

# BEASTS & BARBARIANS

STEEL EDITION



UMBERTO  
PIGNATELLI



 CRAMEL

PLAYER'S GUIDE

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## ABOUT THIS BOOK

Welcome to *Beasts & Barbarians*, Gravel's setting of sword and sorcery! In this book, the **Player Guide**, you'll find all you need to create powerful barbarians, courageous amazons, cunning rogues, or mysterious warlocks and venture across the Dread Sea Dominions!

## FIVE YEARS LATER...

When I designed *Beasts & Barbarians* I intended from the beginning that the setting should be alive and kicking, like a screaming barbarian in battle.

Five years have passed since the previous edition of the game, the Golden Edition, and there have been many adventures during that time, both in official published scenarios and in the awesome adventures played at your tables.

When we decided to publish a new edition, extending the timeline was only natural.

So the question is, what has happened in the Dominions in the last five years?

A lot of things, my friends, a lot of things, good and bad in equal part, and ripe for adventure, of course.

Are you sure you want to discover them?

If the answer is yes, well, grab your sword and turn the page!

## A NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

To save space, several abbreviations are used in this book to refer to other books of the *Beasts & Barbarians* Steel Edition line and different types of characters:

SEPC = Steel Edition Player Guide

(RH) = Right Hand

SEGM = Steel Edition Game Master Guide

(WC) = Wild Card

(E) = Extra

(H) = Henchman





*Shangor looks suspiciously at the dark jungle in front of him. Born in the forests of the savage north, he is usually at ease in the woods, but there is something strange amongst these unfamiliar, vine-covered trees. His nose is full of the ripe smell of corruption — and of ancient evil. His skin crawls, as if unseen eyes were watching him. His hand instinctively caresses the hilt of his axe. The contact with the wood, polished by use, gives the massive barbarian comfort.*

*He crouches down to examine the tracks in the mud. Five men, at least, went this way, carrying Korala, the daughter of the caravan master, whom they took several hours ago.*

*The prints of bare feet are noticeably smaller than those of a full-grown man.*

*"Pygmies!" Shangor curses, thinking of the stories he has heard about these vicious, elusive savages. Tales of silent blowpipes loaded with poison darts, promising a painful death, and of kidnapped maidens, sacrificed to bestial gods. Yet, Korala's beauty — and her father's gold — drive his worries away.*

*As he follows the tracks, he soon becomes aware of a low thudding noise — sacrificial drums, and not far away. His sharp ears lead him unerringly towards them, until he finds himself in front of a strange, forbidding ruin of huge size.*

*His hesitation gone, Shangor immediately readies his axe, smiling grimly. As always, thought and action are one and the same in his barbaric, uncivilized mind.*

*The light of the moon shines on his massive muscles as, clad only in a loincloth, he sneaks through the dark jungle, as silent as a leopard...*



# THE DIARY OF JUSTINUS OF SYRANTHIA

MY BELOVED MASTER VELASTIOS, IT IS WITH UTMOST  
RESPECT THAT I WRITE YOU THIS LETTER. SIX LONG  
YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE I LEFT OUR BELOVED LIBRARY  
IN SYRANTHIA TO WANDER THE DOMINIONS, BECAUSE,  
AS YOU USED TO SAY, THE PLACE OF A SAGE IS IN THE  
WORLD, ALWAYS OBSERVING IT WITH EYES EVER FRESH AND  
CURIOUS, AND RECORDING, WITH WORDS AND PAINTINGS,  
THE MANY MARVELS, BEAUTIFUL AND HORRIBLE ALIKE, OF  
OUR LANDS.

OVER THESE LONG YEARS I HAVE TAKEN A NUMBER OF  
NOTES, WHICH I SEND YOU NOW; I PRAY YOU WILL  
REGISTER THEM IN THE ANNALS OF THE LIBRARY, FOR THE  
INSTRUCTION OF FUTURE GENERATIONS...

FROM THE DIARY OF JUSTINUS OF SYRANTHIA



# FROM THE DREAD STAR TO THE FALL OF THE IRON EMPIRE

**A**s my old master Velastios always told me, to understand the people of a land, you must know her history, so that's where I'll start my narration.

I'll try to be concise, but if I talk too much, please stop me.

The earliest records of the Great Library of Syranthia say that the lands today known as the Dominions, in times of yore, were a large empire, belonging to an ancient, inhuman race: the Keronians.

Powerful sorcerers and demon worshippers, they controlled all the known lands, due to their powers and their legions of slaves.

The Keronian empire of terror ended, around five thousand years ago, due to a terrible cataclysm, the Fall of the Dread Star, which destroyed the very center of the empire, creating a large body of water, the Dread Sea, and altering forever the geography and history of the Dominions.

Nobody knows the true nature of the Dread Star; the Priests of Hulian say it was a sign of the wrath of the gods, but if you wander the Dominions as much as I have, you'll hear the wildest stories on this subject.

Whatever the cause of the Fall, the Dread Sea is still warm in its heart today, as if the Dread Star might still be burning somewhere in its depths.

The Fall dramatically altered the climate: the dust raised by the cataclysm altered the land, destroying forests, creating new deserts and causing the deaths of countless innocent people.

Slowly, the climate returned to normal, and a host of city states were born around the Dread Sea, which are collectively called "the Dominions".

The most important of them was Faberterra, a city of humble farmers, not very different from the others, apart from a single fact, which changed the history of the world.

In 1224 AF, Fabron, a Faberterran priest of the minor god Hulian, discovered that the gray stones on the bed of the river near Faberterra could be melted and forged into a very strong metal: iron.

From that moment on, Faberterra's raise was unstoppable. The mighty Iron Phalanxes, supported by the Smith Priests of Hulian, conquered all the surrounding lands.

In the south it annexed Syranthia, where the Great Library has stood for innumerable ages, and Kyros, land of elephants, while in the north it conquered Tricarnia, home of the decadent Priest Princes, heirs of Keron, worshippers of the demon queen Hordan, hated enemy of Hulian.

After the conquest of Tricarnia, Faberterra was no longer simply Faberterra the city state, it was the Iron Empire, ruled by Domestan I, Masterarkos of all the Phalanxes and first Emperor of Faberterra.

Not everybody was subjugated by the might of the Iron Phalanxes: in the north, the fierce Northlanders, the fearful Cairnlanders, who dwell in the tombs of their Ancestors, and the mysterious Caleds, dwelling in an ancient, untouched forest, resisted the Iron Empire's rapacious appetite, while in the south the black-skinned tribes of the Ivory Savannah, who were luckily beyond the Empire's reach, continued to live their savage lives in freedom.

Another notable exception was the Island of Ascaia, where the women rebelled against the cruel governor and declared independence, becoming the fierce Amazons and forbidding their land to any man, a law which still exists today.

But the Empire was tainted from its birth: the peace treaty with Tricarnia included a marriage between Domestan and Salkaria, a Tricarnian Princess of legendary beauty, who became the first Empress and who imported the corrupt customs and deities of her people, subtly changing the customs of Faberterra.

The Iron Empire knew a golden age lasting eight centuries, even if the bloodline of the Emperor was slowly tainted by the Tricarnians, who gradually insinuated themselves into the highest ranks of the Empire.

So great was the hunger of the Iron Empire that it expanded eastward, crossing the Iron Mountains and conquering the vastness of Zandor, from Jalizar, the City of Thieves, in the north to the borders of mountainous Lhoban, where the holy monks dwell in their monasteries, in the south.

But the might of man is nothing before a god's will: in 2450 AF, while the Iron Empire was enjoying a stagnant prosperity, a new, terrible threat, came from the unknown steppes of the east: the Valk, a race of savage, nomadic horsemen, worshippers of demons, invaded the Iron Empire.

Driven by the prophecies of the Valkyria, the warrior-priestesses of their demon god, Sha-Mekri, they were led by Dhaar, the greatest warlord ever known, who came to the west to pillage the Iron Empire and crush it under the hooves of his horse.

The Valk Invasions were terrible: Zandor was totally devastated, and the Cairnlanders and Northlanders, pushed out of their ancestral lands by the Valk, attacked the Iron Empire from the north, looking for shelter in the civilized lands, while the southern provinces, like Kyros, quickly declared independence from Faberterra.

In a few seasons, thousands of years of civilization were wiped away.

It could have been worse, but Dhaar, mired in the long siege of the city of Jalizar, died suddenly, in a mysterious way, in his tent.

The Valk horde shattered, the various clans siding with the three sons of Dhaar, but they remained in Zandor, while the rest of the Iron Empire looked on, agonizing.

This was five years ago, in 2510 AF.

## THE SWORD OF HULIAN

As you know very little of the Dominions, you'll surely be more interested in what has happened in the most recent years.

After the Valk invasion was halted, it looked as if the Iron Empire would recover and civilization would slowly return to the devastated lands of the Dominions, but it hasn't.

It started in 2513 AF, with an omen: a great, red comet appeared in the skies. People all around the Dominions went wild, thinking that another Dread Star was going to fall, destroying the world again.

The priests of the Divine Couple of Faberterra, the double patron deity of the Iron Empire, called it the Sword of Hulian, and said it was a sign of the wrath of the gods, while in Tricarnia the Priest Princes locked themselves in their observatory-temples, studying the old scrolls of Keron, because it seems no prophecy mentioned this strange event.

Whatever the real nature of the Sword of Hulian, it was ripe with consequences for the Dominions.



The very night of its apparition, old King Ekul of Ekul, in southern Zandor, died in his bed, leaving the throne to his niece Yasmine, who, though very young, must now use all her influence to keep the kingdom together, under pressure from the local nobles and the Valk lords who covet the throne.

But this wasn't the weirdest event that happened that night: deep in the mountains of Lhoban, in the monastery of Heaven's Door, the Enlightened One, spiritual guide of all the monks of Lhoban, disappeared without choosing a successor for the first time in history, leaving the mountain kingdom in turmoil.

Shortly after this, the fire of the comet's tail spread over the Ivory Savannah, where the black-skinned tribes, led by the mysterious White King, declared war on mighty Caldeia, the coastal kingdom which predates the savannah by centuries, razing the villages and hunting for slaves.

The conflict is called the War of the Chain, and, if ever a just war existed, it is this one, but nobody knows how it will end: Caldeia is rich and powerful, and apart from its black-clad soldiers it can count on the subtle powers of ancient Keronian sorcery and on the mercenaries its deep coffers can summon, while the White King can count on dozens of tribes at his orders.

In the north things are no better: in the fetid swamps of Tricarnia a terrible outburst of pestilence, the terrible Red Plague, appeared. It is a devious malady which consumes both the body and the mind, transforming poor souls into bloodthirsty monsters, and now the Priest Princes of the Land of Demons are fighting, independently, to stem the scourge, so far with little success.

But all these things, although serious, aren't the main fear of Emperor Domestan XII, ruler of the Iron Empire: in far Valkheim, east of the Empire's borders, where the northern Valk have lived in relative peace for a number of years, a new threat has arisen: a man who came from the steppe, escorted by Valkyria.

He calls himself Deserjaas, a Valk word meaning "the successor" and he claims to be Dhaar's successor. He swore, on the warm body of the last son of Dhaar, who he personally killed, that he will put the Iron Empire to the torch and will ride to the Iron Throne, in Faberterra, to burn it to ashes.

## A NOTE ON DATES

Every civilization uses a different calendar to date historical events but, for ease of use, the Reformed Salkarian Calendar is adopted in these books. It calculates all dates starting from the presumed year in which the Dread Star fell (AF = After Fall, BF = Before Fall).

If you are interested in a more detailed description of the Dominions' history, you'll find it in the *next chapter*.





The Valk clans are gathering under his banner like flies on a corpse, and this is what makes the Emperor tremble at night when he visits the royal nursery, where his newborn twin sons, Arestos and Vanestan, sleep, oblivious to the terrible threat looming over them and all the civilized people of the West.

# CLIMATE

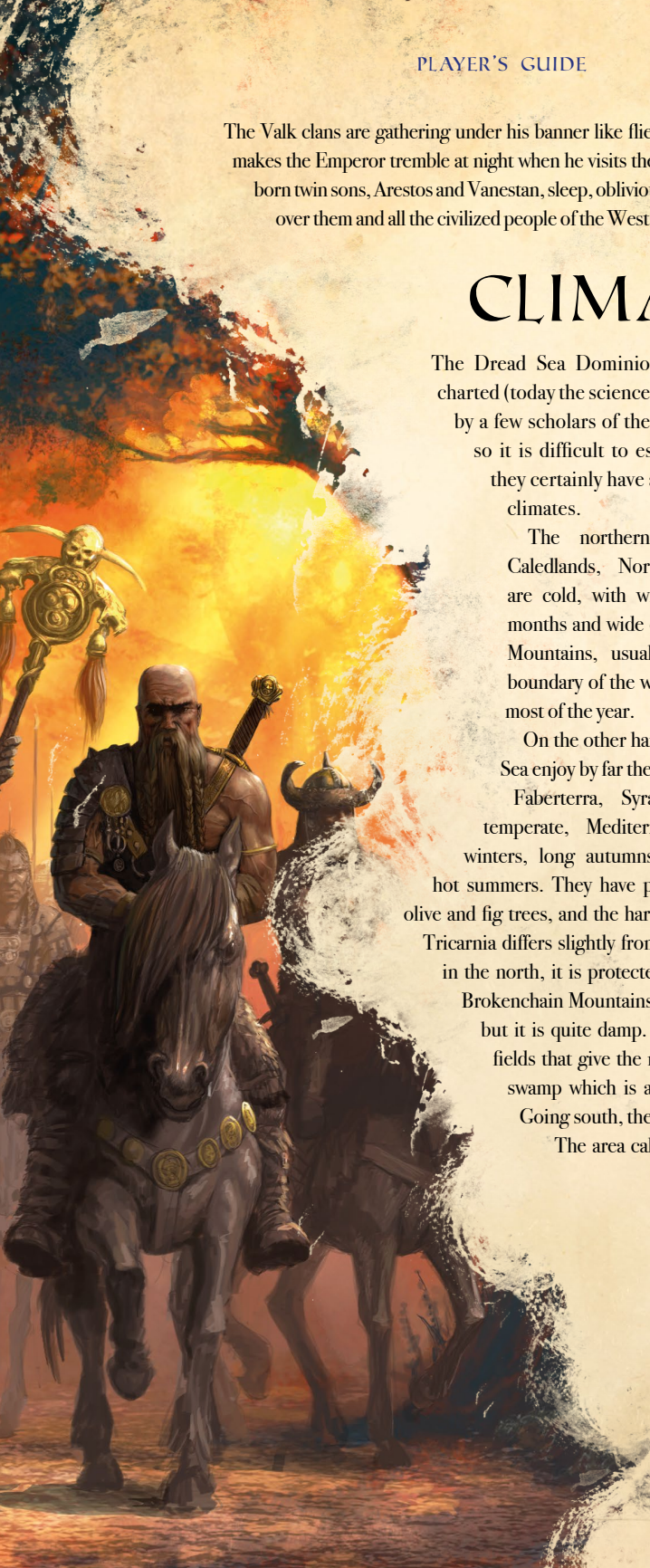
The Dread Sea Dominions have not been precisely charted (today the science of geometry is practiced only by a few scholars of the Great Library of Syranthia), so it is difficult to estimate their actual size, but they certainly have a very wide range of different climates.

The northern kingdoms including the Caledlands, Northeim and the Cairnlands are cold, with winters lasting as long as six months and wide expanses of forests. The Troll Mountains, usually considered the northern boundary of the world, are in the grip of ice for most of the year.

On the other hand, the lands facing the Dread Sea enjoy by far the best climate.

Faberterra, Syranthia and Kyros have a temperate, Mediterranean climate with warm winters, long autumns and springs and generally hot summers. They have plants of all species including olive and fig trees, and the harvest there is always generous. Tricarnia differs slightly from its neighbors; despite being in the north, it is protected from the cold winds by the Brokenchain Mountains, so it has a temperate climate but it is quite damp. It has large, half-flooded rice fields that give the nation the aspect of a massive swamp which is always shrouded by thick fog. Going south, the climate gets hotter.

The area called the Horn, comprising the





Fallen Realm, the Red Desert and the Ivory Savannah is scorching all year round, and the highest temperatures are reached in the desert. With the exception of oases, the vegetation mainly includes palms, cacti and other resilient plants.

In the Ivory Savannah the main plant is the sturdy Bone Grass, which in the summer takes on a pale color resembling that of bones. Thanks to its position around the mouth of the Buffalo River, Caldeia enjoys a mild climate and its vegetation is similar to that of Kyros and Faberterra. Going further south, the Lush Jungle and the Cannibal Islands have a tropical climate. Plants of every type and size grow in these snake-infested lands. Moving east, Lhoban is an area of high mountains; it is quite cold with short, hot summers. Except for some lichens, very few plants grow in these lands but the valley bottoms are fertile, enjoy mild weather, and yield excellent crops.

The old kingdom of Zandor, comprising Ekul, Jalizar and Valkheim, has the most varied climate. Ekul is a cold, windswept desert with small oases, as there is nothing to stop the winds blowing in from the Valk steppes. The only exceptions are the coastal regions, which are very fertile. Jalizar has a continental climate which gets milder and better for agriculture towards the shores of the Drowned King Sea. Valkheim, actually a part of the steppe, is always exposed to the wind and except for a short, hot summer, it is frozen all year round.

In every land, as well as the common plants, there exist several varieties of Lotus, sometimes useful and sometimes harmful, which take different forms (usually parasitic ones such as White Mistletoe in Northeim) and are used by Lotusmasters in their concoctions.





[illegible] $1\text{ Cm} = 250\text{ Km}$



# THE BOOK OF LORE

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"WORDS AND FIRE, THESE ARE THE  
WEAPONS HULIAN GAVE MANKIND  
TO TURN AWAY DARKNESS."

**-The Book of Steel, holy tome of the Smith Priests**

*In the year of the Burning Phoenix, the twenty-fourth year  
of the reign of his majesty Emperor Domestan — twelfth of his  
line, Ruler of the Iron Empire, Lord of the Dread Sea, Guard-  
ian of the North, Heir of the Eastern and the Western Empire  
— I, Velastios of Syranthia, write this chronicle, so that all my  
knowledge, gathered throughout a lifetime at the humble ser-  
vice of the Library, will not disappear when Hulian, Smith of  
Words, finally calls me to his side in the skies...*

*From the Chronicles of Velastios of Syranthia*

If you want to know a land, you must know its history and

legends. In the following pages you'll learn the ancient history of the Dread Sea Dominions, as it is known by the Sages of Syranthia, the most learned men of this troublesome era. You will hear stories, legends and wild rumors, reported as faithfully as possible.

As always, what parts of the following report to believe is left to you, wise reader.

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WORLD

## THE DREAD STAR

Almost two thousand five hundred years ago, where the Dread Sea now stands, there was a great plain where a magnificent civilization flourished: the Keronian Empire. They were a noble race of magicians, astrologers, and priests, and under their domination the world knew marvels that today are almost impossible to imagine. Despite their powers, they were not a fair-minded people, and some scholars say they were not even human.

The strength of the Keronians came from their slaves – thousands of dark-skinned men who constructed their marble and alabaster cities, raised their observatory-temples, and died on the altars of their ancient gods.

In that age, the primitive white men lived in caves in the north, and took great care not to come near the borders of the Keronian Empire, because the Keronian gods were always thirsting for blood, no matter what the race of the sacrificial victims was.

But one day, in a single moment, the Keronian Empire ended. A massive mountain of fire falling from the skies hit the very center of the empire, destroying it and leaving an enormous crater, quickly filled with the waters of the Endless Ocean.

The stories call the falling mountain the Dread Star, and the newly-created body of water took the name of the Dread Sea because even today, its waters are of an intense red color.

The philosophers and sages debate why the Keronian mages and astrologers failed to foresee the destruction that was upon them and did not leave the empire in time. Some say they foresaw the cataclysm, but too late; others say that the Dread Star was a punishment sent by the gods for the many evil deeds committed by this cruel race.

The impact of the Dread Star raised a massive cloud of dust. For many years, the light of the sun was dimmed all over the continent and most of the few survivors died of famine, pestilence, and even worse afflictions.

Then strong winds took the red dust south over the northern part of what today is the Lush Jungle. The trees died, their trunks calcified, and the whole area became the so-called Red Desert.

Further south the situation was better, but the jungle was forced to recede, becoming the Ivory Savannah that still exists today.

Climate changes were not the only effects of the Dread Star. The thin dust filling the air transformed the world in many strange ways. Beasts of all types started to appear, such as white- and black-striped horses in the Ivory Savannah, and massive flying snakes known as Lhoban Dragons in the southeast, among the highest cliffs of the continent.

Mutations caused by the fallen star did not spare humans either. Many of them started to become brutish, feral beings, and the most unfortunate, the primitive people from the mountains of the northeast, now turned into the hulking beasts known as Trolls.

With the passing of time, these abominations became rarer, but they never entirely disappeared.



In remote, unpopulated areas, the monsters dwelling in the old Keronian ruins still howl at the moon today...

## HERO'S JOURNAL: THE LOTUS

One of the most mysterious changes after the fall of the Dread Star was the diffusion of the Lotus. It is a strange plant with flowers of intense colors: red, white, purple and many others. The Lotus appeared all over the continent in several different forms. In the Caledlands the Green Lotus grows, like mistletoe, on the branches of ancient oaks. In the Ivory Savannah, flowers of Gray Lotus blossom from the tops of tall weeds. In the Brown Sea, the Purple Lotus closely resembles the water lily. Whatever its form, the Lotus has great magical powers, but it is also very dangerous. If eaten fresh, it is toxic and might lead to death but, if processed and mixed with other ingredients, it can create fantastic essences, poisons, and so on. Each type of Lotus has a different effect depending on the color of the plant and the ingredients it is mixed with. Lotusmasters are an exclusive sect of alchemists specializing in the study of this remarkable plant. Their recipes are handed down from master to disciple in the utmost secrecy, and Lotusmasters are ready to kill to learn the recipes of a rival. The greatest Lotusmasters are the Alchemists of the Free City of Gis.

## THE DAWN OF CIVILIZATION

The centuries passed and the climate slowly stabilized. The Dread Sea, for some unknown reason, is quite warm, and this made the surrounding areas temperate and comfortable. No longer fearing the Keronians, the white men of the north started migrating south, to warmer regions. Some of them abandoned their primitive way of life and discovered agriculture.

Thus, the first small villages appeared all around the fertile shores of the Dread Sea.

Another migration happened in that remote era. The olive-skinned slaves of the Keronians, who had survived the cataclysm because they lived on the outskirts of the empire, took to the road. They were following a primeval urge to go as far as possible from the land of their masters. Some of them reached the vast woodlands of the northeast peninsula of the Dominions and became known as the Caleds, while the southern ones, of a smaller stature, reached the Lush Jungle and became the progenitors of the present-day Pygmies.

Despite their different appearance and the enormous distance between them, the two olive-skinned races still share many common features.

They are both primitive, very reclusive and isolationists, and always live in forests, perhaps because the constant sight of the sky reminds them of the day when the Dread Star fell onto the world.

But let us return to the fertile shores of the Dread Sea, the cradle of civilization.

In the space of a thousand years, the small villages became cities which soon expanded their boundaries and became small, autocratic city states. Their numbers were growing and, in a few centuries, they started to compete for the more fertile areas. Many small-scale wars were fought in those days, but no city was strong enough to conquer the others permanently.

Then Fabron, a priest-smith from the small town of Faberterra, the follower of a minor deity named Hulian, discovered a way to melt the strange stones of the Gray River.

Thus, iron was discovered.

## THE IRON EMPIRE

The dwellers of Faberterra were farmers who used to work together plowing large fields. The working crews provided the basis for the Iron Empire's war machine: the phalanx. The Iron Priests of Hulian were the first generals of the armies; they led their troops in Hulian's name, but they swore loyalty to a Council of wise citizens.

Thanks to their iron weapons and armor, Hulian's followers conquered all their immediate neighbors. In a few generations, Faberterra became a large state along the eastern coast of the Dread Sea. Yet, these men were conquerors, not pillagers: any city surrendering to their might was spared. After swearing loyalty to the Council of Faberterra, the city was permitted to join the Empire, first as a vassal and then, after a period of twenty-five years, as a rightful member of the Confederacy.

This was the fate of the city state of Syranthia which became the biggest center of learning of the Confederacy.

The Iron Confederacy, as it was then called, continued to expand north and south for two hundred years until it faced two major threats: the northern realm of Tricarnia and the southern Autarchate of Kyros.

Tricarnia was a huge kingdom created by some bastardized survivors of the cataclysm that had hit the Keronians.

Two thousand years of breeding with lesser races had made them more humanlike in appearance, but they maintained the ancient Keronian way of life. Tricarnia's massive estates, cultivated by slaves, were governed by small hierarchies of corrupt Priest Princes, worshippers of ancient Keronian gods and powerful sorcerers.

Slaves also formed the bulk of the Tricarnian army. Although they did not know how to use iron, the sheer numbers of their slave soldiers, combined with the arcane knowledge of the Priest Princes, were enough to stop the advances of the Iron Empire toward the north. Many battles were fought, but the dark magic of the Tricarnian sorcerers awoke creatures not seen in the world for eons, and pestilence and misfortune tormented the invaders.

In the end, the mighty Iron Phalanxes of Faberterra were forced to withdraw.

It was not just a political and military defeat, but also a spiritual one. The Tricarnians went into battle with the standard of their main Goddess, Hordan, Lady of Darkness, and they took no prisoners because they sacrificed them all on the altars of their evil deity. Losing the war shook the faith of the Confederacy: Hulian was accused of being a false god, the Iron Priests were lynched and, in the end, the popularity of the cult faded.

In the south the situation was no better.

The Autarchate of Kyros was a big state with access to two seas, the Dread Sea and the Brown Sea. It was ruled by an absolute monarchy and it managed to stop the expansion of the Iron Confederacy.

Kyros had a tradition of war against the black people of the Ivory Savannah. It was a constant struggle between two opposite ways of living: the nomadic herders of the Ivory Savannah Tribes against the farming communities of Kyros. Through contacts with the Savannah people, Kyros acquired a powerful weapon, the bane of the Iron Confederacy: elephants. They were the only beasts in the world capable of standing against the Buffalo Riders of the Savannah.

The Iron Phalanxes of the Confederacy fled before the mighty charge of the armored pachyderms, and, after a couple of disastrous battles, the generals of Faberterra were again forced to retreat.



Meanwhile, a minor but quite important event happened; the insular city of Ascaia, an early conquest of the Confederacy, revolted against the local governor. It would be viewed as one of the strangest rebellions in the history of the Confederacy. This rebellion was motivated, not by politics, but by the gender of those doing the rebelling.

The women of the city, tired of being oppressed by their men, took to arms.

It was a very bloody war and, within a week, no man was left alive on the island.

At the head of the rebels were Galla, the wife of the former governor, and Ilenya, a gladiator woman of the arena. They became the first Sister Queens of Ascaia.

This was the founding of the Amazon Realm. The Confederacy tried to regain control of the island, but Ascaia is surrounded by dangerous reefs, with a single, easily defensible port, and its agriculture is self-sufficient. So, the Amazons resisted all the attacks and, in a few years, their reign became a grudgingly accepted reality.

After these three blatant failures, the Confederacy languished for twenty years.

Then, Senator Domestan was elected Masterarkos, High General of the Iron Confederacy's Armies. A former veteran of the Tricarnian wars, he was a top tactician and a skillful politician. He made a truce with the Tricarnians and, at the same time, he allied himself with Khmeros, the younger brother of the Kyrosian Autarch, supporting his claim to the Autarchate's throne.

Kyros was shaken by a civil war and in the end the Iron Confederacy crushed both factions, annexing the Land of the Elephants into its domains. Domestan used this success to force the Iron Council to give him absolute power. This was the end of the Confederacy and the start of the Iron Empire, with Domestan I as the first Emperor.

The reasons for the subsequent decisions taken by Domestan are unknown. It is rumored that the High Priests of Hulian came out of the isolation they had been in since being defeated by the Tricarnians; they visited the Emperor and revealed to him a prophecy, which said that Tricarnia and her evil goddess would be destroyed, if fought with an army led by a single man.

The Emperor recognized the figure in the prophecy as himself and, with a unified kingdom under his command and the might of the Kyrosian elephants on his side, he attacked Tricarnia again.

A series of terrible battles were fought in the north, the most famous being the Battle of the Elephant River, where two hundred of these mighty beasts died. But, in the end, the Iron Empire crushed the bulk of the Tricarnian army. Then, the Phalanxes entered Tricarnia and started pillaging the land, with the priests of Hulian spurring them to burn down the unholy temples and observatories dotting the country.

But Tricarnia was never truly conquered.

In the towers of the City of Princes, the capital, the Priest Princes devised a plan to save their realm and turn defeat into victory.

An ambassador, accompanied by a hooded figure, arrived at Domestan's camp. He offered the instant capitulation of Tricarnia and annexation of the northern Dominion to the Empire but asked for the pillaging to be stopped at once. The Emperor was very doubtful but the ambassador said there was more, and removed the hood of his traveling companion. Thus, Domestan first set eyes on Princess Salkaria of Tricarnia, who was to become his bride.

Salkaria was one of the most beautiful women in the Dominions.

Domestan was utterly bewitched by her beauty.

Despite firm opposition by the priests of Hulian, the peace treaty was signed, the conditions accepted, and the new state of things ratified by the marriage between Emperor Domestan and Princess Salkaria.

From that moment on, the tainted blood of the Tricarnians entered the imperial bloodline.

Rumors say that Salkaria — a witch of great power — totally subjugated his Imperial Majesty and from then on the skilled politician and general was only a puppet in the hands of the Priest Princes.

But this version of the story appears only in the secret chronicles of the High Temple of Hulian.

Indeed, misty Tricarnia joined the Empire but preserved a great degree of independence, becoming more an ally than just a vassal country. The Priest Princes retained their titles and all their slaves.

Empress Salkaria soon became an important figure, especially in religious matters.

She granted her protection to Tulemar, leader of a minor faction of the clergy of Hulian, and in a few years they developed a new religious doctrine in which Hulian and Hordan became a single god with two faces called the Divine Couple.

The true Smith Priests of Hulian called it heresy but the Emperor ratified the Divine Couple as the official god of the Empire and the Hulianites were forced to go into hiding. This imperial act was called the Salkarian Reformation, and it marked the start of the Imperial Age. The Salkarian Reformation also introduced a new calendar — the Reformed Salkarian Calendar, which is still used today.

After its alliance with Tricarnia, the Iron Empire experienced constant growth. It expanded toward the north, taking lands from the savage tribes of Northeim, conquering a vast area as far as the Godaxe River.

The Empire achieved this goal by using a mix of brute force and cunning politics.

Its generals often allied with certain Northlander clans against other Northlander clans and then, after eliminating the common enemies, they subdued their former allies.

Nonetheless, they never tried to enter the Caledlands. The Caleds are reclusive and very dangerous. Their naked spearmen are armed with simple bone-tipped lances but they are capable of tremendous feats of savagery, and the powers of their tattooed druids are feared even by the Tricarnian Priest Princes.

In the same period the Iron Empire also expanded eastward, beyond the Iron Mountains. On the other side, they found a temperate land populated by a race of farmers and herders living in a handful of city states. Their territories were vast and bordered only by the Drowned King Sea to the north, the Lhoban Mountains to the south and the River of Tears and Lake of Tears to the east.

The most powerful of these city states was Jalizar and its territory was named Zandor.

In only two hundred years the whole of Zandor was conquered with weapons, cunning politics and the occasional subtle use of Tricarnian black magic.

The Iron Empire reached its apogee, which continued for two hundred years.

But that age of peace was not fated to last.

## THE VALK INVASIONS

Three hundred years ago the Iron Empire saw the face of its mortal enemy: the Valk.

They came from the endless, unexplored steppes eastward of the River of Tears. The Valk were short, bowlegged men, but they were the best riders in the known world.

Their ugly ponies were sturdier even than the white thoroughbreds of Kyros, and able to travel for a whole day without tiring. Hence, the Valk were highly mobile mounted archers, not slow, heavy impact troops like the cataphracts of Syranthia.

They used stirrups and curved bows made of bone with a range unmatched in the west.

The Valk were demon worshippers led by female priestesses, the Valkyria. It seems that their invasion started because of a collective vision the Valkyria had.

In that vision, Sha-Mekri, the most ancient demon-god of the Valk, ordered them to conquer



the west. This is an unconfirmed rumor but the reality was that in ten years two million Valk had moved west from the eastern steppes.

The first to be invaded were the Cairnlords, a barbaric culture living north of the Drowned King Sea. They had long been the bitter enemies of their neighbors, the Northlanders.

The Valk displaced the Cairnlords, who were forced to invade the lands of the Northlanders. The Northlanders did the same to the Empire, which, for the first time in centuries, was forced to face an attack on its borders.

At the same time, for unknown reasons, the Caleds came out of their forests and started a ferocious guerrilla war against the Tricornian territories of the Empire showing that the former slaves still hated their ancestral masters as much as ever.

But the Empire no longer had the impressive military force it had once boasted. The Iron Phalanxes had not been used in a real war for three centuries and were but a shadow of their former selves.

They fought as best as they could, but the Empire lost most of the Northern provinces and was not able to reach Tricornia which, left alone to fight against the Caleds, declared its independence from the Empire.

Many stories are told of the Tricornian-Caled wars. Both sides used terrible sorceries and since then the woods of the Caledlands have been even darker than before. In the end the Caleds withdrew to their woods but Tricornia was wounded so deeply that, even today, most of the region is reduced to ruined shells which are inhabited only by phantoms and dark creatures.

In the meantime, the Northlanders and Cairnlords swarmed south pillaging and destroying. They reached the borders of Faberterra before the joint efforts of the Phalanxes and mercenaries coming from the south threw them back in the battle of Felantium, a few miles from the Elephant River.

But this was only the beginning of the Empire's decline.

Taking advantage of the Empire's weakness Kyros, where a new dynasty of Autarchs had seized power, declared its independence. Faberterra's central government wasn't able to react.

Fifty years later Syranthia, the economic center of the Empire, also declared its independence and was ruled by a group of rich merchant lords. However, Syranthia still officially respected the Imperial government.

Yet, the Valk invasion was to bring more terror and destruction. A hundred years later the mounted barbarians reached the plains of Zandor, the eastern part of the Iron Empire.

## DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE

At this point the Iron Empire was forced to choose: defend the northern territories from the Northlanders and Cairnlords, or use all its forces in defense of Zandor and the rich east.

It tried to save both which proved an ill-fated choice.

To stop the barbarians from taking over in the north, the Emperor created a vast area named the Borderlands including the parts of the Empire raided by Northlanders.

The Borderlands were small, independent dominions, in the hands of capable warlords allied with the Empire.

These warlords and their people were now civilized descendants of previously conquered Northlanders. Yet, they were too civilized to be real barbarians and too barbaric to be rightful citizens of the Empire.

Large parts of their territories were in the hands of the marauders and their rule was often only



theoretical. However, the Borderlanders, as they were named, had their own forces, mercenaries fighting under their banners to keep their ancestral brothers at bay.

A long, bloody war was fought, but in the end the Borderlanders managed to drive the barbarians away and a semblance of civilization appeared again in these lands.

The Iron Empire could only send a token force. Emperor Domestan XII, very young, doubtful of the Borderlanders' actual chances of winning the war, and fearing an assault from Kyros, didn't want to leave Faberterra ungarded.

Therefore, the eastern part of the Empire faced the impact of the Valk invasion alone.

In a show of disdain for the Emperor's cowardice his older brother Ornestan, Governor of the East and Prince of Jalizar, declared independence from the Iron Empire and the new kingdom of Zandor was born with the barbarians at its doorsteps.

Zandor lasted for less than twelve years.

The Valk invaders crossed the River of Tears, razed the border city of Collana and swarmed into the region.

They were led by the Valkyria and by the great warrior chief Dhaar, worshipped as the incarnation of Sha-Mekri, a man who had managed to gather under his command countless clans of the steppe.

The Valk don't conquer. They are nomads and herders: they raze, pillage and burn what they cannot carry off. The armies of Zandor, despite having been the best in the Iron Empire, could not withstand the speed and hit and run tactics of the nomads. In a few years, the Zandorian armies were forced to retreat to the cities and to protect very small areas around major centers, while the barbarians triumphed everywhere else. The Valk brought with them their unholy cult and whole villages were sacrificed to Sha-Mekri and other demons.

Centuries of civilization were wiped out in a few seasons. The ruins of razed cities soon dotted the landscape of Zandor and, despite their treasures, they were infested by Valk demons.

In truth, the Reign of Zandor ended when the armies retreated to defend their cities.

Each of them became once again a city-state standing alone against the demon-worshipping nomads.

In the end, Dhaar and his horde reached Jalizar and besieged it.

The siege went on for three years and Ornestan II, king of Jalizar and nephew of the founder of the kingdom, was ready to surrender to Dhaar when the unexpected happened: the Valk leader died.

Strange stories are told about how the mighty nomad ruler passed away and about a ship full of treasures that set sail from Jalizar to Cis, Free City of the Alchemists, and came back empty, just three days after Dhaar's death.

Whatever the cause, the death of the incarnation of Sha-Mekri had a tremendous impact on the Valk invasion. For a long period, the Valkyria went totally mad.

They babbled incoherently and many of them committed suicide or disappeared into the steppes.

Taking advantage of this situation, Dhaar's three sons started a tremendous fratricidal war to gain power over the horde.

In the end, Tukul, the eldest, went north with his followers and settled in the vast area today known as Valkheim. He died in 2482 AF, leaving Valkheim in a civil war, while the various clan chiefs each struggled to gain the upper hand over the others.

Juggu, the second brother, remained in the north of Zandor. He died from an infected arrow wound in 2471 AF.

Ekul, the youngest one, moved south and, in 2470 AF, created an independent monarchy in the city of Ekul, where he learnt western customs and became a civilized and decadent man.

So, this takes us very close to the present.



The Empire is dying, its customs are fully decadent and the barbarians are ready to quench their thirst for power from the sweet cup of civilization.

The people of the Borderlands have kept the Northlanders and Cairnlords away from the heart of the Empire so far, but their threat is ever present.

The construction of a line of forts on the Godaxe River kept the situation under control, but almost every year the Northlanders attack a fort to test the Borderlands' defenses. It is only a matter of time before one of them falls and the barbarians again swarm into the lush lands of the south.

The landscape is dotted with the ruins of ancient palaces where strange beasts and phantoms of past ages roam freely. The will of local tyrants is often the only law and, in the shadows, evil priests pray to their dark gods so that this troubled era may end and an even worse one may start.

This was the situation in 2510 AF.

## THE SWORD OF HULIAN

What happened in the following years, if you pay heed to prophets and soothsayers, was written in the book of the gods, which gave mankind three signs.

The first sign, in 2511 AF, was a widespread famine in Kyros, a land blessed by Etu herself. Suddenly the crops started faltering, due to the effects of a hot, sickening wind, coming from the Red Desert. The elephants, closed in their pens, bellowed their discomfort, while the people whispered that the reason for this curse was the Autarch of Kyros himself, the hopelessly mad Canymede II, and the dark sorcerer behind his throne, Tusal the Caldeian.

The southern cities of the Autarchate rebelled again, and this time they weren't alone: the Zakharites, a large band of wandering beggars, who had roamed Kyros for years, joined the rebellion, their ranks multiplied by the hundreds of starving farmers forced to banditry by necessity.

Today Kyros is consumed by the civil war, and nobody knows which faction, the loyalists of the Autarch, backed by Kyros City and Kenaton, or the rebels of the south, led by the King of Sulapul, a southern city, will win.

The second sign, in 2512 AF, was far worse, because nobody, even the Sages of Syranthia, remembers a similar event: one night, in Gis, a fire started in the laboratory of the First Alchemist of Gis. Multicolored flames, like the fingers of a mad giant, spread from the high towers, while sickening fumes, coming from the most dangerous Lotus concoctions and other unknown secrets, swept the city, killing or twisting whatever creature they touched, be it beast or man. The other Alchemists did their best they could to stem the fire, but after a week of fighting the eldritch fires, a good third of the city was lost, sealed by bronze doors inscribed with cabalistic symbols, to prevent





whatever lurks inside coming out. The locals have already started calling it the Forbidden Quarter of Gis, and access is forbidden.

Despite the fire and the damage, it must be full of treasures, but the few daring souls who managed to slip inside to loot and pillage, avoiding the Forbidden Quarter Guards, never came out. And, more importantly, what happened to the First Alchemist, by far the most powerful Lotusmaster and arcanist of the city?

The third sign, despite being a less catastrophic one, was ripe with consequences too.

On the night of midwinter of 2153, in the royal palace of Ekul, the old King Eku, the last living son of Dhaar, was quietly listening to his niece and sole heir, Yasmine, playing the sitar for him.

The notes were as liquid and placid as the water of a gentle river, and the music usually calmed the King's nerves, but that night Eku started screaming, as if taken by a fit.

"I see it! I see it! It comes! It comes!"

Princess Yasmine and several monks in the King's service quickly succored him, but nothing could be done: in few moments the old heart of Eku ceased beating.

And then, from the opened window, a light appeared in the sky. A red comet, like a wound in the darkness of the night.

Yasmine, now queen of Ekul, was the first to see it.

A whisper came from her shoulder, where Jin Pah, one of the oldest monks in the service of her uncle, whispered: "The Sword of Hulian has finally come!"

And covered his eyes in a sign of respect or maybe of mourning, nobody knows.

Almost at the same moment, hundreds of leagues away from Ekul, the slave Kysaros was attending the gardens of the palace of Caldeia, when the Sword of Hulian appeared in the sky.

He raised his eyes to watch it, and suddenly a window opened in the Tower of Whispers, the royal residence, one that was always closed because it was whispered to be the personal quarters of King Caldaios, who nobody had seen in many centuries.

The silhouette of a tall, gaunt figure in a long robe appeared in the window, but only for a moment: the man jumped down from the window, but, before crashing down, he transformed into an enormous black bat, which flew away northward, with strong wingbeats.

Kysaros abandoned his rake and fled into the night.

The appearance of the comet in the sky spawned fear in the Dominions: in Faberterra, and in many other countries of the Iron Empire, people rioted in panic as they thought that another Dread Star was falling, and in Tricarnia the Priest Princes were upset, because this particular astronomical event wasn't foreseen by their astrological lore or mentioned in any of their ancient books or tablets. They sacrificed young virgins and strong men by the dozen on the altars of Hordan, but they received no answer.

In the far north, in the Cairns of the Cairnlands, Ancestors dead for hundreds of years stirred in their eternal sleep, shouting words and prophecies in a forgotten tongue, while from the sewers of Jalizar, dark croaking echoes emerged, scaring the hell out of the good citizens in their beds and the thieves and assassins working in the shadows.

But probably the most important event happened in a remote monastery of Lhoban, where in the Room of the Open Sky, the Enlightened One, head of all the monks of the country was meditating, out in the cold.

When the light of the Sword of Hulian touched him, he suddenly became transparent and disappeared.

Cha-Su, his devoted Chela, a Lhobanese word for disciple, could do nothing except witness the



passage to another stage of existence of the Ninetieth Enlightened One of Lhoban, who, for the first time in history, had not chosen a successor.

This caused a great turmoil in the monk caste, which was shaken by another event: the appearance, among them, of the Blindseekers, monks of diverse philosophies, followers of both the Light and the Darkness, who lost their sight but acquired the ability to see the unseen.

Initially this was taken for another terrible omen, but then the monks discovered a prophecy hidden in a long-forgotten quipu, which said: "And when the sky shall be divided, only the Blind shall find the Light".

This fragment, even if obscure, gave a new meaning to the blind monks. If the prophecy is true, these people have been blinded for a purpose: they must look for the new Enlightened One, for they are the only ones who can recognize him, and bring him back to Lhoban.

The Sword of Hulian stayed in the sky for three entire weeks, before becoming paler and paler, and then disappearing into the black depths of sky, but after its demise, some very important events happened in the Dominions.

