

Crystal Heart

Player's Guide





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Based on Lev Hakristal, a world created in collaboration with Gil Breger, Roi Gaash and Ben Shalom.


Dedicated, with much love, to the best people we also get to play with: our spouses.

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Crystal Heart

Player's Guide

A Savage Worlds Setting

by Eran Aviram and Aviv Or



This is not a full product!

The Player's Guide contains only the player-facing parts of the complete Crystal Heart book; the two are distributed in the same package.

You have permission to share this book with your party.



Welcome, Players!

Welcome to *Crystal Heart*, a colorful adventure setting designed for the role-playing game *Savage Worlds*!

Crystal Heart is based on a webcomic by us—Aviv and Eran—which was in turn based on a setting first created for a role-playing game. Full circle! It's about exploring a fantastic world as superpowered agents of a mysterious organization. If you don't like your superpower, you can always have a change of heart. Literally!

There's a lot to tell but we're hoping most of the telling will be done by you. This is why we try to avoid long-winded expositions and focus on providing the tools and seeds necessary to craft your adventures. There's a lot of room for you to create new facts about the world, but not *too* much room, so you won't fall off the edge of the table like a stray die.

Just flip the page and get right into it. Go on and get some Crystals, brave Agents!

~Aviv and Eran

EXPLORE FURTHER

Check out uptofourplayers.com/crystalheart for additional digital content, including:

- The webcomic *Crystal Heart*, available for free. It's a great introduction to this world, of course, but as an added bonus, it also teaches you how to play *Savage Worlds*.
- A free *Starter Set*, with all the basic rules of the game, six ready Agents, and a starting adventure.
- *Full of Heart* provides additional Crystals, their feral manifestations, and shards.
- *Living in Syn* provides ways to tweak your playing experience with an emphasis on Syn: training rules, random events, mentors and services, as well as new tales and adversaries.
- *Original Syn* provides the webcomic-approved canonical explanation for all the mysteries of *Crystal Heart*.
- And several One-Sheets, adventures ready to play.

GET INSPIRED

The world of *Crystal Heart* is inspired by works such as Brandon Sanderson's *Mistborn*, where magic is consistent and ingrained into the world's story; *Pokémon*, where bundles of cool powers run around the world, waiting for you to capture them; *Final Fantasy 7*, where slotting a brightly-colored gem gives you superpowers; and many more. But most importantly, all of these worlds manage to combine the spirit of adventure with light-hearted goofs and serious tones, occasionally at the same time. They also all have deep secrets, hidden truths that shake the way their people understand their worlds.

HOW TO PLAY

Crystal Heart is meant to be used with *Savage Worlds Adventure Edition* (SWADE), which is available in your local friendly gaming store and on www.peginc.com.





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Crystal Heart

They say that a person's heart is made from their dreams and desires.

The core begins to form in our youth, growing alongside our aspirations, hardening into a solid heart as we come into our own. When we die, and our dreams are forever lost, our heart fades away as well. Each person creates their own heart; their life experiences determine its color and shape. The number of possible shapes and colors is as varied as the people of the Five Lands.

In our world there are teams of Crystal Hunters, agents of the mysterious and powerful organization Syn. They seek out and collect ancient Crystals, relics from a bygone age. In order to harness the incredible and inexplicable powers of the Crystals, the person must sacrifice something dear indeed: their own heart. The Crystal Hunters undergo a delicate surgery in which their hearts are replaced with a harness into which they can insert the Crystals.

With their fearsome powers, the Agents of Syn became a symbol of authority throughout the world. They travel the Five Lands in their never-ending search for old ruins, where they might find the mysterious Crystals—hidden behind countless traps, vicious monsters, and ancient curses.

These are the Agents of Syn. Relentless. Fearless. Heartless.

The Crystals

Crystals are power, and until relatively recently, they were uncontrolled. Created sometime during the Bygone Age by methods no one understands today, these fist-sized relics glow slightly with their own unique light and color.

Each Crystal changes the world around it in ways specific to that Crystal's *theme*, as explained in the *Crystals and Hearts* chapter, page 55. The exact manifestation depends on the environment: an orange Crystal of flame



eruption might cause surfaces around it to ignite, but the same Crystal on the ocean floor might create small volcanoes instead.

Around thirty years ago, the people that eventually created the Syn organization invented a method to control Crystals. It requires removing one's heart and implanting a special harness. Any Crystal inserted into the harness can then function as an artificial heart—and, more importantly, grants the person access to the Crystal's theme and powers.

There's one caveat, though. Each Crystal also influences its bearer's personality, making them feel unwanted emotions or think alien thoughts. This mental baggage is called "disposition" and it can usually be held back with some effort, but on occasion it might completely transform a person's personality.

Crystals have been around since at least the end of the Bygone Age, around 800 years ago. They can be found in ancient structures, deep within caves, or even in a well in the middle of a village. Many have become an integral part of their own small and strange ecosystems. In their "feral" state they tend to be dangerous and unpredictable. Syn Agents, as the only people able to safely subdue and tame a Crystal, are scouring the world in search of these dangerous objects.

Your mentor in Syn is always reminding you that Crystals are not "magical"—they are simply utilizing natural forces in ways not yet fully understood. But we're working on it.

THE HEARTS

In the world of *Crystal Heart*, human hearts are not flesh-and-blood. They are hard, gemlike objects, changing slightly in shape and greatly in color from individual to individual. At birth, the heart is only a small, colorless pebble. As the person grows, developing a personality and a world view, the heart solidifies into a unique shape and hue.

The heart "beats" slowly by shaking lightly, enabling blood circulation in a way theorized by modern medical science to be similar to a magnet creating a magnetic field. After a person's death, their heart slowly sublimates, turning into vapor.

It is important to note that animals have flesh-and-blood hearts. Weird, right?

The World

The continent is divided into five Lands, both geographically and ethnically. The denizens of each Land consider themselves part of the same "people", despite not having an actual nation (except for Zingama, which has a well-established unified government and a national identity).

THE FIVE LANDS

Bogovia is the land of dark forests and bleak swamps, of wolves howling in the night against gloomy scenery. Bogovian folk tales are all about grim endings, bitter sacrifices and Pyrrhic victories, with a stubborn hero who refuses to surrender at any cost. Bogovians dress in thick, well-worn fabrics and huddle in small villages, each with its own strange customs and superstitions.

Fjordstad is the land of ice and storms, where the Eleven Cities fight each other over resources and respect. Fjordstadians will act either behind your back, with highly trained spies engaging in industrial espionage, or in your face with mad engineers who'll blow you up with their latest death ray. Fjordstadian nobles tend to dress in elaborate multi-layered suits with various hidden compartments, whereas commoners are more likely to be seen in overalls. All of them, regardless of social status, are known for being elitist and condescending—especially toward each other.

The Islands are varied and eccentric, both culturally and geographically. Some islands are large trading hubs that are among the most cosmopolitan and pleasant places in the world, while others are remote, isolated and untamed. The islands vary in climate, but loose clothing and simple jewelry are common almost everywhere. Islanders are quick to relax, focusing on the here and now. Some of them, of course, are pirates.

Maseia is the land of open plains, countless lakes and naturally-occurring flying mountains. Dozens of Maseian clans travel the plains and valleys, focusing on self-discovery, enlightenment, and living off the



land. Their societies have tight structures, with stiff traditions and strict social mores. Maseians dress in ways that reflect their role within their clan.

Zingama is the land of slithering and poisonous things, a huge jungle criss-crossed by the longest river in the world. A massive government rules over more than a million people, who live mostly in urban settlements along the river. Zingamaians talk politics all day and party all night, proud of being a world-class cultural and industrial power. Dress, hairstyle, slang, and even pets all change on a seasonal basis, according to the latest fads. Farther from the river, the jungles are thick and dangerous.

THE BYGONE AGE

About 800 years ago, human civilization ended. Even the best experts know little about the people who came before, and no one knows why their powerful society was annihilated. The person on the street only knows that several centuries ago, history began almost from scratch.

The Bygone Age left various remnants throughout the world. Most are ancient, strange machines or structures half-buried in the ground. One island might have a Bygone Age forcefield that keeps everyone inside healthy, or a village in Bogovia might be built on a metallic platform that doesn't sink into the swamp. The most important remnants are, of course, the Crystals.

PRESENT DAY

The people of the Lands still don't know a lot about their world. After spending hundreds of years in internal strife, rebuilding society on the skeletons of the past, they have only recently begun to coalesce into what might be called proto-nations.

The thirst for knowledge and progress is there, even if the means for establishing and maintaining production lines are still out of reach. One Fjordstadian city might have cars, and many of them have electric street lights, but these are seen as trade secrets to be kept hidden from rivals. There's even a train between some of the Fjordstadian cities and Maseia—but it's the only train line in the entire world. Zingamaian schol-

ars are making their first steps into the field of archeology, trying to uncover their own past. Deep within the Bogovian forests, high on Maseian mountains, in the jungles of Zingama, beneath Fjordstadian ice, and all across the Islands, countless secrets remain hidden.

One power in the world, however, seems to be ahead of everyone else by a generation at least: Syn.

