidekick.** This gladiator is big, rough and friendly. He is a good companion, and, if treated with respect, he is likely to become a great friend of the characters. The sidekick is absolutely loyal and won't betray the party.

**6 – The Errand Boy.** This scrawny kid is an arena slave, but one that will never fight a

match. He is used as a servant and errand boy by anyone, and in other ways by meaner individuals. The Errand Boy is too feeble to defend himself and knows that obeying is the only way to survive. Despite his lack of combat prowess, the Errand Boy has good eyes and ears, and can be an invaluable helper and assistant.

**7 – The Beast Friend.** This character, who can be either a gladiator or a slave, has a strong link with animals. He knows everything about them and feels compassion for their shared fate of imprisonment. The Beast Friend can be a good aide, but if he must choose between helping a human being or an animal, usually he prefers the latter.

**8 – The Fixer.** Even a closed world like the pits has its merchants and traders. The Fixer is the guy you look for if you need something: better food, ways to receive or send messages outside, even some tools. For the right price he can provide them.

**9 – The Whiner.** This man is always complaining about something: it can be the food, the harshness of the training, the guards' attitude, even the gods who cursed him with the ill fate of being thrown in the pits. In truth the gods cannot be blamed so much; after few moments with him every sane person feels pissed off by the constant complaining, so the fact that the Whiner usually suffers physical abuse from his peers isn't surprising. Oh, and he is also believed to bring bad luck.

**10 – The Quarrelers.** These two gladiators (they can also be slaves), constantly quarrel, and sometimes even spill blood. But despite this constant fighting they are inseparable, and cannot be divided in any way. Even more than the Twins (see below), they are strongly linked and share a strong



friendship that can be seen under the rough words they exchange daily.

**11 – The Cruel Guard.** This man is one of the worst scum of the arena. Sadly he isn't a convict, but a guard. Ruthless, violent and cruel he deeply enjoys his work and always does his best to inflict pain and cause trouble to the gladiators and the beasts alike. This character can be particularly nasty if placed in a position of power (such as lieutenant or commander of the guards).

**12 – The Motivated One.** This fighter wants to win every fight in the arena and eventually gain his freedom, despite the odds being completely against him. He trains every day with scrupulous zeal, and even during his free time he does extra chores. Maybe he has a specific reason to do this: outside he has a relative waiting for him, he is trying to become rich to repay the debts of his family or he is simply a glory hound, wanting his name to resonate in the arena forever. Whatever his reasons, the Motivated One can be a useful ally, so long as the goals of the characters match his own, but he becomes a terrible opponent if they collide.

**13 – The Freedom Seeker.** This man isn't made to live in prison. Probably he lived his previous life in a very free environment, like the savage lands, and he always talks of the sun on his skin, the right to go where he wants and similar things. He is literally dying in captivity and he will do anything, even betraying a friend or trying an almost impossible escape plan to leave the pits. For the Freedom Seeker death is a better end than a life of confinement.

**14 – The Old Veteran.** This gladiator outlived his peers, and today is too old or crippled to fight any more, but for one reason or another he is allowed to live, even if not to leave the pits. He is an old fox and

knows a lot about the art of fighting, the guards, and even the patrons. He can be an excellent source of information and serve as a mentor for the characters while they stay in the pits.

**15 – The Concubine.** One of the few women allowed in the pits day and night, she is the lover of an important gladiator, maybe the King of the Pit. Despite the gladiators being in great part an uncivilized bunch, they don't dare touch her, for fear of her master. The Concubine is a schemer and uses her charm and wits to further her interests, which don't necessarily coincide with those of her current lover; a practical woman, she always tries to tie her destiny to the strongest man in the arena.

**16 – The Mystery Man.** A halo of mystery and even of fear surrounds this gladiator. He is a loner and even the worst scum of the pits don't disturb him. The mystery man is rumored to have supernatural powers; he can be a sorcerer in disguise, an Enlightened One or hide some weirder secret.

**17 – The Bully.** This pit fighter is usually the biggest, scariest dog of the pack. He must always prove his dominance with newcomers, especially if they're smaller than him. After a good thrashing the Bully usually calms down, he can even become amicable.

**18 – The Twins.** These two gladiators are identical, and almost nobody can distinguish them. Twins are usually made to fight together, or, in certain cases, one against the other. Twins are deeply linked and if one of them dies, the surviving one is crushed.

**19 – The Boss.** This gladiator has been in the arena for a while and has built a sort of gang around him. These underdogs obey his orders and he uses them to bully the

newcomers. The Boss is always seeking a way to expand his personal power in the pits.

**20 – The Cannibal.** This spooky gladiator is kept locked somewhere in the arena and is freed only for combat. The reason is simple: he is a freak, a psycho killer, who eats human flesh. The only reason the heroes have to interact with him is that the Cannibal knows some important secret of the arena, learnt from some of his past victims.

## ARENA RELICS

The world of the pits is ruled by the might of muscles and the song of blades, but sometimes, very rarely, dark sorcery and the magical relics of the past drop their fearsome shadows on the blood-soaked sand of the arena.

Here are twelve relics suitable for gladiators and the pits. You can use them as sources of inspiration for your own or, if you are in a hurry, you can simply roll a d12 and pick one.

### ARENA RELICS TABLE

**1 – Thaka-Rhuss.** This ancient Keronian expression means, roughly translated, “dueling sphere”, but in truth the term identifies a much more complex artifact. Each Thaka-Rhuss is composed of two different items: the Thaka, an obsidian (or rarely amber) sphere, the size of a fist, and the Rhuss, a slave collar, made of the same material, engraved with runes of power. The wielder of the Thaka magically acquires control over the body of the wearer of the Rhuss, and can move it like a puppet. These items were used in the past to settle matters between Keronian nobles

without spilling their precious blood: the contenders fought to the death using the bodies of slave gladiators. Today very few of these items exist and they are highly sought by Tricarnian Priest Princes. Rules-wise, the wearer of the Rhuss is automatically under the effect of the *puppet* Power (no roll is required) and so long as the user of the Thaka concentrates, he can command him. In combat the slave and the master act on the same Action Card (using the best Edges of both characters): if they are dealt a deuce of any type, the slave is allowed an opposed roll of his Spirit (-4) versus the Spirit (or Sorcery) of the master. If the slave wins, he is free for a round, plus another round per raise. There is a nasty side effect of this unholy relic: when the slave dies, the master must immediately make a Spirit roll. With raise or more nothing happens, with a simple success he is Shaken, with a failure he suffers a Wound and with a critical failure he is automatically Incapacitated. Both the Rhuss and the Thaka are quite robust (Toughness 7).

**2 – Scorpion Bracer.** This is a small blade concealed in an armor bracer, or even in a greave or a boot. With a simple movement the wearer can trigger the mechanism of the blade, which then protrudes in an insidious thrust. Gladiators use them in the arena to make below-the-belt attacks, usually smeared with some nasty poison. In game terms, a Scorpion Blade is equivalent to a dagger (Str+d4), but if the user makes a Stealth roll when he triggers it, he automatically gains the Drop for his next attack. A triggered Scorpion Blade can be re-sheathed in a couple of minutes.

**3 – Obelisk of Souls.** Nobody knows the origin of this black obsidian obelisk, engraved with symbols in a forgotten language, but the stories say it was taken from a forgotten city deep in the Land of Idols. Over the course of history it came

into the blood-soaked hands of sorcerers and mad tyrants. It is usually placed in the middle of the arena because it traps the souls of dying people as a spider traps flies. Each time a person dies within 36" of the Obelisk, he must make a Spirit (-4) roll (ignoring Wound modifiers). In the case of failure his soul fuels the Obelisk: an Extra gives it 1 Power Point, a Henchman or Right Hand 2 Power Points, and a Wild Card 5 Power Points. The Obelisk can store up to 30 Power Points, but automatically loses one every night of the full moon. A sorcerer knowing the right ritual, which can be found in forbidden tomes, or devised using the inscriptions on the Obelisk (with at least three successes or raises in Knowledge (Arcana) (-4) rolls), can freely tap into the Obelisk's Power Points while standing within 36" of it.

**4 – Ilenya's Blade.** This Amazon Blade is very old and has many notches in its blade but it is one of the holiest relics of the Amazons, because it is the very weapon wielded by Ilenya, one of the two first Sister Queens during the rebellion and liberation of the island. The Blade was lost in 1540 AF, a date any Amazon knows well: it was the last attempt by the Iron Empire to reconquer Ascaia. In a savage battle on the cliffs of the island the mercenary company known as the Syranthian Riders (see *TB*, page 11) almost managed to conquer the Ascaia: only a charge led by Ilenya herself won the day. The Riders were wiped out, apart from a few escaping survivors, but Ilenya fell on the battlefield and her Amazon Blade was stolen. Over the years it passed through many hands, despite all the efforts the Amazons made to find it. Rumors say that it is in some arena of the Dominions. The legend says that with such a blade Ascaia will never fall: in game terms it grants +2 to Morale rolls for all Amazons and +4 to all the Battle rolls of a general defending the Amazons' island.

**5 – Giaasa and Raasa.** These ebon-skinned twin sisters are the most prized bed-slaves of the arena. Mute from the birth, they are beautiful as a starry night in the desert, and satisfy any desire of their owner. Many stories are whispered about these ladies: despite looking no older than sixteen autumns, there are reports of their presence in various arenas from more than a century ago. Skilled in all the arts of the alcove and of the massage, they can take care of a man (or a woman) in any manner, especially if wounded. People have seen them tenderly licking the cuts and bruises of a wounded man and have seen his wounds miraculously close, but there are also stories of fine, strong men who die mysteriously when in their bed. When this happens the two girls disappear, to reappear months or years later in another slave market near an arena, where they are usually bought by some Pit Owner looking for a good slave or two to pamper his pit fighters. In truth Giaasa and Raasa are the last offspring of a dying race of bloodsuckers. When licking wounds they are actually feeding, developing a symbiotic relationship with their quarry, which is healed by their saliva (this counts as the *healing* Power cast with arcane skill d10, 10 Power Points), but there is a serious drawback: if they roll a critical failure, the quantity of saliva in the quarry's blood is too high: it counts as a Lethal (-4) poison. Giaasa and Raasa are Right Hands, if necessary you can use the Damsel profile (see *GE*, page 168), replacing the Good Lungs Special Ability with the Mute Hindrance, and raising Persuasion to d12.

**6 – Dead Man's Armor.** This Medium Bronze Armor (+2), was dipped in red gold, so that it now seems constantly dripping with blood, but actually each drop is a cruel metal spike. It is a full suit of armor, complete with helm. It is Hooked Armor and counts as a Showy item (see page 48), because it includes torso, bracers, greaves



and helm and grants +2 to Intimidation rolls. There is a legend about this armor: This says it was forged for a long-dead king, who won all his battles but was betrayed and killed by his own brother. In game terms, the wearer can use the No Mercy Edge for free (without even spending a Bennie) once per session. As a drawback, at the beginning of each adventure the GM secretly draws a card: if it is red someone will betray the owner of the armor (counts as a Major Enemy).

**7 – Toothaga.** This huge war club engraved with runes of unknown origin is made entirely of stone, and stories say it is a piece of a stalagmite coming from a forgotten temple in a cavern deep in the Troll Mountains. Nobody knows how it appeared in the Borderlands and then slowly came down to the central Dominions. The name cannot be translated, it is a Nandal word. The savage population of the north has great fear and respect for this item, even if the greater part of them never dares touch it (granting the wielder +4 Charisma toward their race). In game terms the Toothaga is a Maul, dealing Str+d12 but requiring Strength d12 to be used due its weight (30 lbs). The runes are prayers to a god of madness, and wielding the Toothaga grants the Berserk Edge, with -2 to any roll to go berserk or to calm his rage. In addition after each month of possession the owner must make a Spirit roll or feel the uncontrollable desire to go north, guided by an unknown sense, to bring the Toothaga back to its temple.

**8 – Nails of Black Iron.** These rough battered nails are made of bronze, stained black from use. There is a very dark story about them, according to which they were forged by Fabron, the discoverer of iron, to bring his beloved daughter back to life. There are five of them, and they must be used together to have effect. By planting

four of them in the joints (knees and elbows) and one in the heart you can revive a fresh corpse (died 24 hours ago or less): but you must also sacrifice an intelligent being (Smarts cannot be (A)) with Spirit d8+ and make a Sorcery or Smarts (-2) roll. The revived being feels well, suffers no pain (ignores any Wounds he suffered), but after exactly 24 hours he falls down, dead, his soul directed to some unknown hell.

**9 – The Mark of Tosar.** Tosar of the Burned Hand (see page 33) was a Smith Priest of Hulan, and his disciples today still hide in the pits among the gladiators and the Noxii. But even in the arena, they don't forget the holy task of destroying the hated sons of Hordan. The Burned Hands know how to place a particular version of the Mark of the Smith (see *GE* page 119) on armor and shields. Unlike the mark of the Smith God, Tosar's sign is invisible (but can still be found with the *detect arcana* Power). In game terms, when a character wearing a piece of armor or a shield marked by Tosar is hit in melee by a creature with the Demon or Undead Monstrous Ability, whether he is wounded or not, the attacker must immediately make a Spirit roll: in case of failure he suffers 2d10 damage. The damage dice drop by one die step after each use. When they go below 2d4 the Mark wears off.

**10 – The King Fisher's Net.** Everybody in Syranthia knows the story of the legendary King Fisher, a humble fisherman who volunteered to enter the Great Arena of Syranthia to pay off the debts of his entire village, which was vexed by an extremely greedy governor. Probably the most skilled retiarius in gladiatorial history, in the end he managed to repay the debts of his people, only to die due to an infection a week after leaving the arena. The King Fisher made his combat nets himself and quite a number of them still exist today. Being a fisherman,

he substituted the customary lead weights with shells coming from the shore near his own village. A Sage of the Library who examined them discovered what the secret of the King Fisher's invincibility was; the shells are razor sharp and poisonous. In game terms a King Fisher's battle net causes Str+d4 damage each round of grappling, and if it Wounds or Shakes the target, the victim must make a Vigor roll or suffer a Fatigue level. As the poison is quite mild, it can cause only one level of Fatigue (repeated poisoning doesn't stack).

**11 – Pearl of Kirem.** A Kyriosan Lotusmaster of the past, Kirem was infamous for his experiments with body-twisting Lotus. His most celebrated concoction is the Wine of Kirem (see *Beasts & Barbarians #2 Citadel of the Winged Gods*). The Pearls of Kirem are his greatest creation. Crystallized, blood-colored spheres, the size of a thumb joint, once ingested they manifest their amazing power. The user's muscles grow incredibly over the next few hours: the imbiber must make a Dramatic Task based on Vigor (-4), with a roll per hour. Each time he fails a roll, he suffers a Wound. Given the terrible system shock of the process no healing, either mundane or magical, is possible during this time. At the end of the process, if the user scored at least two successes and/or raises, he gains a die step in Strength, with four successes or more he also gains the Brawny Edge. The modifications are permanent, but as the Lotus's effect is very taxing for the brain, if any of the Vigor rolls result in a critical failure, the imbiber permanently loses one die step in Smarts. Taking more than a single Pearl is madness: the bad effects stack, but the positive ones only apply once.

**12 – Autumn Emblem.** The Monastery of the Last Leaves, deep in one of the valleys of Lhoban, guarded this old bronze emblem for many centuries: legends say

that its presence in the valley helped keep the winters gentle and the summers long and prosperous. But years ago the jewel was stolen by a renegade monk who lost it in a Lhobanport gambling house. Without the presence of the Emblem, the climate in the mountains is worsening year after year: in few more seasons, the people will be starving. Currently the Emblem is the property of a ruthless merchant lord, ruler of the hardest fighting pit in the port town. He has promised to give it as a prize to whoever can best his champion in the pits. Many young monks have tried, but so far none of them has managed to leave the pits alive. In game terms the Emblem is a powerful artifact, but only in the hands of an Enlightened character: it grants the wearer +2 Toughness and to opposed rolls against any weather-based attacks (cold, water, lightning and fire) and the capacity to use the *whirlwind* Power. In addition, if the user is on the right path toward self-improvement (Enlightenment d8+) it causes a slow but constant bettering of the climate conditions in a range of Enlightenment x 5 miles. In the hands of a soul twisted by evil (with the Obscurement skill) it causes a generic worsening of the climate conditions in the same area, till they reach the equivalent of a miniature ice age.

# IN THE ARENA

In the previous chapter we stressed the concept that the arena and the combats should be the background, not the primary theme of your adventure. But, when a fight in the pits actually happens, it must be as colorful and interesting as possible. This chapter will show you several twists and ideas to make any arena combat an event your players will remember!

While designing an arena combat, you must think about three factors: *Environment*, *Conditions* and *Opponents*.

All these topics are explored in detail below.

## TYPICAL ARENAS AND RANDOM ARENA GENERATOR

The ideas presented below can drastically change the concept of “the arena” people (and players) have. For this reason before introducing the variations the “typical” situation for this factor is briefly sketched.

The arena’s factors are divided into groups and linked to card numbers, so that if you are in hurry, or you prefer a random system, you can draw three cards from the Action Deck and read them in order to generate a quick-and-dirty arena.

Note that this method won’t tell you exactly *who* the opponents are, but it will give you enough elements to devise them yourself. In the same manner you aren’t forced to use all the cards: if you want no Condition, but two Environment effects, just read two cards for that factor. In the same manner, if you want more Opponents and no special Condition, just pick them. In the same way you can decide to draw less than three cards, for example only a card for Conditions, in this case leaving all the other factors at the Typical level.



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Our suggestion is using all three cards for very important, climactic combats.

As always with generators, they are made to help your imagination: stop whenever you want and just consider the elements you see fit for the situation.

### GM'S TIP: DUELS OR PARTY FIGHTS?

*An important decision to take is how the player characters fight in the pits, alone or in a group. Both options have advantages and limitations, described below.*

**Single Fighter.** *Each player character enters the pit alone, and fights a duel against a single opponent (or a small group of enemies). This is probably the most realistic way to handle arena combats, and has the advantage of focusing deeply on each player, plus it allows some competitive play, because players can be pitted against each other (this can be a disadvantage too). The problem is that when a player is fighting, the other players are idle, watching him. This can be fixed by giving them control of the gladiator's opponents (to ensure they play fair, you can compensate them with a Bennie if they play the opponents at their best).*

**Party Fights.** *The entire group (or at least a good part of it) enters the arena together, fighting another group of opponents (or a single big monster). This situation is less typical, but has the advantages of keeping all the party together and allowing teamwork. The disadvantage is that it robs the arena of one of its iconic thrills: a lone man, fighting another lone man, without anybody helping them.*

**Fighting Pairs.** *A good compromise is dividing the party into pairs, so that they enter in the arena with a companion, but they aren't so numerous as to transform the duel into a large battle. In particular the crowd loves couples made up of a man and a woman, which satisfies both female and male spectators.*

## ENVIRONMENT

When you design a *Savage Worlds* fight you should never stage it in a colorless space: combats must be enlivened by props, special objects, atmospheric events and whatever else you can invent. This is even more true in an arena combat: everything that surrounds the characters can have an importance in the pits.

**Keep the Environment Realistic.** Some of the Environments described below drastically change the nature of an arena. For this reason you can decide to stage your combats in a Typical Arena (see below) and use the following only in really high-pitched fights.

**Environment Permanency.** Some Environment variations are so major that they are an integral part of the specific Arena (for example Spikes). In this case, after determining them for the first time, consider them always present in fights in that particular pit.

**Typical Arena.** Arenas are all different, but to keep things simple consider that by default they are round, with a radius of 12" and two entrances, on opposite sides, from where the fighters enter. These entrances are protected by gates. The perimeter of the arena is surrounded by a tall wall (at least 6" on the gaming table) with tiers of seats where the crowd sits to enjoy the spectacle. For richer spectators covered boxes are provided to watch the fight while comfortably cool, drinking or eating cold fruit. The best box is always reserved for the Editor with his friends and the notables of the city. The arenas are made so that the gladiators inside cannot endanger the spectators (see the Arena Security sidebar on page 93).

## ENVIRONMENTS LIST

Here is a list of the commonest Environments. For each of them a variation is also suggested.

As mentioned before, you can choose one or more of them or simply draw a card and pick one randomly.

### DEUCE – FLOOD

The pit is going to fill with water! A large quantity of water is pouring from openings (usually two). Consider the pit as having five levels of filling. At the first level nothing happens apart from the fighters getting wet. At the third level the whole area becomes Difficult ground. At the fifth level, the area is totally filled with water: Combatants fight using the lower of their Fighting and Swimming dice, and normal drowning rules apply, unless they have the Aquatic Monstrous Ability. Note that this effect actually transforms the battlefield, adding a third dimension: depth. A standard pit full of water is 6" deep. Aquatic monsters (especially tentacled ones) use this feature to drag their enemies underwater and drown them (use the standard Drowning rules).

Usually the water goes up one level per two rounds (you can use gaming stones to mark this effect).

Depending on the nature of the mechanism delivering the water, there can be ways to block the flooding process (i.e. blocking the openings or breaking them), usually these require an Attribute (-4) roll (Strength, Agility or Repair being the most often used), which can be cooperative. Blocking half of the water sources reduces the flooding rate by 50% (in this case the water level goes up one

level per two rounds), disabling all of them obviously blocks the flooding.

Another technique to deal with flooding is finding the drain and forcing it open. Usually detecting it requires a Notice roll and prying it open is a Dramatic Task, based on Strength, which must be done underwater. Once opened, the water goes down one level per two rounds. Note that when the emptying process starts the water in the pit automatically becomes rough (see *SWD* page 87), and very rough (-2 to Swimming rolls) if the character is in a SBT centered on the drain.

Floods are a very good way to add an additional danger if the gladiators are going to fight an Aquatic monster. In this case the pit is automatically full.

*Closed Top Pits:* This exotic variation consists of having a pit with a closed top. The maximum water level of the pit is six. When this is reached the heroes have no way to breathe and start suffocating (see *SWD* page 87). After killing their opponent (which is usually an Aquatic monster) the water level starts dropping down.

To allow the spectators to watch the fight, one of the walls (usually the top) is transparent. This can be done with glass, crystals or similar, making this environmental effect very costly.

### THREE – SPIKES

The perimeter of the pit, or, more rarely, the floor, is filled with dangerous, arm-long spikes. Spikes deal 2d6 damage to any character pushed against them. Pushing can be the effect of a Trick, of some combat Edge (such as Beat Back, see *JCT* page 71 or Gentle Touch, page 45), or of grappling. If the spikes are on the ground,

consider each of them as being a “patch” of 1” by 1” Difficult Ground, with the added effect of dealing damage. To make them actually useful, you should place at least two patches per fighter in the pit.

The GM should allow the heroes to be creative in the uses of spikes to gain an advantage in the fight; apart from throwing enemies on them, for example they can try to break one (with a Strength roll) to gain an Improvised Weapon or use them as ladder to escape from the pit (climbing on spikes gives -1 to Climbing rolls). In any case, if they roll 1 on the skill die, they suffer spike damage.

*Concealed Spikes:* A very devious way to have a gladiator killed consists of having spikes concealed in the floor. When a person walks on them, they trigger, dealing an attack with Fighting d8, the Drop and 2d6 damage. To spot them a Notice (-2) roll is necessary for the first one, an unmodified roll for the others. The GM should place at least two concealed spikes per character in the arena, each of them 1” by 1”. Alternatively two spikes can be traded for a SBT of spikes, four for a MBT and six for a LBT.

## FOUR – SIZE

This arena is very big. Check the suit of this card and confront it with the other cards drawn to generate the combat, for each card of this suit double the size of the fighting pit!

*Example: The card drawn for Environment is a Four of Clubs. The other cards drawn are respectively: Deuce of Diamonds (Condition) and Jack of Clubs (Opponent). As the Jack of Clubs is the same suit as the Four, the arena size is four times the standard! So, it is 24” x 4 = 96”! This is excellent for a mounted combat of some type or a naumachia!*

## FIVE – TEMPERATURE

This arena is particularly cold or hot, depending on the environment; this could be due to extreme sun scorching the sand, or the cold wind or snow battering the fighting area. In both cases, the GM should decide the generic level of discomfort of the arena: Low, Serious or Extreme. In Low discomfort, all fighters must make a Vigor roll each four rounds of combat, or suffer a level of Fatigue. In Serious discomfort the characters must roll every three rounds, while in Extreme discomfort they must roll once every two rounds. In heat, being encumbered is lethal: double any encumbrance penalty (this also applies to Vigor rolls to resist heat), while in cold being without adequate garments causes -2 to Vigor rolls (as per the standard Cold rules, see SWD page 87). Fatigue from cold and heat is recovered as normal (see SWD page 87-88). The *environmental protection* Power protects completely from this hazard.

*Lotus of Ghosts and Nightmares:* A nasty trick used in a sun-burned arena, especially in Tricarnia, is smearing the sand of the arena with a peculiar Lotus concoction which, if heated, produces toxic vapors with hallucinogenic effects. Make a Vigor roll as normal, but on a failure, instead of applying Fatigue levels, it counts as a failed Fear Check (see sidebar for Lotus of Ghosts Effects).

## SIX – COLUMNS OR PILLARS

What is an arena without some obstacles? The typical obstacles are columns or tall statues. Each of them is 1” by 1” or 2” by 2”. They grant Medium Cover and have Toughness 12. Usually they are quite tall (at least 6” on the tabletop) and can be climbed up with a Climbing roll. Very strong heroes can try to pull them down



with a cooperative Strength (-4) roll. In case of success the falling stones cause damage in a line of 1" by 6" (or whatever is the height of the column). Characters in harm's way can escape with an Agility (-2) roll. In case of failure they suffer 3d6 damage.

*Altar of a Forgotten God:* Sometimes arenas are built over the ruins of old temples, and here one of the crumbling stones is in truth an altar of a forgotten god. It can be recognized with a Knowledge (Religion), Knowledge (Arcana) (-2) or Common Knowledge (-4) roll. It is a stone slab 2" by 4", granting Medium Cover, with Toughness 14, but its peculiarity resides in its supernatural powers. If the card drawn is red, the altar is holy to a benevolent deity; if it is black it is consecrated to a cruel god. In the first case the temple power triggers whenever someone performs an act of good within 6" from it (this can be sparing a fallen enemy, killing a demon or something similar), if black it triggers when an act of evil and bloodshed is done (going berserk, killing someone in a gruesome way, killing a helpless victim). When the altar triggers the character makes an immediate Spirit roll; in the case of success he gains a Bennie. If he scores a raise the power of the god briefly enters him, giving him the Champion Edge till the end of the combat.