Somehow, the rumor spread in Caldeia that King Caldaios the Cruel had abandoned the kingdom, and, while this brought some turmoil in the nobility and the priesthood, it had an even greater effect on the ancestral enemies of Caldeia: the Savannah tribes, which for years had been a source of slaves for the Caldeian flesh merchants.

The White King, the ruler of the tribes, ordered the war drums to sound, gathering warriors all across the plains. Then, he led them across the borders of Caldeia, destroying the Khav plantations, freeing the slaves and burning the fields. He isn't alone in his efforts: at his side there is a mysterious one-handed woman, her left hand charred by fire, who preaches freedom for the slaves. She is called Tosara, but this is probably more a nickname than her real identity.

The retaliation of Caldeia was immediate. The armies of the Cruel, some of the best in the known world, traded blow for blow, and the war is becoming a long conflict of attrition. Mercenaries from all the Dominions are going south to take Caldeian gold to fight in the War of the Chain, as it is called, but it will be a very long, and bloody, conflict.

In the meantime, another great threat rose up in Tricarnia. A month after the passage of the Sword of Hulian, a hot wind blew from the fetid swamps in the heart of the decadent kingdom. It brought with it the seeds of the worst malady ever known in the Land of the Sons of Keron: the Red Plague, a terrible sickness which twists the minds and the bodies of persons and beasts, making them puppets of decaying flesh, without any thought except killing.

The Priest Princes are doing their best to stem the plague, but a good half of Tricarnia is now swept by bands and armies of those infected by the Red Plague, and some of them have even managed to invade the Borderlands.

In all this darkness, a single flicker of hope came from Faberterra: Telara, the young wife of Emperor Domestan, finally gave him heirs to the dynasty, despite her husband being seventy-five years old. In the summer she bore twins, Arestos and Vanestan, strong and blonde, granting some stability to the Empire.

But this happy event was shadowed by a troubling rumor, brought to court by a Jalizaran envoy: it seemed that the clans of Valkheim had finally found a leader unifying them, a man called Deserjaas. The few who have heard of him say he isn't a warrior, but a powerful sorcerer, come out from the steppes.

The Valkyria worship him as the new Dhaar, and even the Zandorian clans bow in front of him, because he has sworn to destroy the Dominions of the west once and for all, and burn Faberterra for his demon-god, Sha-Mekri.

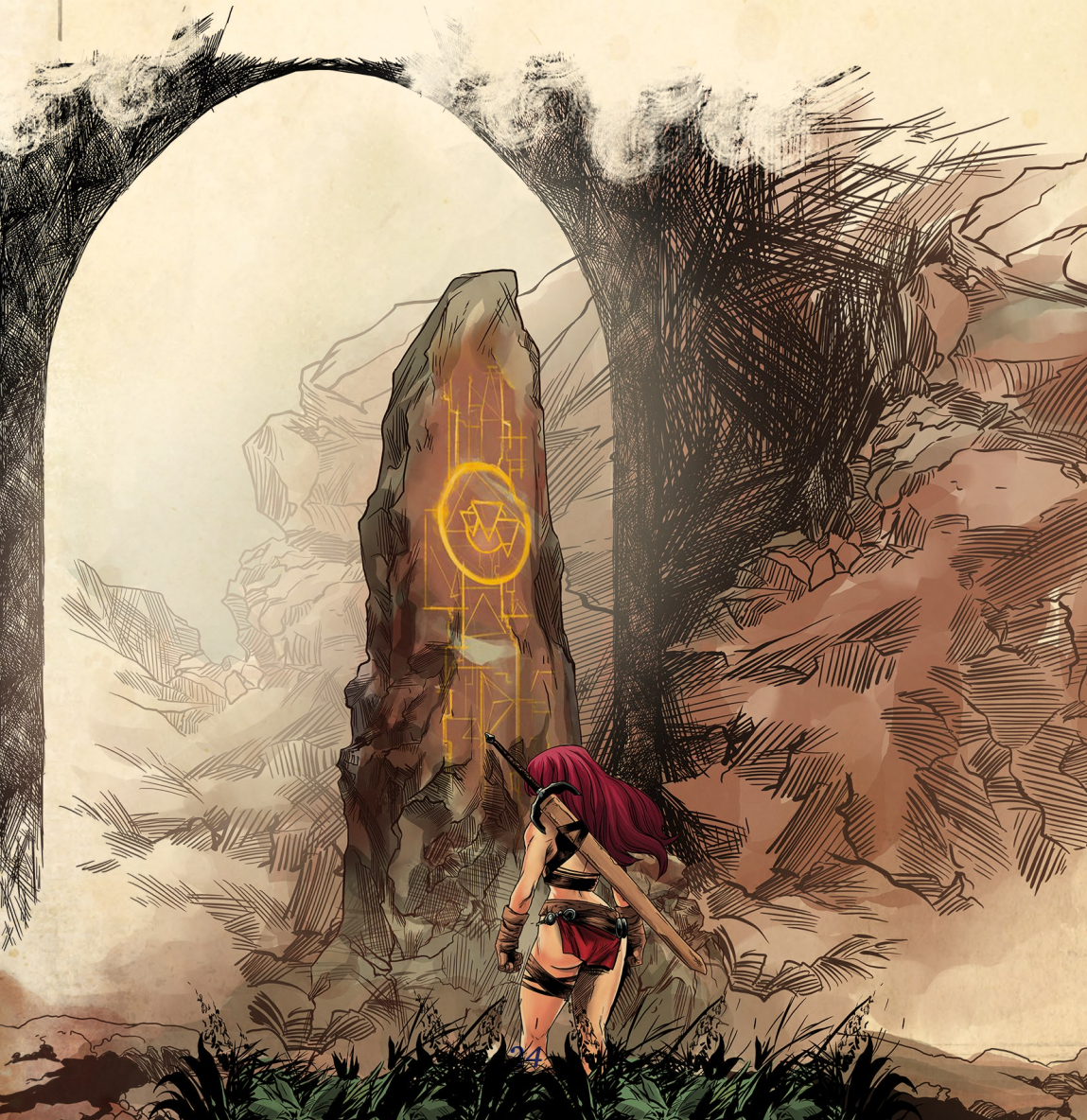


Emperor Domestan, on his throne, shivered hearing these words.

## TODAY...

Today is 2515 AF.

This is the era of *Beasts & Barbarians*. Note that this isn't the full history of the world, a great number of events are left out and many lands of minor importance in the Empire's history aren't even mentioned. Further information on the history of the Dread Sea Dominions will be available in the Gazetteer Chapter and in the Book of Lore, part of the series' future installments.





# TIMELINE

Every civilization refers to a different calendar to date historical events but, for ease of use, the Reformed Salkarian Calendar is adopted in this manual. It calculates all dates starting from the presumed year in which the Dread Star fell (AF = After Fall, BF = Before Fall).

## HERO'S JOURNAL: ABOUT THE SALKARIAN CALENDAR

One of the first acts of Empress Salkaria of Tricarnia was to reform the imperial calendar, adopting a new one as part of the creation of the cult of Divine Couple.

This calendar is cyclical, composed of fourteen years, each of them dedicated to a specific animal or fantastical creature. The Smith Priests of Hulian opposed this calendar from the beginning, because fourteen is the holy number of Hordan (whose secret name is made of fourteen syllables). According to the holy men, in this manner Salkaria put a powerful, subtle spell upon the Empire, this being the reason for its fall. For this reason, the Smiths of Hulian continue secretly to calculate years using the Hulian calendar, which is very different, and moon-based.

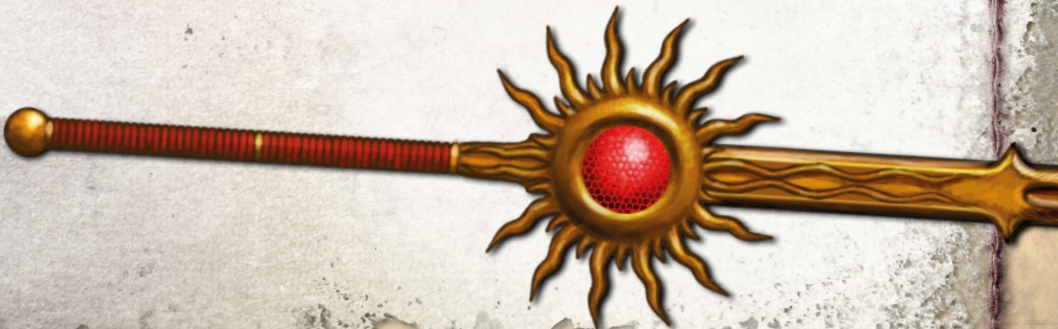
Below you'll find the fourteen creatures to which the Salkarian Calendar is dedicated. 2515, the actual year is the Year of the Fire Chariot.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sun Daughter
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Black Wanderer
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Fire Chariot
- 4<sup>th</sup> Night Elephant
- 5<sup>th</sup> Blind Owl
- 6<sup>th</sup> Snake Mother
- 7<sup>th</sup> Chimaera
- 8<sup>th</sup> Weeping Maiden
- 9<sup>th</sup> Bleeding Boar
- 10<sup>th</sup> Fustigator
- 11<sup>th</sup> Ice Comet
- 12<sup>th</sup> Burning Phoenix
- 13<sup>th</sup> Tree of Death
- 14<sup>th</sup> Roaring Tiger



## PLAYER'S GUIDE

3000 BF	Apogee of the Keronian Empire
0	AF Fall of the Dread Star. End of the Keronian Empire.
600-700	The dust of the Dread Star starts to dissipate.
600-610	Surviving Keronian Princes found the Tricarnian realm in the north.
700-800	Migration Era: the Caleds and Pygmies go to the forests. The white man occupies the shores of the Dread Sea.
997	The Great Library of Syranthia is discovered.
1000	Foundation of Faberterra.
1000-1300	War of the city states around the Dread Sea.
1224	Fabron, of Hulian, discovers iron.
1300	The Iron Confederacy is created.
1397	Syranthia is annexed by the Iron Confederacy.
1525-1526	First Faberterra-Kyros war.
1528-1529	First Faberterra-Tricarnia war.
1528	Ascaian rebellion. Foundation of the Amazon Realm.
1532	Domestan becomes Masterarkos of the Iron Confederacy.
1535-1538	Second Faberterra-Kyros war.
1540	Kyros is annexed by the Iron Confederacy. End of the Confederacy and creation of the Iron Empire. Domestan I crowned Emperor.
1545-1550	Second Faberterra-Tricarnia war.
1551	Tricarnia capitulates and is annexed by the Empire. Princess Salkaria of Tricarnia marries Emperor Domestan I.
1560	Salkarian Reformation. Legitimate priests of Hulian go into hiding.
1562	Death of Domestan I. Domestan II, his son, takes the crown.
1570-1650	The Iron Empire expands to the north, conquering various barbarian tribes.
1660-1860	The Iron Empire expands eastward. Conquest of Zandor.
2060-2300	Apogee of the Empire. An era of peace. Reductions in the Iron Phalanxes.
2327	Start of the Valk invasion. Cairnlands invaded.
2330	The Valk push the Cairnlanders west of the Gold River.
2332-2350	Northlanders and Cairnlanders, fleeing the Valk, attack the Iron Empire.
2333-2340	Caled-Tricarnian war.
2334	Numerous Caled war bands attack Tricarnia.





- 2335 Tricarnia declares independence from the Iron Empire.
- 2350 Battle of Felantium. Iron Empire armies stop the Northlanders a few miles south of the Elephant River.
- 2355 Emperor Domestan X founds the Borderlands.
- 2370 Restoration of the Autarchate in Kyros. Kyros secedes from the Iron Empire.
- 2420 Syranthia peacefully detaches from the Iron Empire.
- 2425 In the Valk Steppes, Dhaar, son of a minor Valk war chief, is born.
- 2450 The greatest Valk horde in history, led by Dhaar, crosses the River of Tears, attacking Collana. The invasion of Zandor begins.
- 2451 Ornestan, Governor of Zandor, asks the Iron Empire for support. Domestan XII, the Cautious, refuses it. Zandor faces the invasion alone.
- 2452 Ornestan declares the independence of Zandor from the Empire. Start of the Twelve Winters' Reign.
- 2464 Zandor fights the Valk on its own soil, but the Zandorian armies are divided and slowly driven back year after year.
- 2464-2467 Siege of Jalizar. Ornestan II is King of Zandor.
- 2467 Death of Dhaar. The Valk horde shatters.
- 2470 Tukul, first son of Dhaar, founds Valkheim.
- 2470 Juggu, second son of Dhaar, dies. The Valk clans in Zandor are independent.
- 2471 Eku, third son of Dhaar, marries Yasmine of Ekul. Foundation of the kingdom of Ekul.
- 2482 Tukul, first son of Dhaar, dies. Civil war in Valkheim as many clans fight for power.
- 2511 Famine and civil war in Kyros.
- 2512 Fire of Gis.
- 2513 The Sword of Hulian crosses the skies.
- 2513 Eku, King of Ekul, last living son of Dhaar, dies. Yasmine, niece of the dead King, is Queen of Ekul.
- 2513 The Enlightened One of Lhoban disappears, King Caldaios leaves Caldeia for an unknown destination.
- 2514 War of the Chain starts in Caldeia.
- 2514 Red Plague sweeps Tricarnia.
- 2514 Empress Telara bears heirs to the Empire: Arestos and Vanestan.
- 2514 Valk of Valkheim unified by a new warlord, Deserjaas.
- 2515 Today.



# CULTURES

## AMAZONS

Amazons are a relatively young culture: Ascaia, which is an island, rebelled and gained independence from the Iron Empire in 1536 AF, killing or expelling all males from the island.

From that day, apart from slaves bought for mating purposes, very few men have set foot on the holy land of Ascaia.

Given their peculiar mating habits (they take men, usually captives, of any race for those purposes), Amazons tend to vary a lot in appearance, with skin and hair of many colors, but several centuries of war and natural selection have made them generally tall and muscular, and many of them have a fierce stare, which few men can stand.

Giving birth is a crucial event in the life of many Amazons: if the baby is male, he is immediately taken away from the mother and sent to foster families on the mainland, whose identity is kept secret, while females remain with the mother and eventually join the Amazons.

Normal families don't exist in Ascaia and children are educated in public schools, not seeing their mothers much, but blood bonds, especially between sisters, are very strong and encouraged. For obvious reasons, same-sex marriage is also quite common.

Being a martial culture of warriors and mariners, much of their education concerns weapons and seafaring, arts in which they excel.

In truth probably not all Amazons are as warlike as they are painted, but they constantly try to project an image of strength and fierceness toward the external world to discourage attacks, which have periodically happened throughout their history, though always repelled.

Amazon clothes, during day-to-day activities, tend to be practical and sturdy, made for war more than looks, reserving dresses and gowns for the young, elderly, and important figures like the Queens, or for very special occasions.

Amazon names come from a number of cultures, but they tend to have an Imperial sound: one of the rights a new Amazon has, after swearing fealty to Ascaia, is changing her name, and many of them, especially those who have made a long and dangerous trip to reach the holy land of Ascaia, decide to take a new one.

Typical Amazon names are Andorra, Eptra, Calla, Kystera, Remitia, Talyria, Vella, Zanarra. Some of them, though not many, use a matronymic (like Zandorra, daughter of Thara).





## AMAZONS' CODE OF HONOR

Amazon characters have the Code of Honor (Amazons) Hindrance. The principles of the Code are as follows:

- ❖ You are free. No man will ever chain you.
- ❖ No man will defend you. You have your wits, your strength and your sword. You will defend yourself.
- ❖ Aid women whenever you can, but a woman must first help herself.
- ❖ Ascaia is your holy land, your mother and your refuge. You will give your life to protect it.
- ❖ Any woman can ask you to be taken to Ascaia and join the Amazons. Accepting or refusing her is not your task. You must bring her to the Sister Queens.

## OTHER AMAZON CULTURES

Sword and Sorcery worlds are very male-centered and women are usually only seen as prizes for the winners or objects of pleasure. An Amazon can be an interesting character to play.

Ascaia's Amazons are the most famous, but they certainly aren't the only group of independent females in the Dread Sea Dominions. The Valkyria are another famous example and in barbarian lands it could be that a woman takes up her father's sword and shows the world what a heroine is made of.

## THE AMAZONS OF SHAKARA

There are rumors that in the depths of the Ivory Savannah there is a tribe of black-skinned warrior women, who dwell in an ancient city made of gold and alabaster, and live free from the will of any man. Wild tales circulate about them: some say they ride powerful lions in battle, while other rumors are about the goddess they serve, the mythical Ascaia. Is it coincidence this name is the same as the holy island of the Amazons?

## IVORY SAVANNAH TRIBES

'Ivory Savannah Tribes' is a collective name used by the Imperials to refer to all the populations living south of Kyros, from the actual Savannah nomads to the farmers of the Verdant Belt and even the feared Cannibals of the Cannibal Islands. There are great differences among them but they all have black skin. They tend to be of average height and build and quite strong, but these aren't universal features. Many Savannah nomads are as tall as the Northlanders while some of Verdant Belt dwellers, due to occasional interbreeding with Pygmies, are quite short.

The Savannah people have well-proportioned bodies and their women especially are very attractive. A common saying claims that a Savannah tribe dancer can melt the heart of a man with the beauty of her dance and make him die on the spot, if she wants to. Sadly, their physical qualities and their lack of technology have made them much appreciated as slaves. Caldecia, in particular, a minor state ruled by white men in the south, has an economy based on capturing and selling Savannah slaves to foreign lands, while Kyros often launches slave raids into the Ivory Savannah. The Ivory Savannah Tribes have no common cultural identity and fierce rivalries exist between different tribes. This is definitely an advantage for slave traders. They don't even need to fight for slaves, they simply buy prisoners of war sold by rival tribes in exchange for cheap weapons. This practice has been going on for centuries.



Ivory Savannah Tribesmen and women wear pelts and simple wool clothes. They like bright colors, like red and yellow, and are particularly fond of feathers and strange headgear. Women are usually bare-breasted.

Typical Ivory Savannah Tribes names are short and contain many labials.

For example: Eba, Utu, Ushul, Ngoba, Talindi, Malima.

## CAIRNLORDS

Cairnlords or Cairnlanders are tall and muscular, with grayish skin and usually black or gray hair. They are a truly remarkable —and slightly disgusting— race because, well, they are tomb dwellers.

Their land was once a powerful empire, even more ancient than the Keronian Empire, but even its name is forgotten today. The only remnants of that distant past are the massive Cairns, artificial hills containing the tombs of the so-called Ancestors.

Some of the Cairns are so large that they can be considered true necropolises. The Cairnlanders inhabit them, sleeping, eating, mating and generally living side by side with their ancient dead. They also bury their relatives in the Cairns, so the Ancestors' numbers are always growing.

For a Cairnlander the difference between life and death isn't that big, or that important. He sees them as two only slightly different states of existence.

Even after death, he continues to stay with his family, and his skull may become a relative's favorite pot, his femur a war club or some other useful tool. They are convinced that the spirits of the Ancestors speak to them, directing and protecting their lives. Controlling a large Cairn grants great

power, not only because of the ancient treasures buried within (the Cairnlanders' metalworking techniques are primitive and almost all their metal comes from the Cairns), but also because of the protection granted by the newly-acquired Ancestors.

The kingdom of the Ancestors was once so vast that some Cairns are within the boundaries of the Northlanders' territories and even the Iron Empire.

However, this does not stop enemy Cairnlords from fighting savagely to gain control of the major Cairns, near or far though they might be.

The Cairnlanders are organized in clans, each ruled by a chief or a king. They live by hunting, herding, very primitive agriculture, and pillaging.





They usually wear pelts and ancient rags or armors they have found in their Cairns. Almost all of them also wear an amulet or some other object belonging to an Ancestor, in the belief that it will grant protection.

Moreover, they tend to have self-imposed names, more like nicknames than standard, civilized names.

Some examples are Whispering Ears, Goatspaw, Brokensword, Seven He Killed, Bride of the Dead One, Skeletal Horse, etc.

## IMPERIALS

The Imperials are the broadest and, therefore, most difficult civilization to define within the Dread Sea Dominions. The name applies to all the civilized populations once under the rule of the Iron Empire.

The typical Imperial, living in Faberterra, Syranthia, or northern Kyros, is of average build and has tanned skin. Manual workers and farmers tend to have a darker complexion, while aristocrats and merchants are fairer, but this is only due to the different lives they lead.

Their hair can be of any color, but brown is the most common, and they usually have dark eyes. Depending on their status and wealth, they may have a well-tended beard and mustache but the military always shave, a tradition derived from health regulations imposed on the Iron Phalanxes centuries ago.

They wear long and short tunics, sandals and cloaks made of wool, cotton, or, in the hotter lands, of imported Tricornian silk. Imperials tend to be sophisticated and civilized.

They shun many other races which they see, sometimes with good reason, as barbarians. Centuries of conquest and the accumulation of riches have made them fat, arrogant and with a passion for pleasures, an aspect of their culture mostly deriving from their contacts with the Tricornians.

However, they can be dangerous enemies.

Civilized people tend to be schemers and plotters and a concealed dagger can be more dangerous than an openly shown barbarian axe. On the bright side, Imperials are cosmopolitan, quite tolerant of other cultures and religions, generally curious about the world, and open to new ideas.

The current ruling system of the Empire is an absolute monarchy but the Emperor is far away, in Faberterra, so the various parts of the Empire are ruled by governors. In addition to this, with the progressive decadence of the Empire, many Imperial lands have become independent and have reverted to their previous forms of government, monarchy, oligarchy and, in some cases, democracy.

Imperial names generally include a first name and a patronymic or family name, such as Tellario Voleskos, Domitio Antiokan, Marika Eleucorikos, Irenya Berenantios, etc.

## HERO'S JOURNAL: CAIRNLANDERS' TALISMANS

The Cairnlanders are very superstitious, and most of them always carry a relic of their Ancestors. It might be a piece of bone, a tooth, or an amulet and its function is to protect the wearer. If the Game Master agrees, a Cairlander character selecting Edges for Novice Rank can choose a single Edge ignoring one Trait requirement. This Edge is linked to the Ancestor's relic and works only if the hero has his Ancestor's relic with him.

## JADEMEN

Jademen are of average build and tend to be quite small, though not as small as the Valk. They have pale yellow or jade green skin, black hair, and almond-shaped eyes.



Their ancestral home is Lhoban, a bleak territory of tall mountains — the highest peaks in the known world — so cold that only a few animals, like yaks, can live there.

For this reason, the Jademen usually dress in wool garments. Weaving is very important in their culture, and wool cloth from Lhoban is among the finest and most finely decorated in the world. They have very little facial hair, and sporting a beard is always seen as a sign of maturity and wisdom.

Lhoban is a particular form of theocracy ruled by monks. Their leader, the Enlightened One, is a sort of semi-divine figure who provides spiritual guidance to the whole kingdom from his secluded monastery in the City of Clouds, while a dynasty of merchant princes rules over Lhobanport, the major city of the land, trade center and doorway to the West. The relationship between the two powers has never been very easy.

The lesser monks travel the land and ensure that the will of the Enlightened One is carried out. The Jademen aren't religious in a traditional way; their philosophy is based on the concept of perpetual reincarnation and progressive improvement toward final Enlightenment. This doesn't mean they don't believe in the supernatural — in fact, the opposite is true. The Lhoban monks are aware of the supernatural threats looming over the world of men — demons, alien gods, and so on — and one of the tenets of their philosophy is fighting against these abominations. In particular, they have been fighting a long war in the Land of the Idols (see SEGM).

Due to Lhoban's harsh environment, many Jademen left and established large communities in the Dread Sea Dominions, principally in Ekul, Kyros and Gis, the City of the Alchemists. The Jademen are very polite and respectful, even ceremonious, but this must not be mistaken for cowardice. They can be deadly warriors, and many of them are trained in exotic fighting techniques unknown in the rest of the Empire.

Their names have a Tibetan flavor, such as Akar, Amrita, Dhargey, Gu Lang, Jimpa, Lasya, Sangmu.

## JALIZARANS

The City of Thieves is a multicultural place, where men of very different races trade, cheat, bargain, and generally live side by side. Let's be honest: there is probably no such thing as a true Jalizaran. The City of Thieves is a melting pot of so many different races and cultures mixed and mingled together that a "true Jalizaran" is very difficult to identify. The original Jalizarans are an archaic mix of Zandorians and Cairnlanders. Of average height, they tend to have black or brown hair, hazel eyes and very fair complexions, which redden very quickly when they quarrel or are out in the cold. Although oral hygiene is unknown in the Dread Sea Dominions, true Jalizarans tend to have very white teeth (having a perfect set of teeth is a sign of great luck among them). Many have a tendency to put on weight as they grow older, but this is probably the effect of their diet rather than a general physical feature.

They are fond of capes, cloaks and similar garments, which are a sign of social importance in their culture. Many of them are also quite chatty, the origin of the northlander insult: "You are mouthier than a Jalizaran whore".

Typical Jalizaran names are a mix of Imperial and Zandorian ones. They tend to be euphonic and with a distinctive sound (as in Sebajos, Jall, Emella, Torran, Vandaio, Renya, Furius) or to have a double vowel (as in Vaaro, Taaso, Mecna).



## HEROES' JOURNAL: RELATIVES' DICE

The dwellers of the City of Thieves do not fear the dead, at least not their dead relatives, and often consult priests to communicate with them. It is believed that, from their otherworldly home, the deceased can bestow great luck on the living, helping them to find hidden treasures, establish the right connections, and so on. One of the most peculiar customs of the Jalizarans, which confirms their Cairnlander origins, is the habit of crafting Relatives' Dice. Two teeth are removed from the body of a deceased relative and used to craft a set of gambling dice, which are believed to bring great luck to their rightful owner. In game terms, any Jalizaran character can start the game with a set of Relatives' Dice by renouncing 1 skill point. Once per adventure, the character can decide to throw the dice (2d6) to call upon his relatives. Check the table below for the effects. Only one set of Relatives' Dice can be used by a character at any given time and he must be their rightful owner (i.e. he must be related to the dead person). If they are lost, they cannot be replaced, but a new set can be made using the teeth of another deceased relative, which requires a Common Knowledge or Repair (+2) roll, and the corpse of a relative, of course.

### RELATIVE'S DICE TABLE

DICE RESULT	EFFECT
2	<b>Angry Relative.</b> Bad luck! For the remainder of the session, the hero cannot spend Bennies when he rolls a critical failure.
3-4	<b>Insufficient Prayers.</b> The character forgot to make the proper offerings for his relative's soul. He must discard any Joker and cannot use Wild Card Edges unless he visits a temple and spends 10 Moons/Rank on candles, prayers, and so on.
5-6	<b>Better to Stay in Bed Today.</b> This is not the right time to play with Lady Luck. The character receives -2 to Gambling rolls or a member of the opposite sex will act as the hero's Enemy (GM's choice). These effects last for the remainder of the session.
7	<b>Busy Relative.</b> The dead relative is carousing with the other dead, or doing other things dead people do, so he has no time for the hero.
8-9	<b>Lucky Day.</b> For the remainder of the session the hero receives +2 to Gambling rolls or he gains a free use of the Connections edge with a member of the opposite sex who has a crush on him (GM's choice).
10-11	<b>Ancestors' Blessing!</b> The ancestor is watching over the hero, protecting him. The character receives a free use of the Danger Sense Edge or a free Soak roll (GM's choice).
12	<b>You Are My Son!</b> The ancestor is very fond of the hero today. One of the hero's Traits is raised by one die step (player's choice) for the rest of the session, as per the <i>boost trait</i> Power.

## NORTHLANDERS

The Northlanders are by far the largest and toughest people in the Dread Sea Dominions.

Many of them are taller than seven feet and strong enough to wrestle an ox barchanded. Both men and women wear their hair long, and married women usually plait it.

Men tend to have long beards but, especially among the southern tribes, they shave, mainly to tell their brothers from their enemies in battle. They dress primarily in furs and roughly-woven wool clothes. The men often walk around bare-chested, even during cold winters, because this is seen as



a sign of strength, while women are dressed in a more traditional way with a long gown.

The Northlanders are fascinated by metal.

They are just starting to learn the art of smelting iron and blacksmiths are held in high esteem. They are proud, stubborn and bold, but they fear and loathe the supernatural.

Their world view is plain and simple: the strong prevail over the weak, as the wolf over the deer, and there is nothing strange about it. The world of nature works like that, just like that of men. They are organized in large families or clans, usually led by the oldest male members, and they live by hunting and foraging.

Quarrels and feuds with neighbors are fairly common and often end in bloodshed. The Northlanders are very individualistic, and only a few times in their history has a charismatic leader managed to unite them under one banner; usually to fight a major threat, like a Cairnlander attack or an Imperial invasion.

Typical Northlander names are short and sharp-sounding, as Shangor, Torm, Uma, Verrik, Corn, Targar, Beren. They don't use patronymics, except in very official situations. For a Northlander it is a man's sword, not his father, which makes him important.

## RED DESERT NOMADS

Nomads of the Red Desert tend to have brown skin, with black hair and eyes, although blue eyes aren't uncommon. They are quite tall, with the southern clans usually a little taller than the others, probably due to occasional mating with the neighboring Ivory Savannah Tribes. Tattoos of various types, often with a religious meaning, are common among them. Many have a stylized sun tattooed on their forehead, to pay homage to the Sun God, or blue tattoos on their cheeks to ensure the benevolence of the Water Lady.

They wear long robes made of wool, with deep hoods that protect them from the sun, and leather slippers. Women dress in wool clothes too, but their garments are finer, since having a well-dressed wife is a sign of prestige for a man. The color of the robes is very important, because it identifies the clan an individual belongs to. Hence, there are Brown Nomads, Green Nomads, and Red Nomads; there are stories about the deranged Black Nomads of Keron, but they are considered a separate race.

Despite the men's apparent open-mindedness towards them, women have a very low position in nomad society. They are supposed to obey their fathers and then their husbands without question. Nevertheless, women are vital to the nomads' economy. They weave, gather goat droppings, look for food, cook, and do a thousand other little chores that men are too proud to do. So, having a good wife is very important. A man can achieve marriage in two ways, either by buying a woman from her father, if she belongs to the same clan, or by kidnapping her, if she belongs to a different clan.

Desert nomads are usually suspicious of strangers, but, once you gain their trust, they can become very hospitable and life-long friends, who would die for you. At the same time, they are easily offended and very vindictive.

Nomads are a warlike people and the desert is a dangerous place. So, the men are armed with a bow, a curved dagger named a Kullah, and a short curved sword, made of bronze. In war, they also use shields and spears, though armor is quite rare, due to the climate. The nomads are skilled archers (though they are no match for the Valk), but they prefer close combat. The nomad war leaders' tactic is to shoot at enemies from a distance with bows, and then charge on horseback. They fight from the saddle, but they don't use stirrups. This can be a winning tactic if the opponent is another nomad tribe or a poorly defended caravan, but it usually leads to heavy losses against the tough infantry of the Independent Cities, equipped with armor, shields, and long spears.



Typical Nomad names have an Arabian flavor, like Yussuf, Ahmed, Semir, Kharela, Aisha, Nahenia, Kadir. They use patronymics and clan names, like Semir son of Nabar, of the Two Hunches clan, but only on official occasions.

## TRICARNIANS

Tricornia is inhabited by two different races: High Tricornians – who are nobles, priests, top military personnel, merchants, and so on – and slaves, who form the bulk of the nation. Tricornian slaves are a mix of other races, captured in raids or bought from pirates and slave traders in Caldeia, Kyros or the Independent Cities.

High Tricornians aren't fully human, because the blood of the old Keronians runs in their veins. They are mostly very tall and slender, with pale or rarely jet-black complexion. They have very smooth skin and no body hair, a feature which other cultures find a little repulsive. Despite this, many of them are very beautiful, with elongated and sharp features. Some say that the High Tricornians have found a way to extend their lives beyond those of other races, but no evidence has ever been found to confirm this rumor.

They usually wear long, elaborate garments of silk, a fairly ordinary commodity in Tricornia, since it is produced in the local silkworm farms, a relic from the region's Keronian past. In battle they used to wear exquisite armor made of bronze, now replaced by iron, and pointed helms.

Tricornians tend to be cruel, a natural instinct to them, like that of a cat torturing a mouse.

They consider other races inferior, worth using only as slaves, as victims on the altars of their alien gods, or as guinea pigs in gruesome experiments. They brought decadence to the Iron Empire, but the worst vices of the dissolute Imperial nobles or merchants appear quite ridiculous if compared to what happens daily in the citadel of a Priest Prince of Tricornia.

The other two distinctive traits of this civilization are slavery and sorcery.

As mentioned earlier, the whole economy of Tricornia is based on slavery. Being only a fraction of the total population, the High Tricornians alone cannot keep the masses of slaves under control, so various levels of slavery exist. The most unfortunate are the humble rice field workers, the slave miners, and the leech catchers (the medicinal use of leeches is a common practice among High Tricornians).

Just above them are the slave warriors and guards, who live in better conditions. They control their inferiors and are the bulk of the army. At the top of the slaves' social ladder are the eunuchs, a caste of castrated men who are the elite warriors and administrators. Sorcery is common. Almost all pure-blooded Tricornians have some knowledge of sorcery, which is necessary to survive the scheming and plotting of their peers, each eager to enhance their power and social standing.

Various forms of sorcery are practiced, but corrupting magic and the evocation of dark creatures are the most widespread. Lotusmastery and drug use in general are common and encouraged, also among





## HERO'S JOURNAL: CALEDS AND PYGMIES

These races are reclusive and xenophobic, so they are not a good choice as player characters. In addition, very little is known about them except for some rumors reported below. Caleds are a primitive people living in the Caledland. They know nothing of metalworking, but among them there are very dangerous sorcerers, called druids. They rarely leave their woodlands and, when this happens, it is usually bad news, since they are waging war against someone. Pygmies are the very short people of the Lush Jungles. They are primitive, and very skilled in the use of blowpipes and poisons. They worship cruel gods that periodically ask for bloody sacrifices of human victims, usually chosen from among non-Pygmey invaders. The players will discover more information about these races during their adventures.

the slaves. The reason is obvious: a drugged slave is easier to control. Tricarnia is divided into Principalities, each of them totally independent and governed by a single noble family. Scheming, plotting and open warfare among the Princes are common.

The capital of Tricarnia, the City of Princes, is considered neutral ground, and no open act of war can be committed there. It is also the seat of the High Prince, the ruler of Tricarnia. Tricarnians deeply hate (and secretly fear) the Caleds, the descendants of their ancient slaves, who still seek revenge for thousands of years spent in slavery.

Typical high Tricarnian names have an ancient ring to them and are always preceded by titles, like Princess Salkaria, Prince Hoolon, Priest Tokariel, and so on. Omitting the title when addressing a Tricarnian noble is considered a mortal insult, except among family members.

## VALK

Valk are the shortest of the common races, with the exception of the Pygmies. Most are slightly over five feet tall and a Valk surpassing six feet is considered a giant. They have black or brown hair, with the exception of the Valkyria, their priestesses, who always have white or blonde hair (usually dyed). The warriors have long braids, and cut them only in case of dishonor. The longer the braid the more powerful and brave the warrior.

They have little or no beard, because one of their rites of passage, the Blood Offering, consists of self-inflicted wounds to the cheeks, preventing the growth of facial hair.

Valk dress in leather and both sexes use trousers and boots, the most practical garments for a race of horse riders. They learn to ride even before being able to walk and are incredibly skilled on their ponies. The basis of the Valk economy, in times of peace, is herding sheep, cows, goats and (naturally) horses. Horse milk and goat meat are their staples and they are particularly fond of fermented milk spirits, which all the other races find disgusting.

They are organized in clans, led by warlords, who share power with the Valkyria. Except for the priestesses, who are respected and feared, Valk women have a very low standing in society, so much so that marriage is rare and a warrior simply keeps in his tent the women he wants, in a condition of semi-slavery. Only after the birth of a son does the father become responsible for supporting the woman.

Valk religion deeply influences their way of life. They are demon worshippers and see demons in many manifestations of the natural world, such as thunder, the steppe winds, and the terrible plagues that often decimate the cattle and bring famine onto the clans. They don't fear demons, at least not openly, but recognize and respect their supernatural powers. Valk names are throaty and with many consonants: Dhaar, Khull, Dakka, Rigga, Throgg, Vulkat are all good examples.



# WAY OF LIFE

## TECHNOLOGY

Unlike other fantasy worlds, the Dread Sea Dominions aren't static. In a few thousand years, they have evolved from the Stone Age to the current Iron Age. Yet, this isn't true for all the Dominions, since certain populations (like the Caleds, the Pygmies and the tribes of the Ivory Savannah) are still primitive. It is hardly possible to provide a comprehensive description of all the technologies of a world, so the following list covers only the major scientific achievements of the Dread Sea Dominions.

**Alchemy:** This field overlaps with that of magic. The Lotusmasters (see sidebar on page 15) are experts in making drugs and poisons, but only from Lotus plants. The Alchemists of Cis, instead, are true scientists and know how to use Greek fire, acids, and similar things. Their concoctions are very costly and seldom sold outside the city. Kyros, Syranthia and the Independent Cities know how to make glass.

**Currency:** Coins made of metal are used in civilized lands, but their value is determined by the trading value of salt. Barter is widespread in the remote, uncivilized areas along the borders of the Empire. The Empire adopted the Syranthian Moon as its official currency, and this roughly circular coin is now common in all the ports and markets of the Dominions.

**Entertainment:** Since literacy is rare, minstrels, musicians and tale-tellers are very important as they are actors and mimes. Especially in the southern lands, dancing is a very common form of recreation. Many enjoy the "blood sports", originally from Tricarnia: shows in the arena where gladiators slaughter (or are slaughtered by) massive beasts and other desperate warriors. These violent games are enjoyed by both the nobility and the commoners alike, especially in big cities where the games in the arena and the distribution of free food keep the masses at bay and ease the burden of living in a decadent Empire.

**Food Production:** Agriculture is the main source of food in the Empire but outside its boundaries (and in the most depressed areas, like the Borderlands) hunting and harvesting are by far the most common way of surviving. In the Savannah and among the Valk herding is widespread. In the past, several populations knew how to use the iron plow but, in the current age, few have retained this skill, since iron must be used for weapons and armor, not for farming. Crop rotation is still unknown.

**Ground Travel:** Most folks travel on foot, while the rich have horses or carriages. Many paved roads, named Imperial Roads, were built in the past but today they are generally abandoned and infested by bandits. The Valk always ride; a Valk that cannot ride is abandoned and left to die by the rest of his tribe. The Cairnlords also use carriages, sometimes pulled by rams, and the top warriors of the Iron Savannah ride the impressive and savage war buffalos.

**Government:** The most advanced form of government is the oligarchy of the merchant lords of Syranthia, but various forms of monarchy are the standard government in most lands.

**Literacy:** Ninety percent of the population cannot read or write. The most educated lands are Syranthia, Tricarnia (where literacy is limited to the nobles), Caldeia, Faberterra, Kyros and Lhoban (where literacy is limited to the monks).

**Medicine:** Outside the largest cities, witchcraft, superstition and midwifery are the closest things to medical science while in the cities there are medics and barbers. Syranthia also has an academy of medicine where the anatomy of man is studied. Anatomy is also well known in Tricarnia due to the traditional use of torture.

**Metallurgy:** At the height of its power, the Empire and all its subjects knew the use of iron and had even started experimenting with a better, lower-carbon alloy called steel but today that is very rare. The barbaric Northlanders, Cairn Lords, and the Savannah Tribes know only bronze, but they



can acquire better metal weapons through trading and pillaging. The Caleds and the Pygmies don't use any metal.

**Sea Travel:** The ships of the Dominions are quite primitive and usually sail close to the coast. The biggest vessels are the Tricarnian galleys but the most maneuverable are the Syranthian merchant ships, which can be seen in all parts of the world. The Amazons too are very skilled sailors, and they use a particular type of sail unknown to other cultures.

**Warfare:** Nowadays, the strongest warriors are Valk mounted archers with armor of boiled leather, composite bone bows and saddles with stirrups. Second best are the fully-armored Syranthian cataphracts, and in third place is the irregular barbarian infantry. The terrible war elephants of Kyros have almost disappeared today and the Iron Phalanxes are reduced to less than ten legions.

## HERO'S JOURNAL: LANGUAGES OF THE DREAD SEA DOMINIONS

The common language spoken almost everywhere is Imperial Syranthian.

Almost all lands have a national language and dozens of dialects, but very few are recorded in writing. The major languages of the Dominions are:

**Alchemists' Code.** The Alchemists of Gis developed this strange language, in truth more of a secret code than a real mother tongue, to protect the secrecy of their discoveries and potions. The Code is taught only to initiates and requires a certain mathematical ability and decryption skills to understand it. So, only characters with Smarts d8 or more can learn this language. It only exists in a written form.

**Barbarian Languages.** The people of Northeim, the Caleds and the Cairnlords speak three different languages (Northern, Caled, and Cairn Tongue). Out of these three, only the Cairn Tongue is written, using a runic alphabet. Very few people speak the Caled Tongue; a few more know how to interpret their drum language, which is surprisingly complex and well-articulated.

**Ivory Savannah Tribes Languages.** The Ivory Savannah Tribes speak an impressive number of different dialects that are all quite similar. In game terms only one language is considered: the Savannah Tongue. In certain parts of the Verdant Belt the most advanced tribes speak a bastardized form of Caldeian called Slavers' Tongue, used mainly for contacts with Caldeian slavers. Neither language has a written form.

**Imperial Syranthian.** Imperial Syranthian, or simply Imperial, is a simple and rather regular alphabetic language, originally from Syranthia. Every player character can speak it, and, depending on her background, might be also able to read and write it.

**Tricarnian and Ancient Keronian.** Tricarnians and Caldeians are the descendants of the ancient Keronian Empire. They speak a common version of the language in daily life (Tricarnian) but use a ceremonial, ancient language during religious rites and in sorcery (Ancient Keronian). These are considered two different languages.

**Lhoban Secrets.** The Jademen speak a mountain dialect, but the secrets of the monks must be preserved with great care, so a "written" form of communication was devised, called Lhoban Secrets. The Secrets are lengths of ropes, with particular knots. Looking at the size of the knots, their distance from each other, and other parameters, the monks can read and communicate their Secrets.

**Pygmy.** The Pygmies speak their own tongue. It is very difficult to learn this language, due to the isolation of these diminutive people.

**Valk.** The Valk speak a very weird, totally unique language. Its peculiarity might be due to the very different origins of the steppe nomads, but there is a theory among the Syranthian sages according to which Valk isn't a human language. A disturbing fact supports this theory: demons speak Valk. No one knows whether a written form of this language exists.



## RELIGION

Religious practices vary greatly across the Dominions and literally hundreds of cults exist, many of them on a local basis.

In this section only the most important religions are detailed.

Before the Salkarian Reformation, the Empire was very open-minded on matters of religion. As long as a land or a city paid its taxes, it was free to worship whatever god it wanted. With the Reformation a new divinity was introduced, the **Divine Couple**, Hulian and Hordan, the artificial fusion of Hulian, the smith god of Faberterra, and Hordan, the goddess of Tricarnia.

They are seen as the two faces of the same divinity: Hulian is the male principle, who governs over logic, fire, science and the written word. He also symbolizes the day.

Hordan, instead, is the feminine principle: she is the goddess of emotions, water, and the spoken word. She also protects love, births, seasons, and the arts. She symbolizes the night.

Statues of the Divine Couple feature a single head with two sides: a handsome blonde man (Hulian) and a striking black-haired woman (Hordan). The statues are never fixed to the ground, and it is the priests' duty to rotate them at dawn and dusk, to show the face of the divinity currently in charge at any given moment of the day. In the Great Temple of the Divine Couple in Faberterra (the follower High Temple of Hulian), an ingenious water mechanism slowly rotates the statues in a show of technology that always impresses the commoners.