THE RISE OF SYN

About 20 years ago, an organization named Syn began recruiting and training special Agents, replacing their hearts with harnesses—a never-seen-before technology. Syn existed for some time before this, but it was the arrival of the Agents that brought the organization to the public's eye.

Most Agents are trained as Crystal Hunters. Syn's intelligence team provides them with a designated route to follow for several months, usually passing through two Lands. During a hunt the Agents are expected to follow the rumors Syn has gathered beforehand, as well as to explore on their own and recover any Crystals found. At the end of a route the group returns to Syn's headquarters: a huge, high-tech flying citadel.

Syn scholars discovered the secret to utilizing Crystals safely and predictably by way of the harness, but they are far from being the only ones who try. Other organizations and individuals have an active interest in gaining control over Crystals, using and misusing them for their own ends. This usually ends tragically...but not always.





Agents of Syn

Syn is a unique organization, somewhere between a government, a commercial corporation, and a private army.

It is one of very few names that are known in all the Lands and in almost every village. It is the most respected, feared, and admired organization in recorded history. You are its Agents in the field.

Here are the five principles of the Agent, taken from Syn's Agent Manual, aka The Code. More details are available on page 30.

- Go where directed, follow the route, but show initiative.
- Help when asked by local authorities with which Syn has signed a contract.
- Avoid unnecessary violence. The world is dangerous; don't make it more so. Simply be on alert and return fire; protect Syn assets.
- Syn supplies most everything you need. Money is not an issue. Go and get Crystals.
- Represent Syn and its agenda fairly and diplomatically.

Agent Training

After being recruited (see sidebar on the next page), the Agents go through several months of training, first by themselves and later with their teammates. Teams are usually comprised of 3-4 Agents, but some groups are larger. Two-thirds of the way into training the Agents are fitted with a harness that allows them to replace their heart with a Crystal, giving them access to its powers.

The default assumption is that you begin the game at the start of your active duty, during which you will get missions and orders from Syn. You will usually be required to go hunting for Crystals, but occasionally you'll be asked to act as law keepers or specialists.

SIGNS OF A CRYSTAL'S PRESENCE

The Code advises to keep an eye for:

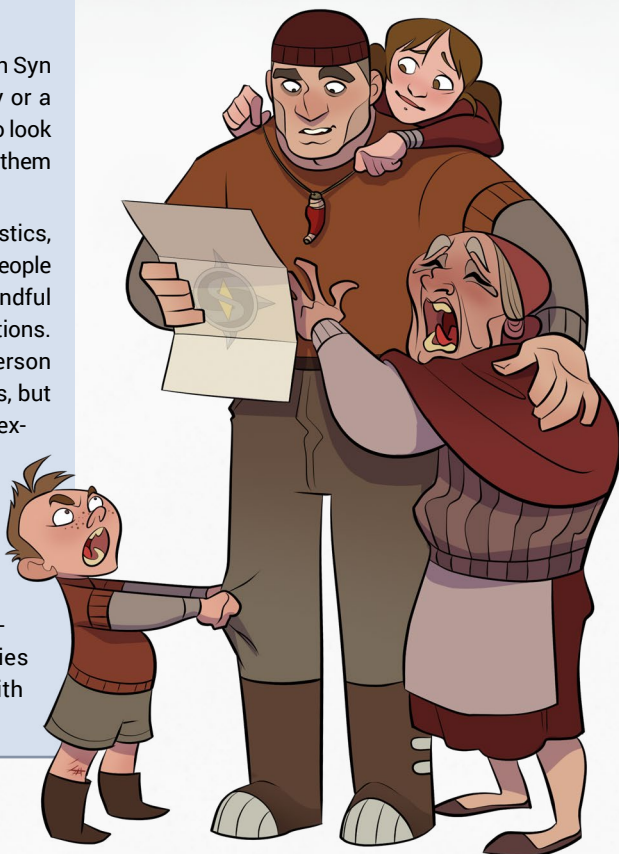
- Physical forces manifesting in odd ways
- Flora and fauna behaving suspiciously
- Cruel or unusually interesting deaths

Recruitment

Every year, dozens of people apply to join Syn by approaching the closest Syn facility or a passing Agent. Agents are encouraged to look out for potential recruits and recommend them to the organization.

Most recruits join Syn's technical, logistics, or science branches. Only a dozen or so people apply to become Agents, and only a handful of those manage to pass the first evaluations. Most tests are meant to ensure the person is healthy and can work well with others, but some are unusual, to say the least. For example, Syn doesn't explain why or how they use a person's reaction to eating a banana as a relevant data point.

Despite the careful screening process, almost every year a would-be Agent doesn't make it through the harness implantation surgery. Their bodies are returned to their families, along with generous compensation.



Creating Your Agent

Character creation follows the same process as in the *Savage Worlds* core book, except as noted.

Keep the Crystal for Last: We suggest you choose your starter Crystal only after you've finished *everything else*. This might seem counterintuitive for many players—this is *Crystal Heart*, why shouldn't I immediately go and choose a cool Crystal?—but it's important to remember that this is a *starter* Crystal, and your Agent will be replacing it in the not-too-far future.

Your character should be someone independent from the Crystal they bear, someone who interacts with, but is not *defined by*, the disposition of their Crystal. Otherwise you're not playing a person, but a container for exchangeable Hindrances.

There is also a practical concern that you (and your character!) should consider: an Agent should be able to handle themselves independently of a specific Crystal. This doesn't mean your Agent needs to be able to handle *every* Crystal at peak efficiency, but

it does mean they should be able to handle at least *some* Crystals beyond their starter one. Build a person who can grow and adapt to new Crystals (or not; see the Crystal Specialization Edge on page 19).

Step 0: Reasons to Join and Motivations to Stay

Becoming an Agent requires you to literally take your heart out and place yourself in the care of a mysterious organization. Why would anyone ever do such a thing?

It's the right thing to do: You believe strongly in something greater than yourself: duty to your people, the greater good, or maybe peace among the Islands. You want to contribute, but you lack the specialized training or the logistical backbone. Syn has all of this and more. When you become a Free Agent (see sidebar next page), you'll use your powers and Syn's resources to advance the cause.



Power unlike any other: You want to be strong. Or maybe you want to fly, or discover what lies at the bottom of the ocean. Crystals allow you to do amazing things, and Syn is the only place where one can have safe and nearly unlimited access to Crystals. Maybe Syn hasn't yet found the Crystal that does what you want—no worries, you'll find it yourself.

No other choice: Perhaps you were exiled from your tribe, angered the wrong people, or happen to be the last survivor of a volcano eruption on your island. You had no home and no hope, but Syn gave you a place to sleep and a purpose. Or perhaps your father was one of the founders of Syn and he demanded that you follow in his wake; or maybe you had a terminal heart disease and had no choice but to join in order to replace your heart. Regardless, you're with Syn now, so you better start appreciating it.

Step 1: Home Land

In *Crystal Heart* everyone is human (gaining a free Novice Edge as usual), and everyone comes from a specific Land.

The Five Lands represent the entirety of the known world. Each Land's population is made up of various cultures, but for the most part, each Land has its own ethnicity. For more details on the world and each Land, see *The Five Lands*, page 80.

Your Future Promotions

At the end of one to two years as a Crystal Hunter—and assuming you survive—you will graduate into one of the following roles.

Free Agents are given free reign when it comes to advancing Syn's interests (as well as their own) and are among the most powerful and influential people in the Five Lands.

Specialists use specific Crystals in the service of some organization in accordance with Syn's ever-shifting alliances.

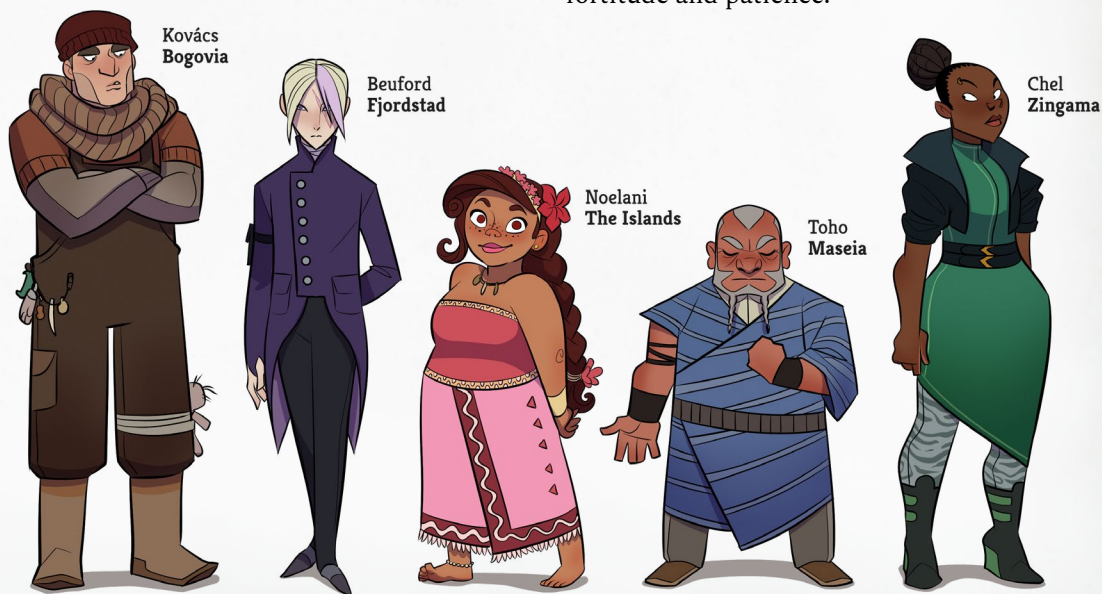
Subduers are given the responsibility of [further information is not available to Novice Agents].