## SEVEN – WEAPONS

Gladiators are sometimes sent weaponless into the arena, especially if they are very strong or are going to fight against savage beasts. Or, to add some spice, their weapons are placed somewhere in the arena, usually in difficult-to-reach places, such as on the top of high columns, in closed chests or similar. If the gladiators are sent weaponless into the arena, you should place at least one weapon for each

of them, in different parts of the pit. As a rule of thumb, getting a weapon should require some time (at least a round of running) and/or an Attribute check of some type (i.e. a Climbing roll to recover it from a tall place, a Strength roll to break the chain to which the weapon is tied and so on). If the gladiators get a weapon, they should gain a relevant advantage against their enemies (for example it is good to give them a ranged weapon). Note that not all weapons are standard ones: smart (or desperate) gladiators can use pieces of broken weapons, chains, stones and so on to create a Medium Improvised Weapon.

*Large Weapons:* This option is especially good if the gladiators are fighting a huge monster, with high Toughness and maybe the Heavy Armor Monstrous Ability. In this case leaving a Heavy Weapon of some type in the pit is a good way to ensure a thrilling experience. A large weapon doesn't need to be a standard one (like a catapult or a ballista). It could be something as simple as a big, sharpened pole. The key factor of a large weapon is that it should require the teamwork of several gladiators (unless the combat is one-to-one): a big, sharp pole requires more than one man to be used, a catapult needs two people to be armed (and another one to distract the monster while this happens and so on). You can handle the greater part of the activities above with group or cooperative rolls. From a GM perspective large weapons are a good way to have all the party involved. Note that large weapons can be dangerous for the arena itself: if a crazy gladiator gets a catapult with a flaming projectile, nothing prevents him from shooting it at the seats of the arena instead of against the monster he is fighting with!

## EIGHT – BRIDGE OF DEATH

This element is a major customization of the arena. Instead of fighting on the ground of the pit, the gladiators fight on a bridge, usually 2" wide. A particular variation of the bridge is the arched bridge, which is a 3" wide at the base but becomes only 1" wide in the middle. Fighters are forced to walk upon the bridge and fight over it. A bridge is sometimes used with the One Against Many Condition (see below), where a single fighter must defend it against the assault of multiple opponents. The biggest danger in fighting on a bridge is falling off. Any character Shaken or Wounded when standing on the edge of the bridge (which naturally has no protective barrier) must make an Agility roll: with a failure he falls. Extras automatically crash to the ground and suffer falling damage (3d6+3) while other characters can benefit from the Cliffhanger! Setting Rule (see *JCT* page 144).

*Bridge of Doom:* This very lethal variation of the bridge Environment adds two twists to the battle: first, the bridge is covered in oil, mud, or some other slimy substance, which makes falling off *very* easy; each round the characters perform an action involving movement (fighting in melee, even if not moving, counts as movement) they must make an Agility (+2) roll or fall. Depending on the technology of the area and the desires of the Editor, some Bridges of Doom begin perfectly clear, then when someone is dealt a Joker or a Deuce from the Action Deck, oil starts raining down from the ceiling (in a roofed arena) or pours from narrow slits in the arch. In addition the bottom of the arena isn't simple hard ground; it can be made of burning coals (see below), in this case add the falling damage to the fire damage, or a pool full of water with some nasty aquatic monster (in this case falling damage is

halved, and with a successful Agility roll it is ignored, as per the Diving rules (see *SWD* page 88).

## NINE – RUBBISH OR CORPSES

Don't expect the arenas to be clean: blood, broken weapons, in some cases even the corpses of fallen gladiators and beasts are left to decompose under the merciless sun. Sometimes the arena is intentionally left cluttered: during nighttime beasts are released inside so that they can eat the corpses. For game purposes piles of rubbish and corpses can be useful places for desperate gladiators to find an improvised weapon. Each pile can be represented on the battlefield by a SBT or MBT of different types to represent respectively rubbish or cadavers. They are Difficult terrain. Searching through a pile of rubbish requires a Notice roll: with a success or more the character finds a prop useful for a Trick (+2 to the Trick roll), while with a raise he finds a Medium Improvised Weapon, with two raises the weapon found is Large.

Piles of corpses are a little different: the character must make a Vigor roll or throw up from the stench (in case of failure he suffers a level of Fatigue and cannot search the pile). With a success or more he conquers his disgust and can look through it. This requires a Notice roll; with a success or more he finds a weapon or a shield belonging to the unfortunate victim. The exact nature of the item is decided by the GM.

*They Lurk in the Filth:* If piles remain untouched and abandoned for a while, they became the nests of nasty scavengers. Before the combat starts, the GM secretly draws a card from the Action Deck for each pile present on the battlefield. If a Club card is dealt it means something is

hidden in the pile. The hidden creatures don't usually attack unless someone approaches (goes within 3") or touches the pile.

Check the table below:

CARD	CREATURE HIDDEN
2-6	<i>Biting Rat.</i> A single rat makes an attack with the Drop (Fighting d6), targeting an unprotected area (usually the hand). If hit, the victim must make a Vigor roll, with a failure he'll develop a nasty fever after 1d4 days (Long Term Chronic Minor Debilitating). The rat scuttles away after the attack.
7-10	<i>Swarm of Rats.</i>
J	<i>Giant Rat</i> (see JCT page 175)
Q	<i>Jungle Boa</i>
K	<i>Garbage Monster</i> (see JCT page 172)
A	<i>Tentacle Monster</i>

## TEN – TORCHES OR BRAZIER

This Environment effect makes sense only by night or in enclosed arenas. Torches are the cheapest way to light an area, but can also be used as weapons in dire need. To be

fully lit an arena usually has a torch every 6", placed around the perimeter. They can be taken and used in melee dealing Str+d4 damage and with the normal chances of setting fire to the target (see SWD page 88). Alternatively braziers can be used to grant even more light. Usually bronze, they can be represented on the battlefield by a SBT. They can be knocked over with a Strength roll, creating a SBT of fiery terrain (dealing 2d8 damage to victims caught in it). As an alternative, really hulking warriors can pick one up (Strength (-4) roll) and throw it as an Improvised Large Weapon, which deals both weapon damage (Str+d8) and area fire damage as above.

*Gis Fire:* Normal braziers are nasty, but some of them burn coals smeared in the infamous Gis Fire (see TB, page 67). They can be recognized because the flames are blue or, rarely, green. Gis Fire is terrible, because once it starts burning, it is almost impossible to extinguish. In game terms, any target hit by Gis Fire rolls a d8 instead of a d6 to check if it catches on fire. Gis Fire is volatile and the target catches fire on any roll other than a 1.

## JACK – LABYRINTH

This arena is a series of corridors so intricate that a gladiator can get lost. Usually labyrinths are made so that the crowd can see the scene from the top and guide the gladiators to safety (or lure them into danger). Usually a Labyrinth combat uses one of more of the following tweaks: gladiators are unarmed (but can find a weapon in the Labyrinth), there are traps in the labyrinth, the monster they are going to fight is particularly vicious (but can be lured into a trap), or the gladiators must/can find the exit to avoid an almost invincible foe. A labyrinth fight requires some extra preparation from the GM, because it





needs a map. Labyrinth walls are usually difficult to climb (-2 to Climbing rolls) and quite sturdy (Toughness: 12). A gladiator can try to ask the crowd (which has a good view) for directions. In this case he must make a Persuasion roll: with a success or more the spectators shout understandable information. At this point the GM secretly draws a card from the Action Deck. If it is a Club, the crowd gives bad instructions, leading the gladiator into the claws of enemy.

*Movable Walls:* This variation requires a certain technological capacity or some magic, so it isn't suitable for very primitive arenas. In essence, the walls of the labyrinth (or at least a part of them) are movable. Walls can move due to a mechanism, or there can be secret passages (which can be found with Notice (-4) rolls) through which silent slaves (Stealth d8 or more) move, arrive behind the heroes, and push the walls to change the conformation of the labyrinth. Characters can understand how walls move (and exploit this advantage) with a Lockpicking (-2), Repair (-2) or Smarts (-4) roll. Movable walls should be used to achieve a dramatic effect (for example to block the escape route from a big nasty monster), but if the GM prefers a random approach he can draw a card from the Action Deck every minute, and, if a Deuce is dealt, a section of the wall is moved.

## QUEEN – CROWD

Arenas have personalities and this depends on the nature and taste of the spectators. Check the suit of the card drawn.

If a Club is drawn, the crowd is Bloodthirsty: they want to see blood, death and pain. Double the bonus for any Gory Kill or Spill the Blood modifier. In addition, any roll to check the Judgment of

the Crowd suffers -4, if you are the losing character. For a Bloodthirsty Crowd any dirty trick, show of poor sportsmanship and so on counts as a Good Deed.

If a Spade is drawn, the crowd is Hostile. For some reason they hate the pit fighters: maybe the gladiators are imprisoned enemies, pariahs or the crowd simply has a reason to hate them. Stir the Crowd and Celebrity rolls are at -2. In addition there is an increased chance for a Hostile Crowd to riot (see below): a Hostile crowd draws an additional card to check if it riots, and adds +2 to the total number of Riotous Crowds.

If a Diamond is drawn, the crowd is Munificent. Spectators are very generous, and they throw coins, jewels and money on a regular basis. When checking the After the Duel events, consider Munificence always in play in addition to any other effect. In this case it works in a reduced manner: money is only multiplied by 2 instead of by 10. If a Munificence event is drawn, the total munificence is magnified, and the money multiplier is 25.

With a Heart, the crowd is Merciful. Spectators appreciate and respect the valor and courage of the gladiators, and show real care for their heroes. Celebrity rolls receive +2 for heroes showing sportsmanship, and they consider any gesture of mercy and honor as good deeds. Merciful crowds don't want to see their heroes die, for this reason rolls to check the Judgment of the Crowd receive +4, if you are the losing character.

*Riots:* Arenas inflame the spirits of spectators as often as they satiate their bloodlust. If the crowd is severely displeased, it can rise up and revolt. This can happen whenever their expectations aren't respected: for example, if the

Judgment of the Crowd is ignored, if a Celebrity roll scores a critical failure or whenever the Game Master feels it is appropriate. To check if a crowd riots, draw a card from the action deck: if it is black, a riot starts! If you want to play it out on the battlefield, roll 3d4 (the dice can ace) and consider the result as the number of Arena Crowds (see page 125) placed on the seats. If you want to handle the riot with the Mass Battle rules multiply the result by 10 to determine the Battle Value of the rioters, to be pitted against the Arena's Security (see sidebar). Crowds aren't very organized, so they have Knowledge (Battle) d4 and Spirit d6.

Riots are excellent ways for gladiators to escape!

## KING – FIRE!

Mankind has an atavistic fear of fire, and placing it in the arena adds an element of danger to the fight. Usually fire appears in the form of burning coals, dispersed through the arena. Consider a total of 24 1" by 1" fire zones. Each of them counts as Difficult ground, causing 2d8 damage, with the normal chances of setting fire to targets. As an alternative, fire can be used to create circles of fire; before the combat starts, servants smear the ground with mineral oil (or rarely with Gis Fire, see above), creating a sort of ring (usually the size of a LBT). When the fighters go inside the ring a torch is thrown, creating a wall of fire. It counts as the *barrier* Power, 1" wide on the border of the ring, cast with a fiery trapping (inflicting 2d6 damage to whoever tries to cross it). Staying inside is safe, but it becomes awfully hot in a short time (it counts as Serious discomfort, see Temperature above). The circle of fire usually lasts for 10 rounds.

*Vapor Sprays*: This variation requires some engineering capacity, so it is normally found only in very rich or civilized places, such as Tricarnia, Syranthia and Faberterra. Under the arena there is a large furnace where sweating slaves incessantly throw in firewood and coal. This is needed to keep a large quantity of water at boiling temperature. A series of hidden nozzles brings the steaming vapor to the surface of the arena. The GM must decide the general area covered by the nozzles; it can be the whole fighting pit, but usually an area of 24 1" by 1" squares is enough. Anytime a character standing in an area where there are nozzles is dealt a Club he must make a Notice (-4) roll. In the case of failure he triggers a nozzle, which produces a cloud of steaming vapor, dealing 2d6 damage to whoever is caught in a MBT, centered on the triggering character. The cloud remains on the battlefield for three rounds, and it grants Medium Cover. Characters can avoid the steam cloud with an Agility (-4) roll.

## ACE – MAGIC!

Sorcery is very rare in the arenas: arcane power is simply too rare, precious and dangerous to be used to entertain the crowds. But in certain cases it is employed to impress commoners or simply because it is an integral part of the arena. Magic environments in the arena should be used and designed on an individual basis, but a generic structure is suggested below, which can be used as a basis by the GM.

To respect the spirit of the Sword and Sorcery genre, magic in the arena is composed of three components: the *Vessel*, the *Enchantment* and the *Trigger*.

The *Vessel* is the physical object which actually contains (and fuels) the magic. Destroying or

disabling it usually ends the spell. The exact nature of the Vessel must be decided by the Game Master, but by looking at the suit of the card, you can determine the arcane skill, Toughness and Notes of the Vessel.

### Vessel Stats Table

SEED	ARCANE SKILL	TOUGHNESS	NOTES
Clubs	d6	12	Wild Die
Spades	d10	14(4)	Armor (+4)
Diamonds	d12	Special	Dramatic Task to be destroyed (pick up to two skills)
Hearts	d12+1	9	Heavy Armor, Weakness (decided by the GM)

The *Enchantment* is the actual power imbued in the Vessel. If you want to stick to standard Powers you can roll a d12 and check the table below, otherwise you can go with your own.

### Vessel Power Table

D12	POWER
1	<i>zombie</i>
2	<i>entangle</i>
3	<i>fear</i>
4	<i>bolt</i>
5	<i>darkness</i>
6	<i>boost/lower trait (pick one)</i>
7	<i>environmental protection</i>
8	<i>blind</i>
9	<i>barrier</i>
10	<i>stun</i>
11	<i>invisibility</i>
12	<i>summon ally</i>

The *Trigger* is how and why the Vessel works. This part is necessarily left to the

GM, because it is too dependent on the exact nature of the Vessel.

To make things clearer, here is an example of a Magic environment in practice.

*Example. Ace of Diamonds, the Dead Rose of Kagarash: Kagarash was a foul sorcerer who lived more than three centuries ago, and stories say he dabbled with necromancy and other dark sides of the magical arts. The Arena of Chalat (see BOD, The Whispered tale, page 59), is built on the actual ruins of his palace. In particular there is an engraving (the Vessel), representing a rose, which is a source of necromantic power. It is the size of a LBT.*

*Anytime a living being dies upon it (the Trigger), the engraving casts the zombie Power, with arcane skill d12, with the effect of immediately reanimating the fallen gladiator! The effect lasts while the corpse stands in the arena. The evil magic of the Dead Rose can be destroyed by finding and shattering the five Keronian symbols of power hidden in the engraving (a Dramatic Task based on Knowledge (Arcana) or Notice (-4)).*

## JOKER DOUBLE ENVIRONMENT

Draw two other cards and try combining both effects, if possible.

### GM'S TIP: ARENA SECURITY

*Arenas must be secure places. The reason is simple: the greatest wish of the people inside is escaping and, if possible, taking revenge on their former owners. In the same manner arenas must be protected from the spectators themselves who are sometimes prone to riot against unpopular decisions, potentially threatening the lives of the nobles and rich merchants inside.*

*The persons tasked to keep the arena secure are the guards, who are usually seasoned tough guys (see the Arena Guard profile on*



page 126). During combats, the guards are divided into three groups.

The first group, armed with bows, walk on the top of the wall dividing the actual fighting pit from the spectators. Their task is intervening if some gladiator (or some hungry monster) tries to leave the fight.

The second group guards the important personalities, to protect them both from the gladiators and the crowd.

The third group, the biggest one, watches the spectators, usually standing on the higher tiers of seats.

**Riots and Security.** When riots happen (see page 91) it is vital to know what chances of having them suppressed are. This depends on the number and preparedness of the guards. To handle it in a FFF way consider that an arena can have a Low, Average or High security level.

The level represents in an abstract way the number of the guards, their training and capability to stave off emergencies and the skill of their commander, as shown in the table below.

Note that the Battle Value of arena guards doesn't ace.

### Arena Security Level Table

SECURITY LEVEL	BATTLE VALUE	KNOWLEDGE (BATTLE)	AVERAGE SPIRIT
Low	1d6x10	d6	d4
Average	2d6x10	d8	d6
High	3d6x10	d10 (WC)	d8

**Battle Value?** The Battle Value is a new stat introduced in TB, to handle the strength of armies in an abstract way. It is briefly summarized below.

To calculate the number of Battle Tokens of two armies using Battle Values:

- 1) The army with the highest Battle Value receives 10 Battle Tokens
- 2) The army with the lower Battle Value receives a number of Tokens equal to  $(10 \times \text{Lowest Battle Value}) / \text{Highest Battle Value}$ . The result is rounded down.

Example: The guards of the Chabat Arena (Battle Value: 40) must defend the arena against a raging crowd (Battle Value: 80). The crowd has the higher Battle Value, so it starts with  $10 \text{ Battle Tokens} \times 80 / 40 = 20$  Battle Tokens. Keeping order in the arena is going to be tough!

### NEW LOTUSMASTERY TRAPPINGS

#### LOTUS OF GHOSTS AND NIGHTMARES

This nasty Lotus concoction (which can also be the selected trapping for the fear Power of a Lotusmaster) evokes the worst nightmares from the victim's mind. In game terms, when rolling on the Fright Table ignore the standard results for 13 and more, and use those below instead.

#### Lotus of Ghosts and Nightmares Custom Fright Table

NUMBER	EFFECT
13-16	The Lotus summons an Extra Illusionary Opponent.
17-18	The Lotus summons a Right Hand Illusionary Opponent.
19-20	The Lotus summons a Henchman Illusionary Opponent.
21+	The Lotus summons a Wild Card Illusionary Opponent.

#### GIS FIRE

Any Power with a fire-based trapping can be declared as being made of Gis Fire (typically barrier, blast, burst and smite). The heat of Gis Fire is so intense that it deals +2 damage, but costs one more Power Point. In addition, if playing with fire is dangerous, playing with Gis Fire is twice as dangerous: Backlash happens on 1-2 on the Lotusmastery dice, and any 1-2 rolled when using it (for example by a warrior with a flaming sword from a smite concoction) counts as critical failure and causes damage to the user.

# CONDITIONS

People attend the arenas because they like to see gladiators fighting, and possibly dying. To keep the combats entertaining the pit fighters are put in dangerous situations, giving them handicaps, like being unarmed, chained, blinded or similar.

This is particularly likely to happen in the arenas of Tricarnia, where people seem to have a large cruel streak, but the habit is quickly spreading throughout the Dominions.

**To the Death or Not to the Death.** An important thing to decide is if the fight must end with the death of one of the opponents or not. Despite what one might think, most fights aren't to the death. Gladiators are a precious commodity; they must be bought, nurtured and trained, so in "civilized" arenas (like Syranthia) very few combats are to the death. The situation is different if the opponent isn't human; you can tell a gladiator not to kill his opponent, but you cannot say this to a tiger or a Nandal brute. Gladiators know what the conditions are because at the start of the combat, the herald of the Master or Games shouts: "Combat!" (in this case the fight isn't to the death) or "To the death!" (in this case it is).

**Typical Condition.** In the typical fight gladiators are sent into the pits with their standard gear, which is limited to the weapons and armors of their specialization (see the Gladiator Edge on page 43). Gladiators without a specialization are equipped with a one handed melee weapon (Str+d6 or Str+d8), a medium shield and a helm or light armor (+1).

## CONDITIONS LIST

Here follows a list of Conditions you can use to make the fight more interesting. As said before, you can choose one or more of them or simply draw a card and pick one randomly.

### DEUCE – BROTHERS IN CHAINS!

This Condition is typical of the Syranthian arenas (see *BOD*, page 50, *Main Attraction* tale); it consists of matching the gladiators in pairs. Each pair is bound with a length of chain, one yard long, connecting the left arm of one gladiator with the right arm of the other one. Each pair is given a weapon and a shield, which they must divide. Ruleswise the Brothers in Chains must always stand adjacent (and must move using the lowest Action Card between them). In addition, attacking with a chained arm suffers -2 (but the free arm has no penalty apart from the off-hand -2 if it applies). As a minor advantage, they can use the highest Parry value of the pair, and both benefit from the advantage of the shield. Brothers in Chains usually coordinate to survive: the shield bearer uses the Defend or Full Defense option, while the armed brother makes Wild Attacks. The chains have Toughness 10.

### THREE – BLEEDING!

This nasty Condition is typical of the Tricarnian arena: the gladiator suffers a non-lethal, bleeding cut, usually on the chest or on the leg, before being thrown into the pit. The cut itself is only a minor annoyance, it isn't deep enough to cause a wound, but it causes continual bleeding, which, after a while, can suck away the strength of the fighter. During the fight, every time the gladiator is dealt a Club, runs or rolls a 1 on the Fighting die (regardless of the Wild Die), he must

make an immediate Vigor roll. In the case of failure he suffers a level of Fatigue due to the loss of blood, with a critical failure the cut opens wider, causing a Wound. The bleeding can be stopped with a Healing roll and five minutes of work, but rarely do the gladiators have time for this in the pit. Heroes surviving a battle in Bleeding condition receive +1 to Celebrity rolls, because the crowd loves seeing fighters smeared with blood!

## FOUR – BLINDED!

The gladiator is deprived of his most important sense: sight. There are various ways to do this. The commonest one is forcing the gladiator to wear a Blind Helm (see page 58), but other ways exist. There is a particularly nasty Lotus concoction, called the Opaque Lotus, which, smeared on the eyes of the victim, causes blindness for an hour. Finally, really mad tyrants sometimes decide to burn out the eyes of some gladiators, but this is an option that should really be avoided for player characters.

## FIVE – WEAK WEAPON!

The character is equipped with a weapon (red card) or armor (black card) which is weakened and prone to breaking during the fight, leaving the gladiator in potential danger. Careful warriors will check their weapons before a fight, so if the weapon is weak they can spot it with a Fighting (-4) or Notice (-2) or Repair roll. Characters with the Armor Use Edge roll with +2. During a fight a weak weapon is considered to be weaker than any other item. Use the Quality of Material rules on *GE*, page 101, but if the gladiator isn't aware that his weapon is weak he uses it carelessly, and it breaks on 1-2 instead of a 1 on the Skill die. At the GM's discretion,

a broken weapon can be used as a Small Improvised Weapon.

For armor the rules are a little different: anytime a character wearing weak armor is hit, before rolling for damage, the GM must roll 1d6, plus one per raise the gladiator is hit with. For each 1 rolled on these dice, the armor immediately loses +1 Armor (before the damage roll). When it reaches zero, it is junk.

## SIX – UNARMED/MANACLED!

The gladiator is thrown into the arena unarmed. This is a great disadvantage, but usually in the pits one or more weapons are present or there is the chance of finding an Improvised Weapon (see Environment above). For characters with the Martial Artist Edge this isn't really a handicap, so they are manacled. Manacles give -2 to Fighting rolls and -1 Parry, but count as Iron Fists. They have Toughness 7 and can be broken.

## SEVEN – UNUSUAL WEAPON

The character isn't allowed his customary weapons. This is a particularly nasty Condition for a character with the Gladiator Edge, because it prevents him from using it. For this reason it can create bad feelings among the players, who can feel deprived of some part of their characters' capacities. To avoid this, and to make the situation interesting, the GM could combine this Condition with the Weapons Environment, making the customary weapons of the gladiators available somewhere in the arena.

## EIGHT – SHOULDER TO SHOULDER!

The gladiator is going to fight with a partner. He is an Ally, controlled by the



players. Depending on the scenario he can be a long-time friend they made in the arena or a total stranger they met only moments before the combat starts. But these types of companions aren't always trustworthy: if the card drawn by the GM is red, the Ally is loyal and fights at his best on the gladiators' side, if the card drawn is black the Ally has something wrong with him: maybe he has some dangerous feature (such as the Bloodthirsty Hindrance or the Berserk Edge), he was paid to fix the match or he is simply a murderous individual ready to backstab the characters at the first opportunity. In this case the Ally is run by the players as normal, until the GM decides he is going to betray the characters, when he immediately returns under the GM's control.

## NINE – NOT ANOTHER ONE!

This Condition is best employed against a single gladiator or a couple of them.

Usually after a fight, the warriors receive the cheers of the crowd, then they retire to rest while other combatants fight. As a rule of thumb you can consider a gladiator has an hour of time before having to fight again. This is not the case with this Condition: after beating the first opponent (or the first group of opponents) a second one enters, then a third and so on, with no chance to rest. The GM secretly decides how many "waves" of opponents the gladiator must face, or the number can be decided by the suit of a card and the table below. Note that it isn't necessary for all the enemies to be of the same type. In addition, to make the situation more dramatic, some waves can present some "special" opponents, as listed below.

Fighting in such a way leaves the gladiators breathless, so, before every fight after the second, they must make a Vigor (+1) roll or suffer a level of Fatigue.



## Increasing Opponents Table

Card Suit	Waves	1 <sup>st</sup> W	2 <sup>nd</sup> W	3 <sup>rd</sup> W	4 <sup>th</sup> W	5 <sup>th</sup> W	6 <sup>th</sup> W
Club	3	-	RH	H	-	-	-
Diamond	4	-	-	RH	H	-	-
Heart	5	-	RH	H	WC	WCL	-
Spade	6	-	RH	H	WC	WCL	WCF

## Table Notes:

RH: Right Hand

H: Henchman

WC: Wild Card

WCL: Wild Card with Leadership Edges (up to 2)

WCF:

Wild Card with Extras with the Fanatics Setting Rule.

## TEN – POISON!

A weapon used by the gladiator's opponent is smeared with poison! This isn't entirely legal, but it happens and can be a great leveler in an outmatched fight. Naturally they don't use instant action, deadly venoms; the crowd wouldn't appreciate that. Instead, they use insidious, debilitating Lotus concoctions. There is an entire pharmacopeia dedicated to these nasty substances, so the GM can fully use his imagination in devising them, otherwise he can choose or pick one from the list below depending on the suit of the card drawn. As a general rule these Powers are cast with arcane skill d10, and their effect lasts five rounds. Since the poison is applied before the fight, each weapon has two doses upon it, this means it is used the first two times it strikes an opponent (Shaking him is enough to trigger the effect).

*Club – Yellow Lotus of Pain.* This nasty concoction, once injected, makes the victim very vulnerable to pain of any type. It counts as the *lower trait (Spirit)* Power.