In truth, the Divine Couple is an artificial divinity, created to unify two very different peoples, the Tricarnians and the Imperials, and usually only lip service is paid to them. In secret, because it is highly illegal, the Iron Priests still worship **Hulian, Lord of Fire** in the catacombs of Faberterra and in other parts of the Empire. In this more authentic version of the cult, Hulian is the Smith god, He Who Turns Away the Darkness, Lord of the Word, and protector of humanity. The priests of Hulian are aware that alien gods and their servants are still walking in the world, and it's the priests' sacred duty to fight them. It is not a secret that they are losing, but they will continue until the last fire burns out. Hulian the Lord of Fire is represented as a lion-headed man, tall and muscular, with the sun painted on his chest and a smith's hammer in his right hand.

**Tosar of the Burned Hand** or Tosar the Liberator is a demigod. A former Smith Priest of Hulian thrown in the arena because he refused to abjure and bow to the Divine Couple and Empress Salkaria, he defeated every monster and demon the wicked woman threw at him in the arena. In the end the evil queen ordered assassins to burn Tosar's right hand off, so he could not hold a sword, but, even with a charred hand, he managed to fight and win. In the end Tosar was martyred, but his followers continue, even today, to fight demons at the side of Hulian and to free slaves, an aspect of the cult which makes this god highly illegal in almost all the Dominions.

Although the Imperial Law forbids it, in Tricarnia, **Hordan, Mistress of Darkness** is still openly worshipped by the Priest Princes and their minions. Hordan is an ancient demonic creature adored





since the times of the Keronian Empire. She is the goddess of night, obscurity, pain, and unholy appetites. Despite her human appearance, Hordan is completely alien, ever thirsting for blood, violent sex, and other depraved acts. She is usually represented as a busty bare-chested woman of otherworldly beauty. But a closer inspection reveals her demonic origin: her long braids end in tiny snake heads, her open mouth shows a snakelike tongue, and her nipples are deadly stingers. Hordan is a generous goddess—as long as she is satiated with constant sacrifices. Otherwise, she feeds on her own followers' bodies and souls.

**Baachaga the Toad God**, Master of Shapes, is another important Tricarnian deity. He is represented as a huge toad, covered in multicolored pustules. When summoned by his worshippers, he takes control of particular species of giant toads, bred for this specific purpose. Baachaga is the god of ever-changing shapes and mutations. A devious deity, he prefers to scheme and plot in darkness rather than openly facing enemies. Baachaga's followers have a long-lasting hatred towards Hordan. In 735 AF the cult of Baachaga was almost totally eradicated when Hordanas, great queen of Tricarnia and High Priestess of Hordan, destroyed Nal Hamar. That can be seen as one of the major acts of war between the two deities. Over the following centuries the cult slowly returned, and today is followed again, mostly in secret.

Another powerful demon sometimes evoked by Tricarnian sorcerers, even if no real homage is paid to him, is **Tirain, Master of Doors and Cages**. Tirain is an enigmatic creature: a traveler between worlds, he enjoys locking his victims in complex traps and labyrinths, some of which aren't even in our world, and is absolutely obsessed by doors, locks and generally impenetrable places. The relationship of Tirain with Tricarnia dates back to ancient Keron; according to one very weird story, mankind is in the Dominions because Tirain dragged them there for one of his devious games, but this is a theory which today has very few supporters.

Northlanders have a rather cold relationship with the divine. They mainly worship the **Lord of Thunder**, a distant god who simply watches mortals from the skies and shows his rage and power during thunderstorms. The Lord of Thunder intervenes only when a child is born, blowing into the lungs of the infant, giving him strength. What the human will do with his gift does not concern the god.

The Ivory Savannah Tribes have a very complex theology, with many minor divinities, but they mainly worship **Etu**, the Mother, a female divinity presiding over rains and births, and **Uletu**, God of Strength, represented as a lion or bull, either as a beast or in hybrid human-beast form.

Valk worship demons, the most important of which is **Sha-Mekri**, an expression that in their language simply means "the King". Sha-Mekri is the incarnation of warfare and destruction. He is usually represented as a blaze (as sometimes happens in autumn on the steppes), or as a massive black stallion with a fanged mouth, whose hooves leave a trail of fire. In very rare cases, he is portrayed as a massive man, dressed in metal armor covered in spikes and riding a metal stallion.

Cairnlords worship the **Ancestors**, the dead. Many of them don't need to be depicted, because they still exist, in embalmed form, in their necropolises. Sometimes, they aren't even truly dead. The Northlander warriors who return from incursions into the Cairns tell wild stories of emaciated figures dressed in ancient rags, who were obviously dead and yet walked and commanded the living.

The people of the Red Desert follow a number of deities, many of them being "djinn", a local word to indicate a number of spirits, demons and strange creatures lurking among the red rocks and crystals of the desert, but the majority of the civilized clans worship Golar Ammon,



the **Sun God**, a peculiar deity which has three aspects, the Dawn Child, protector of all things that grow, the Midday Warrior, god of fiery destruction and lord of knowledge, and the Dusk Elder, protector from the dark things of the night and helper of the suffering.

As mentioned before, the Jademen don't worship a god, though they recognize the existence of supernatural creatures, some of them good but mostly flawed and evil. Instead, they believe that every being can reach divinity through self-improvement and meditation following the **Path of Enlightenment**. Death is but a transition within this process: a creature reincarnates in another being, lesser or higher, depending on how it behaved in its previous life. The monks are at the higher stages of the process and the Enlightened One has almost completed it. What is there beyond? This is a secret that will be revealed only to those who achieve the divine.

This philosophy, exported by the Jademen who left their country to live across the Dread Sea Dominions, slowly blended with the western rites and was adopted by many sects, like the Stylites of the Land of Idols, eremites who live in constant meditation on the tops of tall columns.

The divinities of the Caleds and of the Pygmies are unknown.

## HERO'S JOURNAL: THE SEARCH OF THE BLINDSEEKERS

In the weeks after the passage of the Sword of Hulian, and the disappearance of the previous Enlightened One, a very important event happened in Lhoban. The first is that a number of monks, both the good ones following the path of Enlightenment and of evil ones, followers of the Obscurement, lost their sight, for no apparent reason. In the following months it became clear that these people, although losing their sight, acquired other, supernatural senses, making them capable of seeing things nobody else can see, like spirits, invisible beings, and more importantly, the souls of certain people. But what was the reason for this strange change? The older monks declared it was a sign: the Blindseekers, as they are called, are tasked with a very difficult mission, finding the new Enlightened One and bringing him to Lhoban. Because it is clear that the Enlightened One, either a new one or a reincarnation of the old one, must be present in the Dominions, and must be found.

So, in the last few years, a number of these strange, blindfolded monks have been seen wandering the Dominions, trying to complete this almost impossible mission.

They are the only ones capable of doing it, and, as mentioned above, they are followers of both philosophies. What would happen if a follower of darkness finds him before the followers of light?





# GAZETTEER OF THE DOMINIONS

"THERE ARE MORE PATHS TO WALK IN THE DOMINIONS  
THAN SAND GRAINS IN MY BOOT"

– Ishmael, Red Desert nomad

Here follows a brief description of the most important areas of the Dread Sea Dominions as they are today. A brief summary is presented for every nation, as an example of what the Book of Lore (featured in future installments of the series) will contain.

## ASCAIA, THE AMAZONS' ISLAND

Ascaia is a small island, not far from the mouth of the Elephant River. It has tall reefs and a single port, but the weather is very good and the land fertile, making it an excellent place for growing crops and breeding horses.

In the years before the foundation of the Empire by Domestan, the local female population rebelled and eliminated all males from the island. The leaders of the rebellion were Gella, the wife of the former governor, a very cruel man, and Ilenya, a female gladiator of the local arena. The two women became the first Sister Queens of Ascaia. Since then, very few men have been allowed onto the island, which is now known as the Amazons' Island.

The Amazons' Island is very easily defended and has wide terraced fields; the island is fairly self-sufficient, only lacking one fundamental resource for survival: men.

For the purpose of mating, the Amazons choose slaves, prisoners of war and occasional lovers they find while on missions on the mainland. When an Amazon gives birth to a child, if it is a female, she can join the Amazons.

If the baby is male, he is immediately separated from his mother and sent to his father, if possible, or a foster family is found; but he cannot stay on the island longer than seven days after birth.

The Amazons have a martial culture (a necessity to avoid being re-conquered by males) and they have become skilled sailors, excellent mercenaries and, under some Queens, dreaded pirates and slave hunters.

Luckily, things are no longer this way, at least officially.



The current Queens signed an agreement with Emperor Domestan XII agreeing to patrol the Elephant River and hunt the Pirates of the Fingers, a task which they are carrying out most efficiently. But there are always some independent Amazon captains who, while on the open sea, raid and sink merchant ships. As long as they are not spotted, nothing happens and the Sister Queens usually turn a blind eye because such deeds bring wealth to the island and help preserve its fearful reputation.

## THE BORDERLANDS

“The Borderlands people know the barbarians well because they are of the same breed,” as the ancient saying goes. And it is at least partially true. The Borderlands were once part of Northeim but were taken by the Imperials with war, treachery and cunning diplomacy and their inhabitants slowly mixed with the Imperials, thus becoming the Borderlands people. These people have the better of the two cultures: the knowledge and rationalism of the Imperials and the energy and vitality of the barbarians. When the true Northlanders attacked the Empire, the first people to withstand them were the Borderlands people.

It was clear that the Imperial Phalanxes would not be enough to protect the land and the Borderlands people did what they usually do – they defended themselves against their savage cousins from Northeim.

In the end, the Empire lost its authority over this area, and some small, independent kingdoms were established, collectively called the Borderlands. Although they are under the formal protection of the Emperor of Faberterra, in reality they are on their own, fighting to preserve what they created with such great effort.

The biggest Borderland city-state is Felantium, ruled by a Count, the nephew of the man who, many years ago, stopped the barbarians from invading the Empire in an epic battle fought in front of the city gates. The Count of Felantium is one of the most influential personalities of the northern Dominions, and more than one voice says he should replace the man on the throne of Faberterra, but so far the Count hasn’t made any move in that direction.

The border between the Borderlands and Northeim is the Godaxe River, where a line of forts stands, manned by soldiers from the Borderlands. These forts are vital since every year the Northlanders, Cairnlanders or Nandals launch violent attacks on them, but so far, no fort has fallen. When this happens, the barbarians will invade the Borderlands again and it will be a grim day for all the civilized populations.

There is another nightmare that haunts the lords of the Borderlands—the fact that one day the Drowned King Sea might freeze as far south as the Godaxe River which would pave the way for a massive invasion of the south.

Though the Borderlands are divided and ruled by different laws, one rule is applied everywhere: if a man volunteers to defend one of the forts and serves for at least five years, he is rewarded with a piece of land and receives an additional plot for every extra five years. This rule is called the Price of Blood and it is fair compensation for what the soldiers must endure defending their land. However, it is also a way to lure colonists from the south.

In the Borderlands, capable men can carve out a future for themselves.

## THE CAIRNLANDS

The Cairnlands are a vast, wild area of deep forests and rolling hills. No city or other civilized settlement is visible because many of the seemingly natural hills are in truth artificial mounds built



by the ancient inhabitants of this region. The Cairnlords, today's inhabitants, live in the Cairns, which make for excellent houses, stables, and fortresses, if you don't mind living side by side with your dead, whom they call the Ancestors.

This is no wealthy region and the Cairn Lords are not an advanced people. They live by hunting, herding, and occasional raids on nearby lands. But when darkness falls, the Cairnlanders enter their underground tunnels and lock themselves in, since during the night a strange fog appears and wicked things, best left undisturbed, emerge from the oldest, still unexplored, Cairns.

The mounds called Cairns do not exist only in the Cairn Lands, although this region has the biggest concentration of them. Many are found in Valkheim, the Northlands and the Borderlands. During the long, cold winters, the northern part of the Drowned King Sea freezes, giving the Cairnlords access to the Borderlands and Valkheim. This is the best time for raids into the south, to look for a bigger home or simply to stay away from their haunted lands, which in winter become even more dangerous.

If the land of the Cairns is dangerous, the sea is no less so.

There is a story about a powerful king of the Cairn Lords who spurned the old traditions.

He did not want to live in a Cairn but desired to dwell in a palace, as the southerners do. But he needed slaves and many riches to build such a thing. So, ignoring the teachings of the Ancestors, he ordered his men to build a large fleet. He meant to use it to raid Jalizar and the City of the Alchemists and to use the spoils to build his palace.

When summer came, the fleet was ready and his army sailed south. But during the first night at sea, a terrible storm caught the fleet by surprise. All the ships sank and the whole army, including the king, drowned. Since then, during stormy nights a ghost fleet has haunted the sea of the Drowned King, the man who refused to live in the Cairns, hence the name of the northern inner sea of the Dominions.

## CALDEIA

Caldeia is a city-state around the mouth of the Buffalo River. It has one heavily-defended city, Caldeia of the tall towers, and some smaller fortified settlements in its surroundings. Caldeia was founded several centuries ago by an exiled Priest Prince of Tricarnia, Caldaio the Cruel, and today it is still a monarchy, although the *de facto* rulers are the nobles and a caste of priests.

Remarkably, Caldaio the Cruel is still formally the King of Caldeia. He would be more than four hundred years old by now, but nobody has ever announced his death and, though he hasn't appeared in public for at least three centuries, there are rumors he still lives in self-imposed seclusion in the Tower of Whispers of the royal palace of Caldeia City.

Recently there are rumors that King Caldaio has suddenly left the country for some unknown destination, and this has stirred up the enemies of the kingdom, in particular the Savannah tribes.

Caldeia is very rich because it trades the two most precious goods produced in the south of the world: Khav and slaves.

The fertile area of the Buffalo River's mouth boasts the world's largest plantations of the insidious drug, also known as the Lesser Lotus. This cheap and very addictive poison is produced and refined in Caldeia and then sold across the Dominions. Plantations are tended by slaves who are all heavily addicted to Khav. Many of them die, but Caldeia's flesh markets always have plenty of replacements.

Caldeian's commerce happens in a consistent part by sea, and their ships must make a long trip, sailing the Endless Ocean along the coasts of Keron and then reaching the northern Dominions. Their route forces them to pass near the infamous Finger Islands, where the pirates of the Cove nest, making them their favorite prey.



Sixteen years ago Caldeia found a way to battle these scum of the sea, creating the Corsairs, a strong, independent naval force of freebooters, which constantly patrols the sea routes looking for pirates, for which they are paid a good bounty. Made up in great part of former pirates and criminals themselves, they are led by Commander Karvas, a scoundrel and a rogue if one ever walked the deck of a ship. Corsairs are doing a good job in fighting pirate activity, but they don't have a good reputation in the Dread Sea, because they aren't shy of assaulting foreign trading vessels when there are no witnesses around. After all, you can't teach an old dog new tricks.



## HERO'S JOURNAL: KHAV ADDICTION

Khav addiction is a Major Habit. In addition to the standard addiction rules, Khav has the following effects: it causes a penalty of -2 to all Spirit and Smarts based rolls and eliminates the sense of fatigue. A Khav addict receives penalties for Fatigue, but he does not actually feel it. It is not unusual for slaves addicted to Khav to work to death. The price of Khav varies depending on its purity: a dose may cost from half a Moon to twenty Moons. It is common throughout the Dread Sea Dominions, especially in slave-based nations.

## HERO'S JOURNAL: AN EXTRAVAGANT WAY OF LIFE

Corsairs are very organized in war, but in truth, there is more than a touch of the rogue in them. Easy to inflame and tremendous enemies of pirates, many of them show a certain courtesy towards women and are fair fighters. Below are summarized the tenets of the Corsairs' Code of Honor that some of them (not all) follow:

- ❖ Always respect your given word.
- ❖ A friend of a friend is my friend.
- ❖ Respect your opponent, as long as he respects you.
- ❖ Treat ladies with fairness.
- ❖ My loyalty is to my Captain, his Lord and my Lady, in that order.



## CALEDLAND

Let us be honest: no one has ever explored Caledland. It is a vast, ancient forest inhabited by primitive savages, the Caleds. The only ones who dared enter the forest were the Tricarnians, during the war, and some Imperial Phalanxes, when the Empire was so strong that it considered conquering the Caledlands. Yet, none of them ever came back. The Caleds aren't invincible — after all they are only naked, tattooed barbarians, who fight with stone-tipped spears — but their strength lies mainly in their druids, a caste of very powerful sorcerers. During the Tricarnian-Caled Wars, many acts of foul sorceries were committed by both sides and the part of the Caled forest bordering Tricarnia is now an accursed place, where terrible abominations lurk in the shadows of ancient trees.

The Caleds periodically leave their woods and raid nearby regions. They do not seek spoils, but a single commodity: humans — who are taken to Caledland and never seen again. Immediately before such expeditions, the sound of rolling drums comes from the forest. This means that the Caleds are going on a hunting spree.

Nobody knows what the captives are used for, probably they are sacrificed to the gods or, as many say, they are eaten.

The strange thing is that the Caleds' raids do not seem to follow any logic: they are willing to travel hundreds of miles, to some remote village in Northeim or a farm in the Borderlands, to kidnap a single person. The reason why they go to so much trouble to capture a single unlucky individual, while simply butchering everyone else, is one of the many mysteries surrounding the Caleds.

## CANNIBAL ISLANDS

The Cannibal Islands are a group of medium-sized landmasses not far from the Lush Jungle. The first travelers who came here thought they had found a true paradise with pleasant weather, strange fruit plants, colorful birds and crystal-clear water full of fish.

In truth, these islands are home to one of the most ferocious peoples in the world, the black cannibal tribes. These primitive men attack and eat any stranger they meet, and the first explorers, caught by surprise, ended their lives in the grisliest of ways.

In addition, a couple of times a year, they sail in their long war canoes to the mainland, to hunt their favorite quarry: man. They usually set ambushes around the mouth of the Anaconda River or along the Verdant Belt or the Caldeian coast, but a few times they have gone as far as the Independent Cities.

Some lucky mariners who have managed to escape the Cannibal Islands tell stories of a giant monster that is the god of the Cannibals. Most of the human prey they catch is sacrificed to appease the monstrous divinity's appetite. Yet, the nature of the god is unknown and these stories might be only a legend or a tale to hide some disturbing truth.

## EKUL

Ekul, the southern part of former Zandor, is mainly a desert. The industrious population always fights to farm the rare good soil, and many resources are spent on reclamation and irrigation. Thanks to this enlightened policy, Ekul is now a fairly pleasant place to live and enjoys good trading relations with Kyros, Syranthia and Jalizar.



In truth, Eku is a very young nation. This land suffered the first, tremendous impact of the Valk invasion; many of its cities were destroyed and the population killed. Then, luckily, the Valk moved north, toward richer lands. After the death of Dhaar, leader of the Valk, his third son Eku went south with a large number of clans and invaded this land once again.

Rather than face another war, the locals willingly submitted. They opened to Eku the doors of their main city, which was renamed Eku, and offered him the hand of Yasmine, daughter of the former Imperial Governor.

Eku was still young, and a very curious and attentive person. He took up his residence in the ex-Imperial Palace. He was truly fascinated by the way of life in the southern lands and soon became a civilized man.

Not all his followers were pleased with his behavior, so he was forced to crush a good part of them. His remaining followers adapted to a semi-static life. Eku is a vast territory, but only a small part of it, the coastal region, is farmed. The rest can only be used as pastures, and these were the lands assigned to Valk.

After the disaster of Collana, Eku abandoned the traditional Valk religion.

All the Valkyria were forced to leave the kingdom or face execution, which caused great anger among Eku's followers and attacks from the Valk of the north. Yet, Eku's supporters were ready to face them and came out victorious. Eku enjoys very friendly relationships with Lhoban, and the king himself has embraced the strange philosophy of the Jademen. Eku today is home to the greatest community of Jademen in all the Dominions.

But all good things come to an end, and Eku's age of enlightenment does not seem to be destined to last.

King Eku finally died at the venerable age of ninety-three years and left the crown to his granddaughter, Yasmine, who has the same name as (and a striking resemblance to) his beloved wife.

The kingdom is really unstable now: the Autarch of Kyros has always had expansionistic desires towards Eku, and even if in the past his wedding proposals to Yasmine were coldly refused, today they must be considered, because many people want the throne where young Yasmine sits; Valk clan chiefs as well as nobles of Imperial origin are more than ready to marry Yasmine.

The new queen of Eku has surrounded herself with monks, some of them Ekulian, and others coming directly from Lhoban. The last aren't mild sages but scarred warriors: they call themselves the Bronze Guardians, and accept no signs of insubordination toward the Queen. Despite this formidable guard, Yasmine cannot delay her marriage too much longer. For now, she has declared three months of mourning for her uncle's death, but at the end of them a decision must be taken.

## FABERTERRA

Faberterra was the heart of the Iron Empire, the place where the destinies of far-off countries were decided. Today, Faberterra is only a shadow of its former glory. The rich countryside, full of large estates and prosperous farms, is slowly decaying, because the landowners spend more time indulging in personal pleasures than looking after their properties.

Commerce is still brisk, but only because Faberterra is at the center of the world. The tide is turning and more and more ships choose Askerios to dock.

"Life is short and the Empire is fading. We are doomed. So, let's enjoy ourselves".

This is the common way of thinking in Faberterra. So far, the state has never been invaded, but no one can forget that the barbarian hordes were recently stopped at Felantium, which isn't that



far away. So many Imperials have decided to spend their last days indulging in orgies, feasts and other exotic entertainments, while others regularly visit the temple of the Divine Couple to pray for the Empire and their own souls.

Yet, their prayers seem to go unanswered.

Certainly, Faberterra is still the capital of the Empire and its people are haughty, but this is nothing more than a habit. The once-mighty Phalanxes are reduced to a few units, and their loyalty isn't always certain.

The Emperor protects his palace with a force of mercenaries, while the Phalanxes are assigned to patrol the borders. Many believe that sooner or later a Phalanx commander will try to overthrow the Emperor and seize the crown.

Faberterra City is the biggest settlement of the known world; almost a million people live there – and the situation is growing tenser by the day. Bad news from the north, less commerce and a stagnating economy cause turmoil among the people, whom the Emperor tries to appease by distributing free food and organizing great shows of gladiators in the arena. Today the Arena of Faberterra is greater than the one in the City of Princes in Tricornia and its gladiators are real celebrities – all of which has been achieved by almost exhausting the Emperor's coffers. Many wonder how much longer the situation can last.

## THE FALLEN REALM OF KERON

The Fallen Realm of Keron is that part of the Keronian Empire that, being quite far from the center, wasn't directly affected by the terrible impact of the Dread Star, and its location high on a plateau protected it from being flooded.

Yet, this doesn't mean its people survived.

The consequences of the cataclysm – clouds of dust, earthquakes, famines and pestilences – wiped out the local population, and Keron is now an arid place full of crumbling ruins. The Fallen Realm is believed to be haunted. The mariners sailing near its coast report seeing strange lights at night and hearing the sound of spectral songs. For no reason will a captain dock on these cursed shores.

The Fallen Realm is separated from the mainland by the Keronian Range, a very recent group of mountains created during the cataclysm. Crossing it to reach the Fallen Realm is very difficult, because its peaks are lofty and there are only a few passes. In addition, the area is still affected by intense seismic activity, another good reason to stay away.

A hundred years ago, Kiramas, one of the most powerful Priest Princes of Tricornia, decided to explore the Fallen Realm. His intention was to find ancient relics of the Keronians and, if possible, to create a new Tricornian base in the south of the world. It was a great expedition, with large numbers of ships, slaves and beasts but, once they entered the Fallen Realm, they disappeared.

Scouts were sent to investigate but they too didn't come back. Any further attempt to locate Kiramas was suspended and all that is now left of his expedition are the hulls of his ships rotting on the shore. Today, that dreaded event is remembered as "Kiramas' Folly".

Today Keron is officially an uninhabited land, but there are rumors that particularly wicked tribes of Red Nomads, who call themselves Black Nomads to distinguish themselves from their southern brothers, dwell there, their souls and bodies corrupted by the evil things lurking in the ancient ruins and dark fissures of the Fallen Realm.



## THE FINGER ISLANDS AND THE COVE

The Fingers of the Dead, or simply the Finger Islands, are a group of islands north of the Fallen Realm of Keron.

They were once part of the Keronian Empire, but the Dread Star disaster separated them from the mainland. The islands, surrounded by treacherous shallows, are dotted with ancient Keronian ruins engulfed by the jungle. They owe their name to the common practice on Tricarnian galleys of cutting off the pinkie of a lazy oarsman, and “fingers” is usually the nickname given to mutineers.

The Finger Islands are inhabited by indigenous peoples, and by the dreaded Finger Pygmies (see below), but they are mainly known for being a base for pirates, who launch attacks on merchant ships and raid the Iron Empire or Tricarnia. The navies of the civilized Dominions have often tried to wipe them out, but getting to their base has always been extremely dangerous and costly. The Finger Islands aren’t very far from the Independent Cities, the perfect place to sell stolen goods and spend one’s looted coins. They are also very close to the Fallen Realm of Keron, but the pirates avoid that haunted land.

There are rumors of a hidden bay on the Finger Islands which hosts a true piratical city, where crews find refuge and ships are repaired. This place is called The Cove. The exact location of The Cove is kept secret. Only pirate captains and their most trusted helmsmen know how to reach it, avoiding the shallows. This is a secret for which many military authorities would be willing to pay a lot of gold.

## GIS, FREE CITY OF THE ALCHEMISTS

There is a legend saying that the day Fabron, the Iron Priest of Faberterra, discovered iron, on the shores of the Drowned King Sea, a wandering warlock built the first hut of what, centuries later, would become Gis, the Free City of the Alchemists. The founders of the Alchemists were a group of foreign mages, probably from Lhoban.

Today, life in Gis revolves around the business of the supernatural. Cairnlord relic sellers have their stalls next to those of Caldeian Lotusmasters, and Valk prophets of the steppes offer their visions side by side with black-skinned dancing witches, worshippers of Etu. There is only one law in Gis: all magic is permitted, as long as it doesn’t harm anyone and isn’t detrimental to business, of course.

Of the many forms of magic practiced in the city, the most common is alchemy. The Alchemists, also called Master Alchemists, are the rulers of Gis. Their skills are far more powerful than the knowledge of Lotus mastered by other Dominions’ Lotusmasters. They can produce fire that burns on the water and cannot be extinguished, magic oils that make a barren land fertile again, and many other wonderful things. But their services are very costly and only kings and nobles can afford them.

The Alchemists are a very reclusive organisation. They live in great mansions which they also use as laboratories, protected by their servants and apprentices, and they rarely give audiences to the common people, unless, of course, a large pile of gold is involved.

The identity of the Alchemists is not made public. They always wear long robes, special metal masks and gauntlets that bestow great powers on them. The Master Alchemists have always been twelve and their number cannot change, because only twelve metal masks exist. The rules for succession aren’t very clear. Some say that, when an old Master Alchemist dies, the other eleven choose a successor from among his apprentices. He will take the mask and continue to rule the mansion laboratory. Yet, others believe that the Master Alchemists are immortal.

Gis is a place of wonders, but it is also full of supernatural dangers.



Gis was born as a free city and no foreign power, not even the Iron Empire, has ever tried to subdue it. None except the Valk. After Dhaar's death, rumors claimed that the mighty warlord had been killed by the Alchemists' magic. A great number of Valk clans gathered outside the City of the Alchemists, ready to destroy it to avenge their lord.

But that very night a strange, greenish fog spilled from the mouths of the metal statues along the walls of Gis. The fog silently sneaked into the Valk camp and everyone enveloped by it died in a horrible way, their flesh melted, as if burnt by an incredibly powerful acid. At dawn, the Valk camp was a cemetery. But the fog never went away.

Even today, dozens of years later, there is a large area of green fog, called the Greenmelt, where the half-corroded shapes of the Valk encampment can be seen. Nobody knows if the air is still poisonous, because nobody is foolish enough to venture there.



## THE INDEPENDENT CITIES

The first Independent Cities were founded by the Syranthians in an attempt to avoid the taxes imposed by Kyros on the goods coming from the south of the world. They were far more successful than the Syranthians had expected.

Desert nomads, Ivory Savannah Tribes and, occasionally, Caldeian merchants started to visit them, selling goods from the south and buying products from Faberterra, Tricarnia and other northern dominions. In a few years the Independent Cities increased in number and grew in size, going from small trading posts to large cities. This happened also thanks to the adventurers and other shady individuals who came here from all over the Dominions, lured by the prospect of easy money to be made.

In the end, distant Syranthia lost control over these fiercely independent cities.

Today, a dozen Independent Cities exist, but the most important are Hillias, on the Dread Sea, and Teyerana, on the shores of the Endless Ocean. The first is ruled by a merchant league, similar to Syranthia's, while the other is a monarchy, governed with an iron fist by Korr, a former pirate from the Finger Islands. The other cities are either on the coast or in the Red Desert. They are not united



and often fight with one another — a state of things that Kyros, Caldeia and Syranthia are very happy to encourage.

Another famous Independent City is Quollaba, in the heart of the Red Desert, famous for the strange, precious crystals it sells. Until recently it was ruled by the Tyrant Zanator, but in the end he was overthrown and now it is held by Queen Zamira, daughter of the previous king, murdered by Zanator.

The Independent Cities are excellent places for any individual who is able to wield a sword. The various city lords are always looking for good fighters to join the city patrols, protect caravans, and, occasionally raid enemy cities. The hierarchy in the mercenary militia is usually very fluid and a skilled swordsman can start the day as watchman of the local latrines and go to bed as Captain of the King's Guard. But remember: life is always dangerous in the Independent Cities and, no matter how high a man climbs, he can suddenly fall equally low.

## THE IRON MOUNTAINS

The Iron Mountains are a massive mountain chain, dividing the Dominions in two parts; the eastern ones, where Zandor lies, and the western ones, where Faberterra, Syranthia, Kyros and the other western Dominions stand.

These mountains owe their names to iron, the metal discovered by Fabron, which changed the story of the Dominions forever, but they are also important for a number of other reasons.

Two of them are of political nature: for many centuries passage through them has been very difficult (and it still is today), so Faberterra had to expand and grow into the Iron Empire before sending its phalanxes into Zandor to conquer it.

On the other hand, the Iron Mountains were probably the best defense of the Iron Empire against the Valk. By blocking the main passes, Faberterra managed to stop the Valk from sweeping into the heart of the Empire.

Despite being known as a single mountain range, the Iron Mountains are actually divided into three rough sections: the Northern Range, from the Drowned King Sea to the Iron Route (see sidebar); the Middle Range, from the Iron Route to Mount Syros (which is more or less on the border between Faberterra and Syranthia); and finally the Southern Range, from Mount Syros to the Brown Sea.

Geographically, the Iron Mountains range from high to very high, with Mount Syros, in Syranthia, being the highest mountain known in the civilized Dominions. The weather is very harsh in the mountains, especially but not only in the northern range, and a number of dire beasts dwell there, from wolves to bears, and there are many other unknown ones which survive in secluded valleys.

Two human races dwell in the Iron Mountains: the stout and fiercely independent Mountaineers, who nobody, neither the Emperor of Faberterra nor the King of Ekul, has managed to subjugate, and various clans of Nandals, which are the nightmare of civilized people on both sides of the mountains, because often they come down from the mountains to rape, kill and pillage the lands of civilized men.

## THE ISLANDS OF THE MAIMED ONES

This archipelago in the center of the Dread Sea is usually avoided by all mariners. The ground here is red as dried blood and the waters are hotter than in the rest of the Dread Sea. The islands are covered in a thick jungle, as lush as that of the Pygmies' lands, home to strange beasts unknown in the rest of the Dominions and to weird mutations of common animals. Some very primitive barbarians live here, but no civilized men. They are hideous to look upon — their bodies full of disgusting mutations and their



minds twisted and deranged. There is no reason to visit this accursed place willingly, except to capture savage beasts, which fetch a handsome price if suitable for the games in the arena.

The sages say that the Islands of the Maimed Ones are a fragment of the original Dread Star, and this is the cause of the strange mutations of its dwellers. Many centuries ago, wondering what type of ore could be extracted from this otherworldly ground, a of Faberterra built a fort and a mine on one of the islands. The local barbarians were outraged by the fact and both the priest and his followers were butchered before a single piece of ore could reach Faberterra. Today, the mine is still there, abandoned.

## TRADE ROUTES OF THE DOMINIONS

Trading is the lifeblood of any economy and the Dominions are no different. The passage of wares and goods is possible across the sea and by using the trade routes which cross the Dominions. The most important ones are described below.

**Imperial Route.** This route starts from Jalizar and goes south, to the coast of Ekul, where ships sail for Lhoban. Bandits and dangers of every kind make travelling along it very dangerous, but some of the most enterprising Merchant Houses of the City of Thieves use it, making a good profit (when the caravan isn't destroyed, of course). A very important caravan financed by Gis, the Veiled Caravan, uses this route once a year to reach Ekul.

**Iron Route.** This very important trading route starts from Faberterra, crosses the Iron Mountains and ends in Jalizar. Made with the sweat and the blood of the Iron Phalanxes during the conquest of Zandor, it was one of the first routes made. The Fist, an enormous fortress on the Ironguard Pass, controls it, and is currently ruled by a bandit lord, Justaios, who asks tolls to let merchants pass. A former general of the Iron Empire, Justaios is becoming a real threat to the Emperor, but having the support of the Mountaineers, he is almost impossible to root out from the Iron Fortress.

**Northern Trail.** Starting from Felantium, this route goes north, crossing the Northlands, the Cairnlands, and finally reaching Valkheim and the land of the Zharim (the Cows). It is very dangerous, especially if you don't hire the right guide: there are stories of pathfinders selling caravans out to Cairnlander raiders and even worse.

**Path of Silver.** This very impressive road starts in Lhobanport and snakes through the Lhoban Mountains until it reaches, at its end, the City of Clouds. Originally made to connect the silver mines which are no longer productive (but have been replaced by the rich veins of iron and gold recently discovered), it is very dangerous, due both to bandits and the natural threats from the unforgiving weather.

**Road of Gold.** One of the busiest trading routes of the Dominions, it starts from Askerios, in Syranthia, runs to Kenaton bordering the Sword River, and then goes, by ship, to Lhobanport. Despite being in the heart of the Iron Empire, it has become quite dangerous in recent years, because of the civil war in Kyros.

**Slave Route.** This infamous trading route starts from Caldeia, on the Endless Ocean, crosses the Verdant Belt, and ends in Lhobanport. It is mainly controlled by Caldeia, which has placed several forts on it, and ensures a constant flow of slaves from the Verdant Belt and Lhobanese wool to Caldeia, which, in exchange, sends Khav and other wares to Lhobanport.

**Stone Route.** Not officially recognized, the Stone Route is a new passage discovered across the Land of Idols, which makes the trip very short, with a mandatory stop in Stone Town, a village of outcasts in the heart of the Land of Idols. Despite its sinister reputation (a number of caravans using it never reached their destinations), today an increasing number of merchants are using it.



## THE IVORY SAVANNAH

The Ivory Savannah is an endless land of rolling hills and flat plains. It owes its name to a very common type of grass that takes on a particular gray color while drying in the autumn. The Savannah is a savage place inhabited by lions, gazelles, the striped horses named zebras, and even stranger beasts. Despite what foreigners may think, the king of the savannah isn't the powerful lion or the mighty elephant; it is the buffalo, strong and vicious enough to disembowel a lion, if attacked.

The buffalo herds migrate north during the hot summers, reaching the grasslands bordering the Brown Sea, while in the autumn they migrate south, following the Buffalo River, to the borders of Caldeia.

The Savannah Tribes, who are mostly herders or hunters, follow the migrations of the herds that provide them with food. They are organized in clans, some of them small (four to ten members), others as numerous as five hundred strong. The clans are led by local chiefs and are usually independent, though it isn't uncommon for several clans to team up for big hunts, raids, or similar occasions. The Savannah Tribes are constantly fighting the populations of the Verdant Belt and their relationships with Kyros are even colder. In fact, the very fertile lands between the Sword River and the Buffalo River are coveted both by the Kyrosian farmers and by the Savannah herders. The latter take their herds to feed on the Kyrosian crops, while the Kyrosians not only fight the trespassers but also attack peaceful Savannah Tribes to catch slaves. Caldeia has done likewise in the south for centuries, but this is a state of affairs that is soon going to change (see below).

The Ngobi Tribe, one of the most powerful of the savannah, has a tradition of taming and using buffalo as battle mounts. These mighty beasts are feared even by the Kyrosian army. Through long generations of tribal wars and wise political treaties, the Ngobi have subjugated or made alliances with all the major tribes of the savannah, achieving a leading position. But it is only under the rule of a charismatic leader, the White King, that they have managed to bring all the clans together. Very few strangers have seen the White King in person, and they say he is white and not black. Under the guidance of their new leader, the Ngobi have also built a new capital of their kingdom somewhere in the heart of the Savannah.

They call it the City of Elephants, and rumors say it is a marvelous place.

In the last few years, the White King has consolidated his power, and now is waging war on Caldeia, by far the most dangerous enemy of the Savannah people. The War of the Chain, as is called, is mainly a war of liberation to free the Ivory Savannah's slaves from Caldeian Khav fields. Nobody knows what finally made the White King decide to take initiative against Caldeia, but probably Tosara, the mysterious white woman with the burned hand who is often seen at the King's side, was involved in it.

## JALIZAR, CITY OF THIEVES

Jalizar, also known as the City of Thieves, is by far the biggest city of the north, probably the second or third biggest city in all the Dominions. The Rotten Flower of the North, as it is often called, is a place of trade and passage, but also a den of thievery and wickedness.

But, with all its flaws, Jalizar resisted the Valk invasion. Its mighty walls stopped the nomads, and Dhaar, the lord of the horde, died in a tent outside the city.

Jalizar survived, but its citizens suffered greatly: Famine, theft and all types of crimes were common during the three-year siege.

Today the situation isn't much better. The city has undoubtedly recovered some of its vigor and



is still the major trading center of the northeast. Heavily guarded caravans arrive from, and depart for, Faberterra and Ekul weekly, while massive ships transport their cargoes across the Drowned King Sea.

But the wealth isn't evenly distributed: immensely rich merchants control all the revenues from trade, while the masses starve. Even the King of Jalizar, nicknamed the Ragamuffin King, is forced to beg the merchants for gold to preserve a semblance of order in the city.

Besides the merchants, the major force in the city is the thieves. At least three guilds of criminals exist, and they exert strong control over the territory.

Even the merchant houses are forced to do business with them. Life in Jalizar is corrupt and almost everything, love and faith included, is for sale. But it is also a place of great opportunity for those with a sharp mind and a sharp blade.

## KYROS

Kyros enjoys an excellent position in the center of the Dominions as a gateway between south and north, and east and west. It is an ancient land with imposing palaces and well-tended gardens. In days of yore, before the Iron Empire, Kyros was ruled by an Autarch, a monarch with absolute power.

In that era, Kyros had the might of elephants on its side which made the Ivory Savannah Tribes of the Ivory Savannah tremble and kept the ironclad Phalanxes of Faberterra at bay.

Sadly, those times are long gone and now very few war elephants survive in Kyros.

The central government has been fighting an eternal war of attrition against the Ivory Savannah Tribes. All the Kyrosian rulers, first the Autarchs and then the Imperial Governors, have coveted the rich lands south of the Buffalo River, as they are the most fertile, but the Savannah tribes have always fought back to retain control over them.

The Kyrosian army constantly patrols the disputed lands, where fortified farming villages exist, but the Ivory Savannah Tribes' clever guerrilla warfare seems to be unbeatable. Most likely, if Kyros had surrendered these lands to the nomads and focused on trade, it would now be the wealthiest kingdom in the world. But, as things stand today, profit from trade and farming is barely enough to support the great Kyrosian army and numerous mercenary forces.

The Autarchate was restored when Kyros became independent from the Empire. The first rulers of the second dynasty of Autarchs were men of worth. Sadly, Canymedes II of Kyros, the current Autarch, isn't. He is quite young, not older than thirty-five summers, yet he is as mad as a hatter. He murdered his three older brothers to seize the throne and barely escaped an attempted poisoning in the troubled times before he took power.

Since then Canymedes has become paranoid.

He has many imaginary enemies (as if the real ones weren't enough) and wakes up in the night, screaming, for fear of the White King, the legendary ruler of the Savannah Tribes. Canymedes is convinced that the Tribes will invade Kyros, raze his city and kill him.

But today Kyros has two, more serious problems: first, a great famine spread over the land and is only receding now, thanks the efforts of the many Fagiri, the wandering priest-agronomists of Etu. The situation is improving but thousands of people have died in the last five years and may others joined the ranks of the Zakharites, a large band of wandering beggars, led by the infamous Zhakar, a troublemaker and rabble-rouser, who rob and steal everything they can.

The second problem is a cyclical one in the story of Kyros: the southern part of the kingdom, the Gandhar, has rebelled again, a few years after the last insurrection, and today the country is in the



middle of a civil war with Kyros City and Kenaton fighting against Sulapul and other minor cities of the south, backed by some Ivory Savannah tribes, probably supported by the White King himself. For now, the loyalist armies are holding, but only because they are backed by Syranthia, which fears the collapse of the southern kingdom.

## THE LAND OF THE IDOLS

The Land of the Idols is an area west of Lhoban, dotted with ancient ruins of unknown origin. The remnants of palaces and roads abound, but the commonest ones are the stone idols – columns shaped to resemble statues, from fifteen to fifty feet tall, representing humanoids, real and fantastic beasts and, in some cases, wholly alien creatures. Nobody, not even the sages of Syranthia, knows who built these idols and why.

The land is very spooky and animals don't like it, except for rats, snakes, and bats. People generally avoid it, because there are stories of caravans that took a shortcut to Lhoban through the Land of the Idols and never reached their destination, even if recently the situation has changed a bit (see below).

Until a few years ago, the only inhabitants of the Land of the Idols were the Stylites. "Stylus" is an ancient Syranthian word meaning column and the Stylites are hermit monks, usually from Lhoban, who spend their lives meditating on the top of an idol column.

The Stylites are very wise and sometimes can answer questions nobody else can, but their trance is often so deep that they even forget to eat and drink. The reason behind their unusual meditation practices is unknown and, if asked, the monks just say: "we are protecting the world".

## LHOBAN

Lhoban is a land of high mountains and deep valleys. Crossing it isn't easy, because very few passes are open, especially in winter, and only the local guides know them. At first glance, Lhoban is a land of mountain men who live in small villages and lead a hard, simple life, tending yaks and goats.

In reality, there is much more to Lhoban than meets the eye.

First, in the low valleys the climate is milder and terraced farming is extensively practiced.

Second, Lhobanmen love trading and their two main border cities, Heaven's Door and Lhobanport, are bustling with activity. Lhobanmen produce excellent wool and their weaving techniques are the best in all the Dominions.





Third, Lhoban is a land of high spirituality.

Although each village is ruled by a council of elders, the monks are the true ruling class, as well as the cohesive force of this wide country. Lhoban monks are basically philosophers who follow a doctrine of self-improvement and enlightenment. They live in secluded monasteries, but often visit the villages, protecting the commoners from dangers and bringing the word of their master, the Enlightened One, the true ruler of the country.

Indeed, Lhoban has its fair share of strange creatures (among which are the elusive Lhoban Dragons) and dark creatures that only the spiritual powers of the monks can stop. In addition, many valleys are isolated or still unexplored, so nobody truly knows what lurks within them.

Several centuries ago, a new philosophy spread among the monks: that true enlightenment cannot be achieved through spiritual purity, but only through its opposite, perpetual evil.

According to this belief, only in deepest chaos can the true adept find his real self.

This new sect of monks, who are called Seekers of the Black Light, became the mortal enemy of the traditional ones, following the path of darkness and trying to unleash the forces of evil onto the world. Naturally the good monks rose against this abomination and a terrible war was fought. In the end, the Order of Light, as the monks following the true philosophy are called, triumphed, and the Seekers of the Black Light were defeated. But evil is resilient and, like weeds, the evil monks survived and regained their strength. They are now a secret order, living in hidden monasteries, walking among the common people or, even worse, hiding among the good monks to spread chaos, corruption, and disorder.