Your choice of home Land increases one of your attributes by one step, as a result of both biological and cultural causes. Your maximum attribute limit is also increased by one step, to d12+1. Your choice of home Land also determines the type of things you might know with a Common Knowledge check.

Bogovia: Strength starting at d6. Bogovians are known for their fighting spirit, approaching most situations head on.

Fjordstad: Smarts starting at d6. Fjordstadians are known as being cunning and clever, approaching most situations as puzzles to be solved.

The Islands: Vigor starting at d6. The cultures of the Islands are more varied than in other places, but they tend to have great fortitude and patience.





Maseia: Agility starting at d6. Maseians are quick to act and react, and are usually regarded as more physically active than the rest.

Zingama: Spirit starting at d6. Zingamaians tend to see every problem as a small part of a bigger picture—one that revolves around people.

Name Conventions

Because all people speak the same language (see Languages, next page), there's no real reason for things to have weird names. However, since it's fun and atmospheric, we recommend finding some excuse for this: remnants of linguistic constructs from before the Bygone Age, old customs, local dialects, etc.

- Bogovian names tend to sound sharp and strong, with hard B, V, and K sounds.
- Fjordstadian names use mainly SCH, Z, and F sounds, with sudden dips into D and N.
- Islanders have complicated names with lots of R, W, K, and A sounds, with interesting vowel combinations.
- Maesians use many T and O sounds, with both hard and soft Ks.
- Zingamaians like R and I sounds, and names are usually kept short.

Step 2: Traits

Agents gain the usual 5 points for attributes and the usual 12 points for skills. Skills not mentioned on the following pages do not exist in *Crystal Heart*.

Core Skills: Agents of Syn go through several months of training, during which they gain the following skills at d4: Athletics, Common Knowledge, Crystal Channeling, Fighting, Notice, Persuasion, and Stealth. These skills are marked with a star (★) on the list. They can be further increased with points as usual.

Academics (Smarts)

This skill is combined with Science to reflect specialized knowledge of all kinds. A check is required to know anything of importance regarding the Bygone Age or Crystals, including speculating on Crystal manifestations and abilities (see page 62). Note that this skill does not signify hav-

ing access to Syn's full database; Syn has discovered many secrets it does not share with its Agents.

Athletics (Agility) ★

All Agents receive basic physical training.

Battle (Smarts)

This skill also covers team operations and squad-level techniques. Battle can be used to Requisition equipment and services from Syn (see page 36).

Boating (Agility)

Very common among Islanders, but also used by many river-travelers in Zingama and Fjordstad, as well as fishermen and traders in lake-heavy Maseia and swamp-heavy Bogovia. Includes building and controlling canoes as well as giant ships.

Common Knowledge (Smarts) ★

With communications technology still in its infancy, people aren't very knowledgeable about most of their Land, to say nothing of other Lands. You might be required to roll to see if you remember or are aware of specific details, such as customs (what people tend to celebrate, when, why, and how), dangers (hazardous weather conditions, fauna and flora, and where and when they might be encountered) and history (major political upheavals and wars, people in power, recent natural disasters).

Rolling Common Knowledge on Lands other than your own is usually done with a -1 penalty on the check. History tends to be foggy earlier than 300 years ago, so checks regarding those days are made with a -1 penalty. The Bygone Age is beyond Common Knowledge.

You might know some specialized information, thanks to your upbringing. Based on your Land, the following topics can be considered Common Knowledge to you, instead of Academics:

- Bogovia: Farming techniques and diseases.
- Fjordstad: Scientific principles, mechanics.
- The Islands: Trade and sailing.
- Maseia: Animal husbandry and weather.
- Zingama: Sociology and narcotics.

Crystal Channeling (Spirit) ★

The arcane skill used for Arcane Background (Crystal Channeling), with which one activates their socketed Crystal's powers. Channeling is



a mental exercise practiced with biofeedback techniques. See page 56 for the full details.

Driving (Agility)

This skill is virtually non-existent outside of a few Fjordstadian cities and Syn; most people won't even know how to turn on the wipers. Driving isn't needed for ordinary travel in the Tank (the Most-Terrain-Vehicle issued to each team of Agents), and all Agents receive some lessons behind the wheel, allowing them to use the skill untrained.

Engineering (Smarts)

This skill combines Electronics and Repair into one. It's about practical application of technical knowledge, mainly to construct and repair devices.

Fighting (Agility) ★

Syn Agents get to train with several melee weapons and also bare-handed, but most decide to focus on one or two weapons or styles (usually inspired by their home Land). This is encouraged, as Syn places a huge emphasis on personal development and uniqueness brought together under unified beliefs and goals.

Healing (Smarts)

Healing is used for all physical operations involving a Crystal, such as socketing under pressure (see page 58) and understanding Crystal influence on the human body.

Intimidation (Spirit)

Syn's reputation tends to precede the Agents, as naturally many people find the organization intimidating. Depending on the situation this can be a blessing or a hindrance; on occasion, even kind Agents find themselves resorting to the "Do you know who I am?" approach. See page 82 for the Setting Rule Everyone Has an Opinion About Syn.

Language (Smarts)

By default, this skill doesn't exist as there's only one language in the Five Lands, called the Tongue. The occasional expert also knows some Old Tongue, the language of the Bygone Age. A character learns some basic Old Tongue when they take the Bygone Age Expert Edge (page 18).

If your group enjoys playing with many languages, use the following guidelines:

- Bogovia has two distinct dialects (North Bog and South Bog) with a separate language for bog-dwellers (Mud Tongue).
- Fjordstadians speak North with local accents in every city.
- There are about two dozen Old Tongue-descended languages in the Islands, and the more isolated a society is, the less similar to the Tongue their language is.
- Maseians speak four different dialects (Grass, Hills, Low, and Shadows).
- Zingamaians speak Zingamaian, borrowing a lot of words from the tribal Zingamaian-descended languages that predated the modern nation, as well as from the major Island and Maseian dialects.

Notice (Smarts) ★

When seeing a Crystal in action, feral or otherwise, a raise on a Notice check to study its manifestation can give a clue to its theme.

Performance (Spirit)

Syn Agents don't usually try to pretend to be someone else or entertain a crowd, but stranger things have happened. You can't use this skill to raise funds; getting things from Syn requires a Requisition roll (see page 36).

Persuasion (Spirit) ★

Nobody in the Five Lands is indifferent toward you—see page 82 for the Setting Rule Everyone Has an Opinion About Syn. Persuasion can be used to Requisition equipment and services from Syn (see page 36).

Networking: Instead of paying with money an Agent can pay with Requisition, gaining +2 per point spent.

Piloting (Agility)

A rare skill, which can never be used untrained. Syn has several pilots who can control the autoplanes when needed. In Fjordstad, some engineers are inventing various types of mechanical flight, and Maseian sky-skiffers use gliders to reach the floating mountains.

Repair

See Engineering.

Research (Smarts)

This skill is very much influenced by the immediately available books and reports, which (unless you're in the Syn citadel) tend to focus on the Land you're currently in. Agents in a



Syn facility can spend Requisition to add +4 to the roll (see page 38) Research can also be used to Requisition equipment and services from Syn, see page 36.

Riding (Agility)

Very common in Bogovia and Maseia, and practiced in Fjordstad with the white horse (page 174). Some Islanders use Riding to ride dolphins and hull leviathans (page 175), and some Zingamaians ride delivery snakes (page 181).

Science

See Academics.

Shooting (Agility)

As with Fighting, Syn provides Agents with several types of weaponry but encourages specialization in a chosen form. It's expected that all Syn Agents who don't specialize at throwing things take Shooting to have some ranged combat ability.

Stealth (Agility) ★

The world is surprisingly filled with places people don't want you to go to. On occasion, Agents even try to pretend they never went there.

Survival (Smarts)

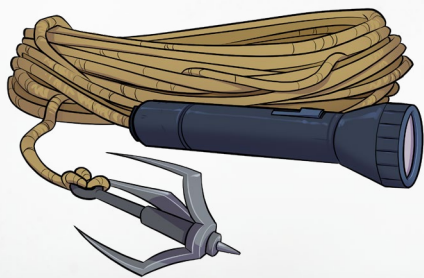
A key skill in all Lands, Survival is essential for a group of Crystal Hunters who run around in the wilds on a regular basis. The Tank is equipped with some basic survival tools (see page 45), but a team shouldn't rely solely on them.