*Diamond – Azure Lotus of Paralysis.* This water Lotus grows on the water lilies of the Brown Sea, and is mixed with the blood of a particular jellyfish. It counts as the *entangle* Power, with the trapping that the

muscles of the victim become progressively harder and stiffer.

*Heart – The Night of Giscamon.* Giscamon was a great Lotusmaster of the past, a founder of the art, and his recipes are still used today. The Night of Giscamon robs a man of his sight, rendering him helpless at the mercy of his enemies. In game terms it counts as the *blindness* Power.

*Spade – Purple Lotus of Fever.* This Lotus is used by the Ivory Savannah shamans to have prophetic visions, but the canny Syranthian Lotusmasters use it in a mixed form, with nasty effects: the victim starts sweating, his breathing becomes labored and in few moments he is fevered and his movement is slowed. It is considered the *slow* Power.

## JACK – ON WHEELS!

The opponent enters the arena riding a chariot, or more rarely, on horseback. To be effective this Condition should be used in large arenas. Chariots (you can use the stats on *GE*, page 93) in the pits are pulled by two or four horses, and have a crew of two: a charioteer (Driving d8, Charioteer Edge) and a warrior of some type (usually an archer or a javelin thrower). Their common tactics consist of shooting opponents while

keeping their distance, or occasionally running them over: for this reason some chariots are also fitted with Scythed Wheels (see *GE* page 93). Note that an opponent On Wheels represents a deadly threat for many characters. For this reason the battlefield should have several pieces of cover the heroes can use to avoid being hit, and the gladiators should have at their disposition at least one ranged weapon (a one-shot weapon, such as a javelin or a spear, is enough).

*Tactics.* Common tactics for the pedestrians to outmatch On Wheels opponents are: trying to board the chariot (they must be on Hold when the chariot passes near them and must win an opposed roll of their Agility (-2) against the charioteer's Driving), killing or wounding a horse, or trying to break one of the wheels of the chariot (Called Shot -2, Toughness 9). Killing a horse or breaking a wheel causes an immediate Out of Control roll.

## QUEEN – SAVE THE DAMSEL!

Even the strongest, hardest gladiator is in trouble if he must fight with the constant threat of danger to a loved one. When the fighter enters the pit, he finds an unpleasant surprise: an important NPC for him (a love interest, a relative or a friend), is placed, bound, in a torture device.

Typically the device used is the Armstripper (but several other Torments are possible, see sidebar): it consists of wooden pole, on which the victim is bound; the ropes are linked to a series of weights which constantly stretch arms and legs, causing terrible pain. The name derives from the fact that the force inflicted is so strong that in the end it strips the arms off the victim. In game terms the Armstripper forces the victim to make a Strength roll every two

rounds. Each time she fails, she suffers a level of Fatigue. When she is Exhausted, the situation becomes worse: she stops making Strength rolls and starts making Vigor rolls each round. At this point every failure causes a Wound. Freeing a person from the Armstripper requires two rounds (a single action if the liberator has a cutting weapon).

Usually the torturing device is placed in a section of the arena opposite the one where the character enters. His opponents instead enter near the Armstripper and must try to prevent the character from freeing the girl. Saving the Damsel is usually appreciated by the crowd, so the liberator receives +1 to the Celebrity roll.

## TORMENTS

*Arenas are also places of torment, where rebels, religious dissidents or simply poor souls who displeased the local ruler are tortured for the amusement of the crowd. Being involved in one of these things for the heroes isn't fun at all: their survival chances are almost zero. But they offer several ideas for putting a Damsel in danger.*

*A couple of examples are listed below:*

**The Scaly Death.** *The Damsel is chained over a pit full of poisonous snakes. They are a particular type which doesn't attack unless they perceive movement. Each two rounds the prisoner must make a Spirit roll. In case of failure she trembles or makes some other involuntary move, gaining a Nervous Snake Token (two tokens with a critical failure). Whenever she has five or more Tokens, the snakes are really enraged. Each round draw a card from the Action Deck, if the value of the card (figures count as 11) is equal to or lower than the number of Tokens the snakes attack (Fighting d6, the Drop, Str damage, the bite delivers a Lethal (-2) poison). The snake pit usually has the size of a MBT, and the snakes are considered a Swarm (their bite causes damage plus the effects of the poison above).*



**An Appetizing Meal.** *There is well, or a pool, in the middle of the arena, usually covered by a large trapdoor. Inside lives a dangerous aquatic monster or a giant alligator. The victim is tied and placed over the pool, just outside tentacle or claw's reach of the creature. Then the rope is slightly damaged, so that it starts breaking, moment by moment, and in the end it will break, dropping the victim to a gruesome death. In game terms, each round the victim is dealt an Action Card like the other characters. Quick and Level Headed Edges don't apply. If the card dealt is black, place a Rope Breaking Token on the table, two Tokens if it is a Club. Whenever there are ten or more Rope Breaking Tokens on the table, the rope breaks, throwing the victim into the beast's fangs.*

is everyone against everyone, and only a single fighter will be standing at the end. The numbers of fighters and their rough composition can be decided by checking the table below, which shows you the total number of fighters, divided by type.

**Alliances.** To survive a Last Man Standing it is important to ally with the other fighters, at least at the beginning. Naturally these alliances are short lived, but they are vital, at least initially. PCs, obviously, ally with whoever they want while for NPCs a quick and dirty manner of creating alliances is shown below. First you must decide the number of factions, as in the table below.

### Last Man Standing Factions

FIGHTERS (INCLUDING PC)	FACTIONS
6 or less	No factions! Everybody on his own!
7-10	2
11-15	3
16+	4

### KING – LAST MAN STANDING!

Usually gladiators fight one versus one, two versus two or in any other number, but always divided into two teams. With a Last Man Standing fight the situation is very different. A number of gladiators are thrown into the pits (at least a dozen), the trumpets sound three times and the Master of Games declares a Last Man Standing fight! This means that the fight

### Last Man Standing Opponents Table

CARD SUIT	TOTAL OPPONENTS	EXTRAS	RIGHT HANDS	HENCHMEN	WILD CARDS
Club	8	4	2	1	1
Diamond	10	6	2	1	1
Heart	14	8	2	1	1
Spade	16	10	2	2	2

Pick a number of gaming stones equal to the number of fighters, divided by colors to give the faction sizes you want (i.e., if you have 14 fighters and you want three factions, you pick 14 gaming stones: five red, five blue and four green). At this point put the stones in a pot, and draw them at random, assigning them to the fighters. Warriors with stones of the same color start in the same group and they act on the same Action Card. Note that given nobody entirely trusts the others in a Last Man Standing, Leadership Edges don't apply.

*Turncoat!* The situation in a Last Man Standing is very fluid: whenever a group is handed a Joker or a Deuce, at the GM's discretion a member of the group can turn against his comrades, joining another faction. The GM must consider carefully when this happens: in certain cases it is better for a fighter to continue staying with his group.

*Single Faction.* Whenever there is a single faction on the battlefield, the balance changes. Cancel all factions, and redo the Alliances step from scratch.

## ACE – ARROWS OF DEATH!

This condition is usually applied only in Tricornian arenas or in the pits of some mad tyrant. Around the arena, usually on the battlements, are placed six Justicars (in a round arena place them at two, four, six, eight, ten and twelve o'clock). They are very skilled archers (Shooting d10, Marksman Edge), in Medium Armor (+2) and wearing ceremonial masks. Each of them has a bow and three arrows. Whenever a fighter in the arena draws a Deuce or a Joker, one of the Justicars, randomly selected, brings his "justice" on him, shooting an arrow at him (if he has one). The task of the Justicar isn't killing the gladiator, but only making the combat

more interesting. For this reason the Justicar always aims at the arms (if the card drawn by the gladiator was red) or to the legs (if it is black).

## JOKER – DOUBLE CONDITION!

Draw two other cards and try combining both effects, if possible.

# OPPONENTS

We talked of *where* and *how* the fight stages, now there is the most important thing: *who* is the opponent.

In this section are several ideas on how to design good opponents. They are generic, broad classes of enemies and twists of existing NPCs, which you must customize according to your needs. Note that the power level of the opponent isn't touched on in these suggestions: they depend entirely on you, and how hard you want the fight to be. Using the Combat Value (see page 55) and the suggestions in the Scaling Gladiators Sidebar (see page 129), you should be able to calibrate them to the strength of your characters.

**Typical Opponents.** Why is a retiarius unarmored or why isn't a myrmidon given a bow? Because this will give them an unbalanced advantage, making the fight unfair. Gladiator roles slowly emerged over the centuries for a precise reason: making fights balanced and entertaining. Here follows a table of the main gladiatorial roles (as per the Gladiator Edge on page 43), with their typical opponents. It can be used to create entertaining fights without becoming exotic. If there is a pair or a party of gladiators fighting another pair or group, it is only necessary that every member of a group is "counterbalanced"

by a member of the opposition. Another option is that of pitting a group of gladiators of the same type against opponents of the same type (e.g. three retiarii against three myrmidons).

TYPE	TYPICAL OPPONENT
Beast Warrior	Any
Bestiarius	Any beast
Bull Dancer	Bulls and other charging beasts (see Bull Dancing Rules, page 105)
Caldeian Fencer	Caldeian Fencer, Chain Fighter or Swordsman
Caled Spearman	Cavalryman or Myrmidon
Cavalryman	Caled Spearman, Cavalryman or Skirmisher
Chain fighter	Caldeian Fencer or Skirmisher
Disk Fighter	Cavalryman or Disk Fighter
Myrmidon	Caled Spearman, Skirmisher, Swordsman, Retiarius
Pugilist	Pugilist or Tusk Fighter
Retiarius	Swordsman or Myrmidon
Skirmisher	Chain fighter, Myrmidon, Skirmisher or Swordsman
Spear Runner	Myrmidon or Swordsman
Swordsman	Caldeian Fencer, Myrmidon, Retiarius, Skirmisher, or Twin Master
Tusk Fighter	Pugilist or Tusk Fighter
Twin Master	Retiarius or Swordsman

## OPPONENTS LIST

Here follows a list of Opponents for your fights, which you can freely choose or pick at random. You can use existing profiles taken from any *Beasts and Barbarians* (or core *Savage Worlds*) book. For each of them some practical examples are suggested.

### DEUCE – MONSTER!

The opponent is a real monster. Usually it causes Fear or has some other nasty special ability. Crowds have a sort of morbid fascination for monsters: they are terrified by them, but also cheer when one of these abominations devours a poor gladiator. Monsters aren't capable of understanding the meaning of "friendly fight" and always strike to kill (and to eat) their opponent. Winning against a monster is quite an event: the gladiator receives +2 his Celebrity roll. Monsters are excellent as the Terror of the Arena (see page 74).

*Examples:* Dread Star Matter, Fishman, Idol Dancer, Sewer Troll.

### THREE – SAVAGE BEAST

An animal captured in some far land. Any creature with (A) Smarts qualifies as a beast. Animals are well treated in the pits, because they are valuable, but nothing is done to smooth their ferocity. In particular in the days before they must fight, they are kept without food, increasing their aggressiveness.

*Examples:* Fanged Ape, Giant Rat, Giant Scorpion, Lion, Sewer Eel, Swamp Cat, Zandorian Caretaker.



## FOUR TRAINED BEAST AND BEAST WARRIOR

Sometimes beasts are trained in the arena to be used as sidekicks by certain types of gladiators, who are called Beast Fighters. In particular Pygmies are very good in this role. The opponent of the heroes in this case is one of these nasty couples: a Trained Beast and his Beast Warrior. A trained beast has his Smarts raised by one die step. Winning against a Trained Beast and his master isn't easy, so the gladiator doing it receives +1 to the Celebrity roll.

*Examples:* Cairnlander axe man and Bone Wolf, Jalizaran swordsman and Zandorian Caretaker, Pygmy warrior and Jungle Boa, Red Desert archer and Desert Shrieker.

## FIVE – CONVICT

The opponent of the gladiator is a prisoner of some sort, depending on the suit of the card drawn:

*Club – Madman.* Use an NPC profile of choice adding the Berserk Edge.

*Diamond – Religious Dissident.* A priest or follower of a forbidden cult, condemned to die in the arena. Use the Priest or Cultist profile (even Smith Priest for a member of a warlike cult). Killing a priest is always a bad omen, so a gladiator doing so must make a Spirit roll or be struck by the Bad Luck Hindrance for the remainder of the current session and the next one.

*Heart – Rebel.* A political rebel of some sort, thrown into the arena to die for having conspired against authority. He knows that he is going to die, but he will sell his life dearly. Choose any profile you like (use the Warrior as default), raising an attribute of your choice by one die step.

*Spade – Bandit.* A murderous criminal of some type. Use the Bandit or Assassin profile. Being desperate men, they receive the Combat Reflexes Edge for free.

*Examples:* Fanatic Cultist of Ulasha, Frothing Madman, Phalanx Deserter, Condemned Strangler.

## SIX TO TEN – GLADIATOR

The opponent is a professional gladiator. You can use the basic version from the *GE* or use the expanded version in this book.

*Examples:* Myrmidon, Retiarius, Skirmisher, Swordsman.

## JACK – BRUTE OR CANNIBAL

The opponent is a member of a brutal race which cannot be considered fully human. The exact nature depends on the card suit.

*Club – Nandal.* A grunting, twisted humanoid of the cold North.

*Diamond – Cannibal.* A disgusting man-eater: being beaten by such a monster implies being devoured, raw or cooked. The best known are those of the Cannibal Islands, in the far South, but sadly cannibalism is diffused through many countries and even some civilized men indulge in this corrupt habit. To create a cannibal version of a profile, simply add the Cannibal and Scary Special Abilities (see *GE* page 165).

*Heart – Tricarnian Slave.* A slave born in one of the pits of Tricarnia and raised to become a fighter. He belongs to one of the several Gladiator Castes, such as the Blind Maulers (see page 141).

*Spade – Twisted Servant.* An unfortunate man or woman, the fruit of the terrifying

experiments of some Lotusmaster or twisted by the evil sorceries of a warlock.

*Examples:* Kashiti Cannibal (see *Beasts and Barbarians #1 Death of a Tyrant*), Nandal brute, Tricarnian Bald-Headed Warrior, Three-Armed Twisted Servant

## QUEEN – BARBARIAN OR AMAZON

Barbarians are excellent fighters in the arena, as are Amazons. The latter are not quite as good as the former, but they inflame the imagination of the spectators more, because female warriors aren't so numerous. By "barbarian" we mean any non-civilized race of warrior: the exact type can be randomly determined by the card's suit.

*Club Caled or Valk.* A naked savage of the great forests of far Caledland or a bow-legged, but ferocious, Valk warrior.

*Diamond – Northern Barbarian.* A Northlander warrior or a bloody Cairnlander savage.

*Heart – Amazon.* Typically an Amazon of Ascaia, but this could be any warrior woman. To create a non-Ascaian swordswoman simply take a profile, add the Amazon Edge and change the gender to female.

*Spade – Southern Barbarian.* A tribesman coming from the Ivory Savannah, the Verdant Belt or even a devious Pygmy.

*Examples:* Caled Spearman, Northlander Convict Marauder, Verdant Belt Clan Warrior, Woman Mercenary of the Independent Cities.

## KING – GIANT

Peasants think that in the far North people are big as giants. Any learned man knows this isn't true: Northlanders and Cairn Lords are only a little taller than the Faberterranean and the Syranthian, and even the people of the north are shorter than some tribesmen of the Savannah. But sometimes it happens that a man or (more rarely) a woman of incredible size is born. The Sages of Syranthia suppose that this is a late effect of the Fall of the Dread Star, or even a twisting caused by some unknown Lotus. These "giants" are highly prized in the arena and are fearsome opponents. You can make a Giant from any profile, simply by adding the Size Monstrous Ability: usually it ranges from +2 to +3. Smaller "giants" exist, but they are simply men with the Brawny Edge.

*Examples:* Giant Nandal Alpha Male, Overgrown Syranthian Pugilist.

## ACE – SORCERER OR ENLIGHTENED ONE

Sorcerers and warlocks rarely appear in the arena; first, with their skills it is difficult to force one of them into such a situation, second their abilities and knowledge are too precious to waste in such a manner. But sometimes it happens, and this is one of these cases. Sorcerers forced into the arena usually are of the warrior type and their Powers have appropriate trappings.

The same thing happens with Enlightened Ones, even if these incredibly skilled martial artists and warriors are found more often in the fighting pits: some of them are convicts like the others, but there are a number of them who, forgetting the Path of Enlightenment, try to become rich and famous using their skills. Finally some

of them enter the arena willingly because this is the only way to fight a particular abomination.

As sorcerers are very rare, if you are determining opponents randomly, the enemy is a sorcerer if the card drawn is a Heart. In any other case he is an Enlightened One.

*Examples:* Lhobanite staff master, Disgraced Tricornian Priest Prince.

## JOKER – DEMON OR MULTIPLE OPPONENTS

The most dangerous enemy a gladiator could face in the pits is a Demon. There is often one in the arenas of misty Tricornia and sometimes one is kept as a pet by evil tyrants. Note that not all demons seem like monstrous beings: some of them can pass for human gladiators but their supernatural abilities make them almost unkillable. Demons should have a Weakness, decided by the GM, and finding it could be the only way to defeat them in a fair fight. Demons are excellent Terrors of the Arena (see page 74). Demons should not be used habitually: if this card is drawn in a non-Tricornian, civilized arena, discard the Joker, draw two cards and consider them independently, each of them detailing an opponent.

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Here follows an example of a gladiatorial combat generated entirely in a random way.

The cards drawn are: King of Diamonds (Environment: Braziers or Torches), Ten of Hearts (Condition: Poison), Queen

of Hearts (Opponent: Barbarian or Amazon).

*Example: The Night of the Black Panther*

*The gladiator is going to fight tonight against Anaya, a tall and lean warrior woman of the Ivory Savannah, so agile and dextrous as to be called the Black Panther. The fight will happen tonight with the arena lit by five big braziers and the crowd shouting, already savoring the taste of blood. The braziers are four of standard size (SMT), placed to form a sort of square, with a fifth one, very big, in the middle (LBT). To make the combat more interesting, in each brazier is placed a sword, whose blade is red hot. The blades deal +2 damage and can set a target alight, but they are very brittle, and break as if made of wood.*

*The fight is to the death, and Anaya is known to be one hell of a gladiatrix: the GM decides to use the standard Amazon profile, making her a Henchman (see the Duels Setting Rule) but adding the Acrobat Edge. She fights with a spear used two-handed and Hooked Light Armor.*

*One of the scales of her armor is actually a small dagger, which is covered with an exotic Lotus concoction typical of the jungle, which causes blindness (as per the Power).*

*This won't be an easy fight...*

## SPECIAL SITUATIONS

This chapter details special situations happening in the arenas apart from the standard fights.



## BULL DANCING

This ancient ritual, popular in Ascaia, is a non-violent form of Blood Sport. Practiced mainly by young girls to celebrate the Dance of the Bull (see page 11), it consists of facing a raging bull, unarmed and unarmored.

The bull charges violently at the dancer who evades him by vaulting over his horns. It is a very dangerous thing to do, because if the dancer isn't more than just good, she ends up gored and trampled by the raging beast. The goal of the dancer is continue to dance till the bull falls down exhausted. In the traditional, Ascaian form, the defeated bull is left unharmed: the whole show in fact is only a propitiatory rite, while in the bastardized form played in the Imperial arenas, the poor helpless beast is gutted with a sharp knife, because the crowd wants to see blood.

In game terms Bull Dancing follows these rules.

**Vaulting the Bull.** Vaulting the Bull is a special combat option (similar to a Full Defense) which can be performed, while unarmed and unencumbered, against any creature using the Gore Monstrous Ability.

The dancer selects Vaulting the Bull as a fighting option, which works in a similar way to the Full Defense Option: the Parry

of the dancer is the higher value of an Agility roll+2 and her regular Parry.

If the dancer wins the roll she evades the charging beast, vaults over his head and lands 1d6" away from him. This move doesn't trigger a free attack. In addition, if she wins with a raise, she can decide between adding another d6" of distance or gaining +2 to the next Tiring the Bull roll (see below). If she scores two raises she receives both advantages.

**Tiring the Bull.** If the bull misses the attack, he must make an opposed roll with the dancer: the Bull rolls on Vigor, while the Dancer can choose whether to use Spirit, Riding or Taunt. If the dancer wins the roll the Bull immediately gains a level of Fatigue. Note that Bull Dancing is fatiguing also for the dancer: with a critical failure on the Tiring the Bull roll, she gains a level of Fatigue. If the bull becomes Incapacitated, he falls down, panting and helpless; the dancer is considered to have beaten him and can dispose of the beast as he sees fit.

### Dangers of the Dance (Optional Rule).

To add some tension to a Bull Dance, you can add the following rule. The suit of the Action Card dealt to the characters, both the dancer and the bull, gives them bonuses and penalties in certain rolls during the current round.

### Dangers of the Dance Table

Card Suit	DANCER		BULL			
	Parry	Tiring Bull	Vigor	Fighting	Damage	Vigor
Club	+2	-2	0	+2	-2	0
Diamond	-2	0	+2	-2	0	+2
Heart	0	+2	-2	0	+2	-2
Spade	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joker	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2



## NAUMACHIA

Naumachia is a Syranthian word meaning “naval battle”. Naumachiae are miniature naval battles fought in arenas after they are filled with water, or in enclosed lakes. The fighters, usually prisoners of war, are equipped as mariners and placed upon real ships, or, when size matters, on miniature versions of them. The biggest naumachiae are real battles, for example the Naumachia of Felantium to celebrate the defeat of the invading barbarians in 2351 AF was fought by three thousand warriors.

Naumachiae are very costly, because they require bodies of water or specially made arenas, so today they are rarely performed, at least on a major scale; instead there are small battles on miniature ships, with crews of a dozen or so, called Minor Naumachiae.

Naumachiae are very bloody: fights are to the death, but the victorious survivors are usually gifted with their liberty. Given the danger, regular gladiators aren’t used in these shows.

Naumachiae are played using the following rules.

### MAJOR NAUMACHIA

A major Naumachia is simply a Mass Battle, with the added twist of being fought on water. To randomly generate the size and skill of the two sides draw a card and use the table below.

If one of the heroes has the Knowledge (Battle) skill he can be placed in command of one of the sides.

**Characters in Mass Naval Battles.** Apart from using Fighting skills, characters can roll on Boating during mass naval battles.

### Random Major Naumachia Troop Generator

CARD SUIT	KNOWLEDGE (BATTLE)	AVERAGE SPIRIT	BATTLE VALUE
Club	d4	d8	400
Diamond	d6	d6	300
Heart	d8	d6	200
Spade	d8, WC	d6	300
Joker	d10, WC	d8	400

### MINOR NAUMACHIA

A minor Naumachia can be fought on the tabletop. The forces are 1d4 war barges (see page 54) per side, each of them crewed by 10-16 soldiers led by an officer (Right Hand). You can use the Pirate or Soldier profiles. Each barge also has a Helmsman (with the Quartermaster Edge, *TB* p. 26), who is fundamental to maneuvering the ship.

The player characters should be substituted first for the officer and the helmsman, then for the other soldiers.

The soldiers are usually equipped with light armor, shields and melee weapons, and at least half of them are also fitted with a ranged weapon of some sort (bows or javelins). The barges aren't equipped with catapults or ballistae: after all, the crowd wants to see furious melees, not barges smashed by big stones.

The average skill of each crew can be determined by randomly picking a card from the Action Deck and checking the table below.

### Random War Barge Crew Generator

CARD SUIT	AVERAGE CREW BOATING	HELMSMAN'S BOATING
Club	d4	d6
Diamond	d6	d6
Heart	d6	d8
Spade	d8	d10
Joker	d8	d10, Right Hand

**Setup.** A Naumachia is usually fought in a very large arena, flooded with water: it is a circle at least 36" in diameter, with the two fleets starting on the opposite sides.

Wind doesn't have a great impact on the ships' movement, because the arena's wall shields them from it, and the crews must resort to the oars to acquire enough speed to reach their opponents (see War Barge description on page 54).

In certain cases, to make the situation even more dangerous in the waters there are sharks or other carnivorous waterborne creatures ready to devour the unfortunate fighters falling overboard.

## CHARIOT RACES

Apart from watching gladiators stabbing each other to death, people go to the arena for another reason: chariot races! The crowd cheers famous charioteers as they enter the circus (the arena where races are held) and goes totally wild during the race.

Chariot races are run using a variation of the standard Chase rules.

### PARTICIPANTS

Chariot races usually have dozens of participants, but only few of them will



cross the finish line. In game terms, there is one Skilled Charioteer for each player character joining the competition, these being the best drivers of the race, plus a collective entity called The Group, which represents the bulk of the average charioteers. The Group has all the Traits relevant to the race at d6 plus a Wild Die, while the actual ability of each Skilled Charioteer is randomly generated by picking a card from the Action Deck and checking the table below. Skilled Charioteers also have the Charioteer Edge.

### Skilled Charioteer Generator

CARD SUIT	AGILITY	DRIVING	FIGHTING	SPIRIT
Club	d6	d8	d8	d4
Diamond	d8	d8	d6	d6
Heart	d8	d10	d6	d8
Spade	d8	d8	d8	d6
Joker	d10	d10	d10	d10

CARD VALUE	CHARACTER TYPE
2-6	Extra
7-8	Right Hand
9-10	Henchman
Joker	Wild Card

## SETUP

Before the race the GM must decide how large the circus track is, this determines the length of the race. Three options are possible; Short, Medium and Long. Then the GM must take a card deck, and place a number of cards on the table face down (depending on the track's length as per the table below), arranged in a circle. Each card represents a portion of the track (a Segment). If necessary consider each as Segment 12" long on the tabletop.

TRACK LENGTH	NUMBER OF CARDS
Short	5
Medium	8
Long	10

At this point take a counter for each player character joining the race, plus one per Skilled Charioteer and one representing the Group. Place all the counters on a track Segment of your choice, this represents the starting line and the finishing line of each lap. This card isn't revealed during the race (see below) and has no special effect.

The last thing to decide is how many laps the race has. The average number is three, but certain very long races can be longer, even four or five.

## GO!

Now you are ready. Deal Action Cards to each player character, one for The Group and another one for the Skilled Charioteers. If there are players whose characters aren't in the race you can give them a Skilled Charioteer to use instead (in this case they receive an Action Card like the player characters).

Now, acting in initiative order, each charioteer, the Group included, makes a Driving roll. Then he advances along the track by one Segment, plus one per success and raise, to a maximum of three Segments per round. Only on a critical failure does the charioteer not move, representing the horses bucking, a mechanical problem or something similar. Shaken characters can make the Driving roll, but suffer -4 to the roll.