Rumor has it that their evil schemes are extremely far-reaching and even involve faraway states.

## THE LUSH JUNGLE

The Lush Jungle is an enormous tropical forest that marks the southern border of the known world. Nobody has explored it completely, because it is a very dangerous place. Fatal diseases and beasts like snakes and spiders of every size and degree of venomousness are only some of the dangers lurking under its trees.

The Lush Jungle is the ancestral home of the Pygmies, a primitive race of dwarf men who withdrew to the shadow of the mangroves shortly after the fall of the Dread Star. According to the Syranthian sages, they are the descendants of Keronian slaves, who came here to find their freedom.

Whatever the reason, they are very reclusive and possessive of their land. Pygmies are deceitful, just like the spiders they love so much. They let you go deep into their territory and then they attack you with poison blowguns, traps, and so on. Very few of those going on expeditions into the Jungle make it back.

Why would a civilized man want to go to this wild land?

The reason is simple: greed. The bed of the Anaconda River, the main river crossing the jungle, is said to be littered with gold, ready for the taking by those so bold as to dive into it, despite its crocodiles and giant water snakes. The mountains are even more appealing, as they are full of precious ore.

These rumors have lured adventurers and desperate rogues from all over the Dominions.

There is also a city, Verazar, founded fifty years ago by a drunken prospector. It is a place full of diseases, whores, and the scum of the world. It is also the starting point for expeditions into the jungle. Actually, although a certain quantity of gold can be found, the expeditions aren't worth the trouble. Even if someone were lucky enough to find a huge amount of gold and come back to Verazar, avoiding the dangers of the jungle, the cutthroats of the city would rob and kill him in no time.



But greed makes people optimistic and many are willing to try their luck.

After a few shots of cheap liquor in a tavern in Verazar, many adventurers will start talking of a city entirely made of gold hidden deep in the jungle. It is deserted, because its inhabitants died centuries ago, and it is waiting to be found by a lucky prospector! Those who have detailed information claim that Aurica — that's the city's name — is located near the fabled source of the Anaconda River, which no one has ever found. Many expeditions have set off to find Aurica, but nobody has ever returned.

## NORTHEIM

The lands of Norheim are full of deep valleys, wild rivers and ancient forests. Norheim is mostly uninhabited, because the Northlanders live in isolated clans and don't farm on a large scale.

The Northlanders aren't the only dwellers in this immense area. The Cairnlanders, the Nandals, and the few inhabitants of Imperial outposts call this place home.

Norheim is a wild land: wolves, bears, mountain lions and many other creatures roam the land and only the strongest of men can endure life in this harsh place. It is also rich in natural resources, such as wood and excellent stone, and also copper, iron and gold. Yet, the Northlanders are too uncivilized to be skilled in the use of metals. They can barely work them and have no idea how to build a decent mine. It is easier for them to buy or steal metal weapons and tools from the southerners, although some of them are slowly learning the secrets of metalworking, which fascinates them.

An important land feature of Norheim is the Smoking Mountain, or Mount of Fire, a big volcano in the heart of the land. Fifty years ago, a group of Imperials came here and built a strange temple, called the Monastery of the Hammer. The Northlanders attacked it, thinking they would find only weak priests defending precious artifacts. But they were wrong. The temple was inhabited by a horde of metal-clad warriors, who slaughtered the barbarians. Now the Northlanders grudgingly respect their neighbors and some friendly relations are budding. The temple dwellers have revealed themselves as the true followers of Hulian, the Smith God, and are teaching the Northlanders a lot of things, among them the secret of forging iron!

## THE RED DESERT

The sages say that the Red Desert was created by the dust raised by the fall of the Dread Star and it was once a great forest. Seeing it today, it is hard to believe the sages. Rocks and thin reddish sand stretch for hundreds of miles in every direction, interrupted only by the occasional oasis. Despite its appearance, the Red Desert hides several treasures and marvels, like great forests of petrified trees, plains lined with veins of precious ore and dotted with gems sticking out from the ground and, finally, the Red Lotus, a very precious variety of Lotus that lives as tiny spores on the stone petals of desert roses.

It is also a dangerous place, inhabited by deadly beasts. Besides scorpions and snakes of small to giant size, there are Skull Jackals, very dangerous predators, and the dreaded Ulatisha, The Being That Digs in the Sand, a legendary monster.

The Red Desert hosts some Independent Cities and is home to nomads and tribes of herders, the only people capable of surviving in this harsh land. They are divided into clans, usually recognized by the color of their robes.

Brown and Green Nomads are quite peaceful, but the red-robed ones aren't.

These desert dwellers aren't a friendly people, except when they expose their faces, which



happens very rarely. Then, they are jovial and amicable. But, if the face of a Red Nomad is covered by the kballa, a sort of heavy veil, he is ready to assault and rob you of all your belongings, and leave you to die of thirst in the desert, without remorse or good reason.

Some say that the Red Nomads descend from the survivors of the Fallen Realm of Keron, because they speak a strange language and worship desert spirits called Djinns. The Red Nomads are a very warlike people and sometimes trespass into the Ivory Savannah and engage the Ivory Savannah Tribes in bloody battles.

## SYRANTHIA

Syranthia is a land of low, rolling hills and fertile plains. Agriculture is widespread and it produces mainly vegetables, fruit and grapes (Syranthia's wine is famous throughout the Dominions). This is why Faberterra conquered Syranthia many years before the Empire.

Its two main cities are renowned for different reasons. Syranthia City, the capital of the dominion, owes its fame to the Library, the greatest collection of books, scrolls and tablets in the known world. Legions of scholars spend their lives studying such a wealth of knowledge and the city is a place of learning and trade.

Askerios, almost as old as Syranthia City, is actually the most important economic center of the Empire and the biggest port in the known world. Slaves from Ascaia, timber from Northeim, and Water Lotus from the Brown Sea are only some of the goods that can be found there.

Syranthia is ruled by a council of merchant princes, who managed to become independent from the Empire without any bloodshed. In truth, Syranthia still pays tribute to Faberterra, but it is only a very small percentage of its huge riches and certainly a worthwhile investment, if it helps Faberterra in fighting the northern barbarians.

Recently Syranthia is also helping Canymedes II, the Autarch of Kyros, to win the civil war, all in an attempt to preserve the stability of the heart of the Empire.

Despite being mainly farmers, merchants and scholars, Syranthians know how to defend themselves. Their military fleet is impressive and, on the mainland, they boast a tradition of cataphract cavalry, the heaviest mounted troops in the Dominions, usually made up of the younger sons of the merchant elite.

Syranthia represents civilization in its most opulent form. Syranthian merchants are fat and greedy, their women snobbish and adorned with jewelry. Many upper class Syranthians indulge in strange pleasures coming from the south, or even follow the unholy Tricornian religion. The latter use the arts of mages and warlocks to gain an advantage over their competitors. Seemingly rich and happy, Syranthia is probably the home of much evil.

## TRICARNIA

Tricornia is a land of vast plains, crossed by a web of small rivers. The climate is mild and the crops abundant. As mentioned above, Tricornia is divided into Principalities, each ruled by a Priest Prince, although day-to-day business is usually supervised by eunuch slave-bureaucrats.

Tricornians have greatly developed their farming techniques. In the last few centuries, they have used the many rivers of their land to create a great network of irrigation canals for their main source of food production: rice fields.

The rice crops are so abundant that they can feed the masses of slaves who live in this land.

Tricornia is what is left of the great Keronian Empire and the Priest Princes think with the grandiosity of their ancestors.





## HERO'S JOURNAL: THE SEA GUARDIAN OF ASKERIOS

Askerios is famous for its massive Sea Guardian, a fifty-yard tall bronze statue of a man holding a torch. The statue is hollow and doubles as a lighthouse: its torch is the light that leads the ships to the haven of Askerios. There are various stories about the origin of the Sea Guardian. Some say it was built by an ancient king of the city and represents a now forgotten divinity, others say it is a gift from Hordan, fallen from the sky along with the Dread Star. A third theory claims that it is a Keronian relic, found while digging the city's foundations. The Askeronians, however, usually believe one of the first two theories.

Whatever its origin, the Askeronians know that, as long as the Sea Guardian protects its port, Askerios will be prosperous. Another strange fact about the statue is that, after centuries of being exposed to the elements, it is still intact, with no trace of rust on its smooth surface.

Their cities, usually quite small, have a beautiful and complex architecture that even the best masons of Faberterra cannot imitate. However, the center of all important decisions is the Prince's palace, which includes all the most important parts of the city. So, for example, the merchant houses are located in the courtyard of the palace, like the temples and other major facilities. This is something that strangers must be aware of: entering a Tricornian city means entering the Prince's palace.

Everything in it belongs to him and is only temporarily used by the slaves and servants.

The two major social classes are nobles and slaves, but a very small group of middlemen exist. They are freed slaves or the children of freed slaves and work as traders and specialized artisans. They are called freemen and their freedom is by no means guaranteed—they can easily be forced back into slavery.

Tricornia has fought quite a number of harsh wars on its land, mainly against the Iron Empire and the Caleds, but the Northlanders have also occasionally attacked its borders. This is why large parts of it are not inhabited and crumbling ruins dot the land.

Not all the slaves are content with their condition, but for many of them there is no other choice. The few who manage to escape from their cruel masters go north, crossing dangerous deserted



areas, and take refuge in the mountains, where free communities of runaway slaves exist. Here, life is hard for the former slaves, but they do not mind because here they can be their own masters. The Tricarnian Princes know of these communities but do not destroy them. The reason is simple: free men are usually stronger and more intelligent than the average slave and the mountains are a good source of manpower. Every now and then, a Tricarnian Prince takes his army and goes hunting for men in the Brokenchain Mountains. This is both business and pleasure, because few things excite Tricarnian nobles more than hunting men. But lately something has changed. The runaway slaves of the Mountains don't just flee anymore; now, they fight.

Someone has taught them how to defend themselves and, even worse, has given them weapons. The army of last Priest Prince who went to the Mountains to hunt for slaves was butchered and the Prince himself barely managed to escape.

This outrageous behavior cannot be tolerated and will be harshly punished.

## THE TROLL MOUNTAINS

The Troll Mountains mark the northern border of the world. What lies beyond these tall, snowcapped peaks is a mystery even to the sages of Syranthia. What lurks among the mountains, though, is well-known: Trolls — big furry creatures, with a really bad attitude and a taste for human flesh. Many other incredible beasts live in the Troll Mountains, such as giant bears, elks, and vicious snow vipers.

When the winter is harsh and hunger torments their bellies, the trolls leave the mountains and go hunting for men in Northeim and the Cairnlands.

There are two species of trolls. The great trolls, or true trolls, are five-yard tall hulking brutes with razor sharp claws, and it takes dozens of fearless warriors to stop them. Luckily, they are barely smarter than animals and clever tactics, complemented by a lot of luck, are enough to deal with them.

The small trolls, also named Nandals, are a race of primitive cavemen.

The shape of their throats makes them unable to speak; they can only emit low sounds and grunts, so they are named Nandals, which in the Northeim language means 'mute'. Despite being smaller than true trolls, the Nandals are more vicious, because they are gifted with brutish force and a certain degree of intelligence. They usually hunt men for food or kidnap women to mate with them.

The Nandals are less geographically settled than great trolls. When they migrate, entire clans come down from the north, sometimes as far as the Borderlands or in the Iron Mountains. A Nandal invasion is always a major threat to a civilized race, because the cavemen don't parley and give no quarter. They simply kill, pillage, and rape. It is said that the Nandals were once common white men, who had the misfortune of being exposed to massive amounts of the dust from the Dread Star, which mutated them into the aggressive creatures they are today. Some Northeim warriors who ventured into the Troll Mountains to hunt or simply to show their courage claim to have seen ancient paintings representing white men in the caves inhabited by the Nandals.

## VALKHEIM

Valkheim is the new home of the Valk. The clans faithful to Tukul, first son of Dhaar, followed him here and established a new Valk realm.

Today Tukul has been dead for many years, but his kingdom survived him.



Valkheim is a land of grassy plains and rocky hills. It is largely uninhabited, except for some villages of fishermen and farmers on the shores of the Drowned King Sea.

This population is a mix of Cairnlanders and more civilized men from Zandor. Generally, they are peaceful and quite superstitious.

Shortly after coming to Valkheim, the Valk warriors, full of rage over the death of their leader, Dhaar, razed these villages and butchered their inhabitants. After a while, Tukul, who wasn't a fool, understood that these people could be used as slaves by his people, so he spared the lives of the survivors. The Valk call them "the Cows", since they aren't able to fight and are bad riders, but their true name is the Zharim and they are an ancient, peaceful race of farmers.

The Cows are fairly good craftsmen too, and can build boats, which the Valk are not familiar with. Tukul's idea was to create a fleet of ships to transport his men and horses to the Borderlands and invade Faberterra, the heart of the Empire. But this was a short-lived dream: the boats were too primitive, had room for no more than a dozen horses each, and could not sail too far from the coast.

So the plan was abandoned, but the Cows were allowed to live in independent communities and pay tribute to the Valk lords.

Of the many Zharim cities, a single one survives more or less intact today: Zhara, built on the coast and the former capital of the Zharim kingdom. Today it is ruled by the Council of Zharim Elders (or Council of Cows as the Valk mockingly call them), who are subjugated by the invader's power and pay a yearly tribute.

Zhara is very ancient and, surprisingly, has flourished under Valk domination, becoming a hub of the trade in cattle with Jalizar, but today, with the arrival of Deserjaas (see below), many fear this age of prosperity has ended.

Today, the Valk live in the eastern part of the country, leading their traditional, nomadic life, while the Cows continue to live on the coast. The Cows are quite content with the situation: the Valk are harsh masters but protect them from the Cairnlanders, who periodically raid their lands.

What about Dhaar, the leader of the Valk?

On a hill, deep in the steppe, the Valk made the Cows build a massive stone construction. It is the tomb of Dhaar, the greatest ruler of the Valk.

His body lies within, perpetually tended by a special group of Valkyria. For unknown reasons, the corpse is still intact, as if the mighty warrior were asleep and not dead.

The Valkyria believe that the spirit of Sha-Mekri dwells in Dhaar's body and that, sooner or later, he will wake up to lead the Valk horde once more.

This prophecy seems to have been fulfilled sooner everyone expected. Some time ago, a man arrived from





the steppes. He calls himself Deserjaas, which means “successor” in the Valk tongue, and he is enflaming the souls of the Valk warriors like a fire on the autumn steppe: he swears he will crush the Iron Empire under the hooves of his horse and if anyone can do that, it is him (see sidebar).

## JOURNAL: DESERJAAS

The new lord of all Valkheim came from the steppes the day the Sword of Hulian, which the Valk call the Blood Strike, appeared. Dressed in a long robe, he has a black sword hanging at his hip, called Cath-Raga. But his most impressive feature is the polished metal mask covering his face, which depicts the horrible visage of Sha-Mekri, the arch-demon of the Valk.

Nobody knows of what metal this ornament is made of, but more than one person would swear it is made of steel.

Deserjaas has a deep voice, capable of enthralling listeners, and is always surrounded by a sworn guard of fanatical Valkyria, the Valaska, which never leaves his side. To differentiate them from other Valkyria, they dye their hair red, so they are often called the Blood Guard or Red Witches.

But the Valkyria aren't the reason why Deserjaas is so feared: one of the first things he did to achieve power was killing Rogal, son of Tukul, and king of Valkheim by right. If the stories are true, he didn't even unsheath Cath-Raga, but simply raised a hand, and Rogal was set afire, like a pyre of pine wood. Deserjaas laughed, hearing his enemy's screams, and the clans bowed in front of him, horses included.

## THE VALK STEPPE

This land is only the first, little chunk of the Far East, where whole hordes of Valk clans and other strange populations live. Very little is known about them.

## THE VERDANT BELT

The area of the Verdant Belt could be a true paradise on earth. It is a fertile land, where farming is easy and the climate mild.

But it is surrounded by vultures. It is threatened from the north by the Savannah Tribes, who often trespass into the Belt with their herds. To the south there are the dark Lush Jungles, from where the Pygmies and other dark things occasionally come looking for prey. But the greatest evil comes from the west in the shape of Caldeian slave traders, who travel down the Slave Route ending in Heaven's Door, in Lhoban. They smile a lot, and bring drugs and precious metal weapons, but in exchange they want a huge amount of slaves.

The Verdant Belt is inhabited by farmers of the Ivory Savannah Tribes. They mainly grow bananas, the staple of their diet, and live in fortified villages. They use a particular farming technique called “slash and burn”; they burn large parts of the rainforest and then cultivate the deforested area for four to five years. After this period, the soil is depleted, so the area is abandoned and a new village is founded somewhere else.



The Verdant Belt tribes are fiercely independent, but in the last few years some of them have been subjugated by the White King of the Ivory Savannah. They pay tribute in exchange for the King's protection and are starting to trade vegetables for cattle, a business that is mutually profitable. Obviously, Caldeia doesn't look kindly on the new peace spreading across the Belt and, wherever possible, it tries to bring war to the area.

The people of this land are great storytellers, and they have many legends and strange stories to tell. One of the scariest ones is about a cursed race of Jaguar Men, who live in the thick of the Lush Jungles and leave only to hunt the Ivory Savannah Tribes. There is no evidence of their existence, but lately entire villages along the border have been found empty of their inhabitants. Is the legend true or is something even darker stretching its fingers over the Belt?

## ZANDOR

Zandor is what remains of the eastern Iron Empire.

A very large area, for some reason Zandor never unified into a large empire of its own, but the various city states remained largely independent.

In truth there are stories of the fabled "Kings of Zandor", but these are so old that nobody believes them anymore. The only central authority Zandor ever had, and then only for brief periods of time, was that of Jalizar, the City of Thieves.

Before the Valk Invasion, in fact, Jalizar was the biggest city in the world, rivaling Faberterra in beauty and riches and during the apogee of the Iron Empire, the Governor of Jalizar had a power greater than that of most kings.

Then the Valk arrived and destroyed everything.

The immense region of Zandor — once full of prosperous towns, rich villages and well-tended fields — is now a mass of crumbling ruins, inhabited only by wild animals and the unholy beasts summoned by the Valkyria and left wandering free.

The fields have reverted to forests and rocky plains, only good as pastures for the Valk herds, and twisted trees grow in the deserted palaces.

After the death of Dhaar, the Valk warlord, the clans faithful to Juggu, Dhaar's second son, remained here, believing they could conquer the whole land in a few months.

But Juggu wasn't a lucky man. He died after three months from an infected wound and the various clans, driven by age-old rivalries, soon lost their short-lived unity.

Today, the Zandorian Valk are too divided to conquer the whole region, but they are strong enough to be a constant threat, so control over the land is virtually shared.

The Zandorians live in isolated, independent settlements, with strong militia and draconian laws, and they can only protect the nearby territory. The Valk, instead, wander the region freely, following their nomadic customs.

In truth, nobody is capable of ruling over Zandor.





# HEROES

"MY NAME IS SHANGOR, DOG! AND YOU'LL  
DIE FOR PUTTING ME IN THESE CHAINS!"

- Riotous slave to his new owner in the flesh market of Faberterra

## HEROIC CONCEPTS

The world of *Beasts & Barbarians* is full of interesting characters, but you might be a little overwhelmed or simply out of ideas, so here is a list of character types you can use or tweak to create your outstanding hero.

**Adventurer.** The typical jack-of-all-trades, adventurers come from all walks of life and have abilities in various fields. An adventurer can be a treasure hunter, a traveler with great wanderlust or a clever scoundrel. Whatever his past, adventure is his daily business.

**Amazon.** The Dread Sea Dominions are a very chauvinistic world and women are usually seen



as objects for pleasure or, even worse, as breeding machines. An Amazon is a woman who has emancipated herself; she fights and lives exactly like a man. Ascaian Amazons are the only Amazon culture of the Dread Sea Dominions, but outside Ascaia many a courageous woman can leave her mark on society, for example the Spear Widows of Northeim, women who, having lost their families, pick up their father's weapons and go seeking revenge.

**Assassin.** An Assassin can find employment in any place and in any culture. He might be a shady lone wolf, a member of the powerful Assassins' Guild of Jalizar, or an executioner following one of the dark cults in the decadent cities of the Iron Empire. Whatever his background, this individual is very skilled at one task: killing.

**Bandit.** The Empire, the law, and civilization itself are crumbling, and the world is full of wolves ready to take advantage of the situation. This character is one of them. He usually earns his living by sacking, pillaging and stealing. Most Bandits are ruthless bastards, but the more sympathetic ones steal from the rich to give to the poor. These individuals are usually liked by the commoners and become the subjects of stories and ballads.

**Barbarian.** Barbarian literally means "one who stutters" and originally the word identified all the people who don't speak the Imperial language fluently. Today the term refers to all the uncivilized populations beyond the boundaries of the Iron Empire. Traditionally, barbarians have been represented in two ways: as hulking brutes with none of the traits of civilized people, living only by the law of the sword, or as noble savages, living peacefully in communion with nature — an ability that civilized men have lost. Most barbarians don't perfectly fit either archetype, but are a mix of both.

**Courtesan.** A courtesan can be an exotic dancer at the court of a prince, or a simple tavern wench. Whatever her origin, she is usually beautiful and, besides her erotic skills, she is quite capable of manipulating the stupid males with her beauty.

**Entertainer.** Poets, bards, acrobats, mimes and every type of showmen are common in the Dominions. They tell stories, report news and entertain people with their performances. Some of them, like court poets, can be firmly rooted in a single place, but many are wanderers, taking their songs and shows wherever they can find an audience.

**Gladiator.** Gladiators fight in the arena for the delight of the crowds. They can be rich celebrities, at whose sight women sigh and faint, or desperate toughs who wrestle with rabid dogs in back alleys for a few copper coins. In many places gladiators are slaves, though they usually lead a better life than a free man, constantly pampered and well-nourished by their master. At least until they meet their end in the arena.

**Lotusmaster.** Skilled alchemists, poisoners and healers, these feared individuals know how to use the Lotus to heal a wound, kill a man in horrible ways, or summon strange visions from the air. They are a reclusive sect and very jealous of their secrets.

**Mercenary.** Some fight for an ideal and some for self-defense, but a mercenary fights only for loot and money. Usually, but not always, he is a skilled warrior. A big mouth and an impressive appearance might be the only weapons a mercenary possesses and it is difficult to know before the battle if the man you hired is a real fighter or just a windbag. But remember, regardless of his skill, a mercenary is first and foremost loyal to his purse.

**Monk.** Monks are people in search of enlightenment and self-perfection. Through meditation and contemplation, they learn how to perform amazing feats impossible for the common man. Some of them can endure thirst and hunger for months, while others can kill a man with a single bare-handed blow. The most famous monks come from faraway Lhoban, but several other monastic groups exist, like the Stylites of the Land of Idols. Some of them are pacifists, philosophers, sages, and men of knowledge, while others, usually martial artists of great prowess, actively fight the evil



of the world. Note that not every monk is pure and good: among them, sadly, there also exist sects dedicated to evil, which they believe is a faster route to perfection.

**Noble.** Decadent princes of Tricarnia, merchant lords of Syranthia, Northlander tribe chiefs, all these people are nobles, born to rule the people, and responsible for their subjects' safety. They mostly lead a stable and pampered life, but some of them decide, or are forced, to choose the path of adventure.

**Nomad.** Nomads are constantly on the move. Some of them, like the Valk, are herders, so they are forced to move to let their beasts graze, while others are hunters that follow the migrations of their quarry, like the Ivory Savannah Tribes hunting buffalos in the Ivory Savannah. Some nomads move on foot but a great number of them have horses and are excellent riders.

**Pirate.** The scourge of the seas, these men know no lord other than the captain of their ship, and prey on any vessel they find. Some of them still possess a glint of honor and humanity, but for the most part they are just a bunch of criminals. A specific type of pirates are the dreaded Corsairs of Caldeia, a group of pardoned sea scum who now actively roam the Endless Ocean fighting other pirates at the orders of the King of Caldeia.

**Priest.** There are many gods in the Dread Sea Dominions, and thus a great number of priests. Despite sharing the same title, there are many differences among them. A depraved priest of Hordan, for example, is very different from a pious Shepherd of the Divine Couple or a midwife priestess of Etu. Remember that, in the Dread Sea Dominions, priests have no supernatural powers. If they want them, they must devote themselves to sorcery, a very dangerous path.

**Sage.** Although the world is in the hands of warriors, barbarians and other men of the sword, there are some who actively look for and preserve knowledge, in all its forms. These individuals are Sages. They might be archivists at the Library of Syranthia or enlightened aristocrats with a passion for books. Whatever their origin, knowledge is what they seek and protect.

**Sailor.** A wanderer of the seas, a sailor feels more at his ease on the deck of a ship than on solid ground. He has seen a lot of places and kissed women of many different complexions, and he wants more of both. He isn't against a little piracy if it keeps his purse fat, but mainly he is a traveler and an adventurer.

**Slave.** Sadly, slavery is very common, so it is no surprise if a hero is born in chains or made a slave. Slaves come from all social classes, and a slave, or an ex-slave, can be a very motivated character and have a very wide array of skills. He can be a lowly servant, but also a warrior slave of the Tricarnian army, or a sage or a scribe kept alive for his unusual abilities. Remember, anyone can fall into slavery.

**Sorcerer.** Magic is a dangerous business that requires constant application and a strong mind. The very soul of the practitioner is involved in the dark rituals necessary to bind the arcane forces to the caster's will. So mages of all types must be aware of the risks they run when they whisper their forgotten spells. A sorcerer is a generic term for all those wizards, warlocks and petty practitioners involved in magic. Although many of them are only charlatans, the few individuals truly gifted with magical powers are among the most powerful, and most dangerous, individuals in all the Dominions.

**Thief.** Wherever there is wealth, there is someone ready to snatch it. A thief is an expert in stealing property, and no safe, wall, or guard can stop her. She can be a member of a powerful thieves' guild, like those of Jalizar, or a freelancer, but her skills are not in question when it comes to stealth and break-ins.

**Warrior.** The sword rules the world in this troubled age. This individual can be a clan warrior from the savage north, a slave fighter of Tricarnia, an elegant cataphract of Syranthia, a hoplite of the Iron Phalanxes, a simple caravan guard or whatever you want, but his main feature is his ability in the art of war.



# CHARACTER CREATION

The creation of a player character for *Beasts & Barbarians* follows the standard Savage Worlds rules.

All playable characters are humans, so the heroes begin with a free Edge.

Normally, *Beasts & Barbarians* heroes are more experienced than standard fantasy adventurers; they start the game at Seasoned Rank (20 Experience Points).

## SKILLS

The following skills are modified or extended to fit the setting.

## KNOWLEDGE

The following are the most useful areas of knowledge Skills in this setting.

**Arcana.** This covers the vast field of magic, the occult and the supernatural.

**Battle.** Useful for mass combats.

**History.** This covers knowledge of the past.

**Legends and Lore.** From common folklore to knowledge of myths and fantastic creatures and places.

**Religion.** This covers all religious matters. In some cases, it can also be used, with a penalty, to cover matters of Arcana or Legends and Lore.

**Specific Area.** The focus can be the Empire, North Dominions, South Dominions, Eastern Lands, or a specific city or country.

## PILOTING

This skill isn't used.

## DRIVING

This skill is used to drive chariots, carts, and other similar vehicles.

## STEALTH

Beside its other uses, Stealth is used to deliver poison while staying unnoticed. Pouring poison into a tankard while no one is looking, for example, at a feast or in a crowded tavern, requires a

## TWEAKING AND MIXING CONCEPTS

Characters, like real people, have a past and are the result of their past experiences. This is particularly true for sword and sorcery heroes.

So you can create a more vivid hero by mixing and tweaking the concepts. For example, by merging together a Monk and a Bandit, you can create a hero who, brought up as a monk in faraway Lhoban, has become corrupted by vice while traveling in the western countries and turned to banditry to satisfy his new needs. He could be trying to regain his former purity or to enjoy his current state to the full.

Whatever his choice, this hero can make for an interesting character.

Similarly, you can combine a Barbarian and a Slave. Your hero is a former Ivory Savannah Tribe barbarian who was captured by Caldeian slave hunters and sold as a slave in Tricarnia. When the adventure starts, he has just managed to free himself and is trying to return south to his homeland...

Once you grasp the technique, it is easy to create interesting characters in no time.



Stealth roll. On a failure, someone notices the attempt. In a one-to-one situation (like two people drinking together) or when someone is explicitly paying attention, delivering poison requires an opposed roll between the poisoner's Stealth and the observer's Notice.

## LITERACY, LANGUAGES AND A REALITY CHECK

The Dread Sea Dominions are a very illiterate world. So, by the standard game rules, almost all characters should have the Illiterate Hindrance. Yet, this would cause a generic flattening of the heroes. Hence, the Hindrance is ignored and each player is allowed to decide if his hero knows how to read and write or not (depending on the hero's background). Illiterate characters have an extra Skill point, to be spent on a Smarts-based skill. Characters can become literate during the game by spending an Advance. A hero starts the game knowing a number of languages equal to half his Smarts die, plus his native tongue as per the Multiple Languages setting rule. New languages can be acquired through advancements.

# HINDRANCES

## FORBIDDEN HINDRANCES

The following Hindrances aren't used in this setting: All Thumbs, Doubting Thomas, and Illiterate.

## MODIFIED HINDRANCES

### POVERTY (MINOR)

Besides starting with half the amount of money, a Poor hero also halves his Savings (see SEPC page 117).

## NEW HINDRANCES

Some new Hindrances are available in this setting.

### CAROUSER (MINOR)

The hero usually puts himself in danger while relaxing and feasting. Whenever he decides to draw a card for the After the Adventure Table, he draws two cards and the Game Master chooses which of the two applies (usually the worst).

### DAMSEL IN DISTRESS (MAJOR)

The world of *Beasts & Barbarians* isn't inhabited only by muscular warriors, witty rogues,



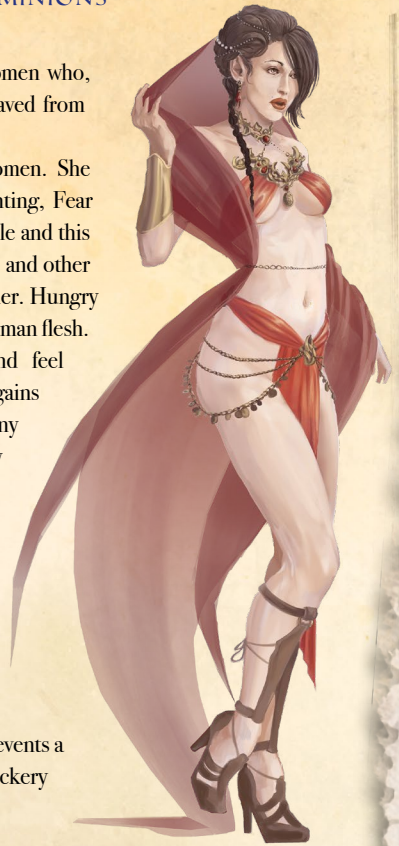
and powerful sorcerers. It is also a world of beautiful women who, sometimes, put themselves in danger and are hopefully saved from such perils by valiant heroes.

A Damsel in Distress is one of these unfortunate women. She is totally unable to defend herself, so she has -2 to Fighting, Fear rolls, and to resist Tests of Will. She appears very vulnerable and this makes her a favorite target for slave hunters, evil magicians and other bad guys, who have in mind a "fate worse than death" for her. Hungry monsters might also attack her to satiate their craving for human flesh.

Conversely, neutral or good characters like her and feel protective towards her tender body. For these reasons, she gains +2 to Charisma and receives an additional Benny. This Benny can be used as normal or, once per session, she can freely give it to a friend (as per the Common Bond Edge).

A Damsel in Distress can learn how to cope with the harshness of the world. Every time she gains an advance she is allowed a Spirit (-4) roll. In the case of success, she loses one of the three penalties above. Once all the penalties are removed, she loses the additional Benny and the capability to share it but retains her Charisma bonus.

Damsels in Distress are generally female, but nothing prevents a male from taking this Hindrance, except for the constant mockery of his companions.



## DEPENDENT (MAJOR)

Fiction is full of heroes having old aunts, love interests, sons and other weak persons in their care. These characters, rather than being an asset, are a limitation for the hero who must do all he can to protect them. Dependents are also a very good choice when the bad guys must kidnap, torture, poison or generally threaten the hero.

In game terms, a Dependent is a Henchman, run by the GM. As a rule of thumb he should have only 3 points in Attributes and 10 Skill points, but this is only a recommendation, the GM is free to build him as he sees fit.

The hero must pay real attention to his Dependent: if he is harmed in a serious way (GM's decision), the adventurer begins the next session with one Benny less. If he is killed, the character starts with no Bennies, and must replace this Hindrance with another one.

Note that it is perfectly fine for a Dependent to be useful, in some cases, but he must be more of a problem than a help in the majority of cases.

## FEAR OF MAGIC (MINOR/MAJOR)

Magic is always mistrusted in the Dread Sea Dominions, but the hero is a particular case: he truly dreads it. With the minor version of the Edge, he tries in every way to avoid the supernatural and even friendly magic.

As a Major Hindrance, his revulsion also prevents him from using magical objects, Lotus potions included, and whenever forced to face or use magic, the character must make a Fear roll.



## IRASCIBLE (MINOR)

The hero cannot stand insults of any kind and is always ready to react to them. Besides the roleplaying effects, he also suffers -2 when resisting Taunts or Smarts-based Tricks. As partial compensation, a hero with the Berserk Edge can apply a -1 to the Smarts roll to go into the berserk state.

## LOST ON THE WAY (MINOR OR MAJOR)

You must have the Enlightenment Arcane Background to take this Hindrance. Your deeds or your lifestyle have made you stray from the Path of Enlightenment to become, for instance, a Jan Tong thug of Jalizar, or simply lost your faith. The minor version of the Hindrance means your Enlightenment skill cannot start above d8 and you cannot raise it further, even with advances. The major version is even harsher: it works exactly like the minor one, but you can't take any New Power or Power Points Edges. Removing this Hindrance is possible through a personal quest to find Enlightenment again. In this case, the Hindrance should be replaced with another suitable one.

## SHARP-TONGUED (MINOR)

Certain people are born to provoke. You are sarcastic, sharp-tongued and, even in combat, you waste time babbling something insulting about your opponent's personal hygiene or his mother's profession. A Sharp-Tongued hero must spend his first action in any combat on a Taunt Test of Will. He can perform other actions in the round, with the normal multi-action penalty. He can also avoid this restriction by spending a Benny. In addition, his somewhat unnerving attitude limits his social abilities: he cannot raise his Persuasion skill over d8. As minor compensation, a Sharp-Tongued hero gains +1 to Taunt rolls.

# EDGES

**Enlightenment and Obscurement:** the two paths of the monks are complementary and opposite, but mechanically they work in a very similar way. Wherever you find "Enlightenment" as prerequisite of an Edge, you can replace it with "Obscurement" and vice versa, unless the Edge description explicitly states otherwise.

## FORBIDDEN EDGES

These Edges aren't used in this setting: Adept, MacGyver, Mentalist, Mr. Fix It, and Wizard.

## MODIFIED EDGES

### ACE

**Requirements:** Novice, Boating *or* Driving *or* Riding d8+

This Edge is slightly modified to work on chariots (Driving), ships (Boating) and mounts (Riding). Each of these "vehicles" requires a different version of the Edge; Charioteer (Driving), Quartermaster (Boating), or Born in the Saddle (Riding). A hero with one of these Edges adds +2 to Driving, Boating or Riding rolls, as appropriate. In addition, he may also spend Bennies on Soak rolls for a vehicle, vessel or mount he controls, by making a Driving, Boating or Riding roll at -2 (canceling the usual +2). Each success and raise soaks a wound and any critical hit that would have resulted from it.



# ARCANE BACKGROUND

Three new arcane backgrounds are used in *Beasts & Barbarians*: Lotusmastery, Sorcery, and Enlightenment. All the other arcane backgrounds are banned. See Chapter 3: Magic for further details.

## CHAMPION

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background (Enlightenment), Enlightenment d6+, Spirit d8+, Strength d6+, Vigor d8+, Fighting d8+

Apart from the different requirements, this Edge works as usual.

## HOLY/UNHOLY WARRIOR

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background (Enlightenment), Enlightenment d8+, Spirit d8+

Apart from the different requirements, this Edge works as usual.

## NOBLE

See Rich and Filthy Rich for monetary changes. Otherwise, it works as usual.

## RICH AND FILTHY RICH

For adventuring heroes, these Edges grant respectively five times and ten times the starting funds, but they bestow no regular income. For NPCs they work in the customary way.

## SOUL DRAIN

**Requirements:** Novice, Arcane Background (Sorcery), Sorcery d8+, Knowledge (Arcana) d8+

Apart from the different requirements, this works as usual.

# BACKGROUND EDGES

## BEAST RIDER

**Requirements:** Variable minimum Rank, Riding d6+

This character is one of the most dreaded warriors of the Dominions, because he has a terrible beast under his control and he rides into battle on it! In game terms he gains one of the creatures in the table below as his mount and animal companion, but the GM and the player are free to invent a new one or to “tame” a suitable creature from the Bestiary. The creature is a Henchman, absolutely loyal to the character, and can be promoted to Wild Card status by spending an advance. If the beast dies, it isn’t replaced automatically, and the hero must buy or find and tame another one. Note that having a big beast can cause several problems too (see sidebar).

## BEAST RIDER TABLE

CREATURE	MINIMUM RANK	OTHER REQUIREMENTS
Balkoth	Seasoned	Fighting d8+, Intimidation d8+, must be Tricornian.
Lion	Novice	Spirit d6+, Survival d6+, must be an Amazon of Shakara
Jalka	Novice	Must be a Valk Jalka Maiden (a virgin Valkyria, see SEGM).
Shadow Bat	Veteran	Must be Tricornian or know the <i>summon ally (shadow bat)</i> Power.
War Buffalo	Novice	Vigor d6+, must be from the Ivory Savannah.



## GM TIP: HANDLING BEAST RIDERS

The Beast Rider Edge can seem very powerful but there are some points to keep in mind.

First, many of these creatures are BIG, so they cannot enter small caverns or the majority of buildings, and therefore they are not very useful in many adventures. Second, many of these creatures are scary. They are known and tolerated in Tricornia, the Valk Steppes and the Ivory Savannah, but a character taking them elsewhere in the Dominions should expect to be received with fear or even with swords and arrows.

That said, the GM has the final call on whether to allow this Edge to player characters, or not.

## BLINDSEEKER

**Requirements:** Novice, Enlightenment d8+, Notice d8+, Spirit d8+, Blind Hindrance

This character is one of the Blindseekers, a Lhobanese monk who, during the night of the appearance of the Sword of Hulian, in 2513 AF, suddenly lost his sight, but in the following months experienced the sharpening of all other senses, and gained the ability to perceive the aura of other creatures. The Lhobanese think that the Blindseekers received their "gift" to recognize the new Enlightened One and bring him to Lhoban, and this is their life's task.

In game terms, a Blindseeker has senses so sharp that he doesn't suffer from the normal effects of the Blind Hindrance (but still receives the free bonus Edge). In addition, he can use the *analyze foe* Power at will. He can use the 1 Power Point version for free (but he must pay the cost for the 2 Power Points version as usual) and it lasts two Rounds/Rank.

Obviously, a Blindseeker ignores Lighting modifiers.

Blindseekers receive great respect from all the other monks and Jademen in general, which is represented by +2 Charisma toward them.

Note that being a Blindseeker isn't an easy life: if he suffers Backlash while using his powers, the character also loses the benefits of this Edge, becoming a normal, blind person for all

purposes for the duration of the Backlash.

## BRUTE

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

This Edge represents the bad side of barbarism (while Savage represents its good side). This hero has the strong, feral attributes of a beast and sneers with open disdain at the decadence of civilization. His philosophy is simple and clear: the strong survive, the weak succumb. In combat, he unleashes his primitive nature; this causes all melee attacks to be made at an additional +1 to damage rolls, +2 if he hits with a raise.

## FALLEN NOBLE

**Requirements:** Novice

A staple of heroic fantasy is the fallen noble, an important man or woman who has somehow lost his or her birthright. This is a modified version of the Noble Edge, to be used with this type of background.

A Fallen Noble has +1 Charisma. He has a certain amount of social importance, but not as much as if he occupied his rightful position. In addition, he can choose one of these three advantages.

**Follower.** A servant of some type accompanies the hero. He can be a faithful retainer, a sworn defender, a teacher or whoever the character wishes. He is a Henchman and his stats are set by the Game Master. If the follower dies, he isn't replaced. When the hero reaches Veteran rank, he can promote the follower to Wild Card status by spending an advance.



**Bag of Gold.** The hero has lost his privileges but he has saved some money, at least. He starts with three times the standard amount of funds.

**Heirloom.** The hero owns a minor relic, specified by the Game Master.

If the Fallen Noble manages to regain his status, this Edge is replaced by the standard Noble Edge, but the character retains the follower, money, or heirloom he chose when taking this Edge.

Note that acquiring this Edge requires GM approval.

## FORMER GLADIATOR

**Requirements:** Novice, Agility d6+, Fighting d8+, Intimidation d6+

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.

## GHOULBLOOD

**Requirements:** Vigor d6+, Must be a Cairnlander

During long and moonless nights, Ancestors sometimes visit the beds of young Cairnlander women. Children born of these strange unions have a grayish complexion and are not totally human. They have +2 to any rolls against undead magic powers and undead creatures don't generally threaten them, unless attacked. In game terms, a Ghoulblood hero can make a Reaction roll when meeting an undead. With a Neutral or better result, he isn't attacked. In addition, a Ghoulblood hero tends to heal very fast. He is allowed a Natural Healing roll every two days.

## HOPLITE TRAINING

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

The hero spent a long time wearing heavy armor. Maybe he trained as a Hoplite, a phalanx soldier, or in a similar military unit. When calculating encumbrance, he considers only half of the weight of the armor and shield he wears. In addition, he has +2 to Vigor rolls to resisting fatigue caused by long marches and by wearing armor in hot environments.

## RELIC

**Requirements:** Novice

The hero begins the game with a major Relic of some sort, decided by the Game Master. As this is quite a powerful Edge, one of the character's Hindrances (chosen by the player) must be linked to the Relic (for example an Enemy wants it or the hero has a Vow which must be fulfilled using the Relic).

If the Relic is stolen or destroyed the character can replace this Edge with another one, respecting all its prerequisites.

## SAVAGE

**Requirements:** Novice, Survival d8+

This hero was either born in the bitter mountains of north, or lived in the Ivory Savannah or in the insidious Lush Jungle.

## GM TIP: BLIND-SEEKERS IN PLAY

Playing a Blindseeker hero can be a lot of fun, but there are some important things both for the player and the GM alike to consider.

**The Quest.** A Blindseeker received his "gift", if it can be called that, for a reason: to find the new Enlightened One. The character could (or should) take the Vow Hindrance to reflect this mission, but there are also rumors of monks who refused the mission, and lost their way...

**Blind is Blind.** In general, a Blindseeker, due to his extremely sharp other senses, can do everything normal people do, but if the GM so rules, there may be things that are impossible for him to do, like recognizing a color, reading a book and so on.



Whatever his origin, he is the stereotypical “noble savage”, perfectly at ease with nature. He perceives incoming danger by smelling the air, climbs cliffs and tall trees with the agility of a monkey, and instinctively recognizes the right herbs to cure wounds and diseases. While in a natural environment (this Edge doesn't work in ruins, cities or underground), he has two advantages when using the Healing, Notice and Climbing skills. First, if his skill is lower than his controlling attribute, he can roll using the attribute value instead of the skill value (so Strength instead of Climbing and Smarts instead of Healing and Notice). If the skill is equal to or higher than the controlling attribute, he gains +1 to the skill roll. Second, he never suffers penalties for lack of equipment on rolls using these skills.