Taunt (Smarts)

Taunt is also used for boasting. As with Intimidation, Agents occasionally find that the locals expect a certain behavior from them; see page 82 for the Setting Rule Everyone Has an Opinion About Syn.

Thievery (Agility)

When disabling traps, being quick and careful is what's important.



Familiarization

Most people in the Lands don't venture beyond their home Lands, and even Agents are only considered well-traveled when they become Seasoned.

Until the Agent gets around a bit, consider making the following skill checks with a small penalty whenever they are made outside of the Agent's home Land:

Knowledge skills: Terrain, weather phenomena, and flora and fauna all change quite dramatically between Lands.

Social skills: Local dialects, different pronunciations, and unusual euphemisms make it harder to get your point across. The vibe of a Bogovian town is very different from that of a Zingamaian city.

Step 3: Edges and Hindrances

You gain one free Edge for being human. You can spend Hindrance points to gain additional Edges, as usual.

For being a Syn Agent, you gain the Edge Arcane Background (Crystal Channeling) (page 16) and the Hindrance Vow (Major): The Agent's Code (page 30). These are above and beyond the usual allotment of Hindrances and Edges. Because this is a given for all Agents, it's not repeated in the stat blocks in this book.

HINDRANCES

Agents don't have to be entirely healthy or clear of mind. In fact, having Bad Eyes or being Yellow or Elderly can all be excellent reasons to become an Agent in the first place to look for a Crystal to overcome whatever's troubling you.

That being said, Syn cannot afford to let a Bloodthirsty Agent ruin its reputation of being fair (scary, but fair), and they'll never accept someone who is Driven or under a Vow which leads them to create international incidents or political catastrophes. There's a place for everyone at Syn—except those who are destructive to it.

The following hindrances are modified for *Crystal Heart*.



Enemy: Can be an Agent from a rival team or someone else in the organization, in which case they don't wish you death but certainly want to hinder your efforts.

Obligation: Normally can't be chosen—you're obligated to Syn—but some rare cases might qualify. A famous Agent named Matias is a single parent and had his eleven-year-old daughter accompanying him on adventures before he became a Subduer. A Major Obligation indeed! Also see the new Hindrance, Dependant.

One Arm: This is a Minor Hindrance, since Syn supplies a light and mostly effective prosthetic. Tasks that require two hands are made at a -2 modifier.

Outsider: In the world of the Five Lands, all non-natives tend to draw a respectful amount of suspicion, but some cultures are considered so out-there that they deserve the Minor version of this Hindrance: Bogovian bog-dwellers, Fjordstadian barbarians, eccentric Islanders, Maseians from the Desert Peninsula, and Zingamaian jungle villagers. See *The Five Lands* (page 80) for more details. By belonging to Syn you automatically get some respect and some legal rights, so the Major version of this Hindrance can't be chosen.

Slow: Syn provides a prosthetic for Agents with the Minor version, and an ultralight wheelchair for Agents with the Major version.

Wanted: Running away from the law to join Syn is not unheard of. Syn Agents are able to shrug off many accusations, but they don't *actually* have diplomatic immunity. The Major version of this Hindrance can only be chosen if the authorities are actively hunting for the Agent throughout their Land and beyond.

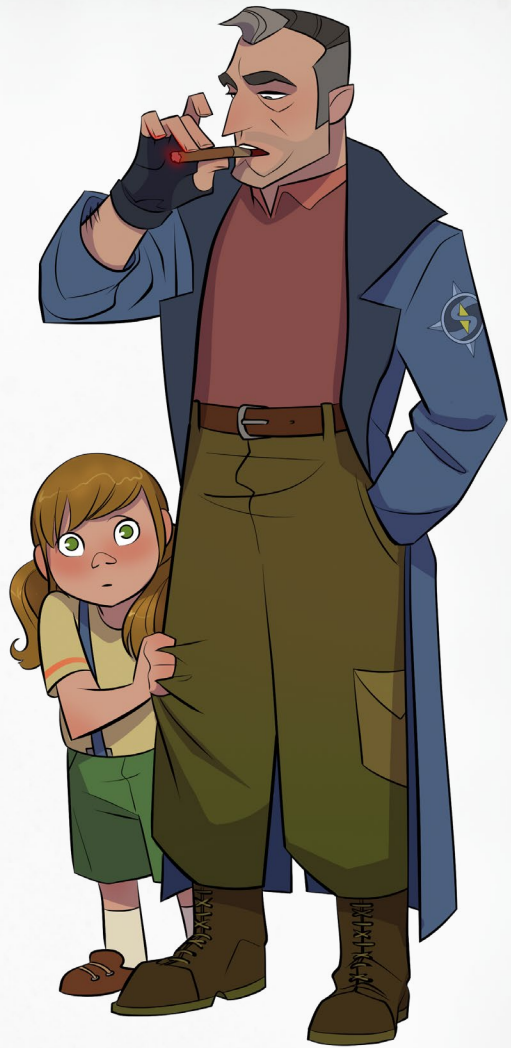
Unused Hindrances

The following Hindrances aren't used in *Crystal Heart*, because they make no sense in the setting: Doubting Thomas, Greedy, Illiterate, Poverty.

NEW HINDRANCES

Compulsive Behavior (Major)

Your Crystal's disposition has a powerful influence over you. When you are dealt a Heart as your Action Card, your Crystal's intrusive thought patterns take hold and you must de-



vote one action this turn to satisfying your disposition. If you are unsure what to do, you can just waste an action in repetitive thoughts.

Dependant (Minor)

Someone or something is depending on your support. You asked Syn to provide that support, but the organization isn't a charity—someone needs to pay for the service, and that someone is you. You start the game with one less Requisition (so you have zero if you're a Novice Agent) and must pay a point of Requisition every few months.

Harness Rejection (Major)

Your body and your harness don't get along, and pushing their connection too far isn't recommended. When you maintain a power you must make a new Crystal Channeling check every ten minutes to keep the power going. In addition, whenever you



choose to take a level of Fatigue instead of failing a Crystal Channeling roll, you instead take two.

Lingering Disposition (Minor)

It's hard for you to shake off the effects of a Crystal you've socketed, even after replacing it. When you switch a Crystal, choose one Minor Hindrance (or a Minor version of a Major Hindrance) of the former Crystal. You keep this Hindrance until you switch Crystals again. You can make a Smarts roll to try and overcome this Hindrance when it comes into play.

Even a starting Agent has a lingering disposition, from the Crystal they used during training; it can be any reasonable Minor Hindrance of your choice.

EDGES

The following Edges are used differently in *Crystal Heart*.

Arcane Background: No Arcane Backgrounds are allowed except for Crystal Channeling (see page 56) which all Agents get for free. The only exception is Weird Science, which is available exclusively to NPCs, mostly Fjordstadian mad scientists; see the No Magic Setting Rule, page 83. While the common person might have various superstitions, and the world is indeed filled with wonder, Syn Agents are taught that there's no "magic" in the Five Lands—only poorly understood Crystal technology.

Aristocrat: Each of the Five Lands, with the exception of the Islands, has an aristocracy of sorts. The differences in style and etiquette between Lands might reduce the bonus given by this Edge to +1 at the Game Master's discretion. Generally speaking you left your position behind, but you are still expected by the people of your Land to behave according to your status and fulfill some relevant duties; you still belong to the cultural elite.

Command: Syn training focuses on small unit tactics. All Leadership Edges that apply only to Extras instead apply to Wild Cards as well (effectively negating the need for Natural Leader).

Connections: You can't have Connections with Syn as your relationship with the organization is covered by the Requisition rules

(page 35). To have a connection with a powerful individual inside the organization, see the new Edge Mentor.

Trademark Weapon: All Syn-issued weapons are custom-made, but that doesn't mean they're custom-*awesome*. An Agent with Trademark Weapon has either brought their own weapon from home, or undergone specific training with a special weapon which is always fancier-looking than others of its kind. This does not require a Requisition roll.

Unused Edges

The following Edges aren't used in *Crystal Heart*, as they make no sense in the setting: All Power Edges, Arcane Resistance (and Improved), Champion, Chi, Linguist, Rich (and Filthy Rich).

NEW EDGES

The following edges are especially appropriate for use in *Crystal Heart*.

BACKGROUND EDGES

Arcane Background:
Crystal Channeling
Requirements: Novice

You are equipped with a harness. You are able to take ranks in the Crystal Channeling skill, which is based on Spirit. See page 56 for the full details. All Syn Agents get this Edge for free.

Fierce Forward

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+

People in the Lands tend to be fierce; you're an excellent example of that.

Once per day, when something you believe in is on the line, you can upgrade your Wild Die by one step (d6 to d8), or get a d4 Wild Die if you don't have one. This upgrade lasts for a scene. A mercenary won't be able to use this Edge simply for fighting, but she *does* get it when she fights a foe who opposes her belief that people should be free to make a living however they choose.

On the other hand, when retreating or avoiding a conflict in which your personal beliefs are challenged, you downgrade your Wild Die to a d4 (or get a -1 penalty on all Trait rolls, if you don't have one) for the next 1d6 hours, or until you come back and fight.