**Passing through the Group.** Sooner or later, the characters will overtake the

Group and pass through it. Whenever a Charioteer reaches the Group he must stop his movement, regardless of the number of Segments he should have advanced. In addition, when starting a round in the same segment as the Group, a charioteer suffers -2 to all Trait rolls, due to the number of chariots in so little space.

**Attacking Chariots.** Charioteers aren't known for their sportsmanship and are equipped with Charioteer Whips (use Whip stats, see GE page 90, adding Reach 6) they can use to hinder their opponents (for example by lashing the opponent's horses) or even to attack them (whipping at the other charioteers). In game terms the first is considered a Trick, pitting the attacker's Agility versus the higher of the horses' or the driver's Agility. The second is considered a standard attack. These types of attacks can be made only if both the attacker and the defender are in the same Segment or in an adjacent one.

**Ramming.** One of the typical things charioteers do is ramming other vehicles. This is usually done by going parallel to another chariot and then trying to push it aside against other competitors or the walls of the circus. This action can be done only if the two chariots are in the same Segment. At this point the two charioteers make an opposed Driving roll. If the attacker wins the enemy is pushed against the walls suffering 1d6 and -1 to his next Driving roll *per* success and raise of the winner. The opposite is also possible: if the defender wins, he deals the damage and causes penalties to the attacker, but he starts dealing damage and causing penalties only from the first raise. Chariots fitted with Scythed Blades (see GE page 90) grant +4 to the Driving and damage rolls.

*Example: Kurasta the Lotusmaster and Juran the Charioteer are running a race in the circus. Kurasta, being in the same segment as Juran, decides to ram him. Kurasta's Driving roll is 9, while Juran scores a meager 4. Kurasta wins with a raise, dealing 2d6 damage to the opposing chariot and causing -2 to Juran's next Driving roll.*

*A couple of rounds later, Juran tries to return the favor: he rams Kurasta, but he rolls 6, while the Lotusmaster rolls 10. Kurasta wins again, but being the defender he only causes 1d6 damage and causes only -1 to Juran's next Driving roll.*

**Going Out of Control.** As Chariot Races are abstract, when a chariot goes Out of Control, instead of rolling on the customary table, simply assume that the vehicle suffers 3d6 damage from impact.

**Obstacles.** Whenever a character *ends* his movement on a face-down card he reveals it. If it is a Club or a Joker it means that there is some trouble, and you must check the Race Obstacles Table below. It can be useful to have a number of differently-coloured gaming stones, to differentiate the various obstacles, because many of them stay permanently on the track.

### Race Obstacles Table

**Deuce – Spikes!** The walls of this section of the circus are fitted with long spikes, making them absolutely deadly for chariots! Place a gaming stone on this Segment. Any chariot going Out of Control or suffering Ramming damage in this Segment suffers +4 damage.

**Three to Four – Hostile Crowd.** The crowd is hostile toward the character, maybe they are fans of another charioteer. They boo as he passes, throw rotten fruit at him and even hurl some stones! This

counts as being the target of an Agility Trick made with skill d10.

**Five to Ten – Narrow Passage.** This part of the track is quite tight, and only a few chariots can pass side-by-side, making it an excellent place to play some nasty tricks on the other competitors. Place a gaming stone on this Segment. Ramming attempts in this Segment receive +2 to the roll.

**Jack to Queen – Dangerous Bend.** There is tight turn at this point of the track. After the card is revealed any charioteer passing through this Segment has the option to immediately stop without suffering any ill effects (this means he slows down to a reasonable speed) otherwise he must make an immediate Spirit (-2) roll. In case of success he can go on without slowing, if he scores a raise he even advances an extra Segment. With a failure he stops and suffers -2 to Driving rolls in the next round, and with a critical failure he goes Out of Control.

**King to Ace – Slippery Ground.** There is sand, mud, piles of dung or some other material on the ground, making it extremely slippery! Any character ending his move in this Segment or simply crossing through it after the card is revealed must make an immediate Driving roll or go Out of Control. The Group doesn't roll but instead stops for a round. Put a gaming stone on this portion of the track to mark the slippery ground.

**Joker – Empty Road!** The chariot temporarily has empty road in front of him, meaning that the driver can whip the horses at maximum speed! The next round he gains +2 to Driving rolls.

## WINNING THE RACE

Whenever a character (excluding the Group) ends a lap (i.e. returns to the first portion of the track), he immediately gains a Lap Bennie. Lap Bennies work exactly as other Bennies but expire at the end of the race.

The first character ending the last lap wins the race.

## HORSE DRUGS

*Winning the race is the most important thing so many charioteers have no problem with drugging horses to obtain the best performance. Using a mix of Lotus concoctions, herbs and other medications a nag can be transformed into a champion. On the down side these drugs are very dangerous for the horses and it isn't uncommon to see a beast die, heart blown up and mouth frothing, during the heat of a race.*

*Various types of drugs exist, with different levels of strength, detailed in the table below.*

## HORSE DRUGS TABLE

DRUG LEVEL	DRIVING MOD.	HEART STROKE CARD	AVAIL..	COST
Low	+1	Deuce	-1	200
Medium	+2	Deuce to Three	-2	300
High	+3	Deuce to Four	-4	400

**Driving Modifier.** *The bonus added to Driving rolls to advance on the racetrack and to any other rolls where speed is involved (GM's discretion).*

**Heart Stroke Card.** *The stronger the drug, more likely it is to have bad effects on the beasts. If the first Action Card the charioteer is dealt each turn (before any card-drawing Edge is applied) is in this range it means that one of the horses feels bad. It must make*



*an immediate Vigor roll, with a modifier equal to the Availability column. With a raise or better the horse is fine, with a success he momentarily staggers (reduce the Driving Modifier of the drug by one), with a failure the horse feels bad and starts frothing at the mouth (the Driving Modifier of the drug drops to zero), while if he rolls 1 or less the horse dies on the spot (the chariot goes Out of Control, if the driver somehow survives the impact he can spend a full round to cut away the dead horse and then can continue the race with -4 to Driving rolls).*

**Availability.** Horse drugs are a Rare Item, and, depending on their strength, the Streetwise roll to find them suffers a penalty. A dose is enough to drug a full train of horses for a single race.



# CREATURES OF THE ARENA

This chapter introduces several new creatures and typical NPCs you can find in the arena.

## MONSTERS OF THE ARENA

Here follows a selection of creatures typically found in the Arena. As these beasts are usually found free and captured, where possible hints are also furnished on how use them in their native environment.

### BONE WOLF

This race of large canines is a strange crossbreed between a jackal and a wolf. Grey furred and with strange orange eyes, these beasts are typical of the Cairnlands. Gifted with a great cunning they are excellent hunters, both of living and unliving things. Their name derives from their customary attack: they bite the prey on a limb, then, exploiting the force of their long paws, break it. Unlike other types of wolves, Bone Wolves prefer the marrow of their prey to the innards. It can happen that sometimes one of these beasts kills, and eats the bones of, an undead creature; in this case it can turn into a hideous monster, a Night Terror (see sidebar).

The Sages of the Great Library think they were once beasts tamed by the Ancestors

of the Cairn Lords, gone wild after the fall of that ancient empire. Even today some specimens, taken as puppies, are tamed by Cairnlanders and trained for the hunt and for war.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d6, Tracking d8.

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

#### Special Abilities

• **Bite:** Str+d6.

• **Bone Breaker:** Whenever a Bone Wolf hits a target with a raise it has grabbed an arm (if the result is even) or a leg (if the result was odd). The victim is considered Grappled. From the next round, the Bone Wolf can inflict damage as per the Grappling rules, with +4 to the opposed rolls and to the damage. If he inflicts a Wound, the victim automatically suffers the effects of the Injury Table (arm or leg), until the Wound is healed.

• **Fleet-Footed:** The Bone Wolf rolls a d8 instead of a d6 when running.

• **Pack Tactics:** Bone Wolves are smarter than average wolves, this means that when giving Gang Up bonuses they give +2 instead of +1.

### NIGHT TERROR

*This terrible creature makes the nights of the Cairnlanders even more dangerous. It looks like a gaunt emaciated wolf, whose eyes shimmer with a greenish light. Unlike other wolves, a Night Terror is mute; you won't hear it howl anymore, but it is a deadly opponent.*

*You can make a Night Terror using the Bone Wolf's stats, adding the Undead and Invulnerability Monstrous Abilities, plus the following two:*

**Soul Devourer.** *Anytime a Night Terror kills an enemy it can make a Spirit roll, with -4 if the victim was an Extra, -2 if he was a Henchman or a Right Hand, without any modifiers if he was a Wild Card. In the case of success it absorbs the life force of the prey, permanently gaining +1 Size.*

**Weakness (Dead Hero's Blade).** *The only item capable of killing a Night Terror is a weapon which belonged to a dead hero. In addition to the normal damage, a Night Terror hit by such a weapon must make an immediate Spirit roll or be killed on the spot.*

## DESERT SHRIEKER

A Desert Shrieker is a sort of black emu, with large bony scales in place of plumes. Sages wonder if this beast is a bird or a reptile, but probably it is somewhere in the middle of the two. Tall as a man, it has a strong, hooked beak made to tear away flesh and break bones. These beasts, in fact, are carrion eaters, but aren't shy of killing live prey when corpses are scarce. Typical of the Red Desert, they live in flocks of between four and twenty specimens, which communicate with high pitched shrieks, hence the name. Desert Shriekers, if hatched in captivity, can be tamed, because they are subject to imprinting (they consider the first creature they see after hatching their mother) so they are used by Beast Warrior gladiators as fighting sidekicks. Wild specimens are sold at high prices in the pits because they are excellent killers.

Desert Shriekers are very sensitive to music and a skilled musician can enthrall them (see sidebar).

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6.

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

### Special Abilities

- **Armor +1:** Large, bony scales.
- **Beak:** Str+d6, AP 1.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Desert Shriekers are natural-born runners. They roll a d10 as a running die instead of a d6.
- **Reptile Reactions:** These beasts are capable of sudden burst of activity, as is typical of reptiles. Once per turn they can make a free Fighting attack against an opponent who moves within 3" of them. This action automatically interrupts the opponent's action and doesn't cost the Desert Shrieker his turn.
- **Weakness (Music):** Desert Shriekers are very sensitive to music; they suffer -4 to resist any Trick or Power based on a music trapping.

### THE SONG OF THE RAKASUTH

*There are stories, told around campfires in the Red Desert, of a particular song which can bewitch the Desert Shriekers and enslave them to the will of the musician. According to the same stories this tune was taught to men by a Jinni called Rakasuth, who dwells in the shadows of abandoned oases. Rakasuth is said to be fond of human memories and in exchange for a pleasant one (which is erased from the mind of the owner) he can bestow the knowledge of the tune. Today not more than three people in the entire desert know the Song of Rakasuth and they jealously pass this lore down from father to son.*

*In game terms the Song of Rakasuth works like the puppet or slumber Power (depending on what the singer wants to achieve). It uses Persuasion (or Spirit (-2)) as the arcane skill, costs no Power Points, and affect any Desert Shrieker in range. The Power can be maintained indefinitely while the singer performs, but he must make a Vigor roll each hour of continuous singing or suffer a level of Fatigue.*



## DOMINIONS CAT

The Dominions' forests, jungles and plains host a number of medium-sized cats: from the Northeim mountain lion, to the Ivory Savannah cheetah, the Lush Jungle panther and many other species and sub-species. These beasts offer excellent spectacle in the arena and are highly sought by Masters of Games. Some of these beasts are totally wild, while others can be trained for hunting, defense, and even war.

The stats below are generic enough to be used with all types of medium-sized cats. In the sidebar you'll find tweaks to customize them for particular species.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d10.

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6

### Special Abilities

- **Claws:** Str+d6

- **Pounce:** Cats often pounce on their prey to best bring their mass and claws to bear. A Dominions Cat can leap 1d6" in the air to gain +4 to its attack and damage. Its Parry is reduced by -2 until its next action when performing the maneuver however.

- **Quick:** Dominions Cats discard and redraw any card equal to or lower than 5, but they must keep the replacement.

- **Racial Ability:** Pick one from the sidebar

### CAT SPECIES

*Here is a brief list of some species of Dominions Cats. They are only examples and the GM is encouraged to create new species and specimens, especially if found in remote areas. Each species is also given a Monstrous Ability, in addition to the standard ones.*

**Black Panther.** *These elegant, emerald-eyed beasts are commonly found in the Lush Jungle and are dangerous, nocturnal hunters. They see perfectly in darkness (they receive the Low Light Vision Monstrous Ability) and their black fur blends perfectly into the shadows of the tall mangroves.*

**Night Hunter.** *Black Panthers receive +2 to Stealth rolls while in any Dim or worse lighting condition.*

**Cheetah.** *Cheetahs are among the fastest beasts not only of the savannah, but of the entire Dominions. A sprinting cheetah can outrun even a Kyrosian pure-breed horse over short distances. They are quite slender (drop Vigor to d6) but extremely fast.*

**Run Like the Wind.** *A cheetah receives +2 to Pace plus they roll 2d6 instead of d6 as Running Dice. If they move 15" or more in a straight line in a round before hitting the enemy, they gain the Drop.*

**Jaguar.** *Typical of the Verdant Belt and the Lush Jungle, jaguars are spotted, solitary hunters at the top of the food chain. Unlike other felines, they love water (add Swimming d6 to their profile); they have a powerful bite.*

**Head Bite.** *The favorite killing technique of jaguars consists of biting (and crushing) the head of their prey. If they hit with a raise their attack automatically strikes the head of their quarry.*

**Mountain Lion.** *Fierce beasts, mountain lions roam the northern lands. The biggest specimens are found in Northeim, hunting in the ancient evergreen woods. Mountain lions are the biggest among the medium-sized Dominions Cats (Size +1).*

**Great Jumper.** *Mountain Lions' hind legs are notably stronger than those of other species, giving them +2 to Pounce distance rolls.*

**Shadow Cat.** *Very few people have encountered a Shadow Cat and lived to tell the tale. The offspring of big cats and unholy creatures summoned from other dimensions by unscrupulous sorcerers, these beasts are very intelligent (raise Smarts by a die step) and have incredible powers of mimicry. They obey only warlocks (i.e. characters with the Sorcery arcane background) and are often employed as killers.*

*Shadow Cats are Wild Cards.*

**Invisible Stalker.** *A Shadow Cat can use the invisibility Power, using Smarts as the arcane skill. It has 30 Power Points specifically for that purpose. For some unknown reason, this effect doesn't work on people wearing aquamarine jewels (they see the beast as normal).*

**Spike-Tailed Bobcat.** *These green-furred predators are mainly found in the Caledlands and in Tricarnia, but rather strangely a sand-colored version can be found in the Red Desert. Unlike normal bobcats these beasts have a long tail, ending in a bony excrescence with two spikes.*

**Spiked Tail.** *The Bobcat is very skilled in using its tail as a secondary attack. It can maul opponents, doing Str+d4 damage. This extra attack doesn't count as an action.*



## GIS GLADIATOR

In the last few years some golden-skinned warriors have been seen in the arenas of the northern Dominions, sent to fight on behalf of the Alchemists of Gis. Mute and always wearing enclosed gladiatorial helms, these creatures might look human, but they definitely aren't: gifted with supernatural strength and vitality, they are almost immune to fatigue and wounds. Noxii serving in the pits whisper that they

don't eat or sleep, and when not fighting they stand idle, motionless as statues.

In truth, Gis Gladiators aren't living beings anymore: the Alchemists, exploiting exotic Lotus and strange magic, imbue dead bodies with a semblance of life, transforming them into docile fighting machines. Voices say that the magi of Gis don't always use corpses; shady characters sometimes roam the arenas and flesh markets of the Dominions looking for the strongest pit fighters and the most muscular slaves, paying huge sums for them without a flinch. These unfortunate men and women are dragged to the City of Alchemists and are never seen again, but more than one gladiator swears that he fought, months or even years later, with Gis Gladiators looking almost identical to unfortunate previous companions.

**Specializations:** Gis Gladiators are trained in the bloody sports like standard pit fighters, so they have the same specializations as other gladiators. The example below is a swordsman gladiator, but others can be made simply by changing the specialization of the Gladiator Edge.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8 (special), Strength d10, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Throwing d6.

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8/7; **Toughness:** 7

**Edges:** Gladiator (Swordsman), Loincloth Hero, Quick, Sweep.

**Gear:** Bronze short sword (Str+d6), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs ranged weapons), Gladiatorial helm (+3, -1 to Notice rolls).

### Special Abilities

- **Construct:** Gis Gladiators receive +2 to rolls to recover from being Shaken and roll using their master's Spirit (see below). They are immune to called shots, poison and disease.

• **Empty Mind:** Gis Gladiators are immune to Fear, mind-affecting Powers and Tests of Will.

• **Inner Strength:** Gis Gladiators can exploit the power of the many Lotus concoctions in which their bodies were immersed. They have 5 Power Points and can use the *boost trait* (only on physical traits) and *armor Powers*, using Vigor as the Arcane Skill.

• **Marionette:** Gis Gladiators are kept alive by magic, but their minds are dead and they must be commanded by their owners. For this purpose special foci, usually amulets made of a strange gold-like metal, are used. Keeping a Gis Gladiator active requires concentration by the owner of the amulet (counts as maintaining a Power), but no real magical aptitude is required: any person can do it with some training. As long as the master holds the amulet and is within 36" of the Gladiator, the slave acts normally, but if for whatever reason the concentration of the master is broken or the amulet is lost or destroyed, the Gladiator freezes immediately. Once concentration is lost, the owner can regain it with a Spirit (-2) roll. A Gis Gladiator doesn't have a Spirit score of his own, he uses his master's (typically d8), and the master can decide to share his Bennies with him as per the Common Bond Edge.

*As a drawback, their mind is still alive, somewhere in their brain, and there is always the chance of it returning and trying to break free of the foul magic enslaving it. Every time a Sleeper is dealt a deuce or a Joker in combat, he has the chance to recover his mind. Place five Mind Control Tokens on the table. During each of the Gladiator's turns, the master and the slave make an opposed Spirit roll, the master using his Spirit and the gladiator using his former value. For each success and raise the winner takes a Token from the table, or, if there aren't any available, steals one from his opponent.*

*If at any time the Gladiator gets five Mind Control Tokens it means he breaks free of the spell, if the master gets five the slave returns into the firm grasp of the owner.*

*Note that during this mental battle the Gladiator's body is still under control of the master, but he makes any physical-based roll at -2 due to the inner strain of the rightful owner of the body trying to oppose the external influence.*

*The GM should use this rule only in climactic moments and is free to increase the chance of it happening (e.g. all Hearts cards), when the Sleeper is in front of someone (like a lover or an old friend) who was important in his past life.*

## "THERE IS STILL A SOUL IN HIM..."

*The sorcery tome showing how to create Gis Gladiators recommends using dead bodies for them. But since the Alchemists are scientists at the heart, some of them experimented with using living people for their wicked studies. These gladiators are stronger and faster than their dead counterparts, because life still flows in their veins. They are called Sleepers and in game terms they receive an extra Bennie, an additional Edge, and an Attribute and a Skill raised by one die step each.*

## ILLUSIONARY OPPONENT

The worst enemy of any warrior is his own fear. Sorcerers, certain drugs and evil entities can bring it to life. An Illusionary Opponent is, as the words say, an illusion, which exists only in the mind of the victim: for spectators they don't exist, but for the chosen targets they are as solid as reality!

**Personalization:** Any creature or monster can be an Illusionary Opponent, you can simply add the Creature of the Mind and Weakness (Disbelief) Monstrous Abilities



to any other profile to create an illusionary version of a creature.

For summoning purposes, an Illusionary Opponent is summoned as a creature one Rank lower than the “real” monster. For example a Swarm, which is a Seasoned creature for *summon ally* purposes, is only a Novice creature if summoned as an Illusionary Opponent.

The profile below represents an illusionary swordsman, which can be summoned as a Novice creature.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Taunt d6.

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7/6; **Toughness:** 7(1)

**Gear:** Bronze long sword (Str+d8), small shield (+1 Parry), light leather armor (+1).

#### **Special Abilities**

• **Creature of the Mind:** An Illusionary Opponent only exists so long as the victim believes in it. Immediately after being Wounded or Incapacitated, an Illusionary Opponent forces its victim to make an opposed Spirit roll (the illusion rolls with +2): for each success and raise the Illusionary Opponent scores, he immediately recovers a Wound and becomes unshaken. Wounds inflicted through Disbelief (see below) cannot be recovered.

• **Weakness (Disbelief):** If the victim of an Illusionary Opponent has reasonable grounds to suppose his enemy is an illusion he can make an opposed Spirit roll against the illusionary opponent; if he wins the Illusionary Opponent is Shaken (this counts as a wounding effect), with a raise the illusion shatters.

## JUNGLE BOA

This enormous snake is typical of the Lush Jungle. Very intelligent, it is an excellent

swimmer, and sometimes infests the murky waters of the Anaconda River, even if its natural environment is the mangrove swamps. Unlike other constrictors, the Jungle Boa has long, sharp teeth, drooling with poison. They are quite attractive to see; their skins sport many different patterns and range from gray-brown to vivid green. People living in the jungle also tell of a particular specimen, called Bandallah, whose skin is marked with a particular sign, and which is fabled to have supernatural powers (see sidebar). Pygmies are very fond of Jungle Boas; the shamans of some tribes can control them and there are stories that they can also take their shapes. In particular trained Jungle Boas are used in arenas with Pygmy Beast Warriors, becoming deadly opponents.

Jungle Boas can be of any size, the stats below represent an average beast.

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d6.

**Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

#### **Special Abilities**

• **Bite:** Str+d4.

• **Boa Poison:** The mouth of a Jungle Boa is frothing with poison. Luckily it is only an acidic substance, dealing +2 damage and, if it hits, it causes -2 to the first roll to recover from Shaken, due to the intense pain it causes. The poison works only for the first successful bite the Boa inflicts, then the beast requires some time (six hours at least) to regenerate it. Pygmies are known to smear their weapons with this deadly substance (see sidebar).

• **Mass of Coils:** A Jungle Boa's most dangerous attack is constricting its opponent, crushing him into a bloody pulp. When it hits with a Fighting attack, this means it bit its opponent (see above), but when it hits with a raise, it entangles its adversary in its coils. A constricted

victim suffers Str+d6 damage each round, but can get free by making an opposed Strength roll against the snake; with a success he only manages to avoid suffering damage in the current round, while with a raise he breaks free. Given its enormous size, a Jungle Boa can constrict up to one additional enemy for each three points of Size it has; so a Jungle Boa with Size +6 can constrict up to three targets at the same time. Constricting doesn't count as an action for the Boa, regardless of the number of victims it has entangled.

• **Size +3:** Full grown Jungle Boas are monstrosities ten yards long, with bodies thick as tree trunks.

### **BANDALLAH OR THE SLAVER SNAKE**

*Bandallah is a name rarely pronounced under the shady trees of the Lush Jungle, because common credence wants that by naming a danger, you evoke it. The Bandallah is a mythical snake, some say one of the Kings of Beasts, gifted with tremendous powers; his emerald green eyes can enthral a man and make him a docile slave. The Bandallah uses this power to lure victims into his coils without effort. When he deems it time for them to die, he releases the spell and the poor wretches die screaming. He does this because fear adds flavor to the meat. The Bandallah can speak in the human tongue and can be recognized by a marking on the skin of his head, resembling a third eye. Priests and sages think that Bandallah is a rebel son of Ulasha (see Beasts and Barbarians #1 Death of a Tyrant), who fled from the desert looking for shelter in the trees to escape the rage of his demonic father.*

*Ruleswise the Bandallah can be made by applying the Beast Kings modifications (see GE page 164) to the Jungle Boa template and giving it the puppet and stun Powers (20 PP, Arcane skill d10).*

### **JUNGLE BOA POISON**

*Weapons smeared with the poison of a Jungle Boa deal +1 damage and cause -1 to the*

*first roll to recover from Shaken. The effect works only for the first strike delivered. With a successful Survival or Lotusmastery roll, a dose of poison can be extracted by a dead or properly subdued snake, plus one per each raise (up to the Size of the Boa plus one). Both the Woodsman and Poisoner Edges grant +2 to this roll. Each dose can be used on a single bladed weapon or for three javelins/arrows.*

*The poison must be used within a week otherwise it deteriorates.*

*Pygmies are known to use this toxin.*

## **MAIMED ONE**

Sometimes beast providers with more greed than good sense travel to the Islands of the Maimed Ones looking for some horrible beast to capture and sell to the arenas. The better part of them never come back, but the few lucky or skilled enough to return safely to civilization bring with them a strange animal or, even more rarely, a Maimed One, a humanoid indigenous to these twisted places. Despite once being men, Maimed Ones cannot be referred to by that term anymore: they are horrible, mutated things with only a passing resemblance to mankind. Savage and ferocious, they are also cannibals, with an inbred hatred of the civilized man.

Obviously, the crowd loves them.

**Mutations:** Extras Maimed Ones usually have one Mutation, Henchmen and Right Hands two, while Wild Cards have up to three.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d6, Intimidation d8, Taunt d6, Throwing d6.

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

**Gear:** Bone war club (Str+d8) or bone tipped spear (Str+d6, Reach 1, +1 Parry, 2 hands).

### Special Abilities

• **Brute:** Maimed Ones are ferocious destroyers of everything they don't understand. They receive +1 to damage rolls in melee attacks, which becomes +2 if they hit with a raise.

• **Horrible:** These creatures are so twisted and revolting as to cause a Fear check the first time they are seen. This roll is at -1 per mutation the Maimed One has (see below). In case of failure, the victim is Nauseated.

• **Mutations:** A Maimed One has one or more mutations, depending on the character type. The GM can invent them or pick them from the sidebar.