## COMBAT EDGES

### ARMOR USE

**Requirements:** Wild Card, Novice, Fighting d6+, Vigor d8+

This hero is very skilled in using armor to absorb the impact of blows. Before rolling to soak a wound, he can activate this Edge. In this case, the current Armor value is added to the Soak roll. To keep the game fast, furious and fun, the torso armor value is always used, even for called shots targeting specific body parts. This rough treatment ruins the armor and it loses one Armor point after each use of this Edge, but a warrior considers that a good bargain, if it helps him stay alive! Damaged armor can be fixed with a Repair roll. Each roll requires 1d4 hours and restores a single Armor point, two with a raise. Armor dropped to zero Armor Bonus becomes useless junk and cannot be repaired.

### CLOAK HERO/HEROINE

**Requirements:** Novice, Agility d8+, Fighting d6+, Stealth d6+

What is a cloak-and-dagger scoundrel without her cape? This Edge allows the heroine to use any cape, mantle, or cloak in combat to deflect blows and hinder enemies. As long as the heroine is unencumbered, she can use a cloak as a shield (gaining +1 Parry, +2 Toughness against ranged attacks), while still having both hands free (although she cannot use another shield). In addition, whenever she performs a Trick using a cloak, the player can place a Small Burst Template on the battlefield with one edge in contact with the heroine. The Trick affects any character caught by the Template.

### CLOAK MASTER/MISTRESS

**Requirements:** Heroic, Cloak Hero/Heroine, Charisma 1+, Persuasion d8+

The heroine can use her cape in such a flamboyant way that enemies are literally dazed by her coolness. Every time she initiates a Trick involving her cloak, she can add half her Charisma (rounded up) to the roll. In addition, the cloak counts as Light Armor (+1), but doesn't preclude the use of the Loincloth Hero/Bikini Heroine Edge.

### DISTRACT

**Requirements:** Novice, Fighting d8+, Smarts d6+, Taunt d4+

This fighter knows how to distract an enemy during melee, at the cost of temporarily decreasing the effectiveness of his attacks. Once per round, before attempting a Fighting roll against an opponent, he can make a free Trick against the same opponent. This doesn't count as an additional action, but it causes -2 to all the hero's damage rolls until his next turn (so the penalty applies also if he uses First Strike or other similar Edges before his next turn). This Edge cannot be combined with a Wild Attack.



## LOINCLOTH HERO/BIKINI HEROINE

**Requirements:** Wild Card, Novice, Agility d8+, Vigor d6+

Comics, movies and books always depict bare-chested barbarians fighting hordes of enemies without suffering the slightest scratch. They also show scantily-clad amazons engaging in savage melees with bug-eyed creatures and finishing their fight with no more than tousled hair. This Edge allows you to emulate this cinematic way of fighting. A hero or heroine with this Edge can make a free Soak roll for each wounding attack as long as they are unarmored. To get the bonus, a character must have no torso armor on (shields are allowed). If he wants, he can wear bracers, greaves or a helm, but these are only cosmetic, granting no armor bonus.

## LOINCLOTH GOD/ BIKINI GODDESS

**Requirements:** Wild Card, Heroic, Dodge, Loincloth Hero/Bikini Heroine, Vigor d8+

While bare-chested, your hero is rarely threatened by minor attacks. As long as he is unarmored, the sheer power of his cool, barbaric appearance raises his Wild Die by one step when soaking wounds (usually from d6 to d8). In addition, once per session, he can add his Charisma, if positive, to a single Soak roll.

## MIGHTY ROAR/WITTY REMARK

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

Combat is more than mere sword-bashing: barbarians roar before slashing you with their axes, while rapier-witted swordsmen puncture you with words before stabbing you with their blades. When taking this Edge, the player must choose either Intimidation (in this case the Edge is called Mighty Roar) or Taunt (and the Edge is called Witty Remark). He can make a free Test of Will of the relevant type per round, which doesn't count as an action.

## MOUNTED DEVIL

**Requirements:** Novice, Fighting d8+, Riding d8+

Fighting on horseback isn't simple, but this warrior knows how to (or has a natural knack for) getting the best from his mount in a fight, and knows all the tricks you need in the saddle. In game terms, when on horseback and unencumbered, he can choose one of the following: +1 to a Fighting roll, or two points of Cover, or the chance to perform a free Agility Trick, exploiting his mount and using the better of Agility or Riding skill. The choice is made at the beginning of the character's turn.

## NIMBLE STRIKE/SOUL STRIKE

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Agility d8+ or Enlightenment d8+, Fighting d8+, Vigor d6+

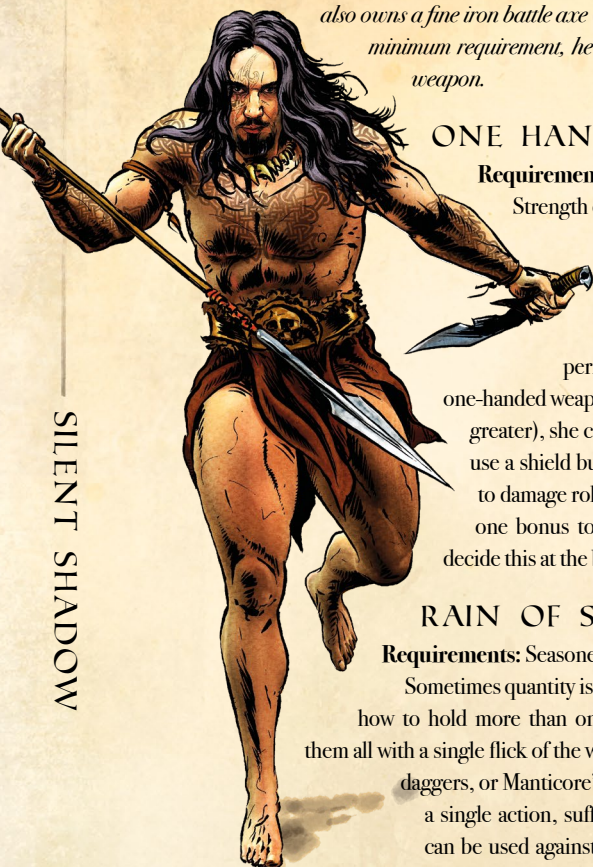
This Edge comes in two different forms: Nimble Strike is favored by light, fast rogues who know how to put their great nimbleness to best use, while Soul Strike is used by monks with great inner strength, who can channel it into melee attacks.

When picking this Edge, the character chooses a single melee weapon for which he meets the Strength requirements. As long as he is unencumbered, he deals damage with that weapon using Agility instead of Strength to calculate damage (for Nimble Strike) or Spirit instead of Strength (for Soul Strike). Note that the chosen weapon must be a specific one (like "Dingus' favorite dagger" or "my black staff"), not simply a class of weapons. The character can decide to change the weapon with which he has this Edge, but at least two weeks are needed to learn to use the new weapon in the proper way. This Edge can be taken more than once, choosing a different weapon every time.

*Example: Dingus of Jalizar has Strength d6, Agility d10 and the Nimble Strike (trusty short*



*sword) Edge. Normally, with his favorite blade he would deal Str+d6 (2d6) damage but, thanks to this Edge, he deals Agi+d6 (d10+d6), as long as he is unencumbered. Dingus also owns a fine iron battle axe (Str+d8) but, as his Strength is lower than the minimum requirement, he cannot take the Nimble Strike Edge for that weapon.*



## ONE HAND AND A HALF

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

Your heroine has mastered the technique of fighting with a one-handed weapon using two hands. This versatile fighting style allows her to strike harder blows or perform nimble defenses. When fighting with a one-handed weapon of at least medium size (Str+d6 damage or greater), she can use it two-handed. In this case, she cannot use a shield but gains one of the two following benefits: +1 to damage rolls or +1 Parry. The character can switch from one bonus to the other with a free action, but she must decide this at the beginning of her turn.

## RAIN OF STEEL

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Quick Draw, Throwing d8+

Sometimes quantity is better than quality. The character has learned how to hold more than one blade between his fingers and can throw them all with a single flick of the wrist. He can throw up to 3 daggers, throwing daggers, or Manticore's Stings (they must all be of the same type) in a single action, suffering -2 to all the attack rolls. The weapons can be used against different targets. Given that his grip on the weapons isn't very strong when he uses this Edge, for damage purposes the Strength of the thrower is considered at most d8.

## STRONG ARM

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Strength d6+, Shooting d6+ or Throwing d6+

Your character has an exceptionally powerful arm and this influences how far he can throw spears, sling projectiles, daggers, and other muscle-propelled distance weapons. This Edge applies to any ranged weapon that deals damage based on Strength, such as a throwing axe or a sling. It doesn't work with fixed damage weapons, like bows. It increases the Range brackets of these weapons by 50% (round fractions down). To keep the modified ranges consistent with the other weapons, first calculate Short Range and then multiply it by 2 and by 4 to obtain Medium and Long ranges. So, a throwing axe (Range 3/6/12), used with this Edge will have Range brackets of 4/8/16, not 6/9/18.

## TOOTH AND NAIL

**Requirements:** Veteran, Nerves of Steel

No matter how hard you punish this hero, each wound inflicted is only another reason to stand up and grin. The character receives +1 to damage rolls for each Wound he currently has, up to +2.



## LEADERSHIP EDGES

## TERROR OF FOES

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

The character is so terrible in combat that he makes enemies tremble at the sight of his blade carving a path of blood through them. Enemies within the Command Radius of the Terror of Foes suffer -1 to Spirit rolls. In addition, after he kills an enemy in melee, the survivors also suffer -1 to Fighting rolls against him till the end of the scene.

## POWER EDGES

## ANCIENT PACT

**Requirements:** Novice, Smarts d6+, Spirit d8+, Charisma 1+, Noble or Fallen Noble

The relationship of the hero's family with demons is rooted deep in antiquity. In the forgotten past one of the character's ancestors made a pact with one such entity, a bond that passed from father to son till today. In game terms the character gains the *summon ally* Power, and can evoke a single creature (a Demon) of up to Veteran rank.

The creature is at least a Henchman and is a specific individual (i.e. Claatush the Demonic Mastiff, not just any Demonic Mastiff). If the Demon is killed, he cannot be summoned again for the rest of the scenario or until proper rituals are performed (these cost at least 200 Moons/ Rank of the creature). The trapping of the spell is usually very simple: it requires the character to speak aloud the True Name of the demon (see SEGM, but it grants no bonus to the roll), or the possession of a particular item (player's choice). In the second case, the duration of the Power is increased by two rounds. If the character doesn't have the Sorcery Arcane Background, he uses Spirit as his arcane skill and has a number of Power Points, dedicated to this Power, equal to half his Smarts die plus 1/Rank. So a Seasoned character with Smarts d8 has  $4+2=6$  Power Points.

If the character is a sorcerer, he can roll on Sorcery. If he already knows the *summon ally* Power he has the following advantages: he receives +2 to the Sorcery roll to summon the creature, the cost of summoning it is halved (round down, including the maintenance cost) and the Demon is automatically a Wild Card. Demons obeying an Ancient Pact don't rebel when a 1 on the arcane skill is rolled, instead they ask for a favor of some type, usually trying to obtain the character's soul. This Edge can be taken multiple times (but no more than once per Rank), each time a pact with a new demon is sealed.

## BEING LIKE WATER

**Requirements:** Novice, Enlightenment d6+, Fighting d6+, Spirit d8+

For monks and other Enlightened individuals, the practice of martial arts is a true meditation technique that allows them to focus their inner powers. A few individuals reach a particular state in which certain fighting moves perfectly blend with one's inner concentration. Monks call this condition Being Like Water. A character taking this Edge must choose a particular Monk Weapon (unarmed attacks are considered a weapon for the purposes of this Edge) and a single power he knows. When the hero is wielding this weapon and he scores a raise on the Enlightenment roll activating the chosen power, he reduces the Power Point cost by one, to a minimum of 1 (as per the Wizard Edge). If he wants, every time the character achieves an advance, he can choose to change the affected power or weapon for free (but not both at the same time).



## BINDING RITUAL

**Requirements:** Heroic, Knowledge (Arcana) d10+, Sorcery d10+, Smarts d10+

Through long incantations, a sorcerer with this Edge can make the effect of a spell of his choice permanent. He must choose a spell that can be maintained, like *summon ally*, *armor* or *boost trait*, and then perform a Sorcery (-4) roll to successfully cast and bind the spell. He pays twice the basic cost of the spell. Casting such a spell is a very long procedure, requiring one hour per Power Point of the spell. Also, if the caster is interrupted, he must start from scratch. The bound spell is considered permanent until the caster dies or decides to drop it. It isn't dropped when the caster loses concentration, falls unconscious or sleeps. As long as the Ritual of Binding is active, the caster doesn't recover the Power Points used to cast the spell. A sorcerer can have only one actively bound spell at any given time.

## CHEMICAL TRADITION

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Lotusmastery d8+, Knowledge (Arcana) d8+, Smarts d6+

For many, Lotusmastery is an art, like painting, poetry or cooking, and the real master knows how to make each potion different. A chemist, instead, follows the opposite approach, using accurate amounts of ingredients and a precise procedure that allow for a more standardized product and less wasted material.

When scoring a success on a roll to make a potion, the Lotusmaster can create two batches of a power, spending the Power Points only once. This cancels the additional effects of scoring a raise, unless the Lotusmaster scores two raises, in which case he creates two batches, both with the raise effect. To regain the Power Points spent, both batches must be used.

*Example: Kurasta, a Lotusmaster with the Chemical Tradition Edge, creates a lotus concoction imbued with the Healing power. He rolls 7, so he creates two concoctions capable of healing a single Wound. Later, he tries again, rolling 8 and scoring a raise. This time too he creates two concoctions curing a single Wound. Several months later, thanks to the bonus granted by a laboratory, he produces another healing potion, rolling a mighty 13! Two raises! This time Kurasta produces two batches of healing Lotus, each of them capable of curing two Wounds.*

## DEMON HUNTER

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Enlightenment d8+, Holy Warrior

This character is devoted to fighting the undead. He has learned ancient techniques to defeat spirits and to imprison a defeated demon, so that its energy can be used against other creatures of the same type. For this reason, he receives +2 to Knowledge (Arcana) and Knowledge (Religion) rolls on demon-related topics. In addition, whenever a Wild Card with the Undead or Demon Monstrous Ability dies within 6" of the Demon Hunter, as a free action, he is allowed an opposed Spirit roll against the creature's Spirit. If the Demon Hunter wins, he captures the demon's soul and stores it inside an object (usually a weapon, an amulet, or something similar), called the Vessel.

The Vessel can be used by the Demon Hunter or sold to someone else. The owner of the Vessel gains the Steel Benny of the Demon Hunter. Until this Benny is spent, the Vessel counts as a magical weapon. If it is spent, it gives +4 to a single damage roll against a creature with the Demon or Undead Special Abilities.

Once the Benny is spent, the trapped demon's energy is used and the Vessel loses all its supernatural powers. A Demon Hunter can hold a single imprisoned soul bound at any given time, plus one every two Ranks above Seasoned (so, two souls at Heroic Rank).



## IMPRESSIVE AURA

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Sorcery d6+, Spirit d6+

Sorcery is widely feared in the Dread Sea Dominions and the simple threat of evoking the dark forces is often enough to make a strong warrior tremble. A character with this Edge can let her magical powers emerge for a brief moment, in order to scare an enemy. For example, her eyes might glow or she might cast a curse in the name of old, forbidden gods. The character is encouraged to describe how her magical nature surfaces and how she uses it to scare others. In game terms, whenever she wants, she can use Sorcery instead of Intimidation but, if a 1 is rolled on the skill die, regardless of the Wild Die, the action costs 1 Power Point. Note that the skill substitution only refers to actual rolls, it doesn't affect Edge requirements. So, if an Edge requires Intimidation d6+, the character must have that Intimidation skill level in order to take the new Edge.

## IMPROVED IMPRESSIVE AURA

**Requirements:** Heroic, Impressive Aura, Sorcery d8+, Spirit d8+

The curses of the sorceress and the sheer force of her malevolence are now strong enough to affect the world and actually harm enemies. When she wins an Intimidation-based Test of Wills with a raise, the Shaken result inflicted is treated as actual damage (so two Shaken results cause a Wound). The use of this Edge always costs a Power Point, but only if she manages to win the opposed roll with a raise (or rolls 1 on the Sorcery die, as per the Impressive Aura Edge).

## INCENSE TRADITION

**Requirements:** Veteran, Lotusmastery d8+, Knowledge (Arcana) d8+, Smarts d8+

A Jalizaran Lotusmaster stole an ancient book from the city of Gis which described the secrets of using the smoke of a burning Lotus. This archaic knowledge, merged with the mastery of burning other herbs imported by the Jademen, has led to a particular branch of Lotusmastery, called the Incense Tradition. This consists of burning special types of Lotus and trapping the smoke in crystal or glass orbs previously treated with particular rituals. The smoke inside the orbs is magical and can be released at will by the wielder on his chosen target. In game terms, to use this Edge a Lotusmaster must have an empty Incense Orb (see Gear chapter). Then, he makes a Lotusmastery (-2) roll and pays a number of Power Points equal to twice the base cost of the Lotus concoction he wants to imbue the Orb with, plus one for each "charge" he wants to put in. The whole process requires a full day of work. If the roll is successful, the Orb will have the chosen number of charges of the selected Power. If he scores a raise, two additional free charges are put into the Orb. With a failure, the process fails but the Orb can be reused; with a critical failure, the Orb is destroyed. Any character touching the Orb can unleash the Power stored inside it (using the maker's Lotusmastery skill), spending a charge. All the Powers have a range of 6/12/24 and their basic duration. The Lotusmaster doesn't recover any of the Power Points spent on the Orb until all the charges are used or the Orb is broken. A Lotusmaster can carry a single active Orb at any time.

*Example: Kurasta, a wicked Lotusmaster, decides to imbue an Orb with the poison power. It costs him 4 Power Points plus 6 for the six charges he wants in it, for a total of 10 Power Points. He rolls 11-2=9 on the Lotusmastery roll, scoring a raise and adding two free charges to the item! After a day's work, his Orb, full of greenish fumes, is ready. By touching it, Kurasta can unleash a tendril of smoke delivering the poison power at range 6/12/24 eight times! He slips the precious object into his pocket and is ready for a dangerous expedition to the Thieves' Guild's headquarters...*





## LOTUS RESERVE

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Knowledge (Arcana) d6+, Lotusmastery d8+, Smarts d8+

Once per session, a Lotusmaster can spend a Benny and declare that he has “just the right potion” for the situation. In game terms, it means he can create a Lotus concoction as a free action and ignoring the normal preparation time. In story terms, he has prepared the potion beforehand and he only has to take it out of his bag. He performs the arcane roll when activating the Edge and, if the power doesn’t work or he fumbles, the effects are applied immediately (the potion seemed good when prepared, but it turns out to be faulty or dangerous when used). The hero spends no Power Points for the potion and the power only has the basic duration. This Edge cannot be combined with the Chemical Tradition Edge.

## SOUL EATER

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Smarts d6+, Spirit d10+, must be a Cairnlander *or* have Obscurement d8+

This character learned from the whispering voices of dead Ancestors or in other dark ways how to rob a dying man of his soul and how to consume it to increase his own life force. It can also be taken by followers of the Obscurement, which has developed secret soul snatching techniques.

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 the Soul Eater 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. This does not count as an action and grants him a Benny 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 Benny) and causes a non-soakable Wound to the Soul Eater for each trapped soul he has.

## PROFESSIONAL EDGES

### AMAZON

**Requirements:** Novice, Fighting d6+, Notice d6+, Strength d6+, must be female

A woman is usually physically weaker than a man and this is why she is underestimated by men in close combat. This is the first lesson an Amazon learns, and the most important one: be opportunistic and turn your apparent weakness into strength, using all the opportunities your opponent gives.

An Amazon has +1 Parry and, whenever an opponent attacking her rolls 1 on the Fighting die, regardless of the Wild Die, she is entitled to an immediate free Fighting attack against him. The additional attack can only be used once per round. These advantages only work against male opponents and this Edge can only be taken by women. The GM has the final judgment on when this Edge applies. For example, it can work against a giant ape but not against a man-shaped living statue, because the statue isn't a real "male" and doesn't consider women as being weaker.

### CORSAIR FENCER

**Requirements:** Novice, Agility d8+, Fighting d8+, Taunt d6+, must have been part of the Caldeian Corsairs

Caldeians are renowned for their swordcraft, and the Corsairs, in particular, have developed a particular fighting style based on quick thrusts, parries and counterattacks, which is very deadly.

In game terms, a Corsair Fencer, unencumbered and wielding a short or long sword in one hand, and no other weapon or shield off-hand, receives +1 Parry and +2 to sword-based Tricks.

In addition, if he has the Counterattack Edge (in basic or advanced form), he receives +2 to Fighting rolls to counterattacks only.

### DANCING WITCH/WARLOCK

**Requirements:** Novice, Agility d8+, Arcane Background (Sorcery), Vigor d6+, must be of Ivory Savannah Tribes origin

A dancing witch (or warlock) is capable of fueling her magic with the rapture of her savage dance. In game terms, instead of paying the Power Point cost of maintaining a spell, she can dance. In this case, dancing counts as an action (causing a multi-action penalty to every other action performed in the meantime) and adds the "the caster must dance" trapping to the power. A Dancing Witch can only dance to maintain a single power at a given time. The dance can last indefinitely but it is usually very tiring, so a Dancing Witch must make a Vigor roll when she stops dancing and for every hour of continuous dancing. In the case of failure, she suffers a level of Fatigue. When she becomes Exhausted, the spell is obviously broken.



## FALCONER

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Beast Master, Smarts d8, Survival d6+

People from the Dominions are very fond of birds of prey and falconry is an advanced art among them, especially in Jalizar.

A falconer knows how to train, look after, and use birds of any type. To be a falconer the character must have a bird companion, not necessarily a falcon (as per the Beast Master Edge). The bird becomes a Henchman, with its Vigor and Smarts increased by one die step each. The creature is so well-trained it obeys orders as a dog would. If the understanding of an order is doubtful, the GM can ask both the falconer and his beast for a Smarts roll; if both succeed, the order is understood. The falconer has a special bond with his beast: the falcon grants his master +2 Gang Up bonus instead of +1 and gives him +1 to any Trick roll if he is within 6" of his trainer.

## LOWLIFE

**Requirements:** Novice, Smarts d4+, Streetwise d6+, Stealth d4+, Persuasion d4+

This character is a professional criminal. He can be a thief, a beggar, a smuggler, an assassin or any other type of criminal. He always knows where to find the right people, information, or pieces of equipment in the shady world of crime. He gains +2 to Streetwise and Persuasion rolls in a criminal environment. In addition, he can look for two Rare Items instead of one between sessions (see Gear section). If he gets a raise, one of the Items (which cannot cost more than 100 Moons/Rank) is free (if it costs more the character receives a suitable discount).

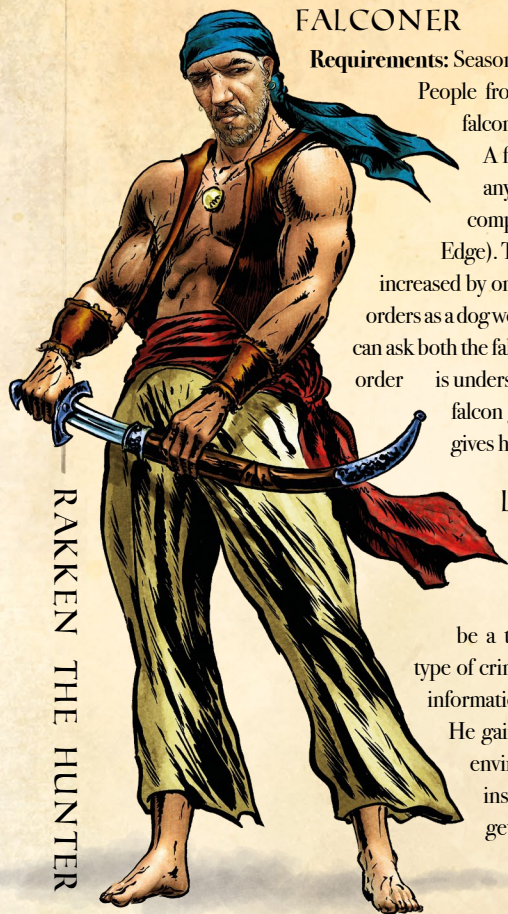
## MONK

**Requirements:** Novice, Enlightenment d8+, Spirit d8+

Monks are men of faith and humble followers of the Path of Enlightenment. They take vows of poverty, so a character taking this Edge automatically acquires the Poverty Hindrance. Monks are usually respected, gaining +1 to Persuasion rolls. Monks can embrace either the contemplative philosophy or the militant philosophy. A character taking this Edge must choose a philosophy and cannot change it later.

**Contemplative.** For these monks, violence is the last resort of the incompetent, and they shun it in all its forms. They automatically receive the Pacifism (Major) Hindrance. If duly followed, their beliefs give them strong and pure souls. Contemplative monks gain +2 to the *dispel* and *banish* powers. Their deep wisdom also allows them to use Spirit instead of Smarts for Common Knowledge rolls and Spirit instead of Vigor for Soak rolls.

**Militant.** A militant monk is more involved in the world than his contemplative counterpart. He is a skilled martial artist and spell caster. The militant monk can activate a power with Range Self without suffering a multi-action penalty. A militant monk may only attack with bare hands or a Monk weapon (see Gear chapter) to apply the effects of this Edge. A militant monk's Powers with Range Touch are considered Range Self instead.





## POET

**Requirements:** Novice, Knowledge (Legends and Lore) d6+, Smarts d6+, Spirit d6+

Heroism is beloved by poets and attracts many of them. Some are cowards who faint at the mere sight of blood, while others are men of the sword as well as of letters. A Poet can use the Knowledge (Legends and Lore) skill instead of Taunt or Persuasion. This is limited to cases in which poetry can be used effectively: composing a mocking rhyme to taunt an opponent (replacing Taunt) or winning the heart of a lady with a sonnet (replacing Persuasion) are reasonable, while using poetry when signing a trade agreement isn't. The GM has the last word on the appropriateness of the skill substitution. Poets are always looking for new stories and legends. Whenever the GM starts an Interlude, the Poet receives a free Benny (two Bennies if he is the subject of the Interlude).

## POISONER

**Requirements:** Novice, Healing d6+, Smarts d6+, Stealth d6+, Streetwise d6+

This character isn't a real Lotusmaster but has studied enough alchemy to be able to make poisons. He can use the poison power with Smarts as the Arcane Skill, and has a number of Power Points equal to half his Smarts die plus 1/Rank. So, a Seasoned hero with Smarts d8 has  $4+2=6$  Power Points, which can only be used for the *poison* Power.

## PRIEST/PHILOSOPHER

**Requirements:** Novice, Knowledge (Religion) d8+, Smarts d6+, Spirit d6+

Priests are ministers of the gods. They are very different, depending on the divinities they worship. A wicked priestess of Hordan, for example, has nothing in common with a pious follower of the Divine Couple or a militant Iron Priest of Hulian. A character must choose a specific deity when taking this Edge. The deity can be one of the major gods described in the Book of Lore or a minor one invented by the player. In the latter case, the player must provide the Game Master with a brief description of the cult, but this is only background information, as the god chosen doesn't affect the Edge's mechanics.

A follower of the Path of Enlightenment can also take this Edge. He doesn't worship a specific deity but is a sincere disciple of the ancient doctrine. He is called a Philosopher and his Edge works in the same way.

Whatever faith they follow; priests share some similarities. They are well versed in theology, so they have +2 to Knowledge (Religion) rolls and, as they are respected figures, they have +1 to Persuasion rolls. As said earlier, the gods don't grant their worshippers supernatural abilities. To possess such abilities, they must follow the dangerous path of sorcery. Yet, prayer itself might prove useful. Maybe the gods really exist and sometimes hear the pleas of their followers or, even if they don't exist, the act of praying brings consolation and inspiration to mortals. As a free action, a Priest can pray to his god for help. This requires a Spirit roll. In case of success, he is rewarded with a Benny. This can be done as many times as the caster wants, but every attempt after the first in the same session suffers a cumulative -4. If a 1 is rolled on the Spirit die, regardless of the Wild Die, the gods are annoyed by the prayers: the character immediately loses a Benny and cannot use this Edge again during the current session. Also, the gods don't forget: if the hero has no Bennies left and owes the gods one, he starts the next session with one Benny less.

## SAGE

**Requirements:** Novice, Scholar, Investigation d8+, Smarts d8+, must be literate

This hero spent years studying in the Great Library of Syranthia or another great center of learning.



where he read a lot of books and became acquainted with various fields of knowledge, including very obscure ones. When fighting a creature, he can make a Common Knowledge roll to remember one of its Special Abilities. In addition, once per session, the player can invent a useful piece of knowledge, remembered from her studies, that helps her or the group in the current situation. This knowledge cannot contradict the consolidated background. If the piece of information is accepted by the Game Master and doesn't disrupt the plot, it grants a bonus of +4 to a single roll or automatically solves a specific problem (GM's decision). Particularly good ideas should be rewarded with a Benny too.

*Example 1. Clamides of Askerios, a Sage woman, is in the thick of the jungle with her close friend, Shangor the Barbarian. Shangor is Incapacitated, due to various wounds suffered while fighting a giant snake. Clamides has a meager Healing d4 skill and no adequate equipment, so she fears she won't be able to patch up her friend up. This is the time to remember some useful knowledge. Martha, who plays as Clamides, states that her heroine has spotted a patch of violet mushrooms, which she remembers from her past studies are perfect for healing wounds. The Game Master accepts the statement, and Clamides receives +4 to a single Healing roll.*

*Example 2. Clamides and Shangor are travelling in the southern deserts, when some hostile Red Nomads appear on the horizon. There are a dozens of them; surely too many even for the mighty barbarian. So it is time to make another statement. Martha declares that Clamides knows that Red Nomads consider blind men holy figures. So the learned woman quickly tells Shangor to tear a piece of his loincloth and cover his eyes with it, pretending to be blind. The Game Master deems the stratagem worthy of resolving the situation, avoiding a dangerous fight that isn't fundamental to the plot. The nomads approach the heroes and, spotting an apparently blind man, leave an offering of water and food, before departing quickly. Martha receives a Benny too.*

## SMITH

**Requirements:** Novice, Smarts d6+, Strength d6+, Repair d8+, Vigor d6+

The character trained for a long time at the forge, and now he is well versed in the arts of the hammer and the anvil. He receives +2 to any roll to repair and craft weapons and armor (see Crafting rules on page 121). In addition, this Edge has another use.

Before the adventure starts, he receives one Sharpened Token per Rank which must be spent on a weapon or a piece of armor belonging to him or a party member: if spent on a weapon, the item receives +1 damage till the end of the scenario, if it is spent on armor, it grants a single free Soak roll. In narrative terms, the weapons or armor are sharpened, balanced, reinforced or put into top-notch shape in some way. The smith needs only an Armorer's Kit to use the Edge in this manner, but if he has access to a Smithy he receives an additional Token.

## TRAINED THROWER

**Requirements:** Novice, Agility d6+, Shooting or Throwing d8+, Vigor d6+

Crossbows aren't a common weapon in the Dread Sea Dominions, so the standard ranged troops are bowmen, slingers, and javelin throwers. The effective use of these weapons requires long and intensive training and can be usually learned only by professional militaries. A character taking this Edge must choose a bow, sling or javelin, which from now on becomes his professional weapon. His training is intensive, so his muscles are perfectly adapted to the task they must accomplish: stretching the bowstring, swinging the sling or delivering the javelin. The character's Strength is considered a step higher in relation to the minimum requirements of his professional weapon, but this doesn't affect damage. A Trained Thrower keeps his cool even in the direst situations. He knows that, when



his arrow breaks in his hand and the charging cavalry is only one hundred paces away, the right thing to do is to take another arrow and shoot it—not to run and die trampled by the enemy's horses. For this reason, when using his professional weapon, whenever he rolls 1 on the Shooting die, regardless of the Wild Die, he can freely reroll the Shooting or Throwing die (but not the Wild Die). In addition, the character receives the following free gear: leather armor and his professional weapon (a bow, a war sling, or 5 javelins). Characters who want a composite bow or a Valk bow must pay the difference.

## TREASURE HUNTER

**Requirements:** Novice, Agility d8+, Notice d6+, Lockpicking d6+, Smarts d6+, Streetwise d6+

This hero is an expert in exploring ancient ruins to retrieve precious artifacts and other valuables, so she knows how to avoid the terrible traps put in place to guard these treasures. She gains +2 to Notice rolls to spot traps, to Agility rolls to avoid them, and to rolls to disarm these dangerous mechanisms. In addition, she always knows how and where to sell her loot, obtaining better prices than others. Hence, her maximum Savings are increased by 25%.

## 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 deified through martyrdom, fought in the pits using his burned hand, and that the flame inside it was doom to any creature of evil. Today, sometimes a priest of the god undergoes a similar ordeal to receive a similar 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 Soak roll.

### COUNT THE DEATHS!

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

A blood-stained hero, digging deep into his 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 (-2) roll, but adds +1 per opponent to the roll if he killed more than one opponent 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; or both, if he scored a raise. Characters with the Priest Edge roll with +2. The effect lasts till the end of the scene. Multiple uses of the Edge give cumulative effects, to a maximum of +2 damage and/or Toughness.



## HELPER

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Notice d8+, Persuasion d6+, Smarts d8+

Some people are particularly good at helping, supporting and coordinating others. As an action, this character observes a friend within 6" and makes a Notice (-2) roll. If successful, she gives her friend a useful hint. The friend's next Trait roll, if performed before the end of the next round, receives a +1 bonus. This Edge cannot be used on Arcane or Knowledge skill rolls unless the Helper also possesses that skill. If the Helper rolls 1 on the Notice roll, she gives bad advice or her clever remarks unnerve the friend, who has -2 to his next action. In addition, a Helper always gives +1 to the lead character in cooperative rolls (if she isn't the leading hero).

## LAST ARROW!

**Requirements:** Novice, Luck, Shooting d6+

As any archer knows, the last arrow of a quiver is always the luckiest one. A character armed with a bow (or a sling, or another similar projectile weapon), can declare, before shooting, that he is using his last arrow. He gains the Drop, but has finished his arrows, and cannot shoot anymore for the rest of the scene, until he finds a way to restock. How the character ran out of arrows is left to the GM (maybe the quiver got lost, the arrow's feathers got wet or similar things).

## TEMPTRESS

**Requirements:** Novice, Charisma 4+, Persuasion d8+, Smarts d8+

There are women who can make empires fall with their beauty and who can make a man's blood boil with a single glance from their long-lashed eyes. Your heroine is one of these striking personalities and has no remorse in using her beauty to influence others. In game terms, she has the *boost/lower trait* Power but can use it only on members of the opposite sex, whether friends or enemies. She uses Persuasion as her Arcane Skill and has Charisma + 1/Rank Power Points.

So a Seasoned Temptress with Charisma +4 has 4+2=6 Power Points. This isn't true magic, but only the effect of the temptress's behavior on others. She can make a man feel like a god or a worm, influencing his ego, so her power doesn't register as magic, but it can be dispelled with the *dispel* power. The Temptress must be visible and interact in some way with her target: speaking or giving him a long, eloquent look is enough. This Edge is usually taken by women but nothing prevents males from choosing it.

## STILL GOT ONE

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Smarts d6+, Stealth d6+, Repair d6+

The heroine has done her best to conceal on her body a number of home-made blades, disguised in clever ways. They might look like hairpins, parts of her armor, or whatever else she wants. These blades deal Str+d4 damage, can be thrown at Range 4/8/16 and can also be used in melee as daggers, but their main utility is for ranged attacks. If the hero has higher-than-minimum requirements their quality is improved (see table below).

Their number isn't fixed: until the character rolls 1 on the Throwing die, regardless of the Wild Die, she still has another blade concealed somewhere. When a 1 is rolled, the character has run out of blades and cannot use this Edge again till the end of the combat, provided that she can then retrieve her weapons. Otherwise, she cannot use the Edge before she has a chance to restock.

This Edge has another use. Once per session, the character can state she has a normal dagger or a lock pick concealed on her body even though she was captured and searched before. This declaration cancels any other use of this Edge for the remainder of the session. This Edge also works on Loincloth



Heroes and Bikini Heroines, even though it is not quite clear where they concealed a weapon while wearing such a scanty outfit...

## STILL GOT ONE BLADES TABLE

REQUIREMENTS		EFFECT (CUMULATIVE)
Repair d8+	+1 Damage	
Smarts d8+	+1 AP	
Stealth d8+	+1"/+2"/+4" range	
Veteran Rank	The character runs out of blades only on a Critical Failure	

## WATCH YOUR BACK!

**Requirements:** Novice, Agility d6+, Notice d6+, Spirit d8+, Pace 6+

This heroine is used to being chased. Maybe she is an Outlaw with the city guards permanently at her heels, or she is running from a powerful Enemy. Whatever the reason, when the situation requires the character to get away quickly, she knows what to do. At the start of every Chase sequence, regardless of whether she is pursuing or being pursued, she receives a free Benny. As a professional fugitive, she has also developed a knack for finding the nearest exit from a building. When she is in a labyrinth, dungeon, ruin, cavern, house or other enclosed area, she is allowed a Spirit (-2) roll to instinctively find her way to the nearest exit. Be warned: the shortest path is not necessarily the safest. The ability to find a way out doesn't work outdoors.







# MAGIC

“BY THE ANCIENT PACTS OF KERON, MIGHTY ULASHA,  
DEVOURER OF SOULS, COME TO ME AND SHOW YOUR POWER!”

—Zanator, Tyrant of Quollaba

Magic in *Beasts & Barbarians* isn't the high fantasy type. In the Dread Sea Dominions, you won't find wizards throwing fireballs or turning into dragons. Magic tends to be subtler, and usually dark, but by no means less powerful. This section contains all the rules you need to create a Lotusmaster, a sorcerer, or a follower of the Path of Enlightenment (or Obscurement). In addition, this chapter describes new powers, specific to this setting. New powers are marked with an asterisk (\*).



# ARCANE BACKGROUNDS

## LOTUSMASTERY

**Arcane Skill:** Lotusmastery (Smarts)

**Starting Power Points:** 10

**Starting Powers:** 3

**Available Powers:** *barrier, blast, blind, boost/lower trait, burst, confusion, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, entangle, environmental protection, fear, healing, invisibility, light, obscure, poison\*, puppet, slow, slumber, smite, succor, stun, warrior's gift, zombie.*

Lotusmasters are skilled men who spend their life studying the incredible effects of Lotus, the strange plant which appeared in the Dominions after the fall of the Dread Star. Many Lotus varieties exist: Gray, Red, Green and so on. The color usually identifies a particular type, but different parts of the plant (flower, root, pollen and so on) are used in potions to achieve different effects, allowing a virtually endless number of combinations.

Lotus cannot be used in its pure form: it is toxic and, in some cases, even lethal. Instead, it must be refined and mixed with other ingredients, and special rites and spells must be recited to produce a batch of powder, a vial of elixir, pills, or other alchemical concoctions. To create a concoction, a Lotusmaster needs his Lotus bag, a sort of miniature lab containing raw materials and basic tools. The process requires one hour per Rank of the power he wants to imbue (so a Seasoned power requires two hours of work). At the end of the preparation time, the Lotusmaster rolls on the Lotusmastery skill and pays the necessary Power Points.

These Power Points aren't recovered until the potion is used or destroyed (burnt, dispelled and so on). Then, the Lotusmaster regains his Power Points at the normal rate. If the skill roll is successful, a Lotus potion is prepared. It lasts indefinitely, until used, and can be taken by any living being with an action. So a Pearly Lotus of Relief, a sweet potion that cures wounds, works exactly like the *healing* power, while a Gray Lotus of Hollow Dreams, a powder with terrible hallucinogenic effects, induces *fear* in the individual targeted with it. Raises work as normal, increasing the effects of the power. Before a scenario starts, a Lotusmaster can choose to prepare as many Lotus potions as he wants, ignoring time requirements. It is assumed he had enough time to prepare what he wished.

**Range:** The Lotus must come into contact with the target to work. So spells with a Range of Attribute (like Smarts×2), Sight, Self or Touch require the Lotus to be ingested, injected, or delivered with a Touch Attack. Ingestion is self-explanatory: the potion must be drunk or eaten (not necessarily as a voluntary action).

To inject a Lotus potion, the target must be at least Shaken by damaging attack (a dagger scratch, or something similar). Touch requires a Touch Attack (+2 to the Fighting roll). Despite being more difficult to accomplish, ingestion or injection are more potent, especially for offensive powers. The skill roll receives a +2, but only on opposed rolls. The exact mode of administration is decided by the Lotusmaster upon creating the concoction. Powers with Range brackets mean that the Lotus must be put into a vial to be thrown at the target. This requires a Throwing roll and ranges are reduced to 3/6/12. Alternatively, a concentrated quantity of Lotus can be delivered with a blowgun dart (a Shooting roll using the blowgun ranges). Duration: Extra Points can be spent as usual to increase duration.



**Laboratory:** A Lotusmaster with access to a good laboratory, something bigger and better stocked than his basic Lotus bag, gains +2 to his rolls. Access to an even bigger facility, like the House of an Alchemist of Gis or some other fully equipped workshop, grants a +4 bonus.

**Backlash:** A Lotusmaster rolling a 1 on the skill die during the creation of his concoction inhales dangerous fumes or poisons himself in some way. He suffers an automatic Wound.

## HERO'S JOURNAL: LOTUS CONCOCTIONS

The *Pharmacologia Segreta*, the traditional book of Lotus recipes studied by every Lotusmaster, states the names of concoctions according to the standard convention: "Color Lotus of Something", e.g. Orange Lotus of the Phoenix, Violet Lotus of the Wailing Widow, and so on. This is the common way to define Lotus potions, but several outstanding Lotusmasters deliberately gave non-standard names to their elixirs to leave their mark. So there might be potions called Giscamon's Vendetta or Food for the Orphans. Savage Worlds' use of trappings lets you create a virtually limitless number of Lotus potions. There are some examples below but the players and Game Masters can obviously create their own.

## MODE OF DELIVERY

Ingestion, injection, and touch are the most common ways. See the Lotusmastery description for further details. Below are listed some other ideas for Lotusmastery trappings.

**Candles.** A very subtle method to deliver Lotus concoctions, candles are made with wax or another suitable material, and contain a particular Lotus concoction which is slowly released while the candle burns. Powers with a Candle trapping cost 10 Moons/Rank of the power in raw materials. The Lotusmaster can set a delay (1-3 hours) before the Lotus starts taking effect. This power affects all targets within a Medium Burst Template, but only in a closed room. Opening a window is enough to immediately disperse the effect.

**Inhalation.** An inhaled power must be breathed in. It affects all targets in a Small Burst Template. Holding your breath is usually enough to avoid it, so opposed rolls to resist it have +1.

**Explosive.** A Lotus concoction can be explosive, dealing +1 damage or treated as a Heavy Weapon. However, it is quite dangerous to handle. If a roll is required to deliver it (e.g. throwing a vial) and a 1 is rolled on the skill die, regardless of the Wild Die, the concoction explodes before use, causing damage to the user.

**Smokes.** Almost any Power can be transformed into smoke. Smoke is stored in small vials sealed with wax which must be opened or smashed on the ground to be activated (vials can be thrown as normal). A smoke concoction affects any target in a Small Burst Template. As a drawback, opposed rolls to resist its effects are made with a +1 bonus due to the fact that the chemicals are very much diluted.

**Venom-based.** Venom-based concoctions are very subtle, but don't affect non-living targets. For example, a venom based *blast* can't be used to destroy a door.

## EXAMPLES OF LOTUSMASTERY TRAPPINGS

**Boost Trait (Strength) (Black Khav).** Black Khav or Wild Khav is a dangerous drug, a favorite among Jalizaran thugs before committing a crime. It is a mix of impure Khav, sewer water, and other disgusting waste. Any individual taking Black Khav develops the Bloodthirsty Hindrance for 2d4 hours.