Mentor

Requirements: Novice

All Agent teams have a supervisor, but you also have a personal mentor. They can be the same person or someone else in Syn. The two of you have a special relationship—not necessarily a *nice* one, but one based on mutual respect.

You gain a skill point (but not above the connected attribute) in one skill that is relevant to your mentor, their teaching style, or their relationship with you. You also increase your Requisition by 2 points, reflecting your mentor's connections and willingness to shift some things around for you.

See Appendix B (page 214) for a list of recommended mentors.

CULTURAL EDGES

Each of the following Edges represents an ability that the character gained by going through some sort of ceremony or by wholeheartedly adopting a custom or way of life. While it's possible for a person of one Land to get initiated into the customs of another, it's a rare occurrence which requires justification in the story.

The trappings for each cultural Edge change according to local variants. For example, one Maseian clan's Rite of Passage has the youngsters go through a series of caves and confront mask-wearing elders, while another requires a person to sit alone in a hut for three days.

These trappings also set the requirements for each Edge. In the example above, the first clan takes all the youngsters of a calendar year through the Rite at an appointed date. In the second, every clansperson chooses when they're ready to go through the trial, with some people doing so late in life.

Bogovian Fire Drill

Requirements: Novice, Bogovian

In the Land of endless mud and musty swamps, fire can be surprisingly dangerous because nobody expects it. But you? You're ready for anything. You've been through too many jump scares and had more than enough people shouting at you to get going. You now show a fierce, almost narrow-minded

devotion to the task at hand. When you recover from being Shaken, you gain +2 on your next Trait roll this turn.

Fjordstadian Scrutiny

Requirements: Novice, Fjordstadian

Fjordstadians are taught from childhood to assume the unknown and suspect the obvious. At best, they are cautious; at worst, paranoid.

This Edge counts as Danger Sense, except that the character rolls her Smarts instead of Notice. It can also be used to recognize non-physical sources of surprise. For example, if the baron at the party is giving a speech about Syn's magnificent achievements but is in fact about to mock the Agents, this Edge can be used to recognize that something bad is about to happen.

Because this Edge casts a wide net, it occasionally triggers for no reason. The GM is encouraged to call for a Fjordstadian Scrutiny roll at least once per session, and especially during times of calm.

If you already have Danger Sense, replace it with a different Edge.

Island Diet

Requirements: Novice, Islander

You know how to eat well, and more importantly, what and when. Even if your Land's fruits, grains, and meats aren't around, you'll find suitable replacements. You've gained





healthy stores of energy, and your diet has guided your metabolism to access that energy quickly and efficiently.

You are able to survive without food for two days (instead of one) before needing to roll Vigor for hunger. If given proper ingredients and appropriate tools, you can create a tasty and nourishing meal. Anyone who eats it while enjoying a relaxing atmosphere is able to ignore one point of penalties from Fatigue for the next 8 hours.

You can usually restock quality ingredients at Syn facilities (no Requisition roll required).

Maseian Rite of Passage

Requirements: Novice, Maseian

You went through a tough trial during which you learned to broaden your horizons and connect with the earth. You have the uncanny ability to notice small details that others seem to miss. This might be thanks to the spirits intervening on your behalf, or a result of being highly perceptive because of your *belief* that spirits are helping you.

Once per session you can Influence the Story without spending a Benny. This new detail must be a new feature or item that couldn't have been immediately obvious at the start of the current scene.

Zingamaian Nationalism

Requirements: Novice, Zingamaian

Zingama is the best! Be proud, Zingamaians! All the other peoples only believe in their families, tribes, cities. They don't *really* understand what's it like to be part of something larger, grander than themselves.

This Edge counts as Strong Willed and Brave. If you already have either of these Edges, replace it with a different Edge.

Note: The Game Master can allow Fjordstadians to take this Edge regarding their city-states, as they have something resembling national pride toward them.

POWER EDGES

Focus

Requirements: Novice, Crystal Channeling d6+

When you keep still, everything is much clearer. If you don't move at all during your turn, you can ignore up to 2 points of penalties on a Crystal Channeling roll you make this turn.

Great Focus

Requirements: Veteran, Crystal Channeling d8+, Focus

Activating powers is second nature to you. You get a free reroll on Crystal Channeling checks.

Imbue With Power

Requirements: Seasoned, Crystal Channeling d6+

You are trained in the tricky but useful technique of imbuing an object with some of your Crystal's power, so it can be used by someone else.

The object must be a fist-sized item that is relevant to your Crystal's theme. You touch it for several seconds (an action, no roll needed) and place one of your Crystal's powers in it. That power becomes unavailable to you until it's used, but you are considered to be maintaining it. You can place several different powers into several different items.

Anyone holding the item can release its power with a Crystal Channeling check. Non-Agents can roll the skill untrained, but they become Stunned in the case of a Critical Failure (Agents suffer desync as usual; their Crystal's resonance comes into conflict with the power they're releasing!). If the power isn't used within a week, the effect dissipates and you get the power back.

Retain Power

Requirements: Novice, Crystal Channeling d4+

You can ignore one point of penalties from maintaining powers—in other words, you can maintain one power for “free”.

PROFESSIONAL EDGES

Bygone Age Expert

Requirements: Novice, Academics d6+, Engineering d6+

You gain +2 on Academics and Engineering checks made to understand and activate Bygone Age technology. You also know some basic Old Tongue, the language of the prehistoric people.

Crystal Expert

Requirements: Novice, Academics d6+, Healing d6+

You gain +2 on Academics and Healing checks made to analyze and understand



Crystals, their manifestations, and Crystal-corrupted creatures. A raise can reveal the unique powers and weaknesses of such creatures. You also know by heart the themes, benefits, dispositions, and powers of all the Crystals in the Syn database (refreshed whenever you have a day to study in a Syn facility).

Crystal Specialization

Requirements: Seasoned, must have kept the Crystal slotted for most of a Rank, or learned a new power with the Crystal through a Power Stunt

For whatever reason, you really like a specific Crystal. Maybe you want to gain mastery over this aspect of reality, maybe you have a specific task in mind, or maybe the Crystal's theme is just your sort of *thing*.

Choose a Crystal. You immediately learn a new power for it or add a new Edge to its benefit. Decide with the GM which power or Edge to add. As usual, it must work well with the Crystal's theme.

In addition, your greater understanding of the Crystal's theme allows you to ignore up to 2 points of penalties from Power Modifiers when activating the powers of this Crystal.

This Edge can be chosen multiple times, with different Crystals.

Improved Specialization

Requirements: Veteran, Crystal Specialization

You gain a new power with the Crystal you've specialized with. When you attain Heroic Rank, you gain an additional new power.

The Right Crystal For the Job

Requirements: Seasoned, Crystal Channeling d8+

You have no special sentimentality for Crystals. They are tools to be used and changed as needed.

Syn allows you to carry one other Crystal at all times (usually you're supposed to only have one). You've learned to change Crystals on your own, quickly and effectively, probably by taking a well-timed long breath or simply enduring through the sudden system shock. You can make a self-socketing check using Spirit or Vigor



instead of Healing, and you don't get the usual -2 penalty for doing so. Succeeding with a raise gives you the additional benefit of ignoring up to 2 points of penalties on your next Crystal Channeling check before the end of your next turn.

However, because of your emotional disconnection from the Crystals you are using, it's harder for you to learn to understand each of them individually. You require 3 raises in order for a Power Stunt to "click" (see page 58), and whenever you use at least one power Modifier on a roll, you have an additional -1 penalty.

Tomb Robber

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+, Notice d6+, Thievery d6+

Getting into ancient ruins is pretty easy; getting out alive is a different matter. You add +1 to Notice rolls when traveling in and around ancient structures, always on the lookout for common hazards and hidden traps. You also add +1 to Thievery rolls when disabling traps and unlocking barriers. Finally, your fascination with ancient tombs led you to study many tales and mythologies, so they're considered Common Knowledge for you.



WEIRD EDGES

Second Breath

Requirements: Seasoned, Vigor d6+

You gain an extra level of Fatigue, with a -1 penalty. You only become Exhausted after you take a third level.

Signature Move

Requirements: Seasoned

You are practiced with a unique and awesome technique, usually a combat move but not necessarily. It must include a motto—the name of the attack, a whispered idiom, or something similar—and a signature choreography. When you select this Edge, choose the set-up (an attribute) and the execution (a skill).

When you make your signature move, you first roll the set-up. For every success and raise, you gain +1 for the skill roll—the execution—which you then roll normally. Failing the set-up inflicts a -2 penalty on the execution, and a Critical Failure forfeits the execution completely. The whole move is considered a single action, and you can perform Multi-Actions this turn as normal.

All moves have a requirement that must be met, the trigger that allows them to activate. Here are some suggestions:

- When you act first in the round
- As a response
- When you're above/behind/under the target
- After saying an excellent quip or pun

Example: Muna's Leaping Strike (Agility + Fighting) requires her to climb on something large, like a table or a pile of rocks, and then jump onto an enemy while shouting "Battle strike!"