### MAIMED ONES MUTATION TABLE

*Nature can be a cruel mother, and for the Maimed Ones surely she is. The list below represents some of the commonest (but not lethal) mutations the Maimed Ones suffer.*

*To determine them randomly, draw a card from the Action Deck for each mutation, check the list and apply the result. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, if the same card is drawn twice, simply ignore the second result.*

**Deuce – Tentacle.** *The Maimed One has one tentacle attached somewhere on its body. The tentacle is a Reach 2 weapon dealing Strength damage, but it isn't precise enough for fine manipulations such as using weapons. It grants +1 to Grapple rolls. Each time this card is dealt the Maimed one receives an additional tentacle. Tentacles attack as a single entity, but each additional one raises damage by one die step and gives +1 to Grapple rolls (up to +4).*

**Three – Ocular Mutation.** *If the card drawn is red the monster has a third eye, misplaced somewhere in its face. Despite being horrible, it grants +2 to Notice rolls. If the card is black the monster has a single central eye in its forehead. Apart from*

*lacking depth perception (-2 to ranged attacks), any Called Shot to the head which at least Shakes the monster automatically blinds it.*

**Four – Missing Limb.** *This poor creature has a malformed or missing limb. If the card drawn is red, the unlucky part is an arm or a hand, and the monster suffers from the One Arm Hindrance. If the card is black it is missing a leg and suffers the Lane Hindrance.*

**Five – Gaunt.** *This mutation confers on the Maimed One a very tall body frame (up to eight feet in height), at the cost of extreme thinness. In game terms a gaunt Maimed One receives +1 Reach and +1 Pace for the extreme length of its limbs, but suffers -1 to Toughness.*

**Six – Hunchback Giant.** *The Maimed One is very tall and big, but its spine is twisted into an ugly hunch. It receives +1 Toughness, and its Strength is raised by one die step, but due to its unstable center of gravity, its Pace is reduced by 2 and it suffers -2 to resist Agility Tricks.*

**Seven – Painless.** *This monster has whitish, hairless skin, with a rubbery consistence. It feels no pain, and so enjoys the benefits of the Hardy Monstrous Ability.*

**Eight – Misplaced Organs.** *The internal organs of this Maimed One are weird, to say the least. It is immune to Called Shots, because it is very difficult to determine where the vitals are. As a drawback any Healing roll made on it is made at -4.*

**Nine – Reek.** *The creature is covered in decaying tumors, which cause a terrible stench. Any character with a proper sense of smell within 3" of the creature must make a Vigor roll each round to avoid being Shaken by the terrible smell. As a drawback, the Maimed One's body isn't very fit and its Vigor is reduced by one die step.*

**Ten – Extra Arm.** *The abomination has a third arm. It can make a free additional attack per round.*



**Jack – Pustules.** *This Maimed One is a bulbous horror of pustules filled with an infectious substance. Whenever the monster is hit by a wounding attack, any target within a SMT centred on it must make an Agility roll to avoid being sprayed by the filthy thing. Anyone so unlucky as to miss the roll must make an immediate Vigor roll or suffer the effects of Long Term, Chronic Debilitating Illness (see SWD page 87).*

**Queen – Howler.** *This very weird mutation manifests as plumes covering patches of the body and an unnaturally high-pitched tone of voice, so strong that it can make a man bleed from his ears. In game terms a Howler (which is almost always female), receives the stun Power, using Vigor as Arcane Skill and with 10 Power Points. Unlike the normal Power, this is used with the Cone Template.*

**King – Killer Jaws.** *The jaws of this Maimed One are a nightmare of filed teeth and the jaw muscles are strong enough to break bones. The creature can make biting attacks dealing Str+d6 damage but if the card drawn is black it cannot speak, due to the unusual configuration of the vocal apparatus.*

**Ace – Twins Abomination.** *This derelict being is two people in a single body: they have two heads and a couple of extra arms, but they share the rest of the body. One of the twins is considerably stronger (raise Strength and Vigor by one die step), while the second is weaker but smarter (drop Strength and Vigor by one die step and raise Smarts and Spirit by one step). They receive two Action Cards and can act autonomously, but they can only move once per round. This mutation is so intrusive that even if there are other cards to draw stop here. The creature is automatically a Wild Card.*

**Joker – Superior Mutation.** *The Maimed One is gifted with bulging muscles, superior reflexes or something similar. Raise an Attribute by one die step and draw another card to pick an additional Mutation.*

## SLAVE HOUND

Large, ferocious dogs, used mainly for tracking down runaway slaves. The Tricarnians were the first to use them, and pure-bred Tricarnian dogs are by far the most ferocious ones, but other regions of the Dominions also have their own Slave Hounds.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d6, Tracking d8.

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

### Special Abilities

• **Bite:** Str+d4.

• **Blood Rage:** These dogs become enraged when smelling blood. They receive +1 to attack and damage rolls against characters wounded or Shaken by a wounding effect.

• **Fleet-Footed:** Slave Hounds roll a d8 instead of a d6 when running.

• **Human Hunters:** Slave Hounds are especially trained to track human beings, for this reason they receive +2 to any Tracking and Notice rolls when hunting men.

## REEF SPIDER

This beast resembles a strange crossbreed between a giant spider and a crab. Large as a pony, it is covered with a thick brownish carapace and has eight legs, the front ones ending in razor sharp claws, which emit low clacking sounds when it walks. Reef Spiders dwell mainly on the shores of the Drowned King Sea, and pass the greater part of their lives in underwater caverns at the base of cliffs. During low tides they come out from their dens and go hunting on the shore.

People living on the coasts of the Drowned King Sea deeply fear Reef Spiders: they call them Green Moon Hunters because

there is a legend according to which during the lowest low tide of the year (which always happens when the moon turns green), they go hunting *en masse*, attacking travelers, mariners and even sneaking from the water into coastal villages. During this night babies in particular must be protected, because the Green Moon Hunters kidnap them and bring them to their lairs, never to be seen again. But this must surely be a legend, because no animal could be so smart...

Beast providers don't believe in these stories for sissies and some of them hunt the sandy beaches and reef caverns of the northern sea looking for the eggs of Reef Spiders. Big as watermelons, they hatch in a few months, always during the full moon, and are then sold to the arenas.

Pit guards are very nervous around Reef Spiders: they are convinced that these creatures are intelligent, very intelligent: too much so to be simple animals, and some of them, half awake during night shifts, swear to have heard them talk in a strange language made of clicking sounds and low gurgles. Naturally these reports aren't held in high regard, but no pit guard will ever turn his back on a Reef Spider or enter their pit to feed them without a good backup with him.

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

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Notice d6.

**Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9(2)

#### **Special Abilities**

- **Armor +2:** Reef Spiders have a thick carapace.
- **Aquatic:** Reef Spiders are excellent swimmers. They can move at Pace 6 in water.
- **Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Crab Fencer:** Reef Spiders use their frontal claws with almost human skill. In

particular they are very good at parrying and launching vicious counterattacks. Once per round, if a Reef Spider is attacked in melee but the attacking roll doesn't beat its Parry, it can make an immediate free attack.

• **Size +2:** Reef Spiders are big.

• **Weakness (Soft Abdomen):** Reef Spiders can be very dangerous, but they have a weak point, their abdomen, which is very tender. The tricky thing is exposing it. Crab hunters know a couple of dirty tricks, mainly kicks, which can be used to capsize Reef Spiders. In game terms this is an Agility Trick, with the Reef Spider rolling at +4. The secret of capsizing them is getting the timing right, so if the Trick is attempted while interrupting their action (this requires the attacker to go on Hold), the bonus is neutralized. A capsized Reef Spider is almost helpless. It cannot attack or move, and attacks against it have the Drop. The beast can regain its feet only by making a successful Agility roll.

### **THE SECRET OF THE BLACK SAND ISLAND**

*There are legends about an underground bay on forgotten island somewhere in the Drowned King Sea, where the sand is jet black. There, buried in a secret location, there is an ancient treasure. There, Reef Spiders drag the children they kidnap as tokens of veneration to archaic deities of the sea.*

### **THE REEF SPIDER'S HEART**

*The heart of the Reef Spider is surrounded by a hard bony shell and is big as a man's head. Sages debate this strange adaptation of nature and suppose that in some past era Reef Spiders had enemies capable of stabbing them. Whatever the reason, the heart shell of a Reef Spider is highly sought both by warlocks and Lotusmasters, because they are excellent ingredients for armor enchantments.*

*In game terms, a Sorcerer using a Reef Spider shell while casting the armor Power receives +1 Armor to the spell's effect (so Armor +3 for a success and +5 for a raise).*

*For a Lotusmaster it counts as four doses of Refined Lotus instead, to be used only for the armor Power. In both cases the duration of the Power is doubled, and the shell is destroyed after use.*

*Extracting a Reef Spider Heart requires a Survival or Healing (-2) roll (and obviously the beast must not have been killed with a Called Shot to the vitals). A Reef Spider Heart can be sold for up to 250 Moons, and is a Rare Item.*

## SAVANNAH CENTIPEDE

Savannah people know that when they find these melon-sized, spotted eggs they must do one of two things: smash them into little pieces or flee. Given time to hatch, they'll produce giant centipedes, initially the big as a cat, but which will quickly grow to the size of dogs and, if given enough time and food, as big as ponies. Savannah centipedes are extremely ravenous and, sadly, carnivorous: one of them can strip a gazelle clean of meat in a few minutes. They exist in various species, recognizable by the color of the carapace. Beast providers pay well for the eggs because these beasts perform well in the arena, but there are very few hunters mad enough to collect them, because this entails entering their underground nests, with the constant risk of stumbling onto an angry mother or father.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

### Special Abilities

- **Armor +1:** Thick carapace.
- **Bite:** Str+d4.

- **Insect Mentality:** Centipedes are immune to mind-affecting attacks, and are very quick in recovering their wits: they receive +2 to rolls to recover from Shaken.

- **Specimen Ability:** Depending on their species, centipedes have a special ability (see Sidebar).

- **Wall Walker:** Centipedes can walk on walls or ceilings at full pace.

## SPECIES OF CENTIPEDE

*Here is a selection of the commonest breeds of Savannah Centipedes.*

**Black centipedes.** *These beasts, recognizable by their thick, jet carapace, are fitted with bigger and stronger jawbones. They have +2 Armor and their jaws deal Str+d6 damage. With the jaws, the Savannah people make excellent daggers (they deal +1 damage).*

**Fire centipedes.** *Colored in various patterns of red, these very aggressive beasts produce pheromones that drive them mad. Whenever there is blood spilled within 6" of them, they automatically gain the Frenzy Edge and deal +1 damage.*

**Olive centipedes.** *Putrid green in color, these little monsters (Size -1) drool yellowish, poisonous saliva from their mouths. Any target making contact with it (i.e. being Shaken or Wounded) must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue.*

**Ash centipedes.** *These very nasty beasts are gifted with advanced camouflage capabilities and their carapaces can blend into their surroundings. They have Stealth d8 and receive a +4 bonus to Stealth if they don't move.*

**Brown centipedes.** *The biggest and most dangerous kind, brown centipedes can become big as horses: they have Size +3.*



## STRIPED KILLER

An enormous and ferocious boar, from the Islands of the Maimed Ones. This creature doesn't belong in our era: striped red and brown, it is large as a bull, and, as well as dagger-long fangs, it sports three horns placed in a straight line from the nose to the forehead. Gifted with an incredible vitality, the Striped Killer has a very bad attitude: it gores opponents with its horns, gutting them, and then eats the innards while the poor sods are still alive. This is a spectacle the crowds of every arena love. Luckily Striped Killers are very shortsighted, but compensate with an overly acute sense of smell.

Striped Killers are usually Henchmen, while very old ones, brutes covered in scars, are Wild Cards.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8.

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10(1)

### Special Abilities

- **Armor +1:** Thick skin and layers of fat.
- **Fangs:** Str+d4.
- **Gore:** If a Striped Killer can move up to 6" in straight line to charge its opponent, it receives +2 to damage and attack rolls. Gore attacks are always performed with the horns.
- **Horns:** Str+d8. Horns are the most terrible weapon of the Striped Killer. They require a certain precision to be used (so the beast suffers -2 to attack rolls) but they are far deadlier than the fangs.
- **Size +2:** Striped Killers are roughly as large as bulls; they are somewhat shorter but stockier.
- **Short Sighted:** Striped Killers are almost blind and they rely on smell to find their targets. Their sight range is 6".

If there is a target within that range, they automatically attack it, ignoring other opponents. If there is no prey in sight range, they are allowed a Notice roll to spot targets more than 6" away. The roll suffers -4 if the prey is downwind or +4 if upwind. Determine the wind direction by rolling a d12 and reading it as a direction on a clock face.



## TENTACLE MONSTER

A giant-sized octopus, relic of a forgotten past. These creatures are found in the reefs around Tricarnia, crawling away from the ancient Keronian cities flooded by the Dread Star's fall. If living in the wild, they become big, but not as big as if nurtured in captivity: the secret is human meat. If this is provided in good quantity, they become enormous, and evil. Tentacle Monsters are aquatic beings, but they can stay out of the water for a while. Usually they are kept in pools of murky water as Terrors of the Arena, and they crawl out looking for food.

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d4.

**Pace:** 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 14

### Special Abilities

- **Aquatic:** Tentacle Monsters are perfectly at ease in water and swim with Pace 7.
- **Beak:** The terrible mouth of this creature resembles an overgrown bird's beak. It deals Str+d6 damage.
- **Large:** Large creatures are somewhat easier to hit. Attackers can add +2 to attack rolls against them.
- **Multi-Tentacled Monster:** This creature has eight very long tentacles. When in the water it uses all of them to attack, while when on solid ground it attacks only with six, while the others are devoted to moving. Each tentacle has

Reach 6, and attacks as an independent being (no Multi-Action Penalty is applied), dealing Str damage. Tentacles can be targeted by attacks, they have Toughness 8, each of them can be Shaken as an independent creature and is severed after suffering a Wound.

- **Scary:** Seeing a Tentacle Monster awakes some deep-buried instinct in mankind, because in the past Keronian priests sacrificed human slaves to the unholy appetites of these beasts. They cause a Fear check the first time they are seen.

- **Size +6:** Tentacle Monsters are huge. Sprawled on the ground they are almost big as an elephant.

- **Weakness (Eyes):** The sheer mass of the Tentacle Monster makes it an impressive opponent: its vital organs are buried deep in its body and to kill it you must literally cut the creature into small pieces. Luckily it has a weakness: any attack targeting the eyes (Called Shot -4) strikes the brain directly, and ignores all the Size bonuses to Toughness (actual Toughness of the monster: 6). Reaching the central body in melee can be difficult, because the monster tries to keep enemies at a distance with its tentacles. The central body has a size of a SBT and the surrounding area in a 6" radius around it (where tentacles can reach) is Difficult Ground. In addition any movement through the tentacles is considered Crawling (see *SWD* page 65).

## DENIZENS OF THE ARENA

This chapter introduces several new NPCs typical of the arenas. As always tweaks are presented to customize them.

## ARENA CROWD

Riots aren't uncommon in the arenas: they can be caused by an unpopular decision of the Master of the Games, by the behavior of a gladiator or can even be carefully planned maneuvers to start a large scale rebellion. Whatever the cause, during an arena riot the greatest danger isn't the gladiators but the wild, out-of-control spectators who can trample guards, notables and even the gladiators to death!

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Throwing d8.

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6

### Special Abilities

- **Crowd Size:** Crowds come in three sizes: Small, Medium and Large, each of them represented by a burst template of the same size. Small Crowds disperse after suffering one Wound, Medium Crowds disperse after two Wounds, and Large ones after three Wounds. Crowds suffering a Wound are automatically reduced in size (so a Large Crowd suffering a Wound is reduced to a Medium Crowd).

- **Crowd Attacks:** Crowds are made up of dozens of people doing different and unrelated things. Targets caught in a Crowd suffer 2d4 damage per turn. In addition, a Crowd can make a special attack/action per size it has (so a small Crowd makes one attack, a Medium two and so on). The crowd's actions are totally random. Draw a card from the Action Deck and check the results below.

*Clubs – Curses and Shouts!* The Crowd shouts angrily; this counts as an Intimidation Test of Will, affecting targets in a template of the same size as the Crowd, at a range of up to 12".

*Diamonds – Hail of Stones!* The Crowd reacts by throwing stones, rotten fruits and whatever else it has at hand against

the nearest or most hostile target. This counts as suppressive fire, with a range of 6/12/24. Unlike standard suppressive fire, the size of the damage template is the same size as the Crowd. Victims rolling 1 on the Spirit die suffer 2d6 damage.

*Hearts – Grow!* Other assorted people join the Crowd, which increases by one size class. A Large Crowd cannot increase in size, so spawns a Small Crowd in contact with the big one.

*Spades – Charge!* The Crowd moves 2d6” wildly in a straight line. This movement crosses any non-impassable terrain, including other characters. Any target in the path of a charging crowd must make an Agility roll or suffer 2d6 damage.

*Joker – Go Nuts!* The crowd goes totally mad, it receives a permanent +2 to damage rolls and Toughness.

• **Swarm:** +2 Parry. Crowds are made up of dozens of angry people, pushing and trampling their victims, so melee weapons aren't very efficient. Melee and ranged weapon attacks deal only half damage. Fire and magic deal normal damage and cause an immediate Fear Check from the crowd. In the case of failure, the Crowd is Panicked (see *SWD* page 85).

## ARENA GUARD

Arenas are dangerous places full of dangerous people. For this reason they are highly protected, so that the gladiators don't rebel, don't try to escape or, even worse, attack spectators during the games. The guards and sentinels of the pits are hardened fellows with a don't-piss-me-off attitude. Although they know they are no match for a trained gladiator in a fair fight, they also know that with numbers, superior equipment and coordination, they can handle the great majority of them. Plus, an arrow in the innards can stop even the most hot-blooded rebel.

Really good guards don't have to resort to violence: so long as they keep their vigilance levels high, nothing bad can happen.

**Customization:** Archer guard (raise Agility and Shooting to d8, drop Strength and Fighting to d6, replace Combat Reflexes with Marksman, replace weapons with bow and bronze short sword), Beast Pits guard (add Survival d6, replace Combat Reflexes with Shaft Master, replace weapons with bronze short sword and long spear (Reach: 2, can only be used two handed)), Brutal guard (raise Strength to d10 and drop Smarts to d4, add the Brawny and Brute Edges, and





the Quirk (Cruel) Hindrance), Corrupt Guard (add Streetwise d6, add the Greedy Hindrance), Whip Master guard (Right Hand raise Fighting to d10, drop Strength to d6, add the Trademark Weapon (Whip) and Death Grip Edges and replace gear with bronze tipped dagger and whip, light leather armor).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Throwing d6.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6/7; **Toughness:** 8(2)

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes.

**Hindrances:** -.

**Gear:** Bronze tipped mace (Str+d6), bronze tipped spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands), bronze dagger (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12), leather small shield (+1 Parry), medium bronze armor (+2), medium helm (+2, head only).

### Special Abilities

• **Kick'em While They're Down!** When someone goes down, Arena Guards want him to stay down. Usually they do this by kicking the fallen enemy in the ribs until he stops moving. Any Shaken character in contact with one or more Arena Guards suffers a penalty to rolls to recover from Shaken equal to the Gang Up bonus of the guards surrounding him, up to -4. The penalty is offset by the Armor of the victim. So, if for example a Shaken gladiator in medium armor (+2) is surrounded by five guards (Gang Up bonus +4) kicking him he suffers -2 to rolls to recover from Shaken. Being Kicked While Down can have nasty consequences: if the character rolls a 1 on the Spirit dice when rolling to recover from Shaken he must make an immediate Vigor (-2) roll or suffer a Wound from the beating.

• **Sergeant:** Every ten guards are commanded by a sergeant, a Henchman

with the Block and Command Edges, plus Knowledge (Battle) d4.

• **Subdue:** Arena Guards are trained to subdue riotous gladiators, not to kill them. This means hitting them hard and fast, but causing no permanent damage. When armed with a blunt weapon an Arena Guard can attack dealing non-lethal damage without any penalty.

## CHARIOTEER

Chariots are a very impressive presence in the arena: seeing gladiators stomped and slashed to death by the scythed wheel of a chariot is one of the things the crowd loves most.

In the following paragraphs are presented two typical crewmen of arena chariots: the Charioteer and Charioteer Archer always work together, one driving the chariot and the other shooting down enemies, while the Scythed Death Charioteer works alone, driving and using the chariot as a weapon against his foes.

Both are deadly opponents.

## CHARIOTEER ARCHER

This specialized archer is the attacking part of a chariot crew. She hits enemies from far away, while the charioteer keeps them at a distance.

**Customization:** Slinger/Javelin Thrower (drop Spirit to d6, raise Strength to d8, replace Marksman and Trained Thrower (Bow) with Strong Arm and Trained Thrower (Sling/Javelin), replace bow with war sling or 6 bronze tipped javelins).

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

**Skills:** Driving d4, Fighting d6, Shooting d10, Taunt d8.

**Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

**Edges:** Dodge, Marksman, Trained Thrower (Bow).

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bow (Damage: 2d6, Range: 12/24/48), bronze dagger (Str+d4), light leather armor (+1).

## CHARIOTEER

This charioteer is only a driver, and works in combination with a Charioteer Archer.

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

**Skills:** Driving d8, Fighting d6.

**Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

**Edges:** Charioteer, Improved Dodge, Steady Hands

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Whip (Str, Reach: 2), light leather armor (+1), shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs. ranged attacks), arena chariot (Acc/TS: 5/15, Toughness: 8, Crew: 1+1 Notes: Scythed Wheels, see *GE* page 101), two horses (see *SWD* page 138).

### Special Abilities

• **Protector:** The Charioteer is trained to use his shield to protect his passenger, who benefits from the effects of the Charioteer's shield.

• **Slashing Death:** The Charioteer is a master of using the scythed wheels of his chariot to slash his opponents to death. Any time the chariot passes within 1" of any other character, the pedestrian must make an Agility roll opposed by the Charioteer's Driving. If he loses, he suffers 2d8+1 damage. Note that the use of this Ability isn't considered an action, but is included in the chariot's movement.

## SCYTHED DEATH CHARIOTEER

This heavily armored charioteer is both a skilled driver and a good fighter. His best weapon is the chariot itself and its scythed wheels.

**Customization:** Cairnlander Axeman (raise Strength to d8, replace the Death Grip Edge with Sweep, replace long whip with long-handled battle axe (Str+d8, Reach 2, 2 hands)), Spearman Charioteer (replace the Death Grip Edge with the Strong Arm Edge, replace long whip with six bronze tipped javelins)

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

**Skills:** Driving d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Throwing d8.

**Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

**Edges:** Charioteer, Death Grip, Level Headed, Steady Hands

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Long whip (Str, Reach: 4), medium bronze armor (+2), arena chariot (Acc/TS: 5/15, Toughness: 8, Crew: 1+1 Notes: Scythed Wheels, see *GE* page 101), two horses (see *SWD* page 138).

### Special Abilities

• **Drag Along the Ground:** One of the favorite tactics of the Scythed Death charioteer consists of grappling an opponent with his whip and then dragging him across the ground, using the strength of the horses.

To do this, the Charioteer must make a grappling attack with a Called Shot (-2), aiming at the legs of the victim. From this point on, if the chariot moves at least 8" in a straight line, any Strength grappling roll made by the Charioteer, including damage rolls, is based on the Strength of the horse (d12) instead of his own. In addition the victim is automatically knocked prone.

• **Slashing Death:** The Charioteer is a master of using the scythed wheels of his chariot to slash his opponents to death. Any time the chariot passes within 1" of any other character, the pedestrian must make an Agility roll opposed by the Charioteer's Driving. If he loses, he suffers 2d8+1 damage. Note that the use of this Ability isn't considered an action, but is included in the chariot's movement.

## GLADIATOR (EXPANDED VERSION)

The following profiles expand the basic Gladiator template you can find in *GE* page 168. You can continue to use the basic profile for generic pit fighters, employing the following ones for specialized gladiators such as retiarii, skirmishers and so on.

**Stirring the Crowd:** Note that the Stir the Crowd Special Ability of the Gladiator of *GE* is now the Setting Rule of the same name introduced in this book on page 61.

**Level of Skill:** The templates below represent gladiators of average skill (consider them Seasoned Characters for the purposes of Celebrity rolls). To scale them up and create more challenging opponents for the party, use the guidelines in the Scaling Gladiators sidebar.

**Character Type:** Average gladiators are Extras but you can easily promote them to Right Hand, Henchman or Wild Card status without changing any stats.

**Other Skills:** Only the relevant combat skills of each gladiator are listed. As a rule of thumb each gladiator has 3-5 skill points to spend on other, non-combat skills.

**Special Abilities:** For ease of use, the effect of the Gladiator Edge for each type of gladiator is recapped as a Special Ability.

## GM'S TIP: SCALING GLADIATORS

*The gladiators' profiles are roughly comparable to Seasoned characters. This means they will be good challenges for warrior-type heroes of the same Rank, but Veteran or better warrior characters will find them easy opponents.*

*Here are some ideas to scale the gladiators up to be an adequate challenge for more experienced fighters. Obviously, modifying a gladiator's profile means recalculating his Combat Value (see page 55).*

**Veteran.** *Pick one of: raise Vigor by one die step and add a Combat Edge or promote to Henchman status (if using the Duels Setting Rule promote them to Wild Cards).*

**Heroic.** *Pick one of: raise main combat skill by one die step and add a Combat Edge or add the Loincloth Hero Edge for unarmored gladiators or the Armor Use Edge for armored gladiators (for Henchmen and Wild Cards). In the case of the Armor Use, grant Henchmen two Bennies only usable for that Edge.*

**Legendary.** *Automatically promote the gladiator to Wild Card status and pick one of: raise main combat skill to d12+1 and give him the Hero of the Pits Edge or raise Strength, Vigor and Agility by one die step and add any three Edges.*

## BEAST WARRIOR

A beast warrior is a gladiator who fights in the arena along with an animal sidekick. The base template is for a Syranthian spearman with a trained Dominions Cat (see page 115).

**Customization:** Cairnlander axe man and Bone Wolf (raise Strength and Vigor to d8, drop Agility to d6 and Smarts to d4, replace gear with bronze battle axe, light leather armor and Bone Wolf animal companion), Jalizaran swordsman and Zandorian Caretaker (raise Fighting to



d10 and Strength to d8, drop Agility to d6, remove Throwing, add One Hand and a Half Edge, replace gear with bronze long sword, light leather armor and Zandorian Caretaker animal companion), Red Desert archer and Desert Shrieker (drop Fighting to d6, raise Shooting to d10, replace the Block and Harass Edges with Extraction and Marksman, replace gear with composite bow, bronze dagger, light leather armor and Desert Shrieker animal companion).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7/6;

**Toughness:** 6(1)

**Edges:** Block, Gladiator (Beast Warrior see below), Harass, Hold the Line! (animal companion only).

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bronze tipped spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands), dagger (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12), light leather armor (+1), Dominions Cat beast companion.

### Special Abilities

• **Beast Warrior:** The Beast Warrior has the Command Edge for his animal companion only. Unless he takes the Command Edge his leadership Edges work only with beasts.

## BESTIARIUS

A gladiator specialized in fighting against animals.