**Burst (Purple Lotus of Pain).** This dangerous powder, made to be thrown at targets, is a strong acid that corrodes skin, lungs or other organic materials when in contact with them.

**Dispel (Gray Lotus of Panacea).** This sweet potion can eliminate almost all the effects of other Lotus concoctions and foul magic, if drunk in time.



**Lower Trait (Smarts) (Wine of the Merchant).** An odorless and tasteless liquid. The merchants from Jalizar mix it with wine and give it to potential customers during transactions.

**Slow (Pale Smoke of Numbness).** This pale smoke, made with Lotus from the swamps, is strangely cold. Contact with it causes a feeling of numbness in the arms and legs. The smoke affects all targets within a Small Burst Template, but opposed rolls to resist its effects are made at +1.

**Slumber (Golden Candle of Sweet Dreams).** These yellow candles are made with the purest wax mixed with Golden Lotus and other exotic materials. They are used both by those who suffer from insomnia and by thieves and burglars to knock out guards. A candle affects any target within a Medium Burst Template, costs 20 Moons in raw materials, and usually takes effect one hour after being lit. It also grants very nice dreams.

**Smite (Yellow Lotus of the Demons).** When poured onto a weapon's blade, this foul-smelling liquid covers it in a persistent flame.

**Warrior's gift (Berserk) (Blood Lotus of the Savannah Warriors).** A foul-tasting potion made by the Lotusmasters of the Ivory Savannah Tribes before a major battle.

## IMPROVISING A LOTUS BAG

A character who loses his Lotus Bag during an adventure is in serious trouble. If he is in a civilized land, he can buy another (see Gear) but it requires 2d4 hours to find and is considered a Rare Item (Streetwise roll required).

If away from civilization, the Lotusmaster can improvise a new Bag, restocking with what he can find. Each attempt requires 1d4 hours and a Survival (-2) or Lotusmastery (-4) roll.

For each success and raise the Lotusmaster gains a Lotus Supply Token (up to a maximum of two), and the effectiveness of the Lotusmaster depends on how many Tokens he has, as per the table below.

### LOTUS SUPPLY TABLE

LOTUS SUPPLY TOKENS	EFFECTS
0	No Lotusmastery possible
1	-2 To Lotusmastery rolls. Power Points reduced to 50%
2	-1 To Lotusmastery rolls. Power Points reduced to 75%
3	Full power, Lotus Bag restored.

## SORCERY

**Arcane Skill:** Sorcery (Smarts)

**Starting Power Points:** 10

**Starting Powers:** 2

**Available Powers:** *armor, barrier, beast friend, blast, boost/lower trait, bolt, confusion, darksight, deflection, disguise, drain power points, draining touch\*, detect/conceal arcana, divination, entangle, fear, havoc, intangibility, invisibility, obscure, puppet, slumber, smite, speak language, stun, summon ally.*

Sorcery is a very dangerous type of magic. The sorcerer, through arcane invocations and unholy rites, asks the intervention of forgotten divinities and powers that man isn't meant to know.

These entities are usually generous toward the sorcerer, but they are also very demanding. Many of those who meddle with dark magic end up with their minds destroyed and their souls eaten by



creatures of unimaginable horror. Evil entities are always eager for nourishment, so a sorcerer can decide to willingly give them a little of his life energy in exchange for extra power.

This is done by self-inflicting a Wound to gain 2 Power Points or +1 to a Sorcery roll. These wounds represent energy sacrificed to dark powers, cannot be Soaked and can only be healed naturally. The penalty caused by these wounds applies after the Sorcery roll they are inflicted for. Sorcerers also have access to the Soul Drain Edge, with lower requirements than usual.

**Backlash:** A sorcerer who rolls 1 on the Sorcery die, regardless of the Wild Die, has somehow displeased the evil entities he works with to gain his powers. He must roll on the Sorcery Critical Failures Table to discover what happens to him.

## SORCERY CRITICAL FAILURES TABLE

D20	EFFECT
1	<b>Evil Twist.</b> The character's body is permanently twisted. His nails become long and claw-like, his teeth elongated and sharp, or whatever else the Game Master decides. He permanently loses 1 Charisma point. On the plus side, his unarmed attacks deal +1 damage from now on. If the hero is exposed to this effect more than once, he only loses another Charisma point, but receives no further damage bonus.
2-4	<b>Dark Energies.</b> The caster's body is overwhelmed by an otherworldly force. He is Shaken for 1d6 rounds and his Sorcery die is reduced by one step for 24 hours.
5-8	<b>Energy Sap.</b> The caster must make a Vigor roll or be Incapacitated. Even in the case of a success, he suffers a level of Fatigue, which is recovered after an hour.
9-12	<b>Not For The Human Mind.</b> The caster has a brief glimpse of what the entity he is contacting REALLY is, and this can shatter the hardest of minds. He must make a Fear (-4) roll.
13-15	<b>Devils' Joke.</b> The spell works as if cast with a raise, but the evil entities change the target: a positive spell affects an enemy, a negative one affects the caster or an ally.
16-18	<b>Manifestation of the Unholy Gods.</b> The evil gods appear in all their terrible might, releasing a wave of pain and terror! Put a Large Burst Template on the caster. Whoever is within the template, caster included, suffers 3d6 damage and must make a Fear roll.
19	<b>Satiate My Hunger!</b> One of the evil forces the sorcerer is contacting decides to take away some of the character's life energy. His Vigor die drops by one step. Every week the sorcerer is allowed a Vigor (-4) roll to regain it. In case of a critical failure on one of these rolls, the loss is permanent. If this reduces the attribute below d4, the character dies horribly, his body consumed by the evil forces.
20	<b>Soul Drain.</b> A part of the sorcerer's soul is snatched and devoured by evil entities. His Spirit die drops permanently by one step. If reduced below d4, the character's soul is destroyed, and he becomes an NPC, possessed by some evil entity, under the control of the GM (restore Spirit to the initial level).

## HERO'S JOURNAL: THE ART OF SORCERY

Sorcery powers, usually spells or incantations of some sort, tend to be quite different from one another, depending on the source of the magic. A Tricarnian demon evoker's *bolt*, for example, is quite different from the *bolt* of an Ivory Savannah Tribe dancing witch.

For this reason, trappings are very important in defining sorcery spells. Always consider the basic rule of sorcery: the evil entities that grant their power to the warlock ask for something in return (adoration, pain, entertainment or sacrifices) and their gifts always have a hidden cost. As a rule of thumb, every sorcerer knows a single trapping for each of his spells. New trappings for known spells are good rewards for sorcerer player characters. A hero can master a new trapping of a spell he already knows with a Smarts roll, if he finds a teacher



or a book of some sort explaining it. Here are some examples of trappings fitting the sword and sorcery style as well as related rule modifications, when needed. You should feel free to add others of your own creation.

**Dark Taint.** The power is inherently evil and somehow corrupts the recipient. In addition to its normal effects, the target suffers a Minor Hindrance for the duration of the spell.

**Fearful.** Simply seeing the spell in action can make a strong man tremble. The target and all those witnessing the spell suffer -1 to Spirit rolls for the duration of the spell.

**It is Only a Clever Trick.** For primitive cultures, such as those of the Dread Sea Dominions, anything unknown is classified as magic. This is why ventriloquism, hypnosis, higher technology and very good sleight of hand are usually considered supernatural powers. A power that is only a clever trick usually has a weak point of some type.

**Glyph.** A Glyph is a sign of power written on an object. Glyphs are more powerful and longer-lasting than normal sorcery powers, because the magical energy trapped within them is magnified. In game terms, a Power with a Glyph trapping actually needs to be written down (doubling the time needed to cast it; the minimum is a whole round). In addition, a spell linked to a Glyph can be lifted by destroying the Glyph (Called Shot at -2, Toughness 5). On the plus side, a Glyph power doubles its basic duration.

**Minion.** Sorcerers can count on a legion of animal and demonic servants, so some of their powers might manifest themselves through the summoning of a minion. Given that summoning a minion takes time, a Power with a minion trapping actually takes effect the round after it has been cast. On the plus side, it lasts an additional round, even if it is an instantaneous Power.

**Mesmerism.** This is created by the sorcerer's strong hypnotic Powers. It is merely an illusion and does not exist outside the victim's mind. A power with a mesmeric trapping can be resisted through a Spirit roll opposed by the casting roll. In the case of failure, the illusion is so real that the victim suffers -2 to all Trait rolls while under the spell. If he is successful, he sees through the illusion, becoming immune to all the effects of the power. Casting the spell costs 1 Power Point less (minimum 1).

**Musical Trapping.** Music is strong, and particular songs have increased effects against particular classes of individuals (for example: women, beasts, soldiers, demons and so on.) The narrower the class, the greater the bonus (usually it ranges from +1 to +2 on the opposed roll or a corresponding penalty if the spell requires a Trait roll to resist).

**Object Required.** The power is linked to an object of some type. The object must be quite easy to replace (maximum cost: 10 Moons/Power Rank) and without it the spell cannot be cast. As compensation, spells that require an object have their basic duration increased by one round.

**Verbal.** The magic requires the caster to speak. So, the spell cannot be used if the sorcerer cannot speak or wants to remain inconspicuous.

## EXAMPLES OF SORCERY TRAPPINGS IN USE

Here follow some examples of powers with their trappings.

**Barrier (Illusory Flames).** This power causes a barrier of hellish flames to rise up from the ground. They are a fiery barrier (causing 2d4 damage to whoever crosses them), but they are completely illusory! Any character stepping into them can make a Spirit roll opposed by the caster's Sorcery roll. If he fails, he believes the illusion, suffering -2 to all Trait rolls till the end of the spell. If he is successful, he sees that the flames are only an illusion and can advance without being harmed! Casting the spell costs 1 Power Point less (minimum 1).

**Bolt (Sorcerous Scorpions).** With a sleight of hand too quick to be noticed, the sorcerer extracts something from his sleeve and throws it at his enemy. The mysterious object is a deadly scorpion, conjured up from nowhere! It deals damage the round after being thrown and the next, before scuttling away.

**Boost/Lower Trait (Corrupt).** The sorcerer can temporary infect the target with the dark taint of the supernatural creatures he serves. Every boosted or lowered Trait manifests itself as a horrid physical mutation



(such as bulging muscles for raised Strength, suckers on the hands for raised Climbing, festering wounds for lowered Vigor, and so on). This causes the target to receive the Ugly Hindrance while under the effect of the spell.

**Deflection (I am not here!).** The sorcerer using this spell seems to have been hit by his enemy's blow but he is actually a yard away, staring at the attacker with magnetic eyes. It is a sort of hypnotic suggestion that prevents the attackers from hitting the target. After each failed attack, the target can freely move 1" away from the attacker. As a drawback, the power's Range is Self and can be avoided by simply closing one's eyes (so, the Blind Hindrance applies). As it isn't a "real" deflection, the defensive bonus doesn't count as armor bonus against area attacks.

**Entangle (Hands of the Dead).** The sorcerer encourages the spirits of the dead to bring the poor victims of this spell to their dark kingdom. Cold arms emerge from the ground and grab the targets, restraining them. Their touch is so cold and terrifying that the victims suffer an additional -1 to Spirit rolls for the duration of the spell.

**Fear (Unspeakable Name of Hordan).** The caster knows the real name of the evil deity Hordan, so abominable that hearing it is enough for people to fall into an abyss of primeval fear. If the caster cannot speak or the name cannot be heard, the spell doesn't work.

**Puppet (Aalisha's Love Ballad).** Legend says that Aalisha, Mistress of Gods and Sorrows, the demon-god of music, once had a human lover, Aaleso, who betrayed her and was condemned to eternal suffering. This wordless tune was the ballad the Mistress of Songs sang to win the heart of her lover and is said it can win the heart of any person. It causes the victim to fall in love with the caster, who receives +1 to the opposed roll if the target belongs to the opposite sex (or has an appropriate sexual orientation).

**Summon Ally (Call of the Eaters).** This evil spell requires the sorcerer to blow into a horn made from the bone of a beast devoured by insects. The air from the mage's lungs turns into a swarm of hungry locusts (a small Swarm).

**Summon Ally (Evocation Circle).** The sorcerer draws a circle on the ground (using a stick, piece of chalk, or other tool) and recites an incantation. This forces a powerful entity of his choice to appear within the circle. The demon is trapped and must swear to be faithful to the evoker before being freed. This process makes the casting longer (a full round) but doubles its basic duration.





## PATH OF ENLIGHTENMENT/OBSCUREMENT

**Arcane Skill:** Enlightenment (Spirit) or Obscurement (Spirit)

**Starting Power Points:** 15

**Starting Powers:** 1

**Available Powers:** *analyze foe\**, *armor*, *banish*, *boost/lower trait*, *darksight*, *deflection*, *detect arcana/conceal arcana*, *dispel*, *environmental protection*, *farsight*, *fly*, *invisibility*, *legerdmain\**, *pummel*, *quickness*, *smite*, *speed*, *telekinesis*, *wall walker*, *warrior's gift*.

Two philosophies exist in Lhoban: the Path of Enlightenment, through which a man can improve himself to reach perfection through discipline and good actions, and the Path of Darkness, through which a person can achieve perfection through the most wicked evil.

The followers of both Paths are usually monks. Through intensive training and meditation, they are capable of incredible feats. They affirm that their powers aren't truly magical and any man, with the right training and true devotion to self-improvement, can achieve the same abilities. But, in truth, many years of dedication (or of wickedness) are necessary to follow one of the Paths. That's why very few of these skilled individuals exist.

Mechanically, the two Paths work in the same way, using the Enlightenment or Obscurement Skill (which are mechanically equivalent). The only difference is that the followers of light can be corrupted (see sidebar), while the disciples of darkness are usually shunned and feared (and must keep their true beliefs hidden).

Their Powers usually manifest themselves as personal abilities, not as true spells.

So, all the Powers, except *banish*, *detect arcana*, *dispel* and *pummel* have a Range of Self.

**Backlash:** An Enlightened (or Obscured) One who rolls 1 on the Enlightenment (or Obscurement) Skill dies, regardless of the Wild Die, temporarily loses his spiritual balance. He is Shaken and all his Enlightenment (or Obscurement) rolls suffer -2 for an hour.

## THE SEDUCTION OF DARKNESS

The dark powers try to seduce good monks with all sorts of temptations.

In game terms, when an Enlightened One suffers a critical failure using his Powers and has no Bennies, the evil powers help him by *offering* him a free d4 Obscurement skill (which works exactly like Enlightenment).

If the character refuses the offer, the critical failure is even worse than normal (evil powers hold a grudge), but his soul is safe.

If he accepts, the new skill is permanently acquired and can be used immediately to reroll the critical failure, as if the character had used a Benny, Wild Die included, but his soul is tainted.

Obscurement can be improved as normal or in another way: whenever the character rolls a critical failure using his Powers and has no Bennies, the dark forces raise his Obscurement by one step and grant a free reroll, this time the hero has no chance to refuse, his soul being already corrupted.

In addition, his Enlightenment skill drops by one step. When a character's Enlightenment drops below d4, the skill is lost forever and the hero turns toward the path of evil, becoming, for all purposes, a follower of darkness (unless he finds a way to find redemption).

An Enlightened One can get rid of an Obscurement die step if he wants to, by spending a skill increase during normal advancement.

Note that characters actually playing a follower of Obscurement aren't tempted, so they aren't subject to this rule.

*Example: Burning Flower, an Enlightened One with Spirit die and Enlightenment d8, was tempted by evil during*



*the last adventure and now has Obscurement d4. At the end of the scenario the warrior-monk gets an advance, and decides to raise Enlightenment. As it is below its controlling attribute, Spirit, he can raise another Skill under its controlling attribute, but instead decides to get rid of the Obscurement die.*

## HERO'S JOURNAL: THE WAY TO PERFECTION

The followers of the Path of Enlightenment usually gain powers consisting of incredible martial arts techniques and amazing feats of the mind, achieved through endless hours of concentration and careful training. Here are some examples of trappings suitable for the Path of Enlightenment.

**Breath Control.** Meditation and self-awareness are crucial in the training of the Enlightened Ones. Both can be achieved by breathing rhythmically, which allows the monk to become calm and focused and to fully express his potential. A Power with this trapping has its maintenance cost halved (so a power with a maintenance cost of 1/round become 1/two rounds). However, as it is difficult to maintain, any check to avoid disruption is made at -2.

**Increased Awareness.** Perception is the key to this Power. The Enlightened One is capable of seeing and manipulating very subtle energies. A power based on an increased awareness trapping grants +1 to the first Notice roll made during the duration of the spell.

**Martial Moves.** This Power is linked to a special combat move that must be performed by the caster in order to activate it. The Power requires the caster to be able to move freely; so, in certain cases, it cannot be activated in an inconspicuous way.

**Meditation Required.** The Enlightened One needs to be deeply focused to awaken this power. It means that the Power requires a round of intense concentration before it can be cast. As minor compensation, the character receives +2 to avoiding loss of concentration while maintaining the power.

**Past Lives.** The source of this Power is the inner, unconscious knowledge gained by the character during his past lives, which is usually inaccessible. If the character scores a raise casting the spell, he sees a glimpse of a past incarnation, gaining +1 to Smarts and Smarts based skills in the current and next round.

**Vessel.** By practicing for a long time with a single item, the monk has become capable of achieving perfect concentration. Unfortunately, without the item the monk can no longer use his Power. The Power is closely linked to a specific item (a weapon, a book, a tool, or something similar). So, when casting the Power while using the item, the character can decide to roll on the most logical skill the item is linked to (i.e. Fighting for a weapon, Knowledge (Religion) for a holy book, Stealth for a cloak, and so on) rather than on Enlightenment. Yet, the character cannot use this power without the Vessel. If the original Vessel is lost, a new one can be crafted or found in 1 week/Rank of the Power, by spending 100 Moons/rank and/or completing a specific quest. Multiple Powers can share the same Vessel.

## EXAMPLES OF ENLIGHTENMENT TRAPPINGS IN USE

Here follow some examples of powers with their trappings.

**Banish (Staff of the Seven Whispers).** By wielding the whispering staff carved by his old master, a monk can make it whistle in such a high-pitched tone that it breaks the link a demon has with the physical world. In game terms, the monk can use the *banish* Power by rolling on Fighting rather than Enlightenment. However if, for whatever reason, he loses the ancient relic, he cannot use this power until he builds or finds a suitable replacement.

**Boost Trait (Fighting) (Breath of the High Mountains).** By breathing slowly and rhythmically, a monk can tap into the incredible resources of his body and soul, greatly enhancing his skills. In this way, he can maintain his focus longer (halves the maintenance cost), but the process requires continuous attention (-2 to any check to avoid disruption).

**Boost Trait (Healing) (Gentle Pressure).** The Enlightened One is capable of perceiving the altered flow of energy in a wounded being and to refocus it with a simple touch of his hands, thus helping the healing process. The altered state of perception caused by the power also grants +1 to Notice rolls.



**Fly (Leap of the Air Warrior).** Through this ancient technique the Enlightened One is capable of violating the laws of gravity, performing incredible jumps and similar feats, but at the end of the round he must always be on solid ground. As a minor compensation, if attacking an enemy on the ground from a flying position, he gains +1 to Fighting rolls.

**Pummel (Stomp of the Master).** Through the sheer strength of his soul, the Enlightened One can make the ground tremble by simply stomping his foot. Before releasing this terrible blow, the Enlightened One must concentrate for a full round.

**Warrior's Gift (Memories of Past Lives).** Each life is only the continuation of a past life, through an infinite chain of reincarnations that end only with the final Enlightenment. Most cannot remember their past lives but the Enlightened One can, and through this power he "awakens" an ability possessed in one of his previous incarnations. If cast with a raise, he gains +1 to Smarts and Smarts linked skills until the start of his next turn.

## MODIFIED POWERS

### SUMMON ALLY

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 3+

**Range:** Smarts

**Duration:** 3 (1/Round) or Special

**Trappings:** Evocation, burning herbs, sacrifices.

This Power allows the caster to summon a powerful Extra loyal to him. In *Beasts & Barbarians* it works in a slightly different way to the core Savage Worlds rules. On a success, the ally is placed at any point within the Range of the Power. On a raise, the ally is more durable and is a Henchman. A summoned ally acts on the initiative card of the caster and gets an immediate action as soon as it is summoned. A character may learn this spell while of Novice Rank, but he cannot summon more powerful allies until he attains the appropriate Rank. The cost in Power Points depends on the type of ally the character wishes to summon. Use the Summon Ally Table as a guideline for unlisted creatures. In the Bestiary section of SEGM several other creatures are marked as summonable.

By taking this power, a caster learns the ritual to summon a single type of creature, and automatically learns another one each time he achieves a new Rank. Rituals for evoking additional, very powerful creatures are usually contained in ancient, forbidden tomes, and finding them might be the goal of an adventure. A caster of sufficient Rank to summon more powerful allies may choose to summon additional lower Rank allies instead, at the same cost. For each Rank lower, he gains one additional ally.

For example, a Veteran caster could spend 5 Power Points to summon one ally requiring Veteran Rank, two requiring Seasoned Rank, or three requiring Novice Rank. Allies summoned by a single casting must all be of the same type.

Backlash on *summon ally*, in addition to the roll on the Sorcery Critical Failures Table, causes the creature to be evoked, but it is free from the caster's control and usually malevolent toward the sorcerer. In this case, the evoked creature doesn't disappear when the spell ends and it must be killed or banished.

**Special:** When not in combat, the caster can summon an ally and ask it to perform a single, non-combat task. The task must be related to the creature's nature or abilities. So, a Shadow Bat can be



asked to act as a mount, a Twisted Servant to dig a passage through a blocked tunnel, a Demonic Mastiff to track someone, and so on. The task cannot take more than one day per Rank of the caster to complete. When the task is accomplished, the creature disappears and the spell ends. Casting the spell in this way requires five minutes per Rank of the creature summoned, and costs double the basic cost. The spell doesn't need to be maintained, but the caster doesn't recover the Power Points spent until the spell ends. If during the task the creature is forced into combat, the spell switches to standard mode and the caster must pay the maintenance cost for the rounds of combat the creature is involved in.

## SUMMON ALLY TABLE

Cost	Rank	Ally
3	Novice	Fighting Bird *, Keronian Imp*, Twisted Servant*, Wolf
4	Seasoned	Dire Wolf, Snake (Venomous), Spirit of the Betrayer*, Swarm
5	Veteran	Ancestor's Ghost*, Demonic Mastiff*, Snake (Constrictor), Giant Spider
6	Heroic	Bear, Fanged Ape*, Shadow Bat*
7	Legendary	Giant Worm, Singer Demon*

(\*) New creature detailed in SEGM.

## NEW POWERS

### ANALYZE FOE

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 1-2

**Range:** Smarts×2

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Mystical sense, spiritual advice, gestalt knowledge.

Knowledge is power. Being able to judge the strength of a foe before engaging him in combat can be highly advantageous.

The character makes an Arcane Skill roll opposed by the target's Spirit. On a success, he gains a +1 bonus to Trait rolls to directly affect the target, and the target suffers a -1 penalty to Trait rolls to directly affect the caster. With a raise, the effect is increased to +2 and -2 respectively. In addition, for 2 Power Points, a success allows the caster to learn of a single Immunity, Invulnerability, or Weakness of the target (if one exists), and a raise allows knowledge of two.

### DRAINING TOUCH

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** 3

**Range:** Self

**Duration:** 3 (1/round)

**Trappings:** Dehydration, poison, black crackling energy around hand, disease.

Mages have more ways to kill a foe than blasting him with balls of fire. This spell makes the touch of the caster deadly. After casting the spell, the mage delivers his *draining touch* on a successful touch attack (+2 Fighting). Victims must make a Vigor roll (at -2 if the mage scored a raise when casting) or suffer a level of Fatigue. Normally, these Fatigue levels recover at one per five minutes, but if the target rolls a 1 on his Vigor die, regardless of the Wild Die, he must recover as "normal" based on the trappings of the power (dehydration requires water, poison/ disease may require healing, and so



on). If the trapping has no specific recovery, it takes one hour to recover a Fatigue level.

## LEGERDEMAIN

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 1

**Range:** Smarts

**Duration:** Instant

**Trappings:** Mimicking action, briefly summoned spirit, astral bi-location.

*Legerdemain* allows the character to perform a single action at range which he would normally be capable of doing in person. If the action would require a Trait roll, then the caster rolls the lower of that Trait or his Arcane Skill to both activate the power and determine the results of the action. If the action does not require a Trait roll, then his Arcane Skill is used normally. Casting *legerdemain* is a normal action, but the action performed through its use is considered a free action (existing free actions like speaking are unchanged). However, the caster is still limited to not duplicating the same action in a round, so it is impossible to cast another spell via *legerdemain*. The Power does not create or duplicate the effects of any gear or magical effects upon the caster, but in all other ways, the action is treated exactly as if the caster were performing the action himself at the location. For example, a Fighting attack does his normal unarmed Strength damage, even if the caster is holding a dagger with *smite* on it.

## POISON

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** 2 or more

**Range:** Self

**Duration:** Special

**Trappings:** Lotus potion.

Poisons are the most notorious and probably most insidious weapon of the Lotusmasters. A poisoned target must make a Vigor roll, opposed by the Arcane Skill of the poison maker, for every Time Interval (see below). If the Arcane Skill roll is higher, the victim suffers a Wound (two on a raise).

If the victim wins the roll, he suffers no damage but the venom continues to work and he must repeat the procedure for the next Time Interval. If he wins with a raise or more, he manages to defeat the poison, which ceases to cause damage.

**Time Interval:** This is the frequency of the roll to check for the poison's effect. It can be Very Fast (1 round), Fast (1 minute), Normal (1 hour), Slow (1 day), and Very Slow (1 week). The poisoner assigns a Time Interval to his concoction when he creates it.

**Mode of Administration:** The most common ways to administer venom are ingestion, touch, or injection (see the Lotusmastery Arcane Background description on page 90 for their effects). Other methods (such as inhaling) can be used but they cause -4 to the arcane roll to create the poison, double the Power Points cost, and must be approved by the Game Master on a case-by-case basis.

**Nonlethal poisons:** The caster can decide that the poison is nonlethal, causing Fatigue instead of a Wound. Fatigue is recovered as normal.

**Healing:** A skilled medic can help a poisoned friend. First, he must recognize the venom used, with a Lotusmastery or Healing (-4) roll. If he is successful, the rolls to combat the poison can be made using the higher of the victim's Vigor and the medic's Healing skill.





“IT IS THE MAN WIELDING  
THE BLADE THAT MAKES IT STRONG, LAD.”

—Kronn, Northlander smith

The common currency of the Dread Sea Dominions is the Syranthian Moon. A Moon is equal to \$1, so you can pick items from the *Savage Worlds* core rules without any need to do conversions.

Player characters start with 500 Moons, plus 100 for every rank above Novice. After equipment has been purchased, all unused money goes into the characters’ Savings (see *Setting Rules*).

During character creation, the players can ignore the Rare (see below) feature, as long as they justify strange items in their background. This section presents the equipment available in *Beasts & Barbarians*. It isn’t a comprehensive list.

You can always refer to the *Savage Worlds* core rules for missing items. Here follows a brief description of the Special Abilities and features of gear in *Beasts & Barbarians*.

**Battle Value.** Used in mass battles, see page 124.

**Monk Weapon.** This type of weapon is traditionally used by monks, characters with the Monk Edge who receive a particular ability when using them (see the Monk Edge on page 82 for details). For non-Monk characters they have no other ability. They are readily available only in Lhoban, in other lands they are Rare.

**Rare.** A rare item isn’t available unless the hero makes a Streetwise (–2) roll. As a rule of thumb, each hero can try to locate a single rare item between a scenario and the next. The roll can be cooperative.



## MELEE WEAPONS TABLE

TYPE	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
<i>Unarmed</i>				
Iron Fist	Str+d4/+1	1	25	See notes, may be a Monk Weapon
Poisoner's Glove	Str	-	100	See notes
<i>Blades</i>				
Amazon Blade	Str+d6	4	900	+1 Parry, see notes
Dagger	Str+d4	1	25	
Great Sword	Str+d10	12	400	Parry -1, 2 hands
Kullah	Str+d4	1	200	AP 1, see notes
Lhoban Sword	Str+d6	6	900	Monk Weapon, +1 Parry, see notes
Long Sword	Str+d8	8	300	Includes scimitars
Moon Sickle	Str+d4	2	500	See notes
Sacrificial Dagger	Str+d4	2	350	+1 Parry, see notes
Short Sword	Str+d6	4	200	Includes sabers
<i>Axes and Mauls</i>				
Axe	Str+d6	2	200	
Battle Axe	Str+d8	10	300	
Club	Str+d4	2	5	
Great Axe	Str+d10	15	500	AP 1, -1 Parry, 2 hands
Maul	Str+d10	20	400	AP 2 vs. rigid armor, AP 1, -1 Parry, 2 hands
War Club	Str+d8	12	200	
Warhammer or Mace	Str+d6	8	250	AP 1 vs rigid armor
<i>Exotic Weapons</i>				
Combat Net	Special	2	200	See notes
Whip	Str+1	1	100	See notes
<i>Flails</i>				
Three-Piece Rod	Str+d6	8	200	Monk Weapon, ignores Shield Parry and Cover Bonus
<i>Pole Arms</i>				
Barbed Spear	Str+d6+1	5	250	+1 Parry, 2 hands, see notes
Buffalo Lance	Str+d8	10	300	AP 2 when charging, 2 hands when used while dismounted
Moon Blade	Str+d8	12	400	Monk Weapon, 2 hands
Scythed Double Spear	Str+d8	10	600	Reach 1, 2 hands, +1 Parry, counts as two separate weapons for multi-attack purposes
Spear	Str+d6	5	200	2 hands; +1 Parry
Staff	Str+d4	8	10	Monk Weapon, +1 Parry, 2 hands, see notes
Sorcerer's Staff	Str+d4	8	500	+1 Parry, 2 hands, see Notes, Rare
Whispering Staff	Str+d4	8	400	Monk Weapon, +1 Parry, 2 hands, see notes



## RANGED WEAPONS TABLE

TYPE	RANGE	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	STR	COST	NOTES
Amazon Blade	6/12/24	Str+6	4	d8	900	AP 2, see notes
Atlatl	Special	-	2	d6	200	One action to reload, see notes
Axe, throwing	3/6/12	Str+d6	2	-	75	
Blowgun	5/10/20	Special	1	-	50	See notes
Bow	12/24/48	2d6	5	d6	250	
Chakram	4/8/16	Str+d4	1	-	100	See notes
Combat Net	1/2/4	Special	4	d6	100	See notes
Composite Bow	12/24/48	2d6	5	d8	500	AP 1
Javelin	6/12/24	Str+d4	1	-	100	See notes
Knife/Dagger	3/6/12	Str+d4	1	-	25	
Severed Head	4/8/16	Str+d4	2	-	200	See notes
Sling, Hunting	4/8/16	Str+d4	1	-	10	
Sling, War	8/16/32	Str+d6	1	d6	100	
Spear	3/6/12	Str+d6	3	d6	200	1 hand: Reach 1 2 hands: +1 Parry
Valk Composite Bow	15/30/60	2d6+1	6	d8	300	AP 1

## AMMUNITION TABLE

AMMO	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
Arrow	1/5	1/2	
Brainstone	1/3	Special	See notes
Sling Bullet, Hollow	1/3	5	-2 to Shooting roll, see notes
Sling Bullet, Lead	1/5	1/2	AP 1
Sling Stone	1/10	1/20	Stones can also be found for free with a Notice roll and 1d10 minutes of search

## ARMOR TABLE

TYPE	ARMOR	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
Bikini/Loincloth	+0	-	-	See notes
Gladiator Armguard	+0	5	200	+1 Parry, see notes
Light Armor Bracers/Greaves	+1	4	25	Covers Arms or Legs
Light Armor Shirt	+1	7	50	Covers Torso
Light Armor Suit	+1	15	100	Covers Torso, Arms, Legs
Medium Armor Bracers/Greaves	+2	6	100	Covers Arms or Legs
Medium Armor Corselet	+2	13	200	Covers Torso
Medium Armor Suit	+2	25	300	Covers Torso, Arms, Legs
Heavy Armor Bracers/Greaves	+3	13	200	Covers Arms or Legs
Heavy Armor Corselet	+3	34	400	Covers Torso
Heavy Armor Suit	+3	60	800	Covers Torso, Arms, Legs



## ARMOR TABLE

Pot Helm	+3	4	75	50% vs. head shot
<i>Armor Modifications</i>				
Half Armor	Special	-25%	-25%	See notes
Human Bone Armor	-1	-10%	+25%	See notes, Cairnlander only, Rare
Reinforced Armor	Special	+50%	+50%	See notes
Spiked armor	Special	+25%	+25%	See notes
<i>Shield</i>				
Small Shield	-	8	50	+1 Parry
Medium Shield	-	12	200	+1 Parry, +2 Armor vs ranged shots that hit
Tribal Shield	-	12	250	+1 Parry, +2 Armor vs ranged shots that hit
Large Shield	-	20	300	+2 Parry, +2 Armor vs ranged shots that hit

## MUNDANE ITEMS TABLE

ITEM	WEIGHT	COST	NOTE
<i>Special Adventuring Gear</i>			
Armorer's Kit	10	100	See notes
Healer's Kit	3	50	See notes
Incense Orb	-	100/Rank	Rare, see notes
Lockpicks	1	200	
Lotus Concoction	-	200/Rank	Rare, see notes
Lotusmaster's Bag	-	100/Rank	See notes
Poisoner's Ring	-	300	Rare, see notes
Refined Lotus	-	50/PP	Rare, see notes
Silk Rope (10")	1	100	Rare, see notes
Tiger's Claws	1	200	Rare, see notes
War Horn	3	400	Rare, see notes
<i>Tack</i>			
Balkoth Barding	-	1000	
Balkoth Crystal	-	3000	Rare, see notes
Saddle, Common	-	10	
Saddle, Elaborate	-	200	
Fighting Bird	-	500	Rare, see notes
Fighting Bird Barding	-	200	+1 Armor, for Fighting Birds
Fighting Bird Talons	-	200	+1 damage, for Fighting Birds
<i>Animals</i>			
Balkoth	-	Not Sold	Rare, only found in Tricarnia
Horse, Cheap	-	150	
Horse, Common	-	300	
Horse, Good	-	750	Rare



## MUNDANE ITEMS TABLE

Mule or Donkey	-	100	
Steppe Pony	-	500	Rare
War Buffalo	-	Not Sold	Rare, only found in the Ivory Savannah
<i>Facilities</i>			
Alchemical Laboratory	1500/300	50	Rare, see notes
Library of Lore	2000/200	40	Rare, see notes
Smithy	600/100	-	See notes

## SLAVES

SLAVE TYPE	COST	NOTE
Very Low	100	
Low	250	
Average	500	
High	1000	Rare
Very High	1500	Rare
Unique	3000+	Rare

## VEHICLES TABLE

VEHICLE	ACC/ TS	TOUGHNESS	CREW	COST	BATTLE VALUE	NOTES
<i>Land</i>						
Cart	1/5	10(2)	1+6	500	-	
Chariot (2 horses)	5/15	8	1+1	1K	-	
Chariot, War (2 horses)	5/10	10(2)	1+1	3K+	-	
Scythed Wheels	-	-	-	+1K	-	See notes
<i>Water</i>						
Amazon Hawk Ship	2/16	15(4)	10+50	100K	400	Heavy Armor, Amazon Sails
Chibbar	2/8	11	2+8	10K	50	Chibbar Rigging
Galley	2/8	19(4)	20+100	150K	300	Heavy Armor
Large Merchant Ship	2/8	15(4)	8+10	80K	200	
Rowboat	1/2	8(2)	1+3	500	-	
Small Merchant Ship	2/10	13(2)	4+10	20K	100	

## WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

**Amazon Blade.** A twenty-inch wide Chakram (see below) with several metal spikes protruding from the edges. It is a very dangerous melee weapon, and if you have the strength to throw it, it can deal terrible damage at a distance. It is a very old gladiatorial weapon, also once called the spiked Chakram, though today it is usually called an Amazon Blade. The origin of this name dates to the Ascaian rebellion: one of the two first Sister Queens, Calla the gladiator, is always depicted using this





weapon, so it is commonly believed it was her weapon of choice. For this reason, it is only issued to high-ranking Ascaian Amazons (must have the Noble Edge). An Amazon seeing an Amazon Blade in the hands of someone other than an Ascaian noble suffers -4 to reactions. It is Rare outside the boundaries of the Island of the Amazons.

**Atlatl.** An Atlatl or spear thrower is a clever device that uses the principle of leverage to throw javelins and spears over amazing distances and with incredible strength. It consists of a piece of wood or bone, as long as the thrower's forearm, with a cup or a spur in which the butt of the projectile rests. It is held near the end farthest from the cup, and the projectile is thrown by the action of the upper arm and wrist. In game terms, it grants the Strong Arm Edge to the user. If the thrower already has this Edge, the effect is increased and the ranges are incremented by 100%. In addition, the wielder's Strength is considered a step higher for the purpose of damage calculation. Placing and properly balancing the javelin is a long task, hence the increased reload time. It is a Rare weapon outside the Ivory Savannah and the Verdant Belt.

**Barbed Spear.** This particularly vicious weapon is used by the Cairnlanders and is usually stone or bone tipped. For this reason, it automatically breaks when the user scores a 1 on the Fighting or Throwing roll. It is Rare outside the Cairnlands.

**Blowgun.** A hollow pipe, up to three feet long, used to shoot small darts. The projectiles are too small to deal any real damage and are normally used to deliver poisons or other Lotus concoctions, where a mere scratch is enough to poison the target. Hence, a Shooting roll is enough against an unarmored target to deliver the poison (no damage roll is required), while against armored ones (+1 armor or better) a called shot (-4) is required to pierce exposed skin, but in this case also no damage roll is needed.

**Brainstones.** Also known as "athlums" these sling bullets are irregular earthenware globes cooked in bone fires. Brainstones are cursed weapons, because they are made by mixing together clay and the brains of fallen enemies. These items aren't sold: they are made by the warrior using them, or, in rare cases, found in a treasure stash. Despite coming from the Cairnlands, they are fairly well-known in Northeim too. To make a Brainstone the warrior must mix clay and the brains of a powerful enemy (he must be a Henchman, Right Hand or Wild Card) and cook it over a fire till it becomes a hard stone (usually a full night of cooking is required). Then he must make a Spirit roll (-2 for a Northeim character, no penalty for a Cairnlander). In the case of failure the Brainstones created are simple sling stones. With a success he obtains a real Brainstone (three with a raise). Any enemy hit by a Brainstone must make a Spirit (-2) roll before suffering any damage or he is Shaken. Such is the power of the Brainstone. After the first use the cursed item shatters. The materials for



making Brainstones, apart from the brain, are 5 Moons' worth of clay and other supplies, but this cost can be ignored with a successful Survival roll. Usually Brainstones are fired from slings, but it isn't uncommon to throw them by hand, like normal stones (Damage: Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12, ROF: 1). Only Northlanders and Cairnlanders know how to make Brainstones.

**Buffalo Lance.** This bronze-tipped heavy spear is used by the feared buffalo riders of the Ivory Savannah as they charge their enemies. It is quite cumbersome in dismounted combat, so it must be used with two hands.

**Chakram.** A Chakram is a flat hoop, from five to twelve inches across, with a sharp edge. It is usually made of metal, but bone and polished wood are also used. It is both a weapon and art object. The women of the Ivory Savannah Tribes often wear engraved Chakrams as bracers, so that they are always armed against the unwanted attentions of potential suitors. It is mainly a throwing weapon, used like a Frisbee, but it can also be used in melee with -1 to Fighting rolls. In the hands of a skilled user, it can be thrown with an arced trajectory to hit targets concealed around corners or behind partial cover. Hence, a character with Throwing d8 or more using one can ignore up to 2 points of Cover modifier, as the disk hits the target from an unusual angle. It is Rare outside the Ivory Savannah and the Verdant Belt.

**Combat Net.** This heavy net, usually fitted with tiny metal hooks and little weights, is a gladiatorial weapon. It grants +2 to Grapple rolls and it is usually used off-handed, with a trident (treat as a spear) in the dominant hand.

**Composite Bow.** The composite bow is usually made of laminated wood and sinew, and it is stronger than the common bow known in the western countries. Composite bows are actually copies of the Valk Composite Bow made by the civilized races but they are by no means comparable to the traditional weapon of the steppe nomads. They are Rare in all the Dominions, except in Ekul, Valkheim, and Zandor.

**Iron Fists.** This definition includes brass knuckles, cestus, the infamous Elephant Horn used by Syranthian gladiators, and any other similar weapons for unarmed combat. It also includes special 'fist weapons' used by Monks, like metal prayer beads (in this case, the item is considered a Monk Weapon). Characters with the Martial Artist Edge granting Str+d4 damage add +1 to their unarmed damage. 'Fist weapons' deal lethal damage.

**Kullah.** A curved, very sharp dagger, made of bronze, and found exclusively in the Red Desert. The Kullah has strong social significance: a boy receives it from his father the day he becomes a man, to show he is now a member of the tribe, and losing it is equal to losing one's status. Due to its shape, it cannot be thrown.

**Lhoban Sword.** This highly decorated sword is typical of the warrior monks of Lhoban. It is made with particularly flexible metal that makes it ideal for parrying blows. It is very Rare outside Lhoban, and Streetwise rolls to locate it suffer an additional -2.

**Moon Blade.** A staff ending in a long, moon-shaped blade. This elegant weapon, something between a spear and a halberd, is also called the Blade of the Maiden, for reasons unknown in the western countries.

**Moon Sickle.** Wise Men of the North know something that other Lotusmasters, even the Alchemists of Gis, don't know or have decided to ignore: plants, Lotus included, hate metals, in particular bronze and iron, so when harvested with such an implement they lose a good part of their power. So, many Lotusmasters use special blades made of bone or of pure metals, silver and gold, which are consecrated through long rituals on nights of the full moon and smeared with exotic Lotus powders. These blades, called Moon Sickles, can harvest the Lotus without damaging it, thus granting the alchemist better components. In game terms, a Lotusmaster with such a tool gains +1 Power Point/



Rank (to a maximum of +5 at Legendary). Moon Sickles must be kept pure: if they touch blood, human or animal alike, they lose their power. This prevents the use of such an implement in combat.

**Black Moon Sickle.** There are rumors that a Moon Sickle can be transformed into a tool of corruption, used by Lotusmasters with nefarious interests, by the following ritual: a normal Moon Sickle must be taken, and then it must be used to carve out the heart of a human being. The organ must be then squeezed over the blade, tainting it forever. At this point the Lotusmaster must make a Spirit (-4) roll. In case of failure the sickle becomes useless, with a success or more it loses the powers of a Moon Sickle but becomes a Black Moon Sickle, which grants +1 to any Lotusmastery roll on the poison Power, or +2 if the Sickle itself is used to inject the poison. Black Moon Sickles aren't sold: they are found in ancient Cairns or must be created by a black-hearted Lotusmaster. A character can benefit from the effects of only one sickle at a time.

**Poisoner's Glove.** This heavy leather glove is usually coated with poison, and is used to deliver Lotus concoctions by touching the target. The wielder is considered to be armed when dealing Touch Attacks.

**Sacrificial Dagger.** This thin, twisting dagger has a strong religious meaning and is usually used in sacrifices and other ritual situations. It is also a wicked and very maneuverable blade, very good for parrying incoming blows. Given its slenderness, it must be forged of iron or stronger metals, otherwise it will break. These blades are always engraved with powerful symbols of power and prayers to the dark gods. In the hands of a character with the Arcane Background (Sorcery) or Priest Edges dedicated to an evil deity, it also grants AP 1. If used by a sorcerer to gain additional Power Points by self-inflicting wounds, it grants +2 Power Points. It is a Rare item.