Example: Heuberger's Sneering Gaze (Smarts + Taunt) can only be used as a retort. He turns toward the target with a sneer, pushes his glasses back up with one finger as he examines the lesser person, and mutters something demeaning.

Example: Toho's Disappearing Act (Agility + Stealth) requires the target to be Distracted by something. He can try to distract them on his own ("Hey, look over there!") with a Taunt Test, but he's not great with these skills, so he usually asks one of his teammates to do it for him.

Step 4: Gear

Agents of Syn get everything they need from the organization. If they need to trade with someone from outside the organization, they do so by promising future help or using favors. In both of these cases, they use Requisition. See page 35 for the rules.

The following is standard-issued gear for Novice Agents on Crystal Hunter teams. See the equipment tables on page 42 for details.

- One or two weapons of your choice, from any of the weapon lists.
- Three Syn suits, custom-made.
- A backpack with some basic, yet modern, adventuring gear. Think flashlights and thermal blankets.
- Basic Crystal capture gear: an empty Crystal container and gloves.
- Any assistive technology required by the Agent, such as a prosthesis or a wheelchair. These are light and effective, but not powered.

The team is also issued a Most-Terrain-Vehicle, fondly named the "Tank." The Tank can seat three in the front and four in the cabin, with enough supplies and ammunition for about a month. The Tank also has storage for six Crystals and comes equipped with a first aid kit. See page 45 for more details on the Tank.

Starting Requisition

Novice Agents begin the game with one point of Requisition. Before starting your first adventure, you can make a single request for gear.

Step 5: Team Building

Now that you have a few Agents, you need to bring them together and form a team.

Your Supervisor

Syn training places a focus on mentorship, having a more experienced Agent help the new ones. Create your own supervisor, or pick or roll from the list in Appendix B, page 214.





As a group, think about the following:

- What's unique, annoying, or inspiring about your supervisor?
- What's their position in the organization?
- Are they seasoned Crystal Hunters, Specialists, or Free Agents?

Your supervisor has no mechanical effect on the game, but they are usually the first person you'll go to for advice or information, and your main connection to the rest of Syn.

Team Training

Your team has spent several months training together. Go around the table and have each player tell the others about their Agent's relationship with another player's Agent, perhaps by describing an event from their training.

You can draw a card and use it as inspiration:

- **Spades:** You share some aspirations. You both want to see the fabled Invisible Isle, want to be the best at the same thing, or maybe you really want your parents to be proud of you.
- **Hearts:** You share some habits or skills. Perhaps you've found a surprising common ground ("*You love baking? I love baking!*"), or maybe you have an honest appreciation of each other's skill or outlook.
- **Diamonds:** You envy something about them—their skill, their attitude, their upbringing. Are you using this to push yourself to become better, or do you instead become bitter?
- **Clubs:** You share a common enemy. Perhaps it's a rival Agent or team of Agents, maybe it's a common dislike of lazy people, or maybe you just both really hate it when it rains.
- **Joker:** You both experienced the same strange event. Maybe you were stranded alone for a week during survival training, were part of the same accident, or maybe you both saw the same strange shadow in the mirror.

The Training Session

Now that you have your team ready, we recommend you play an hour-long game that represents one of your team's training sessions from the first few months of training,

before being implanted with a harness and becoming full Agents. This session has several benefits:

- You get to get to know your character's natural self, sans-Crystal. Remember, from now on they'll always be influenced by the Crystal they're socketing, so this is your only chance to play them as-is.
- You get to test out your character's skills and abilities. If anything isn't to your liking, you still have time to switch some points around.
- You get to create some group dynamics and understand each other's abilities and styles, meaning that on your first adventure you'll already feel like a team of Agents working together.
- The Game Master has a chance to lay out the basic themes for the upcoming campaign, introduce some important NPCs, and maybe provide some foreshadowing.

The Game Master has more information and suggestions on page 112.





Step 6: Starter Crystal

Choose a Crystal from the Starter Crystal List on page 63 and get your Game Master's approval. This can be a Crystal you've been training with for some time, or a newly issued Crystal you haven't had much chance to try out.

You can also spend 1 Requisition to upgrade your starter Crystal from Novice to Seasoned.

Replacing Crystals: When and How

As you adventure, you'll discover new Crystals. You'll also accumulate Requisition points, allowing you to "purchase" Crystals from Syn.

You might want to switch to a new Crystal because it has curious powers or because you grew bored with your old one. Sometimes you will even be ordered by Syn to switch to a Crystal that needs testing (see page 62 for ways to test out new Crystals) or to return your currently socketed Crystal because it's needed elsewhere.

The switch itself is dangerous if done in combat conditions, but pretty straightforward otherwise. The full rules are given on page 58.

In any case, most Agents are not allowed to carry an extra Crystal beyond the one they're bearing—they risk losing *both* Crystals should they go down in the field. Whenever you arrive at a Syn facility, you'll be asked to deliver all the extra Crystals you keep stored in the Tank.

If you enjoy switching Crystals on a regular basis, or grow to feel especially connected to a specific Crystal and don't want to switch it, check out The Right Crystal for the Job Edge or the Crystal Specialization Edge, on page 19.



Character Archetypes

Here are some common archetypes of people from the Five Lands, and common roles in a team of Crystal Hunters. They have all become Agents, so these are above-average people taken up to Step 3 of the Character Creation process.

Statistics for common NPC archetypes appear in the *Adversaries and Challenges* chapter, starting on page 159.

BOGOVIA

BOG-DWELLER

You were once one of the strangest and most reclusive people found in Bogovia—and that's saying something. Living off dangerous Bygone Era tech, deep in the stinky swamps, you barely had any connection with the outside world. And yet, now you're an Agent. How did that happen?

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

Skills: Academics d6, Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Engineering d8, Fighting d4, Notice d8, Persuasion d4, Research d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Habit (Major; must breathe special fumes), Outsider (Minor), Quirk (Uses archaic idioms)

Edges: Bygone Age Expert, McGyver

CHURCH ACOLYTE

The Faith's dogma commands the acolyte to protect the Bogovians from the wrath of the heavens. And also wolves. What would make a devout acolyte, with a bright future in the Church, turn to Syn?

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

Skills: Academics d6, Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d6, Crystal Channeling d8, Fighting d6, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d8, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Delusional (Minor; the moon is magic), Vow (Minor; protect pious Bogovians)

Edges: Aristocrat, Common Bond



PEASANT

It's hard to raise crops and rear farm animals when your land is a swamp and the wolves are closing in. But it's even harder to leave your homestead and family behind to become an Agent. So why did you do it?

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

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d4, Survival d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Mean, Phobia (Minor; some superstition), Thin Skinned (Major)

Edges: Brute, Nerves of Steel

WOODSMAN

As a person who's made their living tracking beasts into the deepest forests and killing them, you're always ready to take the initiative and stare danger in the face. Was the forest not dangerous enough for you, so you decided to replace your heart with a Crystal?

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

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Ruthless (Minor), Stubborn, Phobia (Major; some superstition)

Edges: Quick, Woodsman

FJORDSTAD

ENGINEER

Whether you were an electrician, engine designer, botanist, sewage systems specialist, or something similar, you have the tools and the knowhow to create and repair. The world is a mess, but you can make it work for you. Is this why you want to channel Crystals?

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

Skills: Academics d4, Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d6, Crystal Channeling d6, Driving d6, Engineering d8, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Shooting d8, Stealth d4



Church Acolyte

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Curious, Quirk (Speaks in jargon), Tongue-Tied

Edges: Calculating, Mr. Fix It

MOUNTAIN BARBARIAN

Who are the mountain people? Survivors from the cities of olden days? Those who remained behind when Fjordstadians moved to the cities? Banished criminals? Regardless, they have no place in proper Fjordstadian society. But in Syn...

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

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Thievery d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Enemy (Major; one of the cities), Mean, Outsider (Minor)

Edges: Thief, Two-Gun Kid

NOBLE

To be someone in Fjordstad, you need to belong to one of the noble houses. But the meaning of the word “noble” is changing as more and more people are accepted into the houses by merit. Are you one of them? If so, why would you leave after working so hard to become a member? Or are you of noble birth, expected to be loyal, to behave, to participate in the games of espionage and sabotage? If so, did you leave because it was too much...or not enough?

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

Skills: Academics d6, Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d6, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d4, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5



Mountain Barbarian

Hindrances: Arrogant, Shamed (Minor; something you “had to do” to climb the ranks), Vow (Minor; your noble house)

Edges: Aristocrat, Command

SCIENTIST

You’ve learned just enough to understand how much more there is to know. Is that why you joined Syn—to discover more than the people of your city allowed you to explore? Or were you kicked out because you’ve *already* gone beyond the limits of acceptable research? (Each city-state specializes in a specific field; see page 92).

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

Skills: Academics d10, Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d6, Crystal Channeling d8, Engineering d4, Fighting d4, Notice d8, Persuasion d4, Research d8, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Big Mouth, Overconfident, Pacifist (Minor)

Edges: Investigator, Scholar (Academics)

THE ISLANDS

ECCENTRIC

There are many Islands and they are all different—but some are even more different than others. Way out, beyond the trade routes, where explorers rarely dare go, there are those who are called “eccentric” by the common Islander. Yes, they’re still one of *us*—but they’re weird. Not *bad*, but...