**Customization:** Northlander bear fighter (raise Strength to d8, replace weapons with battle axe, can use the battle axe with the Gladiator (Bestiarius) Edge), Ivory Savannah lion killer (add the Loincloth Hero Edge, replace gear with spear, can use the spear with the Gladiator (Bestiarius) Edge).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7/6;

**Toughness:** 7(1)

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, First Strike, Gladiator (Bestiarius see below), Quick.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bronze tipped one handed spear (Str+d6, Reach 1) *or* bronze short sword (Str+d6), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs ranged weapons), light leather armor (+1).

### Special Abilities

• **Bestiarius:** When fighting against an animal opponent (Smarts (A)), he gains the Giant Killer and Counterattack Edges.

## BULL DANCER

A young, agile girl, who dances on the horns of bulls. The basic template represents an Ascaian Bull Dancer.

**Customization:** Syranthian Bull Dancer (remove the Luck Edge, add a bronze dagger to gear).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Riding d8, Taunt d8.

**Charisma:** +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7;

**Toughness:** 5

**Edges:** Acrobat, Attractive, Fleet-Footed, Gladiator (Bull Dancer see below), Luck, Quick.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Red silk bikini.

### Special Abilities

• **Bull Dancer:** When unarmed and unarmored a Bull Dancer gains the Loincloth Hero/Bikini Heroine Edge.

## CALDEIAN FENCER

An officer of the Caldeian army, trained to fight in the Caldeian Duels.

**Customization:** Axe Fighter (raise Vigor to d8, drop Fighting to d8, replace weapons with iron battle axe and small shield), Spear Fighter (drop Smarts to d6, replace Block with Shaft Master Edge, replace weapons with iron-tipped spear), Sword Fighter (replace Beat Back with Trademark Weapon (My Trusty Longsword), replace weapons with bronze long sword and small shield).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Knowledge (Battle) d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d6, Intimidation d6, Taunt d6.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 9/8; **Toughness:** 6(1)

**Edges:** Beat Back, Block, Command, Gladiator (Caldeian Fencer see below), First Strike.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Caldeian saber (Str+d6, see page 50), Caldeian dagger (Str+d4, +1 Parry), Caldeian Officer's Helm (+2, head only, see page 52), light leather armor (+1).

### Special Abilities

• **Caldeian Fencer:** When in light or no body armor, and armed with a Caldeian saber, long sword, battle axe or spear, and optionally a small shield or dagger in the off hand, he gains the Counterattack Edge.

## CALED SPEARMAN

An almost naked gladiator wielding a spear, mocking the dreaded Caled naked spearmen.

**Customization:** Amazon Spearwoman (drop Strength to d6, add the Amazon

Edge), Caled Convict Warrior (raise Intimidation to d10, add the Loincloth Hero Edge he is at least a Right Hand).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Notice d6, Intimidation d8, Throwing d6.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8/7; **Toughness:** 6

**Edges:** Block, Gladiator (Caled Spearman see below), Sweep.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bronze tipped spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands), loincloth, tattoos.

### Special Abilities

• **Caled Spearman:** When unarmored and armed only with a spear a Caled Spearman gains the Shaft Master Edge.

## CAVALRYMAN

This gladiator is specialized in fighting on horseback. The basic template represents a close combat version.

**Customization:** Horse Archer (drop Fighting to d6, Remove Throwing, add Shooting d8, replace the Block Edge with Steady Hands, replace gear with bow and horse), Horse Javelin Thrower (raise Strength to d8 and Throwing to d8 drop Fighting to d6, replace Block and Combat Reflexes with Strong Arm and Steady Hands, replace gear with three bronze tipped javelins and horse).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d6, Riding d8, Throwing d6.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7/6; **Toughness:** 6(1)

**Edges:** Block, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Gladiator (Cavalryman see below).

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bronze tipped one-handed spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), small shield (+1 Parry), light leather armor (+1), horse.

### Special Abilities

• **Cavalryman:** When unarmored or in light armor and on horseback he gains the Born in the Saddle Edge.

## CHAIN FIGHTER

This gladiator is trained in fighting with a wicked arena chain.

**Customization:** Jademan Chain Fighter (add the Martial Artist and Improved Block Edges, remove armor), Tricarnian Chain Warrior (drop Smarts to d4, Raise Strength to d10 add the Death Grip Edge).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Taunt d6.

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

**Toughness:** 8(2)

**Edges:** Block, Death Grip, Gladiator (Chain Fighter see below), Frenzy.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bronze arena chain (Str+d8, Reach 2, ignore Parry and cover bonus, -1 Parry, 2 hands, see page 50), bronze hooked half medium armor (+2, +1 if hit with a raise).

### Special Abilities

• **Chain Fighter:** When in light half or medium half armor and using an arena chain, the Chain fighter gains the Frenzy Edge.

• **Improved Frenzy:** Because the Chain Fighter already has the Frenzy Edge, the Gladiator Edge (Chain Fighter) grants him the Improved Frenzy Edge, but only when using an arena chain.

## DISK THROWER

This gladiator uses lethal chackrams in the arena. This template represents an Longneck Woman Warrior (see page 39).

**Customization:** Amazon Disk Warrior (Raise Strength to d8 and Fighting to d10, drop Throwing to d8 Replace Two Fisted and Ambidexterity with Amazon, Noble, Trademark Weapon (Amazon Blade), replace gear with iron Amazon Blade, light leather armor, two bronze chakrams).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d10.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6/5;

**Toughness:** 6

**Edges:** Ambidexterity, Gladiator (Disk Thrower see below), Two Fisted, Quick Draw.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Four bone Chakrams (Str+d4, Range: 6/12/24, ignore 2 points of cover), two bronze spiked chakrams (Str+d4, Range: 4/8/16, -1 Throwing, if used in melee in matched pairs they grant +1 damage and +1 Parry).

### Special Abilities

• **Disk Thrower:** When in light or no armor and using a chackram, the Disk Thrower gains the Strong Arm Edge.

## SKIRMISHER

This very lightly armored and mobile gladiator excels in hit-and-run bow tactics.

**Customization:** Red Huntress of Victoria Syranthian female gladiator (replace the Fleet-Footed Edge with Acrobat and Attractive, remove all armor), Tricarnian Crow Archer (raise Fighting to d8 and drop Shooting to d8, replace the Fleet-Footed Edge with Martial Artist, replace leather greaves and gladiator armguard with spiked



boots (Str+d4, count as Iron Fists but are used with kicks, -1 Pace), gladiator helm).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d10, Taunt d8.

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

**Edges:** Fleet-Footed, Extraction, Gladiator (Escaper see below), Steady Hands.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bow (Damage: 2d6, Range: 12/24/48), gladiator armguard (+1 Parry, see *GE* page 93), leather greaves (+1, legs only).

#### Special Abilities

- **Skirmisher:** When in no body armor and wielding a bow, the Skirmisher gains the Extraction Edge.

- **Improved Extraction:** Since the Skirmisher already has the Extraction Edge, the Gladiator (Skirmisher) Edge grants him the Improved Extraction Edge, but only when using a bow and in no body armor.

### MYRMIDON

A heavily armed and armored gladiator, quite slow but deadly. He is the natural opponent of the Skirmisher and the Retiarius.

**Customization:** Cairnlander Bone Warrior (drop Smarts to d4, raise Strength to d10, replace the Counterattack Edge with Frenzy, replace long sword with battle axe, all his gear is made of bone), Zandorian Executioner (raise Smarts to d8, add the Level Headed Edge and Killer Instinct Edge, enemies with the Wanted Hindrance suffer from the Bad Luck Hindrance when fighting a Zandorian Executioner).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Taunt d6.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 9/7; **Toughness:** 9(3)

**Edges:** Block, Counterattack, Gladiator (Myrmidon see below), Sweep.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bronze long sword (Str+d8), large bronze shield (+2 Parry, +2 Armor vs ranged attacks), heavy bronze armor (+3), gladiator helm (+3, -1 to Notice rolls).

#### Special Abilities

- **Myrmidon:** When in heavy metal armor and using a battle axe or a long sword and a large shield, the Myrmidon gains the Armor Use Edge. Non-Wild Card Myrmidons have two Bennies which can be used on Soak rolls for the Armor Use Edge only.

### PUGILIST

A bare-chested warrior fighting with an iron fist and a small shield.

**Customization:** Ekulian Jademan Pugilist (raise Fighting to d10, remove Taunt, replace the Brawler and Improved Frenzy Edges with Improved Martial Artist and Counterattack), Faberterranean Pugilist (Replace Improved Frenzy with First Strike and Combat Reflexes).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Taunt d8.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7/6; **Toughness:** 6

**Edges:** Brawler, Gladiator (Pugilist see below), Improved Frenzy, Iron Will.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Leather bronze-riveted iron fist (Str+d4+2), small shield (+1 Parry).

#### Special Abilities

• **Pugilist:** When in no armor and fighting with an iron fist and a small shield, a Pugilist receives the Block Edge for free.

## RETARIUS

The epitome of the Blood Sports, this bare-chested gladiator fights with a trident and net in the off-hand.

**Customization:** Syranthian Fisher of Death (Replace the Block Edge with Killer Instinct), Faberterran Retarius (Drop Fighting to d8 and raise Vigor to d8, replace Block with First Strike).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Notice d8, Taunt d8.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8;

**Toughness:** 5

**Edges:** Ambidexterity, Block, Death Grip, Gladiator (Retarius see below).

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bronze-tipped one handed trident (Str+d6, Reach 1), combat net (+2 to Grapple rolls, Reach 2, see *GE*, page 91), gladiator helm (+3, -1 to Notice rolls).

### Special Abilities

• **Retarius:** When in no armor and fighting with a trident and a net, a Retarius receives the Two-Fisted Edge for free.

## SPEAR RUNNER

A very mobile spearman or javelin thrower warrior, typical of the Ivory Savannah.

**Customization:** Taleki Tribe Spear Runner (raise Agility and Fighting to d10, drop Strength and Vigor to d6, add the Acrobat Edge, replace loincloth with zebra's skin), Nulambi Spear Runner (raise Strength to d10, drop Smarts to d4, replace the Fleet Footed Edge with Brute, replace loincloth with lion's skin), Ashomba Tribe Spear Runner (raise Throwing to d10,

drop Fighting to d6, replace Improved Frenzy with Strong Arm and Marksman, replace loincloth with buffalo skin).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d8.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 7;

**Toughness:** 6

**Edges:** Fleet Footed, Gladiator (Spear Runner see below), Improved Frenzy.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bronze-tipped spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands) or three bronze-tipped javelins (Str+d6, Range: 4/8/16), loincloth.

### Special Abilities

• **Spear Runner:** When in no armor and fighting with a spear, the Spear Runner gains the First Strike Edge. When fighting with javelins, he gains Extraction.

## SWORDSMAN

A warrior armed with a short sword and round shield, usually complemented with a gladiator armband and helm.

**Customization:** Norheim Axe Fighter (drop Smarts to d6, raise Strength to d10, replace Block, Counterattack and First Strike with Brawny, Brute and Frenzy), Tricarnian Flaming Shield (drop Taunt, add Throwing d8, replace First Strike with Strong Arm, replace round medium shield with bladed medium shield).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Taunt d6.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 9/7;

**Toughness:** 6

**Edges:** Block, Counterattack, Distract, Gladiator (Swordsman see below).

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bronze short sword (Str+d6), round medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs ranged attacks), gladiator armguard (+1 Parry, see *GE* page 93 worn on the weapon arm), gladiator helm (+3, -1 to Notice rolls).

### Special Abilities

• **Swordsman:** When in no armor and fighting with a medium shield and a short sword, the Swordsman gains the Shield Warrior Edge.

## TUSK FIGHTER

A Syranthian gladiator who fights unarmed apart from iron fists and wears an elephant-head-shaped helm.

**Henchmen or Wild Cards:** Tusk Fighters are always Henchmen or Wild Cards.

**Customization:** Umangyu Chosen (Drop Vigor d8 and Fighting to d8, raise Smarts to d6 and Spirit to d8, add Knowledge (Religion) d6 and the Priest and Luck Edges), Khav Addicted Tusk Fighter (drop Spirit to d4, raise Strength to d10, replace the Combat Reflexes with the Berserk Edge, add the Habit (Khav Major) Hindrance).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6.

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

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Gladiator (Tusk Fighter see below), Nerves of Steel, Tooth and Nail, Two-Fisted.

**Hindrances:** Delusion (thinks that when he wears the Tusk Fighter helm he is invulnerable to wounds), choose any other two.

**Gear:** Twin Elephant Horns (count as Iron Fists, Str+d4), elephant-head shaped gladiator helm (+3, -1 to Notice rolls).

### Special Abilities

• **Tusk Fighter:** When unarmed and armed with twin Elephant Horns and wearing the elephant-head-shaped helm, the Tusk Fighter gains the Nerves of Steel Edge.

• **Improved Nerves of Steel:** Since the Tusk Fighter already has the Nerves of Steel Edge, the Gladiator (Tusk Fighter) Edge grants him the Improved Nerves of Steel Edge, but only when unarmed, armed with twin Elephant Horns and wearing his customary helm.

## TWIN MASTER

An unarmed, very fast and mobile gladiator, armed only with two daggers. Also referred to as a “stinger”.

**Customization:** Jalizaran Knife Dancer (drop Taunt, replace Acrobat and Distract Edges with Nimble Strike (right hand dagger) and Counterattack), Cairnlander Spirit of the Clawed Death (drop Agility to d8 and Fighting to d8, raise Strength to d8 and Intimidation to d10, replace the Acrobat and Block Edges with Ghoulblood and Poisoner Edge replace bronze daggers with bone daggers, poisoned with very fast poison).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6.

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

**Edges:** Acrobat, Ambidexterity, Distract, Gladiator (Twin Master see below), Two-Fisted.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).



**Gear:** Twin bronze daggers (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12).

### Special Abilities

• **Twin Master:** When unarmored and armed with twin daggers, the Twin Master gains the Florentine Edge.

### GLADIATORS AND COMBAT VALUE

*For ease of use here follows a table with the pre-calculated Combat Values of gladiators, according to whether they are Extras, Right Hands, Henchmen or Wild Cards. They are calculated using the basic templates (for tweaks you will have to recalculate them from scratch).*

### GLADIATOR COMBAT VALUE TABLE

GLADIATOR	EXTRA	RIGHT HAND (X1.5)	HENCHMAN(X2)	WILD CARD(X3)
Bald Head	41	62	82	123
Beast Warrior <sup>1</sup>	32	48	64	96
Bone Wolf	31	46	62	93
Desert Shrieker	31	46	62	93
Dominions Cat	31	46	62	93
Bestiarius	33	50	66	99
Blind Mauler	36	54	72	108
Bull Dancer <sup>2</sup>	31	46	62	93
Caldeian Fencer	38	55	76	104
Caled Spearman	32	48	64	96
Cavalryman <sup>3</sup>	32(+10)	48(+10)	64(+10)	96(+10)
Chain fighter	36	54	72	108
Charioteer Archer <sup>4</sup>	31	46	62	93
Charioteer <sup>4</sup>	38(+30)	55(+30)	76(+30)	104(+30)
Common Gladiator <sup>5</sup>	32	48	64	96
Disk Thrower	34	51	68	112
Myrmidon <sup>6</sup>	37	55	-	111
Pugilist	34	51	68	112
Retiarius	33	50	66	99
Skirmisher	33	50	66	99
Spear Runner	33	50	66	99
Scythed Death Char. <sup>7</sup>	42(+30)	63(+30)	84(+30)	126(+30)
Sweet Death	37	55	74	111
Swordsman	34	51	68	112
Tusk Fighter <sup>8</sup>	-	-	76	114
Twin Master	35	52	70	105

**NOTES**

[1] *Must have an animal companion (choose from Bone Wolf, Desert Shrieker, Dominions Cat or any other suitable beast), whose cost must be added. The Companion must be of the same type as the Beast Warrior or of a lesser type (so you can have a Henchman Beast Warrior with a Right Hand Companion, but not the opposite).*

[2] *Bull Dancers are seldom used unless one of the fights is expressly a Bull Dance.*

[3] *Cavalrymen are mounted gladiators, the value in parenthesis represents the mount (a riding horse) and must be added to the total.*

[4] *The Charioteer and Charioteer Archer works as a team, the value in parenthesis represents the value of the mounts (two riding horses) and chariot, which must added to the total.*

[5] *This is the common gladiator of the GE page 169.*

[6] *Myrmidons cannot be Henchmen.*

[7] *The Scythed Death Charioteer fights on a chariot, the value in parenthesis represents the value of the mounts (two riding horses) and the chariot, which must added to the total.*

[8] *Tusk Fighters can only be Henchmen or Wild Cards.*

**LANISTA**

A lanista is gladiator's trainer, and, sometimes, even his owner. The main job of a lanista is keeping his warriors well-trained, fit and motivated. Many lanistae were gladiators themselves in the past, or, in certain cases, slave hunters. Good lanistae also have a good eye for fighters, and if they have time to study an opponent, they can usually find a weak spot to exploit.

**Customization:** Fight Master (add the Alertness and Pit Trained Edges), Motivator (raise Spirit d8 and Persuasion to d8, add the Command and Command

Presence Edges, these Edges work only with gladiators), Master Trainer (Smarts d10, Healing d8, Healer Edge the Healer bonus applies also to the Rigorous Training Special Ability).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Healing d4, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6, Taunt d8, Throwing d6.

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

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Former Gladiator, any other two Combat Edges.

**Hindrances:** Any two.

**Gear:** Bronze short sword (Str+d6), tunic.

**Special Abilities**

• **Rigorous Training:** A good lanista always keeps his warriors at their best. This means nourishing them well, making them exercise and keeping them motivated. After a month of this treatment the gladiator and the lanista make a Smarts and a Vigor roll respectively (both at -2). If both succeed the condition of the gladiator peaks, this means that he can raise one of these Attributes by one die step: Agility, Vigor or Strength. The effect lasts for a month, or as long as the gladiator is under the care of the same lanista. At the beginning of the new month a new roll must be made to maintain the condition for the following month. In the case of a critical failure, by the lanista or the fighter, the gladiator suffers a physical collapse caused by overtaxing and must reduce two of the previous stats by one die step for the current month.

• **Spot Weakness:** The Lanista is very good at watching the fighting technique of other gladiators to find weak spots. After watching a full fight involving a character he can make an opposed roll pitting his Notice (-2) against the warrior's Fighting. In the case of success he discovers a useful weakness, which takes the form of

a Weakness Bennie, which he can give to one of his gladiators and that can be used only when fighting against the opponent studied. If the lanista wins the roll with a raise the Weakness Bennie has an additional capacity: it can be spent to automatically gain the Drop.

## PRIEST OF KALEYSHA

Priests of Kaleysha (see page 19 and 33), also called Swords of Kaleysha, are easily recognized by the red blades they wield and their crimson helms. Some of them are valiant gladiators who fight in the pits to honor their god, while others are only profiteers and slave merchants who grow rich and fat organizing gladiatorial games and buying and selling slaves.

**Customization:** Flesh Merchant Priest (raise Smarts and Persuasion to d10, lower Strength and Fighting by one die step, add Streetwise d10, replace Block, Count the Deaths! and Sweep Edges with Connections (Slavers, Nobles) and Rich, replace gear with rich vests, bejeweled dagger and two slave guards (use the Common Gladiator profile, *GE* page 169 ), True Gladiator Priest (raise Vigor and Strength by one die step, add the Loincloth Hero and Elan Edges, he is a Wild Card).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Religion) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Throwing d6.

**Charisma:** +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8/7; **Toughness:** 5

**Edges:** Block, Count the Deaths!, Priest, Sweep.

**Hindrances:** Vow (Tenets of his Faith).

**Gear:** Red Blade of Kaleysha (Str+d8, see page 51), Red Helm of Kaleysha (+2, see

page 52), gladiator armguard (+1 Parry, see *GE* page 93), gladiator outfit.

### Special Abilities

• **Curse of the Gods:** A non-player priest character can call down a curse on someone. To do so, the priest must make an opposed Spirit roll, applying -2 to his roll. If he wins, the target of the curse is affected by the Bad Luck Hindrance or the *lower trait* power (GM's decision) until the end of the scenario. If he scores a raise, the curse is permanent, at least until the priest lifts it or the player atones in some way. The Game Master should use this ability only when strictly appropriate. It is never wise to anger a servant of the gods...

## PRIEST OF TOSAR

Tosar was an ancient Smith Priest of Hulian, since raised to semi-divine status, who fought and found martyrdom in the arena in the first years of the Iron Empire. Protector of the gladiators, he is also a god of freedom and independence, and his worshippers actively work to free slaves. For this reason the cult of Tosar is outlawed in almost all the Dominions.



### BURNED HAND

The Burned Hands are the strongest and most devoted members of the cult. Their faith is so strong that they have decided to endure the Ritual of Burning to receive the Burned Hand of Tosar, at once the blessing and the curse of their god. The Burned Hands are very few and as well as being devoted to freeing slaves, they fight against the supernatural threats of the Dominions, in particular against the servants of Hordan. Occasionally they work with the Smith Priests.

**Customization:** Learned Priest (add Knowledge (Arcana) d8, the Scholar and Sage Edges), Martyrdom-Seeking Priest



(add the Great Luck and Elan Edges, raise Fighting to d10, add the Death Wish Hindrance, replace gear with long iron sword and gladiator armguard).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Healing d8, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d8, Stealth d8, Throwing d8.

**Charisma:** +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8(1)

**Edges:** Brave, Burned Hand of Tosar, Connections (Tosar's supporters), Lowlife, Improved Nerves of Steel, Priest.

**Hindrances:** Outlaw, Ugly (scarred hand), Vow (Tenets of Faith).

**Gear:** Bronze short sword (Str+d6), light leather armor (+1), long leather gauntlets.

#### **Special Abilities**

• **Mark of Tosar:** A non-player priest of Tosar character can craft a Mark of the Burned Hand (see page 82). This is a great secret of his faith and he'll do so only for trusted allies who are expected to fight a supernatural threat. It is a taxing process and requires the Priest to spend a Bennie (non-Wild Card priests should use the Priest Edge to obtain one) and make a Spirit roll. In the case of success the Mark is created and placed on an implement of the priest's choice. No priest can have more than one Mark active at the same time.

• **Secret Tongue of Tosar:** Priests of Tosar have a code of hand gestures to pass messages without being noticed (see sidebar for details). The code cannot be understood if not taught, but an alert eye might notice the gestures. In game terms, this is an opposed roll between the talker's Stealth and the witnesses' Notice. Note that only characters actively looking for something (active sentinels) can spot something.

## SILENT HAND

The Silent Hands are the lowest echelon of the cult. Silent, sneaky, but with eyes always open they are the people supporting and helping slaves almost everywhere. When captured they are killed on the spot.

**Customization:** Healer (raise Healing to d10, add the Healer Edge and Healing Kit, add the Pacifism Hindrance (any form)), Warrior Priest (raise Agility and Fighting to d8, add the Block and Danger Sense Edges, replace gear with bronze short sword, light leather armor, small shield), Gladiator Priest (take any gladiator profile, raise Spirit to d8 and add the Priest and Connections (Tosar's supporters) Edges, add the Outlaw and Vow (Tenets of Faith) Hindrances).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Healing d8, Knowledge (Religion) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Streetwise d8, Stealth d6.

**Charisma:** +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Edges:** Connections (Tosar's supporters), Lowlife, Priest.

**Hindrances:** Outlaw, Vow (Tenets of his Faith).

**Gear:** Bronze dagger (Str+d4), plain tunic.

#### **Special Abilities**

• **Mark of Tosar:** A non-player priest of Tosar character can craft a Mark of the Burned Hand (see page 82). This is a great secret of his faith and he'll do so only for trusted allies who are expected to fight a supernatural threat. It is a taxing process and requires the Priest to spend a Bennie (non-Wild Card priests should use the Priest Edge to obtain one) and make a Spirit roll. In the case of success the Mark is created and placed on an implement of



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• **Secret Tongue of Tosar:** Priests of Tosar have a code of hand gestures to pass messages without being noticed (see sidebar for details). The code cannot be understood if not taught, but an alert eye might notice the gestures. In game terms, this is an opposed roll between the talker's Stealth and the witnesses' Notice. Note that only characters actively looking for something (active sentinels) can spot something.

#### HERO'S JOURNAL:

##### SECRET TONGUE OF TOSAR

*The cult of Tosar developed this secret language to pass information and messages to slaves without being noticed. It is made up of hand gestures, code-words and similar. The meanings this language manages to convey are quite simple and focus on topics like "danger", "you are being tailed", "the hidden cache is there" or "you can trust me".*

*The Tongue has no written form and can be learnt like any other language.*

*To acquire it, a character must have Smarts d6+ and be a Priest of Tosar, a slave and/or a sympathizing member of the cult. Note that knowing the Tongue is dangerous: enemies of the cult will likely torture a known speaker to acquire this knowledge.*

## TRICARNIAN GLADIATOR CASTES

Tricarnian Priest Princes breed slaves for specific purposes, selecting the most interesting (for them) racial traits for their wicked desires. Trying to breed perfect gladiators is one of their favorite pastimes, and over the centuries they have developed and refined dozens of castes of gladiatorial slaves, twisted fighting machines born only to pour their blood on the sand for the amusement of their masters.

Apart from selective breeding, mutilation, Lotus abuse and other evil methods are commonly employed to forge the slaves.

Here are detailed some of the most famous types. The Game Master is encouraged to create his own.

## BALD HEAD

Bald Heads are a particular caste of gladiator slaves with absolutely no hair and a stolid stare. They can be confused with mild eunuchs, but the few warriors who have fought one of them in the pits and survived to tell the tale can assure you they aren't. Bald Heads are subjected in their infancy to extreme physical tortures to train their endurance and to prepare them to resist the Ritual of Thousand Needles, a terrible rite of passage of which it is forbidden to speak, that destroys forever their capacity to feel pain. A Bald Head after this rite is totally immune to pain of every type: you can smash his bones or burn him and he won't even blink. This makes them extremely good fighters, but has a serious hindrance: not feeling pain doesn't mean you are immune to wounds, and a Bald Head can fall down dead because he hasn't noticed a bleeding wound. Bald Heads get excited by violence and can be absolutely vicious fighters. Their pain immunity makes them die in spectacular ways, which is one of the reasons the Priest Princes employ them in the pits.

Bald Heads are always at least Henchmen.