**Severed Head.** One of the wickedest habits of the Cairnlanders is to cut off the heads of their fallen enemies. These prized trophies are then mummified and several metal spikes are stuck through them, turning them into spiked balls, used with a length of rope to hurl them. They are usually thrown at enemies to provoke fear. Besides damage, hitting someone with a Severed Head allows a free Intimidation roll. Luckily, these items cannot be found outside the Cairn Lands, where they are fairly common.

**Scythed Double Spear.** The origins of this weapon are probably among the Ancestors, the forefathers of the Cairnlanders, because the best exemplars of this weapon are found in age-old Cairns. The weapon consists of a wooden or bone (rarely metal) shaft ending in two scythed blades, one on each end. The double spear is used with a staff-fighting technique, more than a classical spear method, and can strike with both ends. For this reason, it counts as two separate Str+d8 weapons and the user can make a main and an off-hand attack as per the standard rules. Unlike staves, even while making two attacks the user receives +1 Parry. They are typical of the Cairnlands. The cost listed in the table refers to a bone weapon. Multiply the cost accordingly for a metal version, which must be custom-made because no Cairnlander smith is capable of doing it.

**Sling, War.** This weapon is a longer version of the typical hunting sling and it is used in battle. It requires more strength than a normal sling but, in the hands of a skilled user, it is potentially deadlier than a bow.

**Spear.** This entry applies to spears, tridents, and other similar weapons. You can use a spear one-handed, taking advantage of its long reach, or you can use it two-handed for enhanced defense.

**Sorcerer's Staff.** These staves are usually carved and decorated in strange ways. Some of them are topped with skulls, gems, or weird amulets. Each is crafted in a peculiar way – for example, carved from the wood of an ancient tree and soaked in the blood of a virgin during a moonless night – which explains its very high price. When it is bought, the player must invent a background story for the staff in order to obtain it. It has a minor magical power: in the hands of a character with the



Sorcery Arcane Background it can deliver a Touch Attack, exactly as if the caster touched the target with his bare hands. Sorcerer's staffs can also be shorter, in which case they are called rods (and treated as a club).

**Staff.** A long wooden stick, the humblest weapon a man can imagine. Given its length, in *Beasts & Barbarians*, a staff wielder is considered as having two separate weapons dealing Str+d4 each. This means he can use his staff for two attacks, one with his main hand and the other with his off-hand, as per the standard rules, but in this case he loses the +1 Parry bonus.

**Three-Piece Rod.** This peculiar weapon is made from three pieces of reinforced wood, connected by two lengths of chain. It was originally a farming implement used to beat grain, but the monks found a martial application for it.

**Valk Composite Bow.** The main weapon of the Valk nomads. This curved bow made of bone, sinews and wood is the best ranged weapon in the known world. Young warriors construct their bows with their own hands, usually under the guidance of an uncle or another relative skilled in this craft. A Valk bow is stronger and has a greater range than any other composite bow. They cannot be bought and losing one's bow is always considered shameful (-2 to Charisma), inferior only to losing one's horse. Valk bows are always Rare outside the Valk tribes. The listed cost is for a Valk character and refers to the raw materials rather than to the finished product. The Valk never sell them and buying one from third parties costs three times the listed cost. Only Valk heroes can start the game with a Valk Composite Bow.

**War Club.** This nasty weapon is a heavy club reinforced with sharp pieces of wood, stone, or even metal. It is as effective as a battle axe in the right hands, but considerably cheaper and heavier. It is usually found among the Ivory Savannah Tribes warriors, the most primitive Cairnlander clans, and the Nandals.

**Whispering Staff.** This strange weapon, only used by trained monks, is a fighting staff with two carved fissures at both ends. Quickly moving the staff produces a strange sound, like a whisper. Those skilled in wielding this weapon (must have Fighting d8+ or the Monk (Militant) Edge) can produce an intense, high-pitched sound that stuns nearby enemies. This counts as a Smarts Trick affecting all the targets in a Small Burst Template centered on the wielder of the staff.

**Whip.** A vicious slaver's implement, or a tool to handle cattle, whips are quite common in the Dominions. They give +1 to Tricks.

## AMMO DESCRIPTIONS

**Sling Bullet, Hollow.** These peculiar bullets are made of very thin earthenware and can hold a single dose of a Lotus concoction. They are used to deliver poison from a distance. They are only produced in Gis and are issued to the Red Slingers, the elite mercenary troops protecting the City of Alchemists. They are quite big, so the shot tends to be less precise (-2 to Shooting rolls). They are Rare items. A Streetwise roll allows finding a batch of five.

**Sling Bullet, Lead.** Metal sling bullets are very deadly because they deform on impact without losing their momentum.





## HERO'S JOURNAL: THE MAGIC OF STEEL

Steel, actually high-carbon iron, is the magical metal of *Beasts & Barbarians*. Steel was produced in small quantities at the height of the Empire by the Smith Priests of Hulian, but the technique needed to smelt it is lost today, largely because very few forges can achieve the necessary temperatures. So, steel objects are prized relics and treasures. A weapon made of steel has AP 2, while armor gains +1 Armor and weighs 25% less. They are almost priceless but, as a general guide, steel weapons and armor cost from ten to twenty times their standard cost, provided that the hero can find some for sale.

## HERO'S JOURNAL: QUALITY OF MATERIAL

In the Dread Sea Dominions, the science of metallurgy is still in its infancy and many cultures use primitive materials to build weapons and other tools. The most common materials, in descending order of hardness, are: steel, iron, bronze, stone, bone, wood. Iron weapons and armor are common only in the Iron Empire (Faberterra, Syranthia and Zandor). In the other lands they are Rare and cost double. Bronze is common in most of the Dominions. Only in the Caledlands, Lush Jungle, and Ivory Savannah is it Rare, and there it costs double. A character buying a tool made of a material weaker than the current standard in that land (so, for example a bronze dagger in Faberterra) pays 20% less. When a fighter rolls 1 on the Fighting Die, regardless of the Wild Die, and his opponent is using a weapon, shield or armor of harder material, the fighter's weapon breaks. The Game Master should not abuse this rule and use it only when it fits the story.



## ARMOR DESCRIPTIONS

Armor can be bought in full suits (a faster option) or in parts, for players who want to choose their gear more accurately. Usually the sum of the parts is equivalent, in price and weight, to a full suit.

**Gladiator Armguard.** This item is bronze or hard leather material made with curved and overlapping metal segments or plates, fastened to leather straps, intended to protect one of the arms of the warrior, usually the off-hand one. It is the trademark protection of many gladiators, especially Tricornian ones, and for this reason is sometime called Tricornian Gauntlet or Hordan Arm: for efficiency reasons, in fact, these items are usually made with exactly fourteen metal segments, cleverly linked, and the legend says that each of them represents a syllable of the secret name of the cruel Tricornian goddess. In game terms it grants +1 to Parry, and can be used offensively exactly as an Iron Fist. No other shield or armor can be equipped on a limb protected with a Gladiator Armguard. It allows the use of the Loincloth Hero/ Bikini Heroine Edge. It is a Rare Item outside arenas and other places where gladiatorial games are common.

**Half Armor.** To avoid being too encumbered or simply to save some money, many warriors choose to use a stripped down version of a suit of armor. It is a common option among many gladiators. They may choose to wear only the front part of a cuirass or armor that covers only the parts of the body not protected by the shield. Half armor costs and weighs a quarter less than a standard armor but, if the character is hit with a raise, he is considered to have -1 Armor. Only armor suits can be bought as Half Armor.

**Heavy Armor.** This armor is entirely made of metal, usually bronze or iron. It was the standard gear of the Iron Phalanxes and other heavy infantry troops, but today it has almost fallen into disuse, given its cost and the training required to use it without collapsing under the weight (see the Hoplite Training Edge). It is a Rare item.

**Human Bone Armor.** Only the Cairnlanders are so barbarous as to use the bones of other people to craft armor. Any type of armor can be made of human bones (even if, for heavier types of armors, they are mixed with metal or other materials). Human bone, despite what one might think, is fairly weak, so human bone armor provides one point of armor less than standard armor of the same type (so light human bone armor grants +0 Armor, medium +1 and heavy +2). On the plus side, human bone armor is very scary, and grants +2 to any Intimidation rolls toward other humanoids. In addition, for sorcerers, it has another use: any time the spellcaster uses a Power with a trapping related to death or the undead, he inflicts +1 damage and receives +2 to opposed rolls. On the down side, suffering, vengeful spirits live in these bones, and they are ready to take their revenge on the user. If the sorcerer rolls a critical failure on a Sorcery roll while wearing this armor he cannot spend a Benny to reroll it, as per the Critical Failures Setting Rule (see Savage Worlds core rules). Light Human Bone Armor (+0) allows using the Loincloth Hero/Bikini Heroine Edge.

**Light Armor.** By far the most common armor in the Dread Sea Dominions, this broad category includes leather armor, gladiator outfits, Valk cuirasses of boiled hide, and many other types.

**Loincloth/Bikini.** A minimal piece of cloth or animal skin that protects no more than the wearer's modesty. It allows the use of the Loincloth Hero/Bikini Heroine Edge.

**Medium Armor.** So many types of armor designs exist in the Dread Sea Dominions that it's impossible to list all of them, so broad definitions are used here. Medium armor



usually has a layer of leather, stiff cloth or, more rarely, wood, covered by plates or disks of metal, usually bronze. It is the most common armor among professional soldiers.

**Reinforced Armor.** Armor can have extra layers of protection, additional plates and so on. Such armor costs much more and is more cumbersome to use, but it has its advantages. If a character doesn't have the Armor Use Edge, he can use the Edge once for free. After this use, the armor deteriorates as usual. If the Repair roll to patch up the armor succeeds with a raise, the free Armor Use Edge is restored, otherwise it is lost forever. A character that already possesses the Edge has more advantages from the reinforced armor. The first time he uses the Armor Use Edge, its use is free and doesn't reduce the Armor value. Each subsequent use is handled in the normal way. As for the untrained use described before, if the roll to Repair the armor scores a raise, the free use of the Reinforced armor is restored. Any suit of armor can be bought in a Reinforced version. Armor cannot be both Reinforced and Half Armor. Reinforced Armor is a Rare item.

**Spiked Armor.** Armor can be fitted with hooks and spikes. Apart from making the user look more impressive, spiked armor has the chance to entangle and even break incoming weapons. In game terms, when fighting an opponent wearing Spiked Armor, the weapon breaking rule applies on 1-2 on the Fighting die, instead of just on a 1 (see page 109). Wearing Spiked Armor is also useful during Grapples: the wearer gains +1 to Grapple rolls and to Grapple damage.

**Tribal Shield.** The members of the Ivory Savannah Tribes are used to painting and decorating their shields with demon faces or even with the skins of their enemies. Alternatively, some of them use the hides of the fiercest beasts they hunt (usually lions or rhinos). A tribal warrior can choose how to paint his shield. It gives him a +1 bonus to one of these rolls: Intimidation, Taunt or Persuasion. The modifier is decided when the shield is built. This object is Rare outside the Ivory Savannah and the Verdant Belt.

## MUNDANE ITEMS DESCRIPTION

**Alchemical Laboratory.** A well-equipped laboratory, which grants +2 to Lotusmastery rolls to prepare concoctions and to Crafting linked to Lotusmastery (see page 121). The first price refers to buying the lab, the second to renting it for three days. It is a Rare item.

**Armorer's Kit.** A basic assortment of smith's tools to fix armor and weapons and to craft items (see page 121). Trying to patch up armor without this basic equipment causes -2 to Repair rolls.

**Healer's Kit.** Depending on the culture and type of healer, it can contain bandages and some rudimentary surgical tools, or dried leaves and amulets (good luck with that!). Trying to heal a wound without this basic equipment causes -2 to Healing rolls.

**Incense Orb.** An empty crystal or glass orb. Through complex alchemical rites, Lotusmasters can trap Lotus powers within an orb for later use (see the Incense Tradition Edge). The Orb is totally sealed and the smoke filters in and out through magical means. An Incense Orb has Toughness 6 and it explodes if shattered, dealing 1d6 damage in a Medium Burst Template for each three charges stored in it.

**Library of Lore.** Books are an extremely precious commodity in the Dominions, due to their rarity and the fact that very few people are able to access the knowledge hidden among their dusty pages. A library is a collection of tomes, scrolls, tablets, even skins or marble slates filled with lore. In game terms, having a library available grants a +2 bonus



to a specific Knowledge or Investigation roll. Really big libraries, such as the fabulous Great Library of Syranthia, aren't covered by this item. The first price refers to the cost to buy it (this doesn't include a proper storage area), while the second is the cost to rent a library and consult its books for three days (the minimum amount of time to get the bonus).

**Lockpicks.** The tools of the trade for every respectable thief. Trying to force a lock without lockpicks causes -2 to Lockpicking rolls.

**Lotus Concoction.** A Lotus potion, imbued with a Lotusmastery Power. They are always Rare Items and the Game Master can limit their availability at his discretion.

**Lotusmaster's Bag.** This is the bag that every Lotusmaster carries to brew his potions. A character with the Lotusmastery Arcane Background has one for free, and can replace it for free between adventures. It must be bought only if the character loses it during a scenario and wants to replace it before the start of the next one.

**Poisoner's Ring.** This hollow ring can store a single dose of an alchemical concoction, and can be opened with light pressure or some other nimble movement. It grants +2 to Stealth rolls to deliver poisons. Rings are the most common form of these devices, but other items can be crafted to store poisons, granting the same bonus. It is a Rare item.

**Refined Lotus.** Doses of ready-to-use Lotus. Each dose can be used by a Lotusmaster instead of spending a Power Point. They are normally sold in batches of 2d6 doses. They are a Rare Item.

**Silk Rope.** Another tool of the trade of expert burglars, this rope is very light, but extremely resistant. It can be made of silk, or other exotic materials, like women's hair. It is a Rare Item everywhere except in Jalizar.

**Tiger's Claws.** These peculiar crampons are used by Jalizaran thieves to climb up walls. They give +2 to Climbing rolls, and are considered Iron Fists. They are Rare items.

**Smithy.** A fully equipped smithy, including forge, anvil, tools and everything you need to forge metal items. Without a smithy you cannot craft weapons greater than Str+d4 or armor heavier than Light (+1). The first cost refers to buying it, while the second is the cost to rent it for ten days.

**War Horn.** Northlanders are masters of crafting war horns. Carved from the horns and bones of animals, they are used in battle to direct and encourage friends and to scare enemies. Tradition demands that a man should kill the beast from which the horn is made himself, and then craft it with his own hands, but this isn't absolutely necessary. In game terms, the horn is a very useful tool, and can be used for three different purposes. All of them require the exclusive attention of the character, so no other action is possible in the same round (but the hero can move at his normal pace).

First, it can be used to enhance the efficacy of orders. The horn blower must make a Vigor roll: for each success and raise he increases his Command Radius, or the Command Radius of a friendly commander within 3" of him, by 50%. The effect lasts until the horn blower is dealt a Joker or a Deuce from the Action Deck.

Second, the horn can be used to encourage disheartened allies. The horn blower must make a Spirit (-2) roll. Until his next action, any friend in Command Radius receives +1 to Spirit rolls.

Third, the horn can be used to make Tests of Will at a distance. Before making the Test of Will, make a Strength roll (this doesn't count as an action). If the blower scores a success, the Test of Will affects any enemy target (friends are immune) in a Medium Burst



Template centered on the blower; with a raise, the template is Large.

## ANIMALS

**Balkoth Barding.** Special armor made of reinforced layers of leather and bronze. It grants the Balkoth Armor (+2) but slows it down a bit, reducing Pace by two. It also functions as a saddle for the rider.

**Balkoth Crystal.** A hand-sized crystal, found only in the Red Desert or in the Brokenchain Mountains, it can be used to entrap the soul of a Balkoth and command it through sorcery. The beast obeys whoever has his crystal. As there is no way to tell if the crystal has already been used, when a player buys or finds one, the GM must secretly pick a card from the Action Deck: if it is a King or higher, the Crystal was already used and is worthless.

**Fighting Bird.** The habit of hunting or even fighting with hunting birds is very old, dating back to the Keronian Empire. In the Dread Sea Dominions various types of birds are used for these tasks, such as hawks, giant crows, and certain species of vultures.

**Fighting Bird Barding.** This light, protective harness covers the bird's throat and chest, granting a little extra protection.

**Fighting Bird Talons.** These minuscule, sharp metal talons are usually fixed onto the fighting bird's own talons to deal extra damage. Fighting birds are trained from birth in using these special "gauntlets".

**Horse, Cheap.** A standard horse, with the same stats as a common horse, but Vigor decreased by a die step, or -2 Pace, or a single Hindrance decided by the Game Master. Identifying a cheap horse requires a Riding roll.

**Horse, Common.** A standard riding horse, as per the Savage Worlds core rules.

**Horse, Good.** A worthy beast. It can be a War Horse or a common horse with +2 Pace, Vigor increased by a die step, or a useful Edge.

**Steppe Pony.** An ugly, furry pony bred by the Valk. It might not be very pretty, but it is gifted with incredible stamina (see SEGM for stats). It is a Rare item outside Valk-controlled lands.

**War Buffalo.** A mighty buffalo trained as a mount for combat (see SEGM for stats). It is only available in the Ivory Savannah and it is never sold. A hero must have the Beast Rider Edge to own one of these mighty beasts.

## SLAVES

Slavery is widespread in many Dominions: in Tricarnia and Caldeia, especially, slaves are the basis of the economy.

The prices of the list represent the market value of a single slave. As you can see, slaves are quite cheap, though the prices refer to Caldeia and Tricarnia; raise them by 50% in other lands.

Usually a warrior slave of low caste is worth less than the weapons he is using. Slaves are usually sold in auctions held in the flesh markets.

Slaves of Average or lower value are often sold in groups (so with a lower single price), while the most precious ones are sold individually.

Note that Gladiator Slaves have a very different range of prices. If you have *Gladiators*



of the *Dominions*, use the price rules of that supplement, otherwise you can consider them to be at least of High value.

Here are some examples of slaves by value:

**Very Low.** Leech fisherman, convict-miner, boy or girl.

**Low.** Farmer, common servant.

**Average.** Artisan, plain-looking girl, low caste slave-warrior.

**High.** Skilled artisan, scribe, good-looking girl, high caste slave warrior.

**Very High.** Sage, skilled healer, very attractive girl, trained eunuch bodyguard.

**Unique.** Concubine of noble blood, fallen sorcerer deprived of his powers, powerful gladiator.

## VEHICLES

All Dread Sea Dominions ships are designed to sail close inshore, except the Amazons' ships (see below). So, when a ship is forced to sail in the open sea, it suffers -2 to Boating rolls. The Amazons, an island population, are skilled mariners and have developed a particular type of sail, which allows them to sail on the open sea without problems. Very few sailors except the Amazons know how to effectively use the "Amazon Sails".

**Amazon Hawk Ships.** The common Amazon warship is long, thin and with reduced draft, so that it can navigate shallow waters, like rivers. The figureheads of these ships usually resemble a bird of prey, and the bow is painted to resemble a bird's plumage. Amazon Hawk Ships are very maneuverable, don't suffer penalties in the open sea and generally grant the helmsman +1 to Boating rolls.

**Cart.** A common farmer's cart or, for a higher price, a noble's coach.

**Chariot.** A fast vehicle used by rich aristocrats for recreation, by imperial couriers, and generally by those who need great speed in traveling. It is usually pulled by two horses, but four or six horses can also be used — or even eight in races in the arena. For every two additional horses the vehicle gains +5 Top Speed. A chariot with six or more horses is less maneuverable, causing -1 to Driving rolls. A chariot with eight horses doubles the Acceleration value. Horses aren't included; they must be bought separately.

**Chariot, War.** A chariot built for battle. It is driven by a charioteer and has space for a passenger, usually an archer or a slinger. War chariots follow the same rules as chariots, but they usually don't have more than four horses. When a horse pulling a chariot is killed, the driver must immediately roll on the Out of Control table. Ranged attacks from a chariot suffer the Unstable Platform modifier but, if the driver has both the Steady Hands and Charioteer Edges, the Steady Hands Edge

## GM TIP: SLAVES' LOYALTY

As the price of slaves is quite low, player characters could decide to buy a horde of slaves to be used for a number of tasks, greatly increasing the power of the group.

Apart from this not being in the spirit of the sword and sorcery genre, remember that slaves aren't usually happy about their situation, and they can be more a source of trouble for heroes than an asset. For each slave, the GM draws a card from the Action Deck and secretly looks at it: the slave is truly loyal only if a hearts card is drawn, is neutral with diamonds and spades (meaning he will be faithful until he has advantages from behaving otherwise) and is very hostile and ready to betray at the first opportunity with a club.

A red joker is an *extremely* loyal slave (he will give his life for his master), while a black joker means the slave is not only ready to betray, but he also has murderous intent.

Obviously the behavior of a slave also depends on how well or badly he is treated by his master.



applies to the passenger too. War chariots are commonly used in Syranthia, Kyros and among the Cairnlanders (where they are pulled by trained goats instead of horses).

**Chibbar.** A Chibbar is a smugglers' ship typical of Jalizar. Slender and light, Chibbars aren't made for long voyages but are very maneuverable and can sail in shallow waters. They can also be very fast, because they are fitted with Chibbar Rigging to elude the Seagulls' patrols.

**Galley.** The biggest ship of the Dread Sea Dominions, propelled by oars. The most common ones are triremes, so called because they have three rows of oars. Galleys are very common and used mostly as slave ships. The most impressive fleets of galleys are those of Tricarnia and Syranthia, followed by those of Caldeia and Kyros. Many galleys are armed with catapults, ballistae, or similar weapons.

**Merchant Ship.** The most common type of ship, used by sailors all over the world. It usually has a lateen sail.

**Scythed Wheels.** A chariot can be fitted with a set of two scythed blades. On the tabletop, any target within 1" of the chariot suffers 2d8+1 damage unless he makes an Agility roll. When using the Chase rules, a scythed chariot gains +4 to Force attempts (in truth, it is only grazing the enemy chariot).



RED WOLF

## VEHICLE KEYWORDS

**Amazon Sails.** These special sails are used only by Amazons, making them capable of sailing on the open sea and granting their vessels extra speed and maneuverability. In game terms, they generally grant the helmsman +1 on Boating rolls. Only Amazons know how to properly use and maintain this type of rigging, so, to use effectively them, the crew must be at least half Amazons (and in this case the roll is made at -4). An Amazon teaching these secret techniques to strangers will be branded as a criminal and a traitor in Ascaia.

**Chibbar Rigging.** This particular rigging, typical of Jalizar, has saved the skin of more than one smuggler. In desperate situations, the crew can increase speed by putting on additional sails. In game terms, they make a group Boating roll per each hour of navigation. For each success and raise the ship gains +25% Top Speed (+50% maximum), but if a 1 is rolled on the Boating die, regardless of the Wild Die, the Chibbar capsizes.





# SETTING RULES

“NEVER CHEAT A MAN WITH A BIG AXE.”

– Jalizaran saying

In this section you’ll find specific rules to make *Beasts & Barbarians* a setting of real sword and sorcery action. This setting uses the Blood and Guts, Born a Hero and Joker’s Wild setting rules from Savage Worlds.

## HENCHMEN AND RIGHT HANDS

Some characters — such as the right hand man of a powerful sorcerer or the captain of the Priest Prince’s guard — are stronger than Extras but don’t qualify for Wild Card status, so they are classed as Henchmen or Right Hands.

Henchmen are more resilient than Extras and have three Wounds, like Wild Cards, but neither a Wild Die nor Bennies.

Conversely, Right Hands are more skilled and for this reason gain a Wild Die, but have a single



Would like Extras and no Bennies.

Right Hands are noted in published scenarios as (RH), while Henchmen are noted as (H).

## ADVANCEMENT SUBSTITUTION

Sword and sorcery characters live an ever-changing life: yesterday they were soldiers in the service of an Independent City king, today they are pirates commanding a ship full of rascals, and tomorrow they will be thieves in Jalizar.

For this reason, characters are allowed, once per Rank, to change a past advance with a new one (typically swapping an Edge or a Skill advancement), if they meet all the prerequisites.

This represents the hero concentrating on new things and letting past experience fade from his memory.

The GM can allow players to use this option more times for each Rank, but each additional use causes the character the loss of one Experience Point.

## AFTER THE ADVENTURE

A word of advice: despite fitting the setting well, the following rules might not be suited to all groups of players. They can be ignored and the Game Master will simply reduce the loot of the various adventures to keep the game's economy balanced.

## SAVINGS

Sword and sorcery heroes usually find enormous riches in their adventures — and spend them just as fast. At the start of their next adventure they are often almost penniless and desperate enough to embark on another mission.

To simulate this cliché, after replenishing their basic equipment (repairing armor or stocking up on arrows — note that replacing a lost weapon is free), the characters are assumed to spend all their money on booze, courtesans or other recreational activities suited to their background (even books for learned characters!).

They only keep a small sum for emergencies and for purchasing new equipment, i.e. their Savings. These Savings are usually 100 Moons multiplied by the hero's Rank, but the GM can change the amount as he sees fit.

Logically, Savings cannot be higher than the money the hero earned in the previous adventure. So, if a Seasoned character only gained 30 Moons in his last adventure, that is what he owns—and he will likely be very sad, since he has no money to spend on courtesans and wine...

Savings can be stashed between adventures, unless an After the Adventure Event interferes (see below) or something happens during the game (e.g., the heroes are robbed).

## AFTER THE ADVENTURE PHASE

After calculating her Savings but before making any purchases, each player can draw a card from the Action Deck to check how she has passed her time since the last adventure, by consulting the After the Adventure Events Table.

Note that drawing a card is purely optional and the player is free to decide whether to draw it or not, since it might bring some useful advantage or some unwanted misfortune.



The table is deliberately very generic. The Game Master, or the players themselves, should invent a brief, entertaining story of what has happened in the meantime. Very colorful descriptions or hilarious ones should be rewarded with a Benny at the start of the next session.

Alternatively, the Game Master can use the results of the table to create a nice introduction to the next scenario.

At the Game Master's discretion, some characters, or even the whole group, can decide to share the same card and face the same consequences, but this decision must be made before drawing the card.

## AFTER THE ADVENTURE TABLE

CARD	EFFECT
2	<b>Ouch!</b> The hero was arrested, imprisoned, robbed or something similar, but he managed to save his skin and escape. He loses all his money, including his Savings, and all his equipment except one item per Rank. As partial compensation, he is enraged now, and this gives him +1 to Soak rolls for the entire duration of the next adventure.
3	<b>A Life of Excesses.</b> The hero has had too much of booze, food, Lotus, courtesans or whatever pleasure he prefers. Reduce the hero's Savings by half. If the card is red, the effect of all his partying is positive and the hero has +1 to Toughness for the next adventure. If the card is black, all the carousing has given him a bad headache or another similar consequence, and he starts the new adventure Fatigued. This fatigue lasts for the entire first session after this event.
4	<b>Carousing.</b> The hero has indulged in the usual adventurer's habits: drinking a lot, meeting courtesans, and so on. But, besides wasting his money, nothing in particular has happened to him.
5	<b>Dominion Event.</b> The first hero drawing the card in the current phase, is involved in a Dominion Event, a particular side story typical of the region where he is (the GM knows what they are). Any other players drawing this card treat the Event as Carousing.
6	<b>Safe Haven.</b> If the hero draws a red card, he finally finds a place to rest. It can be a favorite inn, a castle, a hunting lodge in the woods or whatever he wants. The character picks a Trait of choice, called the Safe Trait. When he rolls on the Safe Trait while in the Safe Haven, he receives +2 to the roll. In addition, the Safe Haven can be used by the hero and his friends as secure storage: items stored there enjoy a certain "plot immunity" so long as the Save Haven isn't destroyed (see below). Any new red card adds a new Safe Haven or a new Safe Trait to the list of an already existing Safe Haven. If the card drawn is black, there is bad news, and one of the character's Safe Havens is lost, destroyed or something similar. Characters can share their Safe Haven with their friends, but for them it is only a secure place, and don't grant them any special bonus. The Save Haven can also be a mobile base, like a ship or a wagon, but the hero must own it before drawing this card.
7	<b>So Boored!</b> The hero hates being idle. She has become so bored that she has taken up a distraction of some type. If the drawn card is red, the distraction is positive and constructive, like training, and she gains a temporary Edge of her choice, respecting all the requirements. If the card is black, she has acquired a bad habit or gotten into trouble. She gains an additional Minor Hindrance. Alternatively, she can take a Major Hindrance, gaining an extra Benny as compensation. Both the Edge and the Hindrance last till the end of the next adventure.
8	<b>Enemy/Friend.</b> The character has done something that has earned him the friendship or hate of someone. If the card drawn is red, the hero has acquired a new friend. He gains the Connections Edge, limited to three uses. If the card is black, he has displeased someone and suffers the Enemy (Minor) Hindrance for the next adventure.
9	<b>Item.</b> The character has managed to put her hands on a valuable object or, alternatively, lost a precious possession. If the card drawn is red, she acquires a single mundane item (taken from the Gear section) that can cost no more than twice her current Savings. It can be a Rare item. Note that she acquires it without spending any money. If the card is black, the hero has lost the most valuable item in her possession, with the exclusion of Worthy Possessions (see the Joker entry) and Trademark Weapons. Recovering them might be the aim of an adventure.



10	<b>I'm Rich!</b> Strangely the hero has managed not only to keep his Savings but also to increase them. Maybe he has had a stroke of luck at the gambling table or wisely decided to invest in some lucrative business. Whatever the reason, the hero immediately triples his total Savings!
J	<b>Blessed/Cursed.</b> The hero has, willingly or unwillingly, done something that has displeased or appeased the supernatural powers. Alternatively, he has received a particularly good or bad omen. Whatever happened, it affects his destiny. If the card drawn is red, the effect is positive and the character gains the Luck Edge for the next adventure. If it is black, a malevolent curse of some type lingers on him and he suffers the Bad Luck Hindrance for the following adventure or until he manages to lift it during the game.
Q	<b>Fame.</b> Thanks to his heroic feats during the last adventure or in the intervening down time, the hero has acquired a certain reputation. If the card drawn is red, his reputation is positive, granting him +2 Charisma. If the card is black, his reputation is negative and he suffers -2 to Charisma. The modifier lasts for the entire duration of the upcoming scenario.
K	<b>"I Have Heard of You."</b> A follower joins the hero. It may be a slave the hero has freed, an old friend or relative or even an animal companion. The follower is an Extra whose stats are decided by the Game Master. When this card is dealt, the Game Master draws another card and doesn't show it to the player. If it is red, the follower is truly loyal to the character; if it is black he has a hidden agenda or brings some danger with him. To avoid having too many followers, if this card is dealt when another follower is already in the group, the player who draws it can choose to use it to promote a current follower to Henchman status or to give him a free advance.
A	<b>Taking a Break.</b> The hero has temporarily quit the adventuring life. He might have married, gone through a religious crisis, or simply decided to get another, more stable job for a while. But adventure runs in his blood and so, in the end, he comes back to the action in the upcoming scenario. He gains a free d4 in one skill of his choice or can raise one of his skills by one die step, up to d6, to represent the experience he has gathered in his sabbatical period. But, on the flipside, his adventuring skills are quite rusty. The GM picks up to one skill per Rank of the hero and marks it with a dot on the character sheet. Until the player spends a Benny on a roll on that skill, he can't use his Wild Die on it.
Joker	<b>A Worthy Possession.</b> The hero has invested all her money (so her Savings drop to zero) in an exceptional product. Depending on the character's Rank and background, it can be a weapon, a set of clothes, a horse, a ship, a laboratory or even a minor magical relic, decided by the Game Master. She is totally enamored of it and persuaded of its value. The object is actually good and bestows +2 to one of the following: an attribute roll, a skill roll, Damage, Armor, Pace or Charisma. Alternatively, it grants +1 to Toughness or Parry, or a free Edge!

*Example: Shangor the Barbarian, a Seasoned hero, finished his last adventure with a bag full of opals (worth 2000 Moons). After finding a replacement (for free) for his trusty battle axe, lost during a battle, he decides to relax for a while in Kyros City, to get a taste of the fabled pleasures of civilization.*

*Daniel, Shangor's player, decides to draw a card from the After the Adventure Events Table and picks the Eight of Diamonds.*

*The Game Master informs him that Shangor earned a Connection Edge that can be used up to three times.*

*Daniel decides that Shangor met and fell in love with Symiria, the favorite courtesan of a powerful noble. He spent all his money on gifts (except a single opal well-concealed in his right boot, value: 200 Moons) for the capricious girl and, in the end, his manly charm won her over.*

*Symiria will use her connections to get favors for her new barbarian lover, but she is a very fickle girl, so this romance will not last for very long.*

*Symiria is a new NPC that the Game Master can use. For example, he might decide that the next scenario starts with the kidnapping of the fascinating courtesan...*



## FAST FALLING

When you are in the heat of the game and the heroes are going to fall off a roof or into a chasm, wasting time on calculating falls can spoil the gaming experience. To speed things up, choose the height of the building or the fall on the Fast Falling Table. Apply the effects of soft ground and falling into water as normal.

### FAST FALLING TABLE

HEIGHT CLASS	HEIGHT (REAL WORLD)	HEIGHT (GAMING TABLE)	FALLING DAMAGE
Very Tall	80 feet	16"	8d6+8
Tall	60 feet	12"	6d6+6
Medium	40 feet	8"	4d6+4
Low	20 feet	4"	2d6+2

**Cliffhanger!** A classic scene in pulp stories sees the heroes desperately clinging to the edge of a building or rock. Let's be honest: killing heroes with a fall is no fun at all, either for the players or for the Game Master. So, the Game Master can decide that every time a Wild Card, Henchman, or Right Hand (both PC and NPC) is going to fall, they are allowed an Agility roll to cling to the edge of a roof or crevasse. Then, with a Strength (-4) roll, which can be cooperative, they can regain solid ground. Yes, this rule isn't realistic (Extras fall normally, after all), but it is much more fun.

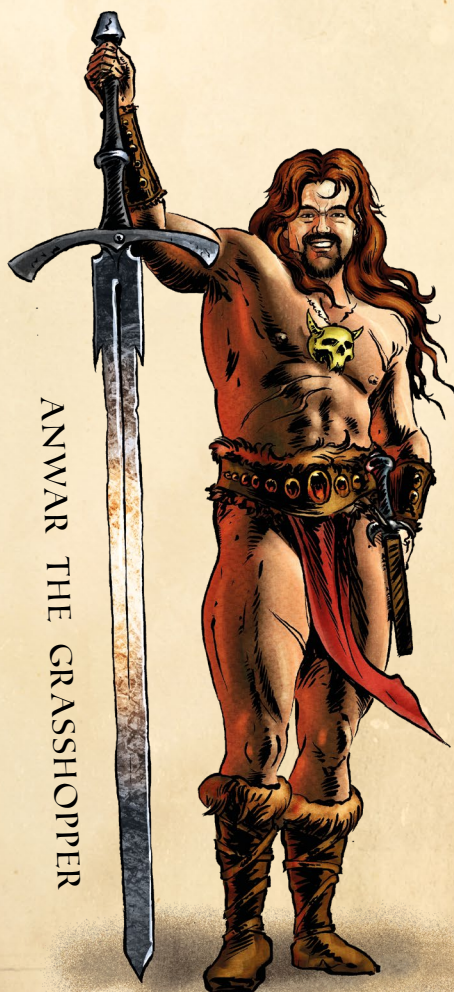
## HEROIC BENNIES

Savage Worlds Experience Points must be awarded sparingly, to keep the pace of advancement right, but there are other ways for the GM to reward exceptional deeds by the characters, and they are Heroic Bennies.

They come in two types: Golden Bennies and Steel Bennies.

Unlike normal Bennies they are conserved between sessions, but once spent, they are gone forever.

In game terms, a Golden Benny works like a normal one, but it also has a focus, a particular situation during which, if this Benny is spent, it grants a special Trait bonus (usually +2 for a Golden Benny and +4 for a Steel Benny) or an Edge.





Steel Bennies work like Golden Bennies, with a difference: they also grant a small bonus while they are in a character's possession.

Heroic Bennies must be unique, and awarded sparingly, only for very special situations.

Below you'll find some ideas to design your own Heroic Bennies, and you'll find others in published scenarios.

BENNIE NAME	CONDITION/EFFECT
Golden Benny of the Protector	This Benny is granted to the hero saving the current Damsel in Distress at least three times in the scenario. If spent it grants +2 to any Soak roll and can be shared with others, as per the Common Bond Edge.
Golden Benny of the Fast Rider	This Benny is granted to the hero who rode three days and three nights without stopping, to warn the city of Talum of the incoming Valk army. If spent it grants +2 to any Riding roll or to any Vigor roll to resist Fatigue.
Steel Benny of the Liberator	This Benny is granted to the hero starting the slave rebellion in the palace of Priest Prince Volator of Tricarnia. While it is in the character's possession, he gains +1 to Charisma. When it is spent on a Persuasion roll, it grants +4 to the roll.
Steel Benny of the Pit Lord	This Benny is awarded to a hero winning the Season of Blood or any other long ordeal in the Imperial Arena of Faberterra. While in the hero's possession, he gains +1 to Soak rolls. If spent to reroll a damage roll, it adds +4 to the total.

## CRAFTING

A barbarian hammering his own sword in his father's forge or a sorcerer discovering ancient secrets in dusty tomes are staples of the sword and sorcery genre.

With the following rules the characters can use their own skills to craft a particular item, find useful lore and similar production-oriented activities.

Crafting gives additional assets to the heroes so it should not be abused. As a rule of thumb, a player can only make one crafting attempt between adventures and then only if the situation allows it (for example a hero captured and escaped from slavery has neither the time nor the means to craft anything). The GM has the final say on when crafting is possible.

Crafting is done off-screen, during the After the Adventure Phase, after applying the Savings rules and after checking the After the Adventure Event Table (if the player wants to do that).

These are the steps to follow.

- ❖ **Decide the Item and the Skill.** First the hero must decide what he is trying to do: build an item, find a piece of lore, or something similar. At this point a specific Skill is selected.
- ❖ **Check the Requirements.** Second the character must have the proper tools, for example at least an Armorer's Kit to build a weapon or similar, a library to research a piece of lore and so on. These are listed in the Crafting Table (see below), with the modifiers they apply to the crafting roll. Note that the crafter must satisfy all the Requirements, unless they are separated by an "or".
- ❖ **Determine the Cost.** For items, the cost is half the standard market cost, while for other things, such as pieces of lore, it is decided by the GM using the Crafting Table.
- ❖ **Crafting.** The actual creation process is handled with a Dramatic Task (five actions long) based on the selected Skill, -2 if trying to craft a Rare item or an object not belonging to the crafter's culture (these penalties stack). If at least three successes are achieved, the item is crafted, if five successes are made, the item also has an Asset, decided by the player. In any other case, the crafting process fails and the resources spent are lost.
- ❖ **Special Assets.** Certain materials the heroes can find during the game allow them to ignore the cost



of creation of the item and grant the item, if properly crafted, a Special Asset, a particular bonus depending on the nature of the material.

**Cooperative Crafting.** Characters can cooperate to craft a specific item, but they must all have at least d4 in the crafting Skill.

**Spending Bennies.** Characters can spend Bennies during crafting between adventures, but the Bennies used are subtracted from the ones given out at the beginning of the next adventure.

**Spending Extra Resources.** Doubling the crafting cost gives +1 to the Skill roll, quadrupling it gives +2.

## CRAFTING TABLE

ITEM	SKILL	COST	REQUIREMENT	TYPICAL ASSET
Armor	Repair	50% of the item cost	Armorer's Kit (-2) or Smithy (+2)	50% weight, one free Soak roll per session.
Devising a new Trapping for a Power	Arcane Skill	100 Moons/Rank of the Power	Must already know the Power (-1/ Rank of the Power). Library of Lore (+2) or Lotusmastery Laboratory (+2)	Discover a trapping for another Power of equal or lesser Rank
Major piece of Knowledge (e.g. true name of a demon)	Knowledge (any), Investigation	600-1000 Moons	Library of Lore (+2)	Extra piece of knowledge, half cost
Minor piece of Knowledge (e.g. location of an old temple, weakness of a supernatural creature)	Knowledge (any), Investigation	100-500 Moons	Library of Lore (+2)	Extra piece of knowledge, half cost
Tool	Repair	50% of the item cost	Armorer's Kit (-2) or Smithy (+2))	Handy, Trusty
Training a Beast (mount, fighting beast)	Survival or Riding	25% of the beast's cost	None	Give an Advance to the beast (like a character acquiring 5 XP).
Vehicle	Repair	50% of the item cost	Armorer's Kit (-2)	+2 Top Speed, +1 Acceleration, +1 Toughness, +2 Armor, Trusty
Weapon	Repair	50% of the item cost	Armorer's Kit (-2) or Smithy (+2)	50% weight, +1 Damage, +2 AP, +50% range brackets, Harder, Trusty

**Handy:** This item grants +1 to a Skill roll, until a 1 is rolled, after which it works like a normal item.

**Harder:** Consider this item one level harder (up to iron) for the purposes of weapon breaking.

**Trusty:** Can reroll any 1 on the Skill die for free, as if spending a Benny, but must keep the second roll.



## OPTIONAL RULES

### ABSTRACT LOOT

Certain groups do not consider keeping detailed accounts of treasure in the spirit of sword and sorcery. These groups can choose to handle loot in abstract units, called Loot Tokens.

At the end of the adventure, the heroes restock their normal gear, as usual; in addition Loot Tokens can be used in the following ways:

- ❖ You can spend one or more Loot Tokens (GM's decision) to acquire a very costly or big item, like a ship or a barge, a castle, hire an army and so on.
- ❖ You can spend a Loot Token to Craft an Item (see SEPC page 121), or two Tokens to craft an item with +2 to the roll.
- ❖ You can spend a Loot Token to redraw a card on the After the Adventure Table.
- ❖ You can spend a Loot Token to start the next session with an extra Benny.
- ❖ You can spend two Loot Tokens to gain +2 Charisma in the next scenario.
- ❖ You can spend three Loot Tokens to gain an extra Experience Point.

Every unspent Loot Token is lost at the beginning of the next scenario.

If need arises to convert a Loot Token into money, each of them is worth around 2000 Moons.

**Awarding Loot Tokens.** A small treasure (razing a small village) should net one Loot Token, a medium one (the typical treasure found in a lost temple) two Loot Tokens, and a big one (a king's ransom), at least three Loot Tokens. Each hero in the party gains that many Loot Tokens, and yes; cutting one of your friends out of dividing the loot can net you a bigger share...





# BATTLES OF THE DOMINIONS

**"HEAR THE CHANT OF STEEL!"**

**- Iron Priest's battle invocation**

Clashes of armies are a staple of sword and sorcery. The following rules expand on the standard Savage Worlds mass battles rules.

## BATTLE VALUE

Battle Value is a new layer of abstraction to estimate the strength of an army.

Unlike Battle Tokens, which show the relative strengths of two armies, Battle Value is an absolute value. This is important because it allows tracking the strength of an army during a Campaign, giving a more accurate view of its status.

Nothing changes during the actual battle, simply use the Battle Values of the two armies to calculate the number of Battle Tokens the two armies have. It is easier than it seems, and the whole process can be summarized in the following checklist:

- ❖ Compare the Battle Values of the two armies.
- ❖ The army with the higher Battle Value receives 10 Battle Tokens
- ❖ The army with the lower Battle Value receives Battle Tokens in proportion:  
 $10 : \text{Highest Battle Value} = x : \text{Lowest Battle Value}$ , where  $x$  is calculated as  $(10 \times \text{Lowest Battle Value}) / \text{Highest Battle Value}$ .
- ❖ Round the number to the nearest integer.