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

Skills: Athletics d8, Boating d4, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d6, Survival d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Clueless, Outsider (Minor), Quirk (a strange custom)

Edges: Brute, First Strike

GASTRONOME

To the Islanders, food is a big deal; so by knowing food, one becomes a big deal. This is true only in the Islands, so why did you leave? After learning the culinary arts—a rare and difficult feat—you turned your back



on the archipelago and joined Syn. Did you have a fight with your mentor? Or are you trying to bring a gastronomic revolution to the other Lands?

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

Skills: Academics d6, Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d6, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d4, Survival d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Clumsy, Jealous (Minor; I'm the best chef), Stubborn

Edges: Fame (in high society), Island Diet

PIRATE

YARRRRRrrrrrr!!

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

Skills: Athletics d8, Boating d4, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d6, Taunt d6, Thievery d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Overconfident, Ugly (Major)

Edges: Acrobat, Feint

TRADER

You've spent your life on the move as one of the trading cooperatives or as an independent. Why leave this life and join Syn? Maybe you've seen many strange things around the Islands, but you're looking for things stranger still. Maybe your trading partners betrayed you, and you lost it all. Or maybe everything you own was eaten by a shark.

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

Skills: Athletics d6, Boating d4, Common Knowledge d8, Crystal

Channeling d6, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Performance d6, Stealth d4, Taunt d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Driven (Major; must leave an amazing inheritance for my family/clan); Hesitant

Edges: Bolster, Connections

MASEIA

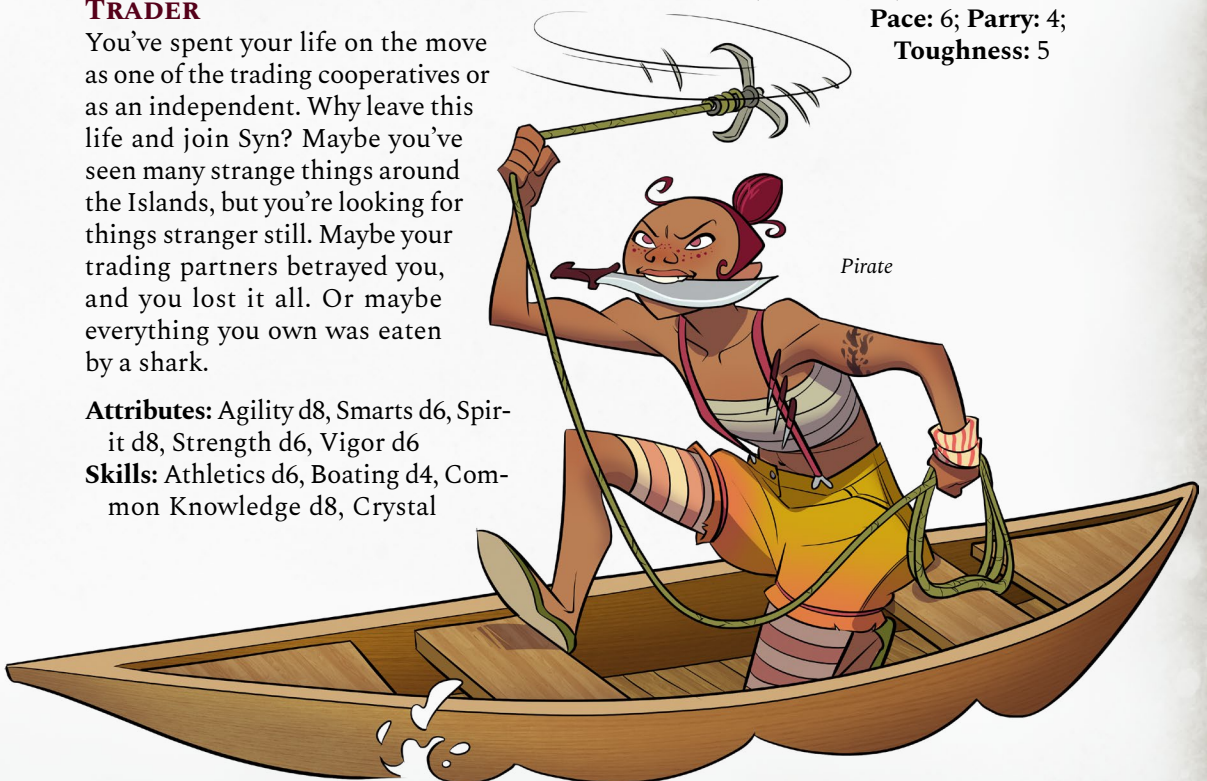
SKY-SKIFF RIDER

Admired, daring, cocky—the skiffers roam around Maseia on special wind-powered boards, belonging to no clan but accepted by all. They deliver mail and bring news from afar, returning every few months to their secret hideouts on the flying mountains above. Since the sky skiff is useless outside of windy Maseia, and Agents (unlike skiffers) are usually suspected rather than admired, why did you join Syn? Is windsurfing simply not extreme enough for you?

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

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Piloting d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d4, Survival d4, Taunt d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4;
Toughness: 5





Hindrances: Delusional (Minor; everything revolves around me), Jealous (Minor; I'm the best acrobat around), Overconfident
Edges: Ace, Provoke

CRAFTSPERSON (HERBALIST)

Many clans are not self-sufficient, specializing in several crafts and trading their unique goods with their neighbors for whatever they need. In the Maseian stratified society, many are born into their craft and are expected to master it in order to prove their adulthood; others choose a role and are required to change their whole lifestyle to fit it. Most Maseians are content with their station—but apparently, you think otherwise. Or were you pushed out of the clan for doing something they simply won't accept?

This is an example of an herbalist, a crafts-person who specializes in treating ailments.

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

Skills: Academics d6, Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d4, Healing d8, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4, Survival d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Clueless, Loyal, Mild Mannered

Edges: Bolster, Healer

HUNTER

Being surrounded by boundless wilds means two things. First, there's lots of good stuff out there, let's hunt it; and second, there's a lot of dangerous stuff that can come from any direction, let's scout. Equipped with an invaluable set of skills for both your clan and Syn, what made you leave your family behind with one fewer hunter to help them?

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

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d4, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: All Thumbs, Heroic, Quirk (uncouth)

Edges: Free Runner, Woodsman

TRAILBLAZER

While the scout is forging new paths, the trailblazer is forging new alliances. It's not uncommon for a clan to be in contact with about a dozen neighbors who keep coming and going with the seasons. This means treaties constantly need to be revised, alliances reconsidered, and social status proved. Trailblazers are almost exclusively chieftain princes and princesses—so how come you turned to Syn?

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

Skills: Academics d4, Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d10, Riding d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Driven (Major; everything can be solved if we just sit and talk this out), Enemy (Minor; a clan who feels slighted by you), Pacifist (Minor)

Edges: Aristocrat, Charismatic

ZINGAMA

ASSASSIN

In Zingama, killing people is a respected job. It's also very dangerous because people apparently don't want to be killed, so they employ traps, guards, and even other assassins to prevent this from happening. Maybe this ever-escalating arms race became too much for you. All of these new techniques are taking the *art* out of the job, you know?

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

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Thievery d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Cautious, Ruthless (Minor), Wanted (Major; your last mark)

Edges: Assassin, Thief

ENTERTAINER

In Zingama, culture is all around you—usually deafeningly loud and blindingly colorful. If you've got the talent, you'll have the audience! Did you leave for Syn to reach new crowds? Or was it because you failed to achieve the recognition you were craving?





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

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Performance d8, Stealth d4, Taunt d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Habit (Minor; smokes), Impulsive, Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Elan, Fame (In Zingama)

OFFICER

All Zingamaians join the army; some even stay. As an officer, you went through command training and served for longer than average. In a way, this “proved” your national pride. Strange that you chose to join Syn, then. Were you dishonorably discharged, or was the Zingamaian army too corrupt or unprofessional for your taste?

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

Skills: Athletics d8, Battle d6, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d8, Healing d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d4, Survival d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Mean, Quirk (Speaks in military terms), Vow (Major; protect Zingamaians)

Edges: Command, Soldier

VEXED

If you want to know what’s wrong with Zingama, ask a Zingamaian from outside of the nation. Despite what most people believe, there are a *lot* of people who are ethnically but not culturally Zingamaian, collectively called “vexed” or “displeased” by the “proper” Zingamaians. In the streets of Zingama City, the displeased only ever come up in a conversation when “primal” aesthetics are back in fashion.

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

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d8, Healing d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d6, Survival d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Outsider (Minor), Suspicious (Minor), one other Major

Edges: Danger Sense, Fierce Forward



Officer

CRYSTAL HUNTER TEAM

Here are some classic roles one can find in a well-rounded group of Agents.

Note: Bump up one of the attribute dice according to your chosen Land.

CRYSTAL EXPERT

You know Crystals, their manifestations, and how to use them well.