**Customization:** Trusted Bodyguard (raise Notice and Spirit to d8, drop Fighting to d8 and Throwing to d6, replace Brute, Frenzy and Tooth and Nail with Alertness, Danger Sense and Loincloth Hero, add the Loyal Hindrance, replace gear with bronze long sword and studded leather loincloth, he can use the Fanatics Setting Rule when protecting his master),

White Eye Bald Head addicted to Khav and other combat Lotuses (drop Smarts and Spirit to d4, add the Berserker and Improved Frenzy Edges, add the Habit (Khav Major Hindrance), replace long sword with bronze great axe).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Healing d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Throwing d8.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8/7;

**Toughness:** 8(2)

**Edges:** Brute, Combat Reflexes, Frenzy, Tooth and Nail.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bronze hooked long sword (Str+d8), medium half armor (+2), medium bladed shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs. ranged attacks, can be thrown Damage: Str+d6, Range: 2/4/8).

### Special Abilities

• **Pain Immunity:** A Bald Head doesn't feel physical pain. This means that he ignores any Wounds or Fatigue modifiers. On the down side, he doesn't know exactly how severely his body is wounded, so he can drop dead at any moment. Whenever he rolls on Vigor after being Incapacitated he subtracts an extra -2 from the roll. This ability counts as Improved Nerves of Steel as a prerequisite for other Edges.

## BLIND MAULERS

Blind Maulers are enormous men, trained to fight with a huge maul and a blind helm, a completely sealed helmet. Usually they are pitted against fast and agile warriors. Maulers must rely on senses other than vision, in particular smell and hearing, to find and crush their enemies. The lords of Tricarnia burn out the eyes of Blind Maulers during childhood to ensure they constantly hone their senses.

**Customization:** Torturer's Assistant (drop Fighting to d8, raise Smarts to d10,





replace maul with bronze battle axe and light leather armor), Blind Mauler Shock Trooper (drop Smarts to d4, raise Strength and Vigor to d12, replace the Alertness Edge with the Berserker Edge).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Notice d8, Tracking d8.

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

**Edges:** Alertness, Improved Sweep.

**Hindrances:** Blind, choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bronze-headed maul (Str+d10, AP 1, AP 2 vs. rigid armors, -1 Parry, 2 hands), blind helm (+3, causes the Blind Hindrance).

### Special Abilities

• **Extended Perception:** This warrior doesn't need to see the enemy to land a blow. He can hear, smell and perceive his presence without relying on eyesight. In game terms, at the beginning of the round, the Blind Fighter is allowed a free Notice roll which doesn't count as an action. On a success he ignores any visibility modifiers to attack rolls for the current round, including the *invisibility* Power and other Powers with a sight-based trapping. The range of this clear perception is half the Notice die type in inches. A good tactic against a Blind Mauler consists of moving stealthily around them. In this case the simple Notice roll becomes an opposed roll between the Blind Mauler's Notice and the opponent's Stealth.

• **Size +1:** Blind Maulers are huge men, often reaching 8 feet tall.

• **Truth Smeller:** Blind Maulers are big, but not stupid at all. Their perceptions are so fine that they can tell if a man is lying from his odor. This is an opposed roll between the Blind's Mauler Notice and

the opponent's Smarts or Persuasion (use the higher die type).

## SWEET DEATH

Sweet Deaths are usually girls of gorgeous appearance, which are forced, from infancy, to ingest strange mixtures of exotic Lotus poisons. This causes several long lasting changes in their body: first, they become immune to almost all the poisons, second their saliva becomes permanently poisonous, and third their hair changes color, assuming a very particular hue (blue, green and white are the commonest ones), this last effect being probably a way for the Priest Princes to tell them apart from other slaves.

Sweet Deaths are used in two ways by the Tricarnians.

First, they are trained in fighting in the arena, their owners amused by watching much bigger opponents writhe on the ground from the effects of the saliva-smear weapons of the Sweet Death.

Second, they are highly sought-after bed-slaves, because small doses of their saliva cause intense pleasure in their mates.

Sweet Deaths are very precious slaves and on the rare occasions they are sold they cost up to five times the standard cost.

**Customization:** Assassin Courtesan (drop Fighting and Strength to d4, raise Persuasion, Stealth and Streetwise to d10, add the Charismatic and Temptress Edge, replace gear with jeweled bikini), Sweet Arrow of Death (drop Fighting to d6, remove Throwing, add Shooting d10, replace First Strike and Rain of Steel with Extraction and Fleet-Footed, replace gear with bow, dagger and hooked bikini the poison is on the arrows and on the hooks of the bikini).

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

**Skills:** Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6, Throwing d8.

**Charisma:** +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7/6; **Toughness:** 8(2)

**Edges:** Attractive, Dodge, First Strike, Rain of Steel.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Bronze short sword (Str+d6) and small shield (+1 Parry) or bronze-tipped spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands), medium leather hooked half armor (+2, +1 with a raise), three bronze throwing daggers (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12, +1 Throwing, -1 Fighting).

**Note:** Usually at the beginning of a fight the Sweet Death has her main weapon plus three throwing daggers smeared with a Fast *poison* (and no Power Points left).

### Special Abilities

• **Pleasure Girl:** The Sweet Death is often a mistress of the alcove; her poison, in mild doses, is a great aphrodisiac, and she gains +2 to all Persuasion rolls involving seduction. But we are speaking of a toxin, so there is always a risk that something goes wrong; if the girl rolls 1 on the Persuasion die, regardless of the Wild Die, it means that she poisoned her mate (consider this as a Fast *poison*).

• **Poisonous Saliva:** The Sweet Death's saliva is poisonous, especially if concentrated, and the girl is well-trained in using it. In game terms the Sweet Death can use the Poisoner Edge, but this is based on Vigor instead of on Smarts. The Sweet Death's saliva follows all the rules of the *poison* Power, but can only be injected or ingested. Usually it is smeared on weapons or delivered to unsuspecting victims with delicious, but deadly, kisses. The Sweet Death in this profile has 8 Power Points.

• **Poison Resistance:** The Sweet Death is immune to all Lotus-based poisons and receives +2 to Vigor rolls to resist all other forms of toxins.

### GM'S TIP: TRICARNIAN GLADIATORS AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

*At GM's discretion, Tricornian Gladiator castes can be chosen as player characters. They are handled as different player races, detailed below. Note that a Tricornian Gladiator is a born slave and a precious commodity, so if one of them is on the path of adventure probably he is a former slave, escaped or sold, and this should be reflected in his background. They are constructed in the following way, as per the Racial Creation rules (see SWD page 22).*

#### BALD HEAD

*He has Pain Immunity Special Ability (+2 Racial Ability).*

*Total: +2 Racial Abilities*

#### BLIND MAULER

*He has the Blind Hindrance (-2 Racial Ability), Extended Perception (+1 Racial Ability), Size +1 (+2 Racial Ability) and Truth Smeller (+1 Racial Ability).*

*Total: +2 Racial Abilities*

#### SWEET DEATH

*She has Pleasure Girl (+1 Racial Ability), Poisonous Saliva (+3 Racial Ability), Poison Resistance (+1 Racial Ability) and the Slave Mentality (Spirit requires two points to be raised by one die step during character creation and two Advances must be dedicated to raise it during play, because of the harsh conditioning and training the girl is subjected to in her infancy, -3 Racial Ability).*

*Total: +2 Racial Abilities*

## SLAVE CATCHER

Slaves, sooner or later, try to escape. It is at this point that slave catchers enter into play. Ruthless brutes, they can track down runaway slaves with the ferocity of bloodhounds (often, they employ them). Once they get the fugitives, after a serious beating, they usually bring them back to the former owners, where usually the poor souls receive another dose of the same medicine, or, in some cases, they are tortured and killed as an example to other slaves.

When the occasion arises, Slave Catchers aren't shy about capturing some new slaves to sell to unscrupulous people.

## SLAVE CATCHER

A tough, heartless guy who hunts escaped slaves for profit.

**Customization:** Hound Master (drop Strength and Vigor to d6, raise Spirit to d8, add the Beast Master and Command Edges, replace nets and lariat with a pack of Slave Hounds (2-6) and hunting horn (can be blown as a full action to grant the user the Command Presence and Hold the Line! Edges till the next round) all the Leadership Edges of the Hound Master work only on beasts), Trapper (drop Strength and Vigor by one die step, raise Smarts to d8 and Survival to d10, count as two trappers for the purpose of the Netter Special Ability), Wilderness Hunter (drop Strength by one die step, raise Agility to d8 and Tracking to d8, add the Woodsman Edge, replace mace, sling and lariat with bronze short sword, bronze dagger and bow).

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



**Skills:** Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d8.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7(1)

**Edges:** None.

**Hindrances:** Greedy.

**Gear:** Bronze-tipped mace (Str+d6), light leather armor (+1), war sling (Str+d6, range: 8/16/32), nets (see below), lariat (-1 Parry, Reach 5, +2 to Agility Tricks, Disarm and Grapple rolls).

### Special Abilities

- **Man-Hunter:** Slave Catchers know how runaway people think and act, and they are often able to foresee their moves. They receive +2 to Tracking, Streetwise and Notice rolls when hunting down slaves.

- **Netter:** A common way to capture slaves consists in driving them into narrow places and trapping them with nets. This requires some coordination and manpower. Some of the Slave Catchers drive prey into the trap, while others set the nets. Treat each net as a use of the *entangle* Power, cast with arcane skill equal to the Survival skill of the trapper. Unlike the normal Power, the net must be placed in contact with the trapper. Each Catcher can place a net as big as a SBT, but more Catchers can gather to place bigger nets: two Catchers can place a MBT net and three a LBT net. Placing a net requires one minute per size of the net.



## MASTER SLAVE CATCHER

This grizzled individual is one of the best slave catchers around. A relentless mastiff, when focused on a quarry he never lets him slip away. This is the reason he is paid so much.

**Customization:** Hound Master (drop Strength and Vigor to d6, raise Spirit to d10, add the Beast Master and Command

Edges, replace nets and lariat with a pack of Slave Hounds (8-12), a Slave Hound pack leader (Henchman) and hunting horn (can be blown as a full action to grant the user the Command Presence and Hold the Line! Edges till the next round) all the Leadership Edges of the Hound Master work only on beasts), Lariat Master (replace Dodge and Elan with Death Grip and Trademark Weapon (Lariat), replace long sword and lariat with Valk-leather lariat (Reach: 7, Toughness 8)), Trapper (drop Strength and Vigor by one die step, raise Smarts to d8 and Survival to d10, count as two trappers for the purpose of the Netter Special Ability), Sharpshooter (drop Fighting to d10, raise Shooting and Stealth to d10, add the Marksman Edge).

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

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d8, Survival d8, Throwing d8, Tracking d8.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7(1)

**Edges:** Alertness, Block, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Dodge, Elan.

**Hindrances:** Cautious, Code of Honor (always fulfill contracts).

**Gear:** Iron long sword (Str+d8), medium leather and bronze armor (+2), three bronze daggers (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12), composite bow (Damage: 2d6, range: 15/30/60), lariat (-1 Parry, Reach 5, +2 to Agility Tricks, Disarm and Grapple rolls).

### Special Abilities

- **Chosen Quarry:** When a Master Slave Catcher chooses a quarry and focus on him, there is nothing that can stop him. To do this, he must spend a Bennie and choose a quarry. Until the quarry is dead or captured, he receives +2 to any roll directly linked to tracking down and capturing the quarry (attacks included). The bonus lasts indefinitely but the Bennie isn't recovered

until the quarry is recovered. If for some reason the Master Slave Catcher quits his hunt he loses the Bennie permanently. If he manages to catch his prey he immediately recovers the spent Bennie, plus he receives another one (which lasts till the end of the session, as normal). A Master Slave Catcher can only select one quarry per session.

• **Man-Hunter:** Slave Catchers know how runaway people think and act, and they are often able to foresee their moves. They receive +2 to Tracking, Streetwise and Notice rolls when hunting down slaves.

## SPECIAL GLADIATORS

Under this entry are listed very special opponents the heroes can find in the arena. Some of them are particular gladiators, while others are only exotic warriors. They are good NPCs to use as Kings of the Arena (see page 74).



### JADEMAN MASTER OF THE CLAW

This evil Jademan monk is a follower of the dark path of the Obscurement (the opposite of the Enlightenment). There can be many reasons for him to be in the arena; maybe he needs to kill people to progress further on the path to total darkness, or maybe he stays in the pits because in them he is protected from some exterior menace (such as Enlightened Ones hunting him) or maybe just because he loves the cheers of the crowd and bathes in the sheer fear he causes in his opponents.

Whatever the reason, he is armed with one of the strangest and most dangerous weapons which exists in Lhoban: a clawed staff, and one made from the arm of a demon!

**Obscurement:** Obscurement is the evil counterpart of Enlightenment, but rules-wise it works in the same manner.

**Customization:** Jademan Chain Lord (replace Trademark Weapon (Clawed Staff) and Being Like Water Edges with Trademark Weapon (Knotted Rope) and Death Grip, replace *legerdemain* with *fly* (jumps), replace Demoniac Clawed Staff with Dead Women's Hair Knotted Rope (JCT page 88, causes -2 to Soak rolls to victim)), Martial Artist Evil Lord (raise Fighting to d12, replace Trademark Weapon (Clawed Staff) and Being Like Water Edges with Improved Martial Artist, Frenzy and Loincloth Hero, replace *legerdemain* Power with *quickness* (hyper fast movements), remove any weapons from gear).

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

**Skills:** Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Healing d8, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8.

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

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Obscurement), Being Like Water (Clawed Staff), Monk (Militant), New Power, Power Points, Trademark Weapon (Clawed Staff).

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, plus any two.

**Powers [25 PP]:** *Analyze foe* (sight of the true spirit), *boost/lower trait* (release energies of darkness), *deflection* (short span precognition), *legerdemain* (far touch can make a Clawed Staff attack at distance), *warrior's gift* (memories of past lives).

**Gear:** Black Claw (Ensorcelled Clawed Staff Str+d8, 2 hands, Reach 1, Monk weapon, see sidebar), black monk outfit.

#### Special Abilities

• **Lord of the Deep Shadows:** This Jademan warrior is a master of soul

combat. Whenever he fights a Spirit Duel (see page xxx) and wins, in addition to stealing a Bennie he also lowers two of the victim's Traits (GM's choice) tainting their souls. The tainting remains until the Jademan Master is killed, but can be recovered with weekly rolls on Spirit (-2). Each success and raise restores a Trait to its normal value.



## NORTHLANDER BEAR KILLER

This massive Northlander warrior is covered in scars, all of them caused by one of his customary opponents: bears, of any size and race, which he fought in the pits of the North. Today he fights in the southern arenas, but no mollycoddled southerner, not even the ones that fancy themselves "gladiators," can be a match for the furry kings of the northern forests.

**Customization:** Northlander Spear Lady (raise Agility to d10, drop Strength and Vigor to d8, replace Brute, One Hand and a Half and Sweep with Amazon, Shaft Master and Acrobat, replace iron battle axe with iron-tipped spear).

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

**Skills:** Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d8, Throwing d10.

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

**Edges:** Brawny, Brute, Combat Reflexes, Frenzy, Giant Killer, One Hand and a Half, Loincloth Hero, Improved Nerves of Steel, Sweep.

**Hindrances:** Arrogant plus any other two.

**Gear:** Iron battle axe (Str+d8), gladiator armguard (+1 Parry), loincloth, bear fur cloak.

### Special Abilities

• **Scarred but Alive:** The Bear Killer can seem only a mindless brute but he has

survived the great bears of the north so he must have some brains in his scarred head. In fact, he is a vicious fighter and knows that the best way to kill a bear is drive it mad with the scent of his own blood first. This is a tactic which works even better with humans: whenever the Bear Killer is wounded and soaks all wounds, in the next round he gains +2 to attack and damage rolls towards the character who wounded him.



## PYGMY SNAKELORD

This enigmatic Pygmy warrior wears the holy mask of Ulala, the Great Serpent, and fights riding an enormous Jungle Boa.

**Customization:** Master of Snakes (remove the Sidekick, instead the Snakelord controls up to ten venomous snakes (see *SWD* page 140)).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Healing d8, Intimidation d8, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Throwing d10, Taunt d8.

**Charisma:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7(1)

**Edges:** Ambidexterity, Beast Bond, Fervor, Gladiator (Beast Warrior), Hold the Line, Inspire, Level Headed, Quick Draw, Sidekick (Jungle Boa), Strong Arm, Two-Fisted.

**Hindrances:** Choose any three (two Minor, one Major).

**Gear:** Six javelins (Str+d6, Range: 9/18/36), Mask of Ulala (+2 head only, see sidebar), light bone and leather armor (+1), Jungle Boa sidekick (see below).

### Special Abilities

• **Beast Warrior:** The Beast Warrior has the Command Edge for his animal companion only. Unless he takes the Command Edge his leadership Edges work only with beasts.



• **Jungle Boa Sidekick:** The Jungle Boa the Pigmy Snakelord rides is a Wild Card, and an enormous one (Size +5).

• **Jungle Dweller:** The Pygmies are excellent tree climbers. They can squeeze past gnarled roots and run through the dense undergrowth which carpets the jungle floor with perfect ease. So, they ignore Difficult Ground while in the jungle.

### GM'S TIP:

#### EVIL RELICS OF THE ARENA

Some really powerful opponents, such as the Jademan Master of the Claw or the Pigmy Snakelord, owe part of their strength to specific relics. Finding a way to neutralize them can be the focus of a scenario, and a very wise thing to do before facing such a powerful opponent in the pits. Normally, discovering these weaknesses requires a Knowledge (Arcana) (-4) roll, or the use of the Sage Edge (of finding a learned person on the matter).

Here are some examples.

**The Black Claw (Jademan Master of the Claw):** This Clawed Staff is made from the mummified arm of a real demon, and includes razor-sharp claws and strange tattoos. In game terms it is a relic, which can hit and wound creatures vulnerable only to magic. In addition, as it is the claw of an inherently evil entity, the owner can use the Demon Hunter Edge, except that it entraps the souls of characters with the Enlightenment Arcane Background rather than demons. The Black Claw is considered a Heroic character for the purposes of the Edge. The Black Claw can only be used safely by heroes with the Obsurement Arcane Background. Enlightened heroes using it must make a Spirit (-2) roll or they will be corrupted by darkness, losing a die step in Enlightenment and gaining a die step in Obsurement (see JCT page 83).

**Countered by Mirror Amulet:** There is a particular amulet, made of polished crystal, which is fabled to offer some protection

against the Black Claw and its cruel master. The reason is that it contains the soul of Yun Lan Ti, a White Flower monk of the past. White Flowers are female monks who devote their lives to entrapping demons (see B&B #3 Green World). The exact location of the amulet is unknown, but rumors say it appeared less than seven years ago in western Ekul. Rules-wise any character with the Obsurement Arcane Background staring at his own reflection in the amulet sees his true soul and feels the pain of what he has become. This forces him to make an opposed roll between his Spirit and the amulet's Spirit (d12+2, with Wild Die). For each success and raise by the amulet, the evil monk suffers one non-soakable Wound. When he is Incapacitated, his soul is entrapped in the amulet. The crystal amulet can contain an unlimited number of souls but can be wielded only once by each person, then it finds a way to move to another owner.

**Mask of Ulala (Pigmy Snakelord):** This ancient Pigmy sacred mask came into the arena in an unknown manner, but for one reason or another never left. The Pigmy wearing it becomes the servant of the Great Serpent, Ulala. In game terms it grants him the Beast Bond, Inspire and Hold the Line! Edges, but only towards snakes. In addition the wearer receives a very powerful gift: He cannot die until his snake sidekick is killed (he has the Invulnerability Monstrous Ability).

**Countered by the Orchid of the Hollow Moon.** There is only one substance which can kill the wearer of the Mask of Ulala, a particular poison made with the Orchid of the Hollow Moon, a particular Lotus plant growing in the ruins of a ziggurat in the heart of the Lush Jungle. The concoction (which can be distilled with a simple Lotusmastery roll) is so powerful as to be considered a Fast poison (skill d12, with a Wild Die), affecting only the wearer of the mask.



# THE SEASON OF BLOOD

# RUNNING THE SEASON

This chapter is a stand-alone game to simulate exciting battles between teams of gladiators! You can use it as a fill-in session when some player doesn't show up at the regular game, as an integral part of a campaign or to play a sort of weekly league.

It is played without a GM and if you want you can use your regular RPG character in the game, but beware, because the risk of dying on the sands of the arena is very high!

The game is quite basic and straightforward, but in the sidebars you'll find several tweaks you can introduce to add extra spice.

## WHAT THE SEASON OF BLOOD IS

With the expression "Season of Blood" people of the Dominions refer to a series of gladiatorial games, held once a week for several months, from the beginning of the spring to the late summer.

During these matches, the gladiatorial teams of the Dominions pit their best men one against the other in the arena.

At the end of the season, the team scoring the most victories is awarded a laurel wreath from the hands of the local notables (in Faberterra it is the Emperor himself who crowns the victorious ones). Gladiators winning a Season of Blood have a good chance to earn their freedom.

Different countries award victories in different ways; for example, in Syranthia victories are counted on a team level, while in Faberterra it is the number of opponents a single gladiator dispatches that counts.

More importantly, the pit owner of the winning team is rewarded with a huge sum of money, in certain cases even a noble title.

Given the stakes, nobody is surprised that the Season of Blood is a very harsh competition both in and out of the arena: tricks, treachery and alliances between teams are common, and considered part of the fun.

With these rules, each player takes control of one gladiator team and tries to lead it to victory.

## SEASON TYPE

Before starting to fight the players must decide together the duration of the season: if they are interested in playing a quick match (ideal as a fill-in) or a short, medium or long league.

Depending on their choice they'll have a certain number of Arena Points with which to compose their team and a limit to the composition of their forces, as shown in the table below.



## Season Type

GAME	ARENA POINTS	DURATION	RH	HC	WC	CELEBRITY
Quick Match	50	Single battle	any	any	2	d8
Short League	60	4 Weeks long	2	2	2	2/die step
Medium League	70	8 Weeks long	3	3	2	3/die step
Long League	80	12 Weeks long	4	4	3	5/die step

**Arena Points** They are the “abstract currency” of the Season of Blood, each of them representing a mix of resources, contacts and so on. They are used for almost anything, from buying starting forces (and replacements) to hiring a Lanista to fine-tune the skill of the gladiators, healers to cure their wounds and even to pay shady individuals to sabotage rival teams.

**Duration.** The number of weeks the Season lasts. Typically gladiators fight once per week.

**RH.** The maximum number of Right Hand characters you can include in your team.

**HC.** The maximum number of Henchmen characters you can include in your team.

**WC.** The maximum number of Wild Card characters you can include in your team.

**Celebrity.** It indicates the fame of the team (see below)

## BUILDING A TEAM

A team is defined by four factors: Name and Description, Team Celebrity, Gladiators and Assets. They are explained below.

## TEAM NAME AND DESCRIPTION

Teams are more than collections of pit fighters. They are the stuff of which legends are made, idolized by crowds and loved by women. The player should find a proper name and some noticeable “tag” for his team. At the end of the league, all the players vote for the Best Team which receives additional Victory Points.

*Paul decides to go with a team entirely made of Syranthian gladiators. Known for their silver-plated helms, shaped to resemble the head of a bird of prey, they are the Falcons of Askerios. Elegant and lethal, they are among the best gladiatorial teams of western Syranthia.*

## TEAM CELEBRITY

Unlike the standard RPG rules, in the Season of Blood Celebrity is defined at the level of the gladiator team and is expressed in die steps, exactly like the Attributes of characters. Celebrity is quite important because it determines the outcome of several events in the game (the number of Bennies and income being the most important ones).

Teams start at Celebrity d4-2 and can go up to d12+2.

The Cost, in Arena Points, to raise Team Celebrity is listed in the Season Setup table.

Note that you can buy extra dice of Celebrity during the Season, but they'll cost double.

*Example: Paul, while creating his team, the Falcons of Askerios, for a short league decides to invest 6 Arena Points in Celebrity, bringing it to d8.*

## GLADIATORS

The most important component of a Team is the gladiators. Players buy gladiators from the following list, by spending Arena Points. Gladiators exist in various types: Extras, Right Hands, Henchmen and Wild Cards. The players can buy however many Extras they want, but they must

stick to the maximum number of the other categories given for the season type.

Gladiators use the standard profiles given in the Denizens of the Arena chapter, and players must use the basic version, no tweaks are allowed.

Typically teams are made up of 4-12 gladiators.

*Example: As the Falcons of Askerios are in a short league, Paul can have up to two Right Hands, two Henchmen and one Wild Card. Having four matches to fight, he decides to buy six gladiators and goes for:*

*1 Wild Card Beast Warrior (9)  
1 Wild Card Bone Wolf (9)  
2 Henchmen Swordsmen (14)  
2 Extra Myrmidons (8)  
Total 40 Arena Points spent*

### Gladiators Cost Table

GLADIATOR	EXTRA	RIGHT HAND (X1.5)	HENCHMAN(X2)	WILD CARD(X3)
Bald Head <sup>T</sup>	4	6	8	12
Beast Warrior <sup>1</sup>	3	5	6	9
Bone Wolf	3	5	6	9
Desert Shrieker	3	5	6	9
Dominions Cat	3	5	6	9
Bestiarius	3	5	6	10
Blind Mauler <sup>T</sup>	4	5	7	11
Bull Dancer <sup>2</sup>	3	5	6	9
Caldeian Fencer	4	5	8	10
Caled Spearman	3	5	6	10
Cavalryman <sup>3</sup>	3(+1)	5(+1)	6 (+1)	10(+1)
Chain fighter	4	5	7	11
Charioteer Archer <sup>4</sup>	3	5	6	9
Charioteer <sup>4</sup>	4(+3)	5(+3)	8(+3)	10 (+3)
Common Gladiator <sup>5</sup>	3	5	6	10

Disk Thrower	3	5	7	11
Myrmidon <sup>6</sup>	4	5	-	11
Pugilist	3	5	7	11
Retiarius	3	5	7	10
Skirmisher	3	5	7	10
Spear Runner	3	5	7	10
Scythed Death Char. <sup>7</sup>	4(+2)	6(+2)	8(+2)	13(+2)
Sweet Death <sup>T</sup>	4	5	7	11
Swordsman	3	5	7	11
Tusk Fighter <sup>8</sup>	-	-	8	11
Twin Master	3	5	7	10

## Notes

[T] This gladiator is a Tricornian Slave. You can only have a single Tricornian Slave Gladiator in your team unless you choose to Go Tricornian (see sidebar).

[1] Must have an animal companion (choose between Bone Wolf, Desert Shrieker, Dominions Cat or any other suitable beast). The cost of the animal must also be paid. The Companion must be of the same type as the Beast Warrior or a lesser type (so you can have a Henchman Beast Warrior with a Right Hand Companion, but not the opposite).