*Example: The Battle of Teralia. The Defenders of Kenaton (Battle Value: 650), a mercenary Band led by the burly Zandorian swordsman known as the Golden Bull, is surprised by the Eighteenth Iron Phalanx (Battle Value: 900) while ransacking Teralia, a helpless Faberterranean village. No compromise can be found and the Phalanx General orders his men to wipe the greedy mercenaries out. The Eighteenth Iron Phalanx has the highest Battle Value so it receives 10 Battle Tokens, while the Defenders of Kenaton obtain  $(10 \times 650)/900 = 7.22$ ; rounded to the nearest integer this equals 7 Battle Tokens. The Hoplites seem to have a decisive advantage, but the mercenaries could have a couple of tricks up their sleeves to change the tide of battle. The two armies are deployed opposite each other on the dusty plain in front of the village, when suddenly the horn blowers of the Defenders sound the order to charge at the Iron Phalanx's lethal scythed chariots...*

## GENERIC BATTLE VALUES OF ARMIES AND SHIPS

Since Battle Value is an absolute number, the only tricky thing is how to estimate it; you can then use it for a clash of armies, navies or whatever you want. You can even sum them to have a good idea of the forces on the field during mixed conflicts; for example, you can easily simulate the siege of a coastal city by a combined naval and ground force.

The table below suggests the Battle Value various units should have. These are only average values, and any of them can vary (from -30% to +30%) depending on effective numbers of troops, fatigue and so on.

BATTLE VALUE TABLE

BATTLE VALUE	EXAMPLE
50	Small Merchant Ship
100	Merchant Ship
200	Very Small Mercenary Band, Small Barbarian Tribe, Large Merchant Ship, Pirate Ship
300	Syranthian warship, Tricornian War Galley
400	Small Mercenary Band, Barbarian Tribe, Large Pirate Ship, Amazon Hawk Ship
500	Small Valk Horde, Tricornian Priest Prince's Army
600	Average Mercenary Band, Large Barbarian Tribe, Iron Phalanx (modern era, reduced strength)
700	Syranthian Army
800	Large Band, Kyrosian Nobleman's Army
900	Phoenix Guard (Gis' Defensive Army)
1000	Very Large Band, Iron Phalanx (modern era), Autarch's Army
1200	Valk Horde
1500	Iron Phalanx (late Empire, reduced ranks), Large Valk Horde
1800	Iron Phalanx (height of the Empire)



## ACTUAL SIZE OF ARMIES

The system presented in this chapter is intentionally generic and abstract to keep the game Fast, Furious and Fun.

If you want to know more accurately how many people are in an army, you can estimate the number by dividing the Battle Value by the Individual Battle Value of the men composing it.

Add 20% to the number if the army is mainly composed of cavalry (mounts must eat too).

You can also reverse engineer the Battle Value; if you know the actual composition of an army, you can calculate its Battle Value by summing up the values of the individual soldiers, as listed in the table below.

### INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS BATTLE VALUE TABLE

BATTLE VALUE	SOLDIER TYPE
0.5	Irregular
1	Light Infantry/Short Range Missile Troop
2	Medium Infantry/Long Range Missile Troop
3	Heavy Infantry
5	Light Cavalry
7	Medium Cavalry
10	Chariot
50	Elephant
50+	Monster

*Example: The mercenary band called the Defenders of Kenaton have a Battle Value of 650. This means the Band could be comprised of the following units: 130 Medium Infantry (260 Battle Value), 50 Long Range Missile Troops (100 Battle Value), 5 Chariots (50 Battle Value) and 80 Heavy Infantry (240 Battle Value).*



# LEGENDS OF THE DOMINIONS

In this chapter you'll find some of the most iconic characters of the Dominions, to use as heroes, hirelings and patrons in your adventures.

## JUSTINUS OF SYRANTHIA

Justinus is probably not the name with which this tall, red-haired man was born. Of Northlander origin, Justinus is an orphan, found in a plague-ridden village in the Northlands by Velastios, many years ago. Velastios, a famous Sage of the Library of Syranthia, took the youngster as his pupil, and, over the years, Justinus grew up with the same lust for knowledge and adventure as his foster father.

Justinus isn't a strong warrior, a canny rogue or a powerful sorcerer, but he always manages to be in the right (some might say the wrong) place when interesting things happen. A skilled artist himself, he loves making sketches of the many wonders he sees in the Dominions and periodically sends them, with accurate written records of his adventures, to his old master, so that they can be archived in the Library of Syranthia.

In the past, Justinus was often seen in the company of Shangor or Zandorra, but in recent years he has been seen wandering alone, or in the company of some other adventurer, ready to jump into all sorts of strange stories.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Healing d8, Knowledge (History) d10, Knowledge (Legends and Lore) d10, Investigation d10, Persuasion d8, Notice d10, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Streetwise d8, Survival d6, Taunt d8

**Cha:** 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Curious

**Edges:** Common Bond, Connections (special – see A Life on the Road), Great Luck, Helper, Improved Dodge, Jack-of-All-Trades, Sage, Scholar

**Gear:** Staff (Str+d4, Reach 1, 2 hands, +1 Parry), hunting sling (Damage: Str+d4, Range:4/8/16), robes, writing implements.

### **Special Abilities:**

- ❖ **A Life on the Road:** Justinus has traveled the Dominions for many years, in all directions, and he knows (and is known by) a number of people. Once per session he can try using the Connections Edge with an organization of the GM's choice. If successful, the Sage remembers an old friend or acquaintance in the area. But Justinus also has a number of people who hold grudges against him, the fruit of a life of adventuring; if he rolls 1 on the Streetwise die, regardless of the Wild Die, a powerful Enemy finally catches his scent....
- ❖ **"A Tale You've Never Heard":** Justinus is always involved in some story, usually dangerous. When the heroes find him, he usually proposes a mission of some sort to them, involving a particular reward (draw a card from the Action Deck and check the Adventure Generator, Reward Card, SEGM); but at the end of the story it will turn out to be something else (draw a second card, this is the real one).



## IMMORTALIZED IN THE DOMINIONS!

Justinus is the official chronicler of the Dread Sea Dominions, and many of the books of the setting are written from his point of view.

A group of heroes involved in an adventure with Justinus has a good chance of having their deeds recorded in the young Sage's stories and their tales becoming widespread in the Dominions.

At the adventure's end, draw a card from the Action Deck and check the table below to see the unpredictable effects of Justinus' tale! It is left to the GM how Justinus' stories interact with the After the Adventure Table.

### JUSTINUS' CHRONICLES TABLE

CARD	EFFECT
2	<b>Misunderstood Tale!</b> However Justinus actually told the story, the opposite version spreads: if the adventurers were the heroes, they become the villains of the tale! In general they receive -2 to Charisma for at least one scenario (or until they clear their names in some way).
3-5	<b>"So You're Those Guys..."</b> The tale of the heroes spreads widely; they gain +2 to Charisma for the next three adventures, but it also reaches the wrong ears. If any of the adventurers has an Enemy he will easily track down him in the next scenario.
6-8	<b>Patron!</b> The tale of the heroes' deeds reaches the ears of a powerful character, who wants to hire the adventurers. If the card drawn is red, the patron is a good person, while if it is black, they have attracted the attentions of a bad guy, ready to do anything to make the party obey his orders...
9-10	<b>A Worthy Memory.</b> The heroes are well aware of how what they did saved the Dominions. They start the next scenario with an additional Benny.
J-Q	<b>The Heroes' Ballad.</b> The heroes' adventure became a tale so famous that each participant permanently gains +1 Charisma and obtains the Steel Benny of the Ballad, which grants another +1 to Charisma, and when spent on any social skill (Persuasion, Test of Will, Streetwise) it grants +4 to the roll.
K-A	<b>Unsung Heroes.</b> The tale of the heroes' deeds will never reach anybody, but it is archived in the Great Library for future generations' knowledge. The party gains an additional Experience point!
Joker	<b>"It Wasn't Easy..."</b> Draw two cards and combine the effects!



## SHANGOR THE THUNDERFIST

Shangor is a barbarian warrior born in the bitter mountains of Northeim. Bold and brave, he left his cold home to seek fortune, fame and beautiful girls in hotter lands. His first contact with civilization was rather unlucky. In the Borderlands, a devious Tricarnian merchant offered him a cup of wine poisoned with the Lotus of Dreams, and poor Shangor woke up as a slave oarsman on a Tricarnian galley.

It has been five years and a number of incredible adventures since then. Today Shangor is around thirty, and is at the peak of his strength. A skilled warrior and a good commander of men, some time ago he had a quite serious argument which led him to part ways with his most trusted companion, Zandorra the Amazon.

After wandering for a while, he found himself in the Ivory Savannah, where evil Caldeian slavers captured him and left him to die, judging him too savage to be tamed as a slave. Shangor was freed by a band of outcasts and bandits, the Scarlet Lions. He quickly gained the leadership of the band after killing their chief barehanded, with a single, mighty punch, which gained him a new name: Thunderfist.

Under his command, the Lions grew from minor robbers to a dangerous small army of resistance fighters, fighting against Caldeian influence in the Ivory Savannah, gaining the praise of the same tribes which had made the Lions outcasts.

When the War of the Chain began, Shangor intervened, helping the White King in a very dangerous battle, and today is one of his most trusted generals, even though he is known for his independence and refusal to obey orders. The barbarian is a true supporter of the King, but he doesn't trust Tosara, the priestess of the Burned Hand, at his side: in his adventuring years he has seen too much sorcery to trust any priest or mage more than a sharp blade in a strong hand.

Shangor often misses Zandorra, the breakup between the two not being exactly friendly, and he wonders about the fate of the reckless Amazon; but he knows his responsibilities don't allow him to hit the road again and find what out happened to her.

Maybe, after the War of the Chain ends...

Shangor can be an excellent patron for the heroes: he is a very good friend of Justinus of Syranthia and he welcomes as a friend any adventurer introduced by the young Sage.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d12, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d8, Riding d8, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Throwing d6, Tracking d6.

**Charisma:** +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 9

**Edges:** Block, Brawny, Brute, Charismatic, Command, Command Presence, Danger Sense, Hold the Line!, Improved Sweep, Loincloth God, Mighty Roar, Savage.

**Hindrances:** Heroic, Loyal.

**Gear:** Iron battle axe (Str+d8), iron dagger (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12), fur loincloth, lion-skin cloak (he killed the lion himself, and it grants him +1 Charisma in the Ivory Savannah due to the legends about his deed), crow feathered Caldeian helm (+2, it is a spoil of war which belonged to Sorakan the Crow, the man who condemned him to die in the savannah; Shangor can sacrifice it to make a free Soak roll at +4).

#### Special Abilities:

- ❖ **Former Lord of the Arena:** Shangor survived a whole Season of Blood in the Imperial Arena of Faberterra. This experience made him tough as nails and grants him +1 Toughness.





- ❖ **The Scarlet Lions:** Shangor took this band of bandits, made up of the outcasts of the Ivory Savannah tribes, gave them training and self-respect, and restored their honor in the eyes of their former tribes. These men will follow the Northlander barbarian to hell and back. They have a BV of 400.
- ❖ **The Thunderfist:** Once per session, Shangor can spend a Benny to make an unarmed attack with the Drop, his famous “thunderfist”. This is a lethal attack.



## ZANDORRA THE BLOOD BRIDE

Zandorra is the typical Amazon: proud, competent and bold. She was born in Ascaia, the daughter of a warship captain, and she knew nothing of how women live outside the Holy Island. Zandorra loved both weapons and sails, so she joined the crew of a hawk ship and started the life of a sailor. She travelled to many lands and fought against barbarians and pirates, always side by side with her trusted sisters.

One night, in the port of Faberterra, she met a handsome black mariner from the remote south. Amazons aren't particularly shy, and Zandorra spent the night with him. Nine months later, in the House of Labor in Ascaia, she gave birth to a baby boy. Following Ascaian law, the boy was instantly taken away from his mother. Zandorra wept that night, but only a little, then she tried to forget the whole thing.

Four years later, Zandorra was back on her ship with her sisters. One day, after conquering a slaver's galley, the Amazons discovered an unusual cargo below deck: a group of half-starved slave boys and girls.

The sight of these emaciated children touched something deep in Zandorra's soul: she yearned to see her son again, to hold him in her arms.

As soon as her ship returned to Ascaia, she went to the House of Labor and asked the Midwife Sister to tell her where her son was. The Midwife refused and Zandorra threatened her. The situation got out of control, Zandorra fought some city guards and was forced to leave Ascaia as a fugitive.

Since that day many years have passed, and the warrior-woman lived side by side with her friend, Shangor the Barbarian, during a number of adventures, the two making an unlikely but very effective couple.

A couple of years ago, Zandorra won the command of a pirate ship, the *Blood Bride*, and started a piratical life, side by side with Shangor, but always with the goal of finding her lost son.

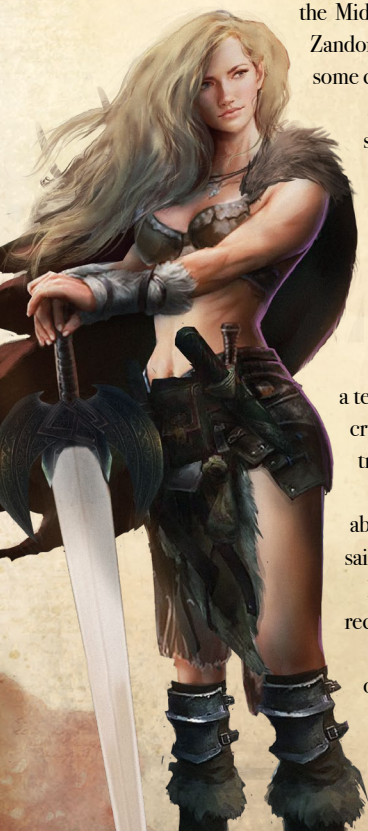
One tragic day, during a fight at sea, she discovered that her boy, then nine, had been tortured to death by the Caldeians.

Then something broke inside Zandorra and she became filled with a terrible hate for Caldeia, the whole land and race; she started a personal crusade against the southern kingdom, a crusade which could only end tragically.

Shangor, her first mate and long-time friend, tried to persuade her to abandon this path, but the confrontation ended badly: harsh words were said, blades shimmered and the blood of a friend was spilled.

In the end, Shangor left the *Blood Bride*, alone, and without any reconciliation between the two.

Today, Zandorra continues roaming the Endless Ocean and occasionally the Dread Sea, ransacking and pillaging, but always against





Caldeian ships.

She occasionally takes a lover or two, but nobody, not even her trusted helmsman Vaago, can say the name of Shangor in her presence without risking her anger.

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

**Skills:** Boating d10, Climbing d6, Fighting d12, Healing d6, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d8, Riding d8, Stealth d8, Taunt d8.

**Charisma:** +4; Pace: 6; Parry: 9 (1) (Amazon); Toughness: 7 (1)

**Edges:** Amazon, Ambidexterity, Bikini Goddess, Block, Command, Improved Frenzy, Helmsman, Two Fisted, Very Attractive.

**Hindrances:** Bloodthirsty, Overconfident, Stubborn.

**Gear:** Twin iron long swords (Str+d8), bronze dagger (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12), red-dyed leather bikini (+1, allows using the Bikini Goddess Edge).

**Special Abilities:**

- ❖ **Amazon Sea Tricks:** The *Blood Bride* isn't an Amazon Ship but Zandorra is an Amazon and she spent enough years in the Ascaian navy to learn a trick or two. Once during each sea Chase, Mass Battle or similar scene involving the *Blood Bride*, Zandorra can spend a Benny to gain +2 to a single Boating roll, relating to some special "Amazon Sea Trick". Alternatively, she can spend it to double the Acceleration of the ship for a round.
- ❖ **The Blood Bride:** An infamous pirate ship, it is slender and fast, and manned by a reckless crew of pirates. The Good Brothers (another name for the pirates of the Cove) manning it have average Boating d8 and the ship as a whole has BV 350.

## PLAYING SHANGOR AND ZANDORRA

Shangor and Zandorra are the two iconic characters of the setting. In this book, after five years of adventures, they are Legendary heroes, with a lot of experience under their belts. They have changed a bit during all that time: Shangor isn't as reckless now as in the past, but he is a skilled commander with a deep sense of responsibility for his men, while Zandorra is a strong woman battling with her own rage. If the players are interested in playing Shangor and Zandorra, the characters can be found, as pre-generated characters, in *Heroes of the Dominions*, at Seasoned Rank. Story-wise you can simply ignore this "advanced" version of them (replacing their role with another suitable NPC of your own creation), or, more interesting, you could play a campaign entirely as a flashback: Shangor and Zandorra, who eventually made peace with each other, are remembering their past adventures. Ideally, when the adventurers reach the Legendary level the story reaches the present time and continues as you wish.

As always, these are only suggestions: the Dominions are your world to play in, and only you who can decide how their story will end!

## PERSONALITIES OF THE DOMINIONS

In this chapter you'll find a selection of the most influential and important personalities of the Dominions, the real movers and shakers of the setting. They can be used as friends, enemies and occasionally patrons of the adventurers.





## DRAKOVAR OF RAL VASTARA

South of the western point of Tricornia are the Lizard Islands, savage lands populated by strange beasts. The Islands host several small villages, mainly inhabited by escaped slaves, and a small, heavily fortified city with the showy name of Ral Vastara or Port of Marvels. Ral Vastara was probably an ancient Keronian mountain fortress, which luckily escaped the fury of the waters due to its elevated position. Surrounded by thick walls, it has always been fiercely independent, and a nest of pirates. Today the lord of Ral Vastara is Drakovor, an adventurer and pirate of Tricornian origin who brags he is the heir of Tovakor, the Prince of Scales, one of the most enlightened kings of the Land of Demons.

In the past the Lizard Islands, in particular Ral Vastara, were used as a stopover by ships travelling to the south of the Dominions, because it is quite easy to find fresh water and fruit on the islands, but today most ships avoid them, due to the danger posed by Drakovor. Pirates of any sort are an exception to this rule: they are always welcome to spend their loot and to join Drakovor's ranks, and the city's lord is known to visit the Cove frequently, where he is welcomed as a friend and fellow pirate. Drakovor is becoming a real problem for Tricornia; he refuses to pay taxes and homage to the High Prince and his fleet of assorted pirates brings danger and ruin all along the coasts of Tricornia, ransacking without fear. The only city with a fleet strong enough to face him is Ral Hordaka; the lords of the City of Night are too busy plotting against other cities in the north and don't want to lose important resources fighting against a petty pirate, but Drakovor has started attacking their black ships too, so sooner or later the Lords of the Port of Darkness will have to deal with him. Drakovor is very ambitious, and has declared that one day he will march on the City of Princes, seize the throne and behead the High Prince. There must be some grain of truth in Drakovor's words: reports say the adventurer has a terrible monster under his control, a huge Lazarta, big as a house, which obeys his orders. Drakovor calls him Karos, which in Tricornian means "vengeance," and rides him into battle.

Drakovor is known to have a penchant for bets of any type; the weirder and more dangerous, the better. He could be an adversary for the party, but also a (quite dangerous) patron.

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

**Skills:** Boating d8, Fighting d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d4, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d10, Taunt d8

**Cha:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Overconfident, Quirk (loves betting and always respects the letter of a pact)

**Edges:** Beast Rider (Karos), Block, Connections (pirates, independent traders), Command, Fervor, Improved Frenzy, Noble, One Hand and a Half, Sweep

**Gear:** Nagar – ensorcelled bronze long sword (Str+d8, AP 2, grants the Arcane Resistance Edge to the user), ancient Tricornian armor (+2), bronze dagger (Str+d4, range 3/6/12, concealed in a boot and covered with a very fast lethal *poison* made with arcane skill d10), golden cloak, Karos (see sidebar).

### Special Abilities:

- ❖ **Drakovor's Fleet:** Drakovor's fleet is made of a variable number of ships (2d6+3 x 100 BV). With some time (1d4 weeks) he can also use his Connections Edge to summon help from the pirates of the Cove, for another 1d6 x 100 BV per success and raise (up to 3d6 x 100). These pirates obviously work only for loot...
- ❖ **The Black Shark:** Drakovor's capital ship is a large Tricornian war ship, manned by his own men, and feared in all the ports of the Dominions (-1 to opponent's Spirit rolls during mass battles). It is surprisingly fast (+2 Top Speed) and, by itself, has a BV of 500 (included in Drakovor's Fleet above), 100 of which are due to Karos, which has a special nest on it.

## KAROS

Karos is Drakovor's main asset: an enormous Tyrant Lazarta, a sort of snake-like dragon, typical of the Lazarta Jungle of Tricarnia, which the pirate lord rides in battle.

Very few people have seen a Tyrant Lazarta and survived to tell the story. These beasts are almost legendary: big as houses, they are basically enormously long snakes with huge leathery wings and a couple of claws. Apart from their sheer mass and ferocity, nature gifted Tyrants with a huge membranous sac, placed in the gorge, filled with a strong acidic substance which they can spit. A person hit by this deadly substance turns into a bubble of reddish pulp in a few minutes.

Karos is quite intelligent and very faithful to his master; he is a Henchman.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Notice d8

**Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 17 (3)

### Special Abilities:

- ❖ **Armor +3:** Karos's skin is hard as iron armor.
- ❖ **Acid Spitting:** Tyrants spit acid using the Cone Template. Any character hit by the cone must make an Agility (-2) roll or be hit by the acid, suffering 2d8 damage for three consecutive rounds. A Tyrant cannot spit in the same round he attacks with bite and claws.
- ❖ **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6. The beast can attack with both bite and claws in the same round, without any penalty, but he cannot use Acid Spitting in the same round.
- ❖ **Fear -2:** These beasts are terrifying. Any character seeing a Tyrant must make a Fear (-2) roll.
- ❖ **Flight:** Karos flies at Pace 12, with Climb 0.
- ❖ **Large:** Tyrants are very big and attack rolls against them are made at +2.
- ❖ **Size +7:** Tyrants are huge beasts, with long serpentine bodies at least twenty feet long and thick as tree trunks. Karos is even bigger than normal.
- ❖ **Weakness (Acid Sac):** The Tyrant's acid sac is quite visible and vulnerable. If a character manages to hit it with a Called Shot (-4) it has only Toughness 7 (2). After suffering a Wound, the sac breaks, releasing an acid shower (see above for damage) on whoever is in a Small Burst Template, but from this moment on the Tyrant cannot use the Acid Spitting ability.
- ❖ **Weakness (Music):** Lazartas are very sensitive to music and songs, and receive -2 to opposed rolls against any power based on music.



## SHADE

Over centuries, Shade is the name assumed by the most secret and capable killer of the feared Assassins' Guild of Jalizar. Shade could be anyone: a man, a woman, a slave. The secret records of the Guild, those that could be recovered after the first destruction of the Guild in 1501 AF, even report one case of a little boy being Shade for some time.

The current Shade is a young woman, Vaasha, who poses as a pretty and not very smart courtesan.

In truth Vaasha, an orphan who grew up in the alleys of the City of Thieves, is a cold, remorseless killer, ready to obey any order from her Guildmaster.

She has but a sole weak point: for many years, she has been looking for the person who killed her foster father, the Lotusmaster Poaran, who taught her everything she knows about poisons.

Nobody knows how she'll react if she ever discovers that the killing of her old man was ordered by the Guildmaster of the Assassins himself.

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

**Skills:** Boating d6, Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Healing d10, Intimidation d8, Lockpicking d10,



Notice d10, Persuasion d12, Stealth d12, Streetwise d10, Taunt d8

**Cha:** +4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Damsel in Distress (she has removed all the penalties), Vow (serve the Master of the Assassins' Guild)

**Edges:** Alertness, Attractive, Danger Sense, Improved Level Headed, Martial Artist, Poisoner, Temptress, Thief

**Gear:** Poisoned iron dagger disguised as a hairpin (Str+d4+1 imbued with Shade's Poison), poisoner ring (with three doses of Shade's Poison), bikini (some of whose parts are concealed lockpicks).

**Special Abilities:**

- ❖ **Shade's Poison:** Vaasha's trademark, this is a Fast poison that exists in two forms: ingested and injected. Shade counts as having Lotusmastery d10+2 and 10 Power Points. Obviously Vasha is immune to her own concoctions' effects.
- ❖ **Right Hand of Death:** Shade is *the* top professional murderer, and if she gets the chance to strike, she rarely leaves her victim alive. By spending a Benny, she automatically gains the Drop. In addition, any roll to Soak a wound caused by her attacks is at -2.



## MOTHER MAIDAR

As everybody in the Dominions knows, Dhaar, the mighty warlord of the Valk, died in 2467 AF, forty-eight years ago, probably killed by magic from Gis. His body lies, untouched by time, in a huge citadel the Valk forced their slaves to build on the steppes of Valkheim. Known simply as the Tomb of Dhaar, it is a bleak place, run by a special group of Valkyria and their chosen soldiers, called the Guardians of the Tomb.

At the head of the order is a Valkyria called Mother Maidar. She is old, very old: some say she was one of the wives of Dhaar, while others even suggest she was his mother, and that he was sired by an inhuman mate after a night of love on the steppes.

But that was a long time ago.

Mother Maidar is the second greatest authority in Valkheim: till some years ago, even the King of Valkheim asked for her counsel and obeyed her not-so-veiled orders.

The advent of Deserjaas changed things dramatically: Mother Maidar, who is a gifted seeress, doesn't believe he is the new Dhaar, but instead considers him a great danger for the Valk people, which, if it follows his guidance, will find its doom.

Mother Maidar's influence is so great





that, till today, she and Deserjaas have never met, probably because the Successor doesn't want to alienate the more traditionalist Valk clans which hold the Guardians of the Tomb in great esteem.

On her side, despite living in a self-imposed isolation, Mother Maidar has a very long arm, and even longer sight. Her agents roam the Dominions trying in every way to hinder and stop Deserjaas' plans of expansion.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d12+2, Strength d4, Vigor d4

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Healing d10, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d8, Intimidation d12, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Persuasion d10, Riding d8

**Cha:** +4/+8; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Elderly, Vow (keep the body of Dhaar safe)

**Edges:** Ancient Pact (Kumra's spirit – Dhaar's demonic steed), Charismatic, Command, Danger Sense, Noble.

**Gear:** Robe.

### Special Abilities:

❖ **Chosen of Dhaar:** Maidar is protected by some supernatural force, probably Dhaar's spirit. Demons must win an opposed Spirit (–4) roll to attack or harm her in any way. This protection disappears if Maidar attacks them first.

❖ **Curse of the Mother:** Maidar isn't a true Valkyria anymore: too many years have passed and she is something different now, but she can cast terrible curses by spending a Benny. The victim must win an opposed Spirit roll with Maidar, or he suffers from Bad Luck or any other Hindrance of Maidar's choosing. The curse is permanent. The Mother can also throw a death curse, rolling at –2, plus another –2 if the victim is a Henchman or a Right Hand and –4 if he is a Wild Card (see sidebar).

❖ **Mistress of the Tomb:** Few positions are more important in Valk culture. Maidar receives +4 to Charisma, but only toward Valk.

❖ **Mother's Visions:** Valkyria are famous for their visions, and Mother Maidar's visions are more accurate than those of any other Valkyria. By spending a Benny, and making a Sorcery (–2) roll, a Valkyria can use the *divination* Power without spending any Power Points. A human (or horse) sacrifice reduces the penalty by two. Each additional use of this ability in the same lunar month causes an additional –2 to the roll. A Valkyria failing the Sorcery roll is Exhausted. Critical failures also require rolling on the Sorcery Critical Failures Table.

## MAIDAR'S DEATH CURSES

The death curse of Mother Maidar is intended to be used as a plot device for the GM, not as a simple way to kill a character.

Note that a death curse can take many subtle forms: a character's saddle can break at the worst moment during a wild ride, a platoon of guards can surprise him while he is sneaking behind enemy lines, a morsel of food can choke him, or he can simply catch a nasty disease.

Whatever the effect of the curse, if it affects a player character, there must always be a way to escape its effects.





## STEALER OF SOULS

This tall, cadaverous-looking warrior, clad in ancient rusty armor of Cairnlander origin, seems to be one of the walking dead himself.

Nobody knows his name anymore; he is simply called "Stealer of Souls", because that is what he actually does.

In addition to being a fearsome warrior, the Stealer of Souls has somehow learnt the secret techniques of eating souls, and, over the years, he has developed a craving for that cruel activity.

The Stealer of Souls is a mercenary, and of the worst type: no job is too dirty for him, he is totally remorseless and faithful, so long as he is paid.

As to his fees, well, rumors say that coins and gold mean nothing to him, while he is always looking for some slave to drag into the Cairnlands, where he has a hideout of some kind.

The Stealer of Souls is an excellent henchman to team up with the major villain of a story. Given his Harder to Kill Edge, he will probably escape the first confrontation with the adventurers, who will meet then him in successive adventures.

The Stealer of Souls is a Heroic character, but the GM should level him up during the campaign, if necessary, to keep him on par with the adventurers.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10 (d12+1), Vigor d10

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d12, Healing d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d4, Notice d8 (d12), Riding d8, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Throwing d6, Tracking d8.

**Charisma:** -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 11(3)

**Edges:** Armor Use, Block, Brawny, Choulblood, (Harder to Kill), Improved Level Headed, Improved Sweep, Soul Eater.

**Hindrances:** Greedy, Ugly.

**Gear:** Bronze ancient greatsword (Str+d10, AP 1, 2 hand, -1 Parry), reinforced heavy armor of Cairnlander origin (+3), bronze dagger (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12), great helm (+2), horse, tattered cloak.

### Special Abilities:

- ❖ **Ghost Whisperer:** The Stealer of Souls can communicate with freshly dead souls (less than one day). To do this, he must make a Spirit (-4) roll and spend a Benny. Roll on the Reaction Table to see how cooperative the ghosts are.
- ❖ **Stealer of Souls:** This character is very expert in soul snatching. He can steal up to three souls as per the Soul Eater Edge and, unlike the normal version of the Edge, he can also steal Edges (each Edge stolen counts as a stolen Trait: to steal an improved version of an Edge he must score a raise on the Spirit roll). He currently has stolen Strength (2 die steps), Notice (2 die steps) and the Harder to Kill Edge.



## TUSAL THE CALDEIAN

Tusal is the personal advisor of Ganymedes, the Autarch of Kyros, or – as he is called when he is not present – the Sinister Hand of the Autarch. He is a tall, bald man of gaunt aspect, coming from faraway Caldeia. His age is unknown and nobody has ever questioned him on the matter. People usually feel uneasy when they look into his black, hypnotic eyes. Tusal came to Kyros City a few years ago to take the post of court astrologer, a position of scant importance, but his whispers quickly gained the Autarch's ear. "What Tusal thinks, Ganymedes says," is the phrase commonly murmured in the Autarch's palace these

days. Tusal has a very bad influence on the ruler's weak mind: he encourages Canymedes' obsession with gaining more personal power. The Sinister Hand has also persuaded him to create a secret police, the Hands of the Autarch – or simply the Hands – to deal with traitors, real or imaginary. In truth, the Hands are highly-trained assassins and spies who answer directly to Tusal and are responsible for all sorts of devious acts, obviously carried out in the name of the Autarch.

Tusal deeply hates Ramatides of Keron, the High General of the Armies of Kyros, but hasn't found a way to get rid of him, yet.

Tusal is an excellent opponent for the heroes, and, probably, an agent of Caldaios the Cruel, although in the last few years, he seems to be playing his own game.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Sorcery d12, Stealth d8, Streetwise d10, Taunt d8

**Cha:** +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

**Hindrances:** Cautious, Greedy

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Sorcery), Connections (nobility, spy network), Improved Impressive Aura, Noble, New Powers, Power Points, Rapid Recharge, Binding Ritual, Soul Drain.

**Powers [30 PP]:** *armor* (invisible shield), *bolt* (tendrils of darkness), *boost/lower trait* (corrupt), *deflection* (I am not there!), *invisibility* (You can't see me!), *puppet* (Your mind is mine!), *summon ally* (Keronian Imp, Twisted Servant, medium swarm, Fanged Ape, Shadow Bat, Spirit of the Betrayer).

**Gear:** Dark bone dagger (+1), ensorcelled robes (+1), two Lotus concoctions chosen from among: *obscure*, *stun*, *boost/lower trait*.

#### Special Abilities:

- ❖ **Binding Ritual:** Tusal has permanently bound Tsaro (see below), a very powerful demon, to his will. Tsaro acts as the Sorcerer's personal servant, bodyguard, and spymaster.
- ❖ **Spy Network:** Tusal has a number of ears throughout Kyros, and probably even some in nearby Syranthia. Every time something of interest occurs (a conspiracy is formed, a person of interest arrives in Caldeia, and so on) Tusal can make a Streetwise (-2) roll to be informed of it.



## TSARO OF THE MANY FACES

The creature called Tsaro belongs to the ancient race of the Talaxakah.

Talaxakah are shapeshifting demons of great power, usually in the service of Demon Lord Baachaga, who grants their use to his most trusted followers. A Talaxakah, in its normal form, is a vaguely humanoid shape of gray protoplasm. This demon “eats” in a peculiar way: whenever it touches a victim, it melts and incorporates the flesh of the individual. When the victim is completely melted, the Talaxakah acquires the ability to take its shape.

Talaxakah summoned in the Dominions are usually immature; after a period ranging from one to three weeks, they reach adulthood and reproduce.

This happens in a very disturbing way: the Talaxakah must “eat” a victim, as above, but the process, instead of incorporating the victim, creates another Talaxakah, identical to the parent, with the same powers and an initial form which is that of the victim eaten.

A Talaxakah is a Legendary creature for the purposes of the *summon ally* Power.

Tsaro's current form is that of a mild, middle-aged man, apparently the personal scribe of Tusal. Apart from dozens of different people, he also absorbed the shape of a giant falcon, which allows



## GM'S TIP: THE HANDS OF TUSAL

Tusal has a number of persons in his service, some of them acting as spies and others as assassins and killers, in a complex pyramidal organisation with Tsaro at the top.

Usually low-ranking Hands have no means of recognition or particular skills, but higher-ranking ones are issued the Hand of Tusal, a bronze amulet in the shape of a hand, which identifies them as members of the spy network. A Hand grants Intimidation d10 toward any Kyrosian.

him to travel very quickly, and that of a giant river snake, an excellent swimmer.

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

**Skills:** Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d12, Stealth d10, Streetwise d10, Taunt d8.

**Pace: 6; Parry: 7; Toughness: 6**

### Special Abilities:

❖ **Assassin:** Talaxakah are deadly opponents, very capable at catching their foes flat-footed. By spending a Benny they can gain the Drop on the enemy.

❖ **Consuming Touch:** Str+d8, AP<sub>3</sub>, this is considered a Touch Attack. A Talaxakah can freely transform one of its limbs into a tentacle of protoplasm, through which it eats and reproduces. The monster can use any creature Incapacitated by its Consuming Touch for Mimicking or Reproduction (see below).

❖ **Demon:** Demons are immune to poison and disease. They have a +2 bonus to recovering from being Shaken.

❖ **Fear -1:** Seeing a Talaxakah in its natural form is very disturbing, and causes a Fear (-1) Check.

❖ **Invulnerability:** A Talaxakah's physiology is totally alien: it is immune to any mortal weapon not made of steel. Apart from this, only acid and fire can damage it.

❖ **Mimicking:** A Talaxakah can take the form of a victim it has consumed (Incapacitated through its Consuming Touch). Physically, the copy is perfect. The Demon doesn't acquire the memories of the

victim, but being a consummate actor it can easily impersonate her (people who know the victim very well can make a Notice roll opposed by the Talaxakah's Persuasion to detect something strange). The mimicking process is limited to the body of the victim; the monster cannot copy its gear.

❖ **Reproduction:** A Talaxakah which has Incapacitated a victim using its Consuming Touch can decide to reproduce itself by spending two Bennies. The process (which lasts one minute per Vigor die of the victim) creates a new Talaxakah, which already knows how to take the shape of the victim used to create it. A Talaxakah cannot reproduce more than once every thirteen months.

❖ **Weakness (Dread Star Matter):** Talaxakah have an ancestral nemesis: Dread Star Matter (see SEGM). If the creature enters into contact with even a small sample of it, something incredible happens, and the Matter starts devouring the demon, which must make a Vigor (-4) roll each round or suffer one non-Soakable Wound. The process ends only after the Talaxakah scores three or more successes and/or raises on the Vigor roll.

## ANWAR THE GRASSHOPPER

BASED ON BRIAN D. BREMER'S CHARACTER CONCEPT.

Anwar was born in the shadow of the Mountain of Fire, the great volcano of Northeim, and the first sound he heard was the echo of the hammering of the Priests of Hulian on the holy anvil of the Monastery of Fire. Growing up, he became a reckless young warrior, so he was called Anwar, which, in Northlander tongue, means "trouble".



Anwar, like his grandfather before him, became a Trollhunter, one of the daring (or mad) souls devoted to killing the dangerous man-eaters of the mountains.

During his first winter hunt, when he was in the band of old Beras Two-Horns, Anwar did something true to his name: trying to finish his quarry with a single blow, he threw his longsword at the head of a black troll, impaling one of the beast's eyes.

But, the hit didn't reach the brain, and Anwar found himself cornered by a very pissed off giant.

Other, wiser, warriors in this case would have escaped as rabbits in the snow, but not Anwar. He jumped on the troll's head, jumping like a grasshopper, grasped the antlers of the beast and pulled out his sword, planting the blade deep in the troll's skull.

The beast fell down in the snow silently, as silent as the other trollhunters of the band.

Beras Two-Horns, after punching the boy in the head for being reckless, named Anwar "Grasshopper", and from that moment the nickname stuck.

Some years have passed since that winter, and today Anwar wanders the southern lands as a mercenary, but he has kept the "grasshopper" attitude. Recently a man jumped from the walls of the city of Azagara on the top of a war elephant, and, gods know I tell the truth, Anwar was that man!

## ELKYR THE WISE

BASED ON DANIEL MCLAUGHLIN'S CHARACTER CONCEPT.

While carousing in the taverns of Syranthia, if you are lucky, you could meet a strange Tricarnian man. Tall, thin and quite old, even by Tricarnian standards, he is usually busy sipping a cup of fine wine and telling weird stories in a soft, well-spoken voice. Elkyr introduces himself as a scholar, but he doesn't wear the robes of the Sages of the Library. In truth Elkyr is a former Priest Prince, his name being Elkyrian of Nal Elkya, a city in the southwestern lands of the Sons of Keron.

If someone asks him how he ended in a tavern in Syranthia, he'll answer: "I am looking for my Pride, stranger."

A peculiar answer, but with more truth in it than it appears. Ten years ago Elkyrian killed his own father, using the family ensorcelled sword, a dark artifact called Pride, to seize the throne. But his reign was brief: his own family rebelled against him, and he had to flee from Tricarnia, losing his sword, which returned to the arcane dimension to from whence it came.

From that day Elkyr the Wise, as he calls himself today, wanders in the Dominions, looking for adventures and especially for clues on how find Pride again: there is, in fact, a special bond between the rightful heir of Nal Elkya and Pride, a sort of dark dependence which makes any moment of separation from the blade painful for Elkyr, which manifests as accelerated aging. Elkyr isn't the only one looking for Pride: his surviving brother Kyvoor, and his wicked sister, Kyraasa, are desperately trying to find it. The first to lay hands on it will be the new, uncontested lord of Nal Elkya.



ELKYR THE WISE



## SILENT SHADOW

### BASED ON ARMIN WELK'S CHARACTER CONCEPT

Silent Shadow is a legend among the slave masters of Tricornia.

A spooky, dark legend, of one that came out from the forest and killed the slavers, before returning under the thick foliage of the woods.

The Tricornians don't know the identity of Silent Shadow, but for the freed slaves living in the Brokenchain Mountains he is a hero, a silent figure freeing them and guiding them to safety beyond the mountains.

All of this without speaking a single word.

Silent Shadow is Caled warrior, enslaved by the Tricornians many years ago, who cut away his tongue and forced him with an ensorcelled collar to act as a bloodhound, tracking down escaped slaves, a task in which Silent Shadow excelled.

Luckily for him, one day he was ordered to hunt Taurus, an escaped slave who was a Priest of Tosar in disguise. When Silent Shadow finally tracked him down, Taurus broke the magical collar of Silent Shadow and the two escaped together, reaching the ex-slave communities in the Brokenchain Mountains.

Since that day Silent Shadow has acted as advanced scout of the liberators, and often strikes alone at the slaver's hunting parties, with his amazing hunter skills.

Despite this, the other slaves keep him at distance: after all is a tall, tattooed and naked Caled warrior, which speaks to nobody. His only friend in a young black-skinned girl, Imara, which Silent Shadow freed some months ago and for which he feels something, a strange sentiment he never felt before... maybe it's what other men call love?

## RAKKEN THE HUNTER

### BASED ON ERNIE SULLIVAN'S CHARACTER CONCEPT

"Rakken is the son of a hundred mothers and many more fathers!"

This is the saying in the main ports of the Dominions. Ventus Rakken, best known as Rakken the Hunter, is a scoundrel of the seas if one ever existed. Of mixed and largely unknown breed (some say he is the bastard son of a Syranthian noble while others swear he was born in the sewers of Jalizar), Rakken is the captain of the *Thara's Kiss*, a slender merchant ship, manned by a crew of peculiar sailors, which include a blind Valk sorceress, a cannibal of the Cannibal Islands, a fallen monk of Lhoban and a couple of former acrobats of the Great Circus of Jalizar.

Rakken is equally welcome (or, to perhaps, unwelcome), in every port of the Dominions, including the Cove, to which he discovered the secret path years ago.

Rakken isn't a pirate in the true sense of the word, he is more a procurer of things.

In particular he works for the arenas of the Dominions, furnishing them with dangerous beasts and critters, but he isn't shy about lending his services to shadiest characters, if the pay is good.

Recently he got involved in a weird business with the Autarch of Kyros himself, selling him the egg of a Pale Lady, a strange creature famous for her amazing erotic skills. This creature dwells only in some remote islands of the Brown Sea and finding it brought great trouble to Rakken and his crew.

Unluckily for Rakken the egg, after hatching, proved to be from a totally different creature, a Dark Lurker, a sort of bipedal lizard, which killed the favorite concubine of the Autarch and almost bit off the manhood of the mighty king, before being stopped by his personal bodyguard.

From that day, there is a high bounty on Rakken's head, and the *Thara's Kiss* must avoid the Kyrosian coasts to avoid being sunk by catapults.

Considering that this outlandish story is told by Rakken himself, and that nobody has ever heard of creatures called Pale Lady and Dark Lurker, this may not be the real cause of the Autarch's hate toward Ventus.

Among his many flaws, in fact, Rakken is known to be a great liar...

## RED WOLF

### BASED ON AARON BANDSTRA'S CHARACTER CONCEPT.

Everybody knows that the Iron Phalanxes of today aren't like those of the past: discipline is more lax, commanders are incompetent and the real spirit of the Empire is slowly dying in a rotting carcass.

Well, anyone who says that never met Arus Bandarius, called the Red Wolf. Of mixed blood, Arus was born in the Borderlands thirty-four winters ago, to a Northlander hunter and a Faberterran washerwoman escaped to the north.

At fourteen he enlisted in the Twenty-fourth Phalanx, lying about his age, and at seventeen he was made Rank Leader. But it was during the Battle of the Copper Pass, in the southern Iron Mountains, that Arus became a hero: after the sudden death of the general of the Twenty-fourth, Marianus, he took the command and made a bunch of men hold the pass against a horde of Nandals for three days, fighting tooth and nail. At the dawn of the fourth day the Nandals retreated, and the dead were counted: almost a third of the hoplites were killed, but a major invasion of Faberterra was prevented.

That day Arus won the nickname of Red Wolf, because his fur cloak was red with blood after the battle, and was made general.

Arus is popular among the common people, very popular. Someone whispered in the Emperor's ears he is *too* popular and for this reason he was offered a prestigious appointment: guard, with the Twenty-fourth, the imperial city itself. In this manner he will be always very near to the Emperor, in case he needs him, or... in case he becomes a threat.

Arus has held this appointment from six months and both he and his men are becoming restless: they are hardened soldiers, not ceremonial troops, and want to be on the battlefield, not parading in the streets!

But maybe there is something in store for the Red Wolf and the men of the Twenty-fourth, a task that only they can accomplish, in some remote province of the Empire...



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