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

Skills: Academics d6, Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d8, Fighting d6, Healing d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Research d6, Stealth d4; two more points

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: One Major, two Minor

Edges: Crystal Expert, one other

ENGINEER

You can fix it, drive it, and build it.

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

Skills: Academics d4, Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Driving d4, Engineering d8, Fighting d6, Healing d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d4; two more points

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: One Major, two Minor

Edges: Mr. Fix It, one other

FACE

You can calm down the angry commoner and manipulate the arrogant elite.

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

Skills: Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d4; four more points

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: One Major, two Minor

Edges: Attractive, one other

FIGHTER

You'll subdue, destroy, or kill it while protecting your teammates.

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

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d4, Shooting d8, Stealth d4, Taunt d6; two more points

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: One Major, two Minor

Edges: Provoke, one other

INFILTRATOR

You'll steal—erm, *stealthily acquire* much needed information, disable traps, and stalk from afar.

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

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Shooting d4, Stealth d8, Thievery d8; two more points

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: One Major, two Minor

Edges: Thief, one other

LEADER

You guide your teammates and help them work like a well-oiled machine.

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

Skills: Academics d4, Athletics d4, Battle d6, Common Knowledge d4, Crystal Channeling d6, Fighting d8, Healing d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4; two more points

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: One Major, two Minor

Edges: Command, Reliable





Syn

Welcome, would-be Agents, to your orientation course. Please stay close to your guide and be careful not to cross into areas designated “Restricted Access.” Be advised that all information provided in this course and during the rest of your training is classified “Agent Only”. It must not be discussed with people from outside of the organization or non-essential Syn personnel, under penalty of six months’ incarceration.

Welcome to Syn.

Responsibilities and Perks of an Agent

Syn is the world’s only global organization. It’s well known throughout the Lands for being powerful and aloof, using amazing technology and expert Agents to free the world from the danger of Crystals. It has way stations throughout the Lands, public connections, and secret agendas. It is the most respected and influential organization

in recorded history, and you are its Agents in the field.

LEGAL JURISDICTION

The Five Lands are ruled by various governments or similar powers, such as lords, village councils, or ancient customs accepted by the locals. Syn is powerful and far-reaching, more so than any other political power in the world, so everyone likes to know where they stand with the organization.

Most local governing bodies have signed agreements with Syn allowing for cooperation, though the exact wording varies from settlement to settlement. Generally they allow the following perks to traveling Syn Agents once they have identified themselves by showing their harnesses:

Perks

- A show of respect, such as being invited to important events as guests of honor.
- Free lodging for a week, including meals, once per month.

- The right to use force against those who break local laws. Syn Agents are occasionally called in to help with local policing efforts.
- The right to use force against those who interfere in Syn operations (subject to many restrictions, depending on local agreement).

While not technically a perk, Syn Agents also enjoy an unspoken, near diplomatic-like immunity. While Syn Agents are required to abide by local laws just like anyone else, most power groups would like to avoid getting into trouble with Syn, so they'll allow Agents to get away with some surprisingly uncouth behavior.

It is important to remember that while Agents can indeed escape justice in many Lands, they can't escape *Syn*, who takes very unkindly to Agents who soil its reputation unnecessarily.

Safe Crystals: It is generally agreed that Crystals belong to Syn even before being recovered, meaning Agents can claim ownership over any discovered Crystal and use reasonable force to retrieve it, if necessary. However, several towns have come to be dependent on one or more elements of their environment which were created or influenced by a Crystal. Although rare, Syn occasionally acknowledges that removing such Crystals would have disastrous or even fatal consequences. In these cases they allow the Crystals to remain where they are, designating them "safe" (though some Agents jokingly claim this is an acronym for Suspended, Awaiting Future re-Evaluation).

Varying Degrees of Access: Usually Agents have the same basic rights as every visitor to an area, but there are exceptions. In many places Syn Agents are handled with silk gloves and escorted at all times (but also followed and spied on). Elsewhere they are unwelcome interlopers, allowed only a minimal stay in town. And there are some isolated settlements where Agents are seen as enemies to be shot on sight.

THE AGENT'S CODE

The Agent's Code is a 216-page manual describing the procedures and guidelines all Agents are expected to follow. It's taken as

a Vow Hindrance (Major) by all Syn Agents during their training (see page 14).

The manual's main concerns can be summarized by the following points. Not fulfilling these responsibilities might result in temporary negative modifiers on Requisition rolls at the GM's discretion.

Go where directed, but show initiative.

The route is only as good as the information used to plan it, and most of it is based on rumors. Be aware of the signs of a Crystal's presence (see page 9) and follow the leads.

Help when asked by local authorities.

Local agreements almost always allow authorities to ask the Agents—who are usually more capable, better trained, and more prepared than local law enforcers—to act as a policing force.

Avoid unnecessary violence. You, the harness, the Crystal you carry, and all of your equipment represent hundreds of hours of investment. Don't endanger them without a good cause.

Syn supplies most everything you need.

You are not allowed to invest in commercial ventures. If you require something, Syn will provide it.

Represent Syn. Protect Syn's agenda and present it fairly and diplomatically. Remember: Crystals discovered in territories with which we have an agreement are considered Syn assets even before recovered.

CRYSTAL HUNTER DUTY: THE ROUTE

Crystal Hunters operate under a single mandate: find and retrieve Crystals. These Agents are tasked with a route planned by Syn's intelligence officers and based on clues and rumors. A route is usually a five or six month journey with eight to ten stops, assuming about a week spent at every major stop. This can fluctuate depending on weather patterns, being asked to deal with local issues, having to report to Syn way stations, and other such interruptions.

Syn recruits two new teams every year or so. Each team is assigned hunting duty for a route or two, so at any given time there are about four Hunter groups in the world. Different teams are usually given mutual-



ly exclusive routes, although occasionally routes might converge in certain places—especially if Syn suspects more firepower might be needed for a certain mission.

Debriefing: Agents are required to contact an operator in one of the many Syn way stations or facilities once every six weeks or so. During these check-up meetings, the Agents:

- File reports on their missions.
- Provide all Crystals and shards gathered during the previous period. These new Crystals need to be brought back to Syn's citadel to be evaluated. An Agent can socket a Crystal that they found, but since Agents are only allowed to keep one Crystal at a time—the one in their harness—they'll need to return their previous one. Occasionally, teams “forget” to report a Crystal, even up until the very end of their route.
- Requisition new gear, Crystals, dossiers or maps. (See Requisition, page 35).
- Receive new orders. If this way station is on your designated route, you might find new orders waiting for your group.
- Review bulletin board requests. Each Syn facility has a bulletin board with open requests by local authorities asking for help. Taking one of these missions is an accepted detour from your designated route. Finishing a mission successfully might reward you with Requisition.

Many routes end with only a single Crystal being found, along with a shard or two. Not

all rumors are true, not all information is accurate, and not every team survives retrieval (but *your* team, of course, is not just *any* team!). See the Chasing Leads Setting Rule (page 80).

Advanced Duties

Veteran and Heroic Agents are assigned to one of three roles.

Free Agent: Despite what many Novice Agents believe, Free Agents aren't given complete free rein to do what they want. They must submit a plan and occasionally report on their achievements. Their efforts should help Syn in some way, either by providing resources, establishing connections, getting Crystals (always good!), etc. The details of the plan are left very much up to the Agent, as they are people who have proved that they are capable and can be trusted. That being said, being Free is still a designation, which can be changed depending on the Agent's desire and Syn's needs.

Specialist Duty: A team of Specialists is given a goal and sent on a mission, usually in service of a major political power, but occasionally to accomplish some goal of Syn's. Many such missions are time-sensitive or require specific Crystals; others are less defined, or have vague success conditions.

Subduer Duty: As far as Novice Agents have managed to figure out, Subduers are just like Specialists, except the missions they're on are top secret and only serve Syn. When they return, they tend to require long-term medical treatment. All further information is classified.

Syn Facilities

Syn maintains two to three main facilities in each Land, mostly in the big cities, along with several small way stations in remote areas. The main headquarters of Syn is its famed flying citadel, which is always on the move. These facilities support all Syn personnel, whether Crystal Hunters on a route, Specialists on loan to local powers, or Free Agents going through the area.

Services

Main facilities offer two of the following services; way stations offer only one. Choose or roll randomly:

- 1. Formal meeting rooms:** Agents meeting with non-Syn guests in these rooms receive +2 on social interaction rolls.
- 2. Local library:** Several well-stocked shelves of books and documents provide +2 to Research rolls.
- 3. Crystal examination chamber:** Grants +2 to Academics rolls to discover the abilities of Crystals.



4. Workshop and garage: Grants +2 on Engineering rolls to create or repair devices as well as vehicles.

5. Clinic: This medical center adds +2 to all Healing rolls and Vigor rolls for Natural Healing.

6. Training room: Agents using this room gain a Benny that can be used during the current or the following session. This requires at least several days of training.

Each Syn facility has a bulletin board with open requests by local authorities, see page 36 for more details.

Quirks

All Syn facilities also have their own unique quirks. The first time the Agents visit a main facility or way station, roll on the following table:

- 1. State of the Art:** One of the services offered in this facility is among the best Syn can provide, increasing the