[2] Bull Dancers are seldom used unless one of the fights is expressly a Bull Dance.

[3] Cavalymen are mounted gladiators, the value in parenthesis represents the mount (a riding horse) and must be added to the total.

[4] The Charioteer and Charioteer Archer work as a team, the value in parenthesis represents the mounts (two riding horses) and the chariot and must be added to the total.

[5] This is the common gladiator of GE page 169.

[6] Myrmidons cannot be Henchmen.

[7] The Scythed Death Charioteer fights on a chariot, the value in parenthesis represents the mounts (two riding horses) and the chariot and must be added to the total.

[8] Tusk Fighters can only be Henchmen or Wild Cards.

## THE MAGIC OF NUMBERS

*The Arena Points value of Gladiators is calculated by simply dividing the Combat Value (see page 55) of the fighter by 10 and rounding it to the nearest integer.*

*If you want to add exotic monsters and/or player characters to the Teams you can easily calculate their Arena Points value.*

## TEAM OPTION: GO TRICARNIAN

*Tricornian gladiators are quite specialized and a little stronger than the others. To counterbalance this fact each team can only have a single Tricornian gladiator in the roster, unless you decide to Go Tricornian. In this case your team can be made exclusively of Tricornian gladiators and Common Gladiators. You cannot use any other type of gladiator, including player characters.*



**TWEAK: USING PLAYER CHARACTERS AS GLADIATORS**

*If all the players agree each team can include one of the actual player characters (usually the character the player uses in the main campaign). The cost is calculated as explained in "The Magic of Numbers" but augment it by 25% to reflect the other non-combat abilities they certainly have.*

*Player characters are considered Wild Card gladiators and count towards the Wild Card limit of the team.*

*If Player Characters dies during the Season of Blood they are dead, this is the price of joining the Season.*

*If they suffer from a Nigglng Injury (see page 55) at the end of the Season they acquire a Minor Hindrance of some sort (it must be something linked to their wound, such as Anemic or Lame).*

*During the Season, Player Characters acquire Kill Points like any other gladiator, but at the end of the Season these disappear (and their effects too, being only temporary) and are converted into regular Experience, at the rate of 1 Experience Point per 5 Kill Points.*

*If a player character wins the Great Slayer Prize (see page 165), he is also awarded the Hero of the Pits Edge for free.*

**TWEAK: MICROMANAGING**

*These rules are designed to help you create roughly balanced teams of gladiators in a few minutes. This is done at the cost of less granularity and limiting the game to the "classic" gladiators.*

*If all the players agree, you can have a game with lots more granularity and options with this simple tweak:*

+ Each Arena Point is worth 10 Combat Value.

+ You can have any creature or gladiator in your team, calculating their Combat Value and using that to price them.

## ASSETS

Assets are all the assorted friends, resources and objects that can make a team a winning one. Assets are bought with Arena Points like gladiators and Celebrity. Assets come in two types: permanent ones, which can be used once per week, and single-use assets, which are lost after use (but can be bought again). Here is a list of the available Assets.

You can have only a limited number of each Asset, as shown in the table below.

Assets usually have one skill at level d8. You can make them Right Hands (giving them a Wild Die but doubling their cost). Item Assets (like Weapons or Armor) have no Right Hand counterparts.

Hostile Assets can only be used against the team directly opposing you.

## Assets Table

ASSET	MAX NUMBER	COST	NOTES
Agitator	5	1+ number of Agitators	Hostile Asset
Augur	1	3	Single use
Assassin	1	4	Hostile Asset
Courtesan	2	2	Hostile Asset
Excellent Weapon/ Armor	2	2	Item
Guard	5	1	
Guard Captain	1	3	
Healer	2	2	
Lanista	2	3	
Lotusmaster	1	3	
Match-Fixer	2	3	Single use
Mercenary	2	Half the Gladiator cost	Single use
Poisoner	1	3	Hostile Asset
Spy	1	2	Hostile Asset
Warlock	1	4	Hostile Asset

## ASSETS DESCRIPTIONS

**Agitator.** Agitators are persons paid to stir up the crowd in the arena, and make them cheer or taunt someone. Each Agitator has Taunt d6. Whenever a team makes a Celebrity roll Agitators can make a Taunt roll, and for each success and raise they give +1 to the team's Celebrity roll. They can make a single roll per week. Alternatively, they can apply -2 to the Celebrity roll of the opposing team, but in this case they are consumed (they are spotted and eliminated by the other teams' supporters). Agitators cost 1 plus the number of Agitators already owned. This means that the first Agitator costs one Arena Point, the second two and so on.

**Augur.** A wise (and superstitious) team owner can decide to spend some money for the favors of a diviner, a priest or some sort of other practitioner, to have some

useful insight into the outcome of the fight. In game terms an Augur grants an additional Arena Bennie, a Right Hand Augur grants two. These Bennies last only for a single combat and if not used, expire. An Augur's prophecies are valid only once, so this Asset is single-use only.

**Assassin.** Gladiators are too well-protected to be killed outside the arena, but a knife in the darkness is a good way to remove an opposing team's asset. An Assassin acts before any other Asset and has Stealth d8: if both the Challenging team and the Challenged team have an Assassin the Challenging team goes first.

An Assassin targets an Asset of the opposing team (chosen by the Assassin's owner) and makes a Stealth roll (-2). With a success or more the target Asset is killed, but if the roll is 1 or less, the Assassin is

caught and killed. If the opponent has a Guard he can decide to use it to counter the Assassin. If this case the normal opposed roll is made, with the Assassin rolling at (-2). If the Assassin wins, he avoids the pesky Guard and can proceed with his deadly mission.

**Courtesan.** A pretty girl can be incredibly useful, especially if you introduce her to the opponent's gladiators the night before a combat. She has Persuasion d8 and +2 Charisma. During the Pre-Combat Phase, you can send the Courtesan to tire and distract an opponent's pit fighter. In game terms this is an opposed roll between the Courtesan's Persuasion and the gladiator's Vigor. For each success and raise the girl obtains, the gladiator suffers a level of Fatigue. He can be Incapacitated by fatigue, in this case he misses the combat and his owner can replace him with another fighter. If the gladiator wins the roll nothing happens, if he wins with a raise he has +1 Toughness for the next battle (he feels very good)!

Two courtesans can work together (the victim will have a very interesting night), making a cooperative roll.

**Excellent Weapon/Armor.** One of the gladiators is fitted with a weapon or armor of excellent quality. If it is a weapon it grants +1 to the relevant skill roll (which can be Fighting, Shooting or Throwing) *or* +1 damage *or* AP 2. Armor instead grants +1 Armor *or* weighs only 50% of the normal weight, while a shield can confer +1 Parry or an additional +2 Toughness vs. ranged attacks. Note that if a gladiator is Incapacitated in combat his opponents can freely steal an Excellent Weapon/Armor. Stealing a weapon requires a single action while removing armor from a fallen enemy is a long task, requiring one round per point of Armor plus one. So removing

Medium Bronze Armor (+2) requires three full rounds of work.

**Guard.** With all these shady individuals poking around a team, some heavy muscle is necessary to keep the situation calm. Guards have Notice d6 and can be used to counter any Hostile Asset targeting the team (Hostile Assets are marked in the Notes column of the Assets Table). This is done simply by making an opposed roll between the hostile Asset's relevant skill (without modifiers) and the Guard's Notice. If the Guard wins the roll, the opposing Asset cannot act during this week, if he wins with a raise the opponent's Asset is eliminated! The guard's job can be a tough one: if he rolls a 1 on the Notice roll he is eliminated by the opponent's Asset. Multiple guards can work together, making cooperative rolls. Each Guard can make a single counter per week.

*Example: Dave decides to send his Courtesan to harass one of the gladiators of the Falcons of Askerios the night before an important fight. Paul, the owner of the Falcons, has a Guard among his Assets and decides to use him to block the dangerous girl. The courtesan rolls 2 on Persuasion, while the Guard, rolling on Notice, scores 4. The Guard wins and the girl is caught and sent away before she can reach the alcove of the gladiator...*

**Guard Captain.** The guards' leader, he is the man responsible for maintaining the security of the team. He works exactly like a Guard, but he has Notice d8 and his presence grants +1 to the Notice rolls of the other guards.

**Healer.** A healer is an invaluable asset and can be used to save the skin of your pit fighters. Each healer can be used to grant a gladiator a reroll on the Gladiatorial Incapacitation Table, exactly as if he had spent a Bennie. A Right Hand Healer



allows the gladiator to roll as if his Vigor die was one step higher.

*Example: Shangor, a gladiator of the Falcons of Askerios, is Incapacitated during a combat. He makes a Vigor (d8) roll on the Gladiatorial Incapacitation Table, but the bones show 1, which means death! Luckily Paul has a Right Hand Healer available. He uses him and Shangor rerolls, this time using a d10, and obtains a 5. Thanks to the arts of the medic his life is safe!*

**Lanista.** Keeping the gladiator in top condition throughout the Season is a very delicate and important factor. This Lanista is a specialized sparring partner and trainer, overseeing and fine-tuning the training of the gladiators. Before the combat starts, a Lanista can raise by one die step one combat skill for one of the gladiators of the team. A Right Hand Lanista can do the same for two gladiators or improve by two die steps one combat skill of a single gladiator. No skill can be raised higher than d12 in this manner. The effect wears off after the fight.

**Lotusmaster.** The right Lotus concoction handed to a gladiator before the fight starts can give him the extra punch to win the match. This shady Lotusmaster specializes in this sort of thing. Before the combat starts, a Lotusmaster can grant one of the gladiators a Combat Edge of his choice, so long as the gladiator has all the prerequisites, as per the *warrior's gift* Power. A Right Hand Lotusmaster can bestow two Edges to a single gladiator or one to two different pit fighters. The effect of the drugs is strong enough to last the entire combat.

**Match Fixer.** This shady individual is deep in the gambling and betting business and can make you a tidy income if things go as planned. A player using a Match

Fixer must bet, before the fight starts, on the victory or defeat of his own team. Then, if the fight ends with the result he bet on, his Income for the current week is doubled. If it ends with the opposite result, his Income for the current week is halved. A Right Hand Match Fixer is a creative individual; he grants triple income for a successful bet but sucks away any Income of the team if the bet is lost. Match Fixers are slippery people and must be hired on a one-time basis.

**Mercenary.** Sometimes you need a specific gladiator for a single battle. In this case you can hire a Mercenary. Mercenaries are exactly like the other gladiators, but fight for you for only a single battle, then they must be re-hired.

**Poisoner.** Poisoned weapons are a must in the arena, especially if the poison used isn't strong enough to kill the victim on the spot, but only slows him down a little. A team with a Poisoner Asset can have one of their weapons or three projectiles (javelins, daggers or arrows) smeared with a mild Lotus concoction, which requires a Vigor (-2) roll, otherwise the victim suffers a Wound. The poisoned weapon works only for one successful attack (i.e. the victim must be at least Shaken). The effect of the poisoned weapon must be written on a piece of paper before the combat starts and must be revealed after hitting. A Right Hand Poisoner can, at the player's option, poison two weapons or provide a stronger poison (-4 to the Vigor roll) for one.

**Spy.** A good spy is well aware of the tactics and health of the opponents' teams and his info can aid you in picking the right opponent for the current week. A team with a Spy is dealt an additional card during the Challenge Phase. A Right Hand Spy grants two extra cards. The



team makes its Challenge using the best card.

**Warlock.** A petty magician of some skill, a warlock can be hired to use his hypnotic skills during the fight. He usually hides among the spectators and tries to use his dark powers to temporarily distract the team's opponents. In game terms, a Warlock has Intimidation d8. Once per combat a Warlock can make an Intimidation roll against any gladiator in the pit. He counts as being on Hold and automatically goes first. A Right Hand Warlock has Intimidation d10 and can be used twice per combat.

*Example: Paul still has 4 Arena Points, having spent 6 for Celebrity and 40 for Gladiators. He decides to buy an Asset: a Lanista (3), leaving 1 Arena Point that he can spend after gaining some Income. Now he is ready to face the Season of Blood!*

## SETTING UP THE BATTLEFIELD

Before the first Week starts, players must decide the nature of the battlefield, which will be the same for the duration of the entire league (unless you decide for a Tweak: Variable Battlefield, see sidebar).

The battlefield is a standard arena (circle of 12" radius, two gates 3" wide on the opposite side from which the gladiators enter).

The players must decide collectively if they want any Environment features in the battlefield. Choosing or picking at random one from the Environment List below is usually good. Players can decide whether to use the basic version of any Environment, or the listed variant.

Note that the list is slightly different from the one on page 86 because certain Environments aren't fair in a competitive game.

After the selection is made, players vote. If the majority agrees with the choice of Environment, go on, otherwise another Environment must be agreed upon.

After the Environment is chosen, players collectively build up the Battlefield, taking turns in placing pieces of terrain, until it is ready. If possible, write some notes or take a shot of the scene to quickly rebuild it if you are playing a Season spanning multiple gaming nights.

#### TWEAK: VARIABLE BATTLEFIELD

*If all the players agree, the battlefield can be changed after a number of combats, usually two or three.*



### Season of Blood Environment List

CARD	ENVIRONMENT	REFERENCE PAGE
Deuce to Three	Spikes	86
Four to Five	Size	87
Six	Temperature	87
Seven-Eight	Columns or Pillars	87
Nine-Ten	Torches or Braziers	90
Jack	Weapons*	88
Queen	Bridge of Death	89
King	Rubbish or Corpses	89
Ace	Fire!	92
Joker	Magic!	92

[\*] Place three weapon tokens in the battlefield. One of them is a spear, the second a bow and five arrows and the third one a heap of three javelins. One of them is on the top of a small pillar (Climbing (+2) roll is required to get it), the second is immobilized by a chain (Strength roll required to break it free) and the third can be picked up freely.



# RUNNING THE GAME

When all players have their teams assembled (and recorded on the Team Roster Sheet, the actual Season of Blood can start.

The Season is composed of Weeks. Each Week is broken into several phases.

They are:

1. Challenge Phase
2. Pre-Combat Phase
3. Combat Phase
4. Post-Combat Phase

When you have played the number of Weeks indicated by the Season Type Table the Season ends, and the player with the greatest number of Victory Points wins the game.

## CHALLENGE PHASE

One of the most important factors of the Season of Blood is who fights who: match a weakened opponent at the right moment and even a feeble team can win the Season.

In the Dominions there are no calendars of fights as in present-day sports leagues, instead matching fights is based on the concept of challenge.

Each player is handed a card from the Action Deck (teams with a Spy Asset can receive more). Then, in order of initiative, each player can challenge another player.

There are only two rules to be respected, in this order:

1. You cannot challenge a team you have already challenged in the previous

week, unless there is no other opponent available.

2. If there was a Gods' Chosen Team in the previous week (see below) it is the first team to be challenged.

The challenged player discards his card (he is now matched, so he doesn't need it anymore) and has the right to decide the type of challenge (see below).

When all teams are matched the Challenge Phase ends.

**The Gods' Chosen.** If there are an odd number of players, one of them necessarily remains out of the battle. He is called the Gods' Chosen. The Gods' Chosen automatically receives 1 Victory Point and an Income which is the average of the highest amount and the lowest amount scored by the other teams in that week.

The player doesn't stay idle: he can run all the non-aligned monsters appearing in fights the week and he can act as referee in case disputes arise between players. In addition, if he wants to, he can hire his gladiators out to other teams, haggling with the players for compensation. These fighters are considered mercenaries and are run by the Gods' Chosen player. Being a Gods' Chosen can be an advantageous thing because the gladiators receive a week of extra rest!

## BEING CHALLENGED

If you are the challenged team you have to fight, but you have the right to dictate conditions, in other words the type of fight.

These are the available types:

1. Duel (one vs. one use the Duel Setting Rules)
2. Pairs (two vs. two)
3. Trio (three vs. three)

4. Skirmish (five vs. five)
5. Battle (ten vs. ten)

Note that it is perfectly acceptable for you to dictate a condition your opponent cannot fully meet, in this case he'll have to put in the battlefield the best he can.

*Example: Paul's team, the Defenders of Askerios, is challenged by David's Team, the Furies of Kyros. Paul knows that David's team has few very strong gladiators available, due to casualties suffered in the previous weeks. So he decides to play smart, choosing a Skirmish (five vs. five). Paul has five gladiators to line up, but Davide has only three, so the fight is five versus three.*

#### **TWEAK: GRAND MELEE!**

*If one of the players is handed a Joker, instead of a regular combat a grand melee can be called. The decision is voted for by the players, and if the majority agrees the Grand Melee happens.*

*A Grand Melee is simply a combat between all teams, with a single team (or gladiator) winning it!*

*Grand Melees adopt the following tweaks:*

- + Each player participates with 5 gladiators.
- + Gladiators begin the game already in the pits. Players are dealt an Action Card, and they place one of their gladiators in the pit in card order. When all the players have placed the first gladiator, they move on to the second one and so on till all players have deployed all their fighters. No gladiator can begin closer than 6" to an opponent.
- + During combat each player receives only two action cards: one for Wild Cards and another one for all the other gladiators he controls.
- + Income, Victory Points and Kill Points are doubled during a Grand Melee!

#### **TWEAK: PROGRAMMED FIGHTS**

*Instead of using the mechanism of challenges, the players can decide, before the*

*Season starts, to have some specific battles programmed in certain weeks. For example, they can decide that in the first week only Duels are fought and that the last week is a Grand Melee.*

*Or, as an alternative, they can decide to have Beast Fights (see below) in certain weeks.*

#### **TWEAK: BEAST FIGHTS**

*Animals and monsters are integral part of the arena, but this league system deliberately leaves them out. If you want you can decide to have a Beast Fight as a Programmed Fight in certain weeks. The greatest problem of this sort of combat is that each player doesn't play against another team, but against animals.*

*The simplest solution is to adopt the following rules:*

- + During a Beast Fight Week every player fights against a Beast team. Randomly pair players (if players are in odd number a player will play as Beast Lord twice).
- + Each pair plays two fights. In the first, one of the players will use one of the Beast Teams detailed below and the other his own gladiators, in the second they'll switch roles.
- + The gladiators always fight in Trio, while the beasts can be of variable number.

#### **Example Beast Teams**

*Players should prepare at least three different Beast Teams before the Season starts, so a player using the beasts can choose the ones best for him, otherwise the following ones can be used.*

*Note that, for balance purposes, there are "multiple copies" of each Beast Team ; so, for example during a week of Beast Fights more than one player can decide to go with a Lions Team.*

*Teams are made with around 30 Arena Points.*

#### **Nandal Team**

*4 Nandal Tribesman (Extras see GE page 175)*

*1 Nandal Veteran Warrior (Henchman, use the Nandal Tribesman profile see GE page 175)*

*1 Nandal Alpha Male (Wild Card see GE page 175)*

*Celebrity d4*

### **Lions Team**

*3 Female Lions (Extras see SWD page 138)*

*1 Alpha Female (Henchman see SWD page 138)*

*1 Lion Pack Leader (Wild Card see SWD page 138).*

*Celebrity d6*

### **Daughter of Hordan Team**

*5 Bone Wolves (Extras see page 113)*

*1 Daughter of Hordan (Henchman see GE page 144)*

*Celebrity d8*

## **PRE-COMBAT PHASE**

Once the Challenge is issued and answered, we are in the Pre-Combat Phase. During this Phase players do three important things, in this order:

1. Choose Gladiators
2. Use Assets
3. Arena Bennies

The steps above are performed first by the challenging team and then by the challenged one.

### **CHOOSE GLADIATORS**

The choice is free, each player can choose any gladiator on his roster, regardless of whether he is an Extra, Right Hand, Henchman or Wild Card.

### **USE ASSETS**

Each player can use all the Assets he has. Note that Guards may be used during the Pre-Combat Phase to neutralize hostile

Assets (like a Courtesan) or during the actual combat to counter unwanted influence (like Agitators).

## **ARENA BENNIES**

In the Season of Blood Bennies are handled in a slightly different way from usual.

Wild Cards receive one Bennie each. It is personal and can be only used by them.

Before combat starts, each player makes a Celebrity roll, rolling a Wild Die as well. They receive one Arena Bennie, plus one per success and raise on the roll. Players can decide to use Agitators to improve their result or to worsen the opponent's result.

Arena Bennies are shared among the team and can be used independently by any character regardless of whether he is an Extra, Henchman, Right Hand or Wild Card.

Neither the Wild Cards' Bennies nor Arena Bennies are kept between fights.

## **COMBAT PHASE**

Now, we fight!

The fights of the Season of Blood stick to the standard Savage Worlds rules apart from the following notes.

### **ACTION CARDS**

If, at the beginning of the game, players control three or fewer gladiators each, each gladiator is handed an individual Action Card.

If the forces are bigger, the following rules apply:

Wild Cards each receive their individual Action Card.



Henchmen receive a single Action Card for all of them.

Right Hands receive a single Action Card for all of them.

Extra receive a single Action Card for all of them.

## BENNIE USE

Bennies are used as normal. Henchmen, having multiple Wounds, can use Arena Bennies to soak Wounds.

## TURN DURATION

Players can be very slow in their decisions, especially in a competitive game. To avoid the game bogging down too much, after revealing his action card a player has three real-time minutes to resolve his actions. After this time has passed, he forfeits his turn and the countdown continues. Otherwise you can use the Crowd Gets Angry! optional rule (see sidebar).

### TWEAK: CROWD GETS ANGRY!

#### OPTIONAL RULE

*If one player uses too much time to decide his move any other player at the table can invoke a Crowd Upset. It means that every player casts a vote, positive or negative.*

*If negative votes beat the positive one, the crowd gets upset and throws a rock (Shooting d6, no range modifier, 2d6 damage) at a random gladiator of the slow player's team.*

## ENTERING THE BATTLEFIELD

Gladiators enter from the two opposing gates. During their first turn they simply "appear" in contact with the gate and have their full Pace available. The choice of gate is given to the challenged player.

## ENDING COMBAT

The combat ends when one of these two things happens:

1. One force is completely wiped out.
2. Ten turns have passed.

At this point the winner must be decided by checking the Victory Conditions and Victory Points must be awarded.

## VICTORY CONDITIONS

There are two independent victory conditions to check: Team Victory and Individual Gladiator Victory.

They are detailed below.

**Team Victory.** At the end of each fight, count up the number of opposing characters your side eliminated. Characters give you Kill Points, as shown below.

CHARACTER TYPE	KILL POINTS
Extra	1
Right Hand	1.5
Henchman	2
Wild Card	3

The side with the greatest number of Kill Points wins the combat and receives 3 Victory Points, the loser receives zero. If they are equal, the combat ended in a draw, and both players receive 1 Victory Point.

**Individual Gladiator Victory.** Each gladiator, immediately after dispatching an enemy, receives the number of Kill Points shown in the table above. The gladiator who scored the greatest number of Kill Points at the end of the combat is called the Slayer of the Day. Kill Points are

also used as experience in the arena (see Improving Gladiators below).

## POST-COMBAT PHASE

After the battle is fought and Victory Conditions are checked, the Post-Combat Phase starts, which is made up of the following parts:

1. Collecting Income
2. Checking the Fallen
3. Improving Gladiators
4. Spending Income

### COLLECTING INCOME

Each player makes a Celebrity roll, with a Wild Die.

He scores 1 Arena Point with a failure, two with a success and an additional one per raise.

He also obtains two additional points if he obtained a Team Victory and another one if he obtained the Individual Gladiator Victory.

No team can gain more than half its Celebrity die type +2 Arena Points per match. For example, a team with Celebrity d6 cannot gain more than  $3+2=5$  Arena Points per combat.

Arena Points are added to the player's total and can be spent in the Spending Income Phase.

*Example: After his first battle with the Falcons of Askerios, Paul has lost the match, but one of his gladiators is awarded the Individual Gladiator Victory. The Falcons have Celebrity d6. Paul rolls the d6 plus a Wild Die, obtaining 3 and  $6+2=8$ . A raise! He receives two Arena Points for the success, one for the raise and an additional one for the Individual Gladiator Victory. Total four Arena Points. Not so bad!*

## CHECKING THE FALLEN

The rules for healing in the Season of Blood are a little different from the standard ones. Each Incapacitated gladiator makes a Vigor roll and checks the Gladiatorial Incapacitation Table below. Right Hands and Wild Cards receive a Wild Die, but *they cannot use any Bennies*.

However, they can use Healers (see Assets, page 156).

This supersedes all the standard healing rules of Savage Worlds.

### Gladiatorial Incapacitation Table

RESULT	EFFECT
1	<i>Death!</i> The gladiator is dead. May the gods save his soul.
2	<i>Niggling Injury.</i> The gladiator suffers a nasty wound which never heals very well. He must miss the next combat and, in addition, before each week starts he must roll Vigor: if he scores 1 on the Vigor roll, regardless of the Wild Die, he is in great pain and cannot be used that Week.
3	<i>Wounded.</i> The gladiator must miss the next combat while he recovers from wounds. After this time has passed, he suffers no long-term consequences and starts the next fight fully healed.
4+	<i>Success.</i> The gladiator's wounds are healed before the next combat. No long-term consequences.

## IMPROVING GLADIATORS

The Arena is a place where you grow up fast, especially if you survive. For each 5 Kill Points a gladiator gains, the player draws a card and checks the table below.

## Gladiator Killing Experience Table

CARD	EFFECT
2-6	<i>Skill Raise.</i> The gladiator raises a combat skill by one die step.
7-10	<i>New Edge.</i> The gladiator obtains a new Combat or Leadership Edge for which he has the prerequisites.
J-Q	<i>Attribute Raise.</i> The character can raise one Attribute by one die step.
K-A	<i>Powerful Item.</i> The character receives a powerful item for free (as per the Excellent Weapon/Armor Asset).
Joker	<i>Promotion!</i> The character is “promoted” one type. So an Extra becomes a Right Hand, a Right Hand a Henchman and so on. If the character is already a Wild Card he obtains the Luck Edge, if he already has Luck he receives Improved Luck. If he already has the Improved Luck Edge the player draws another card.

## SEASON END

At the end of the last week, the Season ends. The player with the greatest number of Victory Points is the winner of the Team Prize. In addition to the usual Victory Points, players can decide to vote for two extra Victory Points bonuses, detailed below.

FACTOR	EXTRA VICTORY POINTS
Best Team Name and Backstory	1
Best Painted Team (if you are using minis)	1 per 2 weeks of the Season

The player owning the character with the greatest number of Kill Points is the winner of the Great Slayer Prize. If the gladiator winning the Great Slayer Prize was a character imported from an RPG campaign this can provide an interesting in-game reward (see sidebar at page 153).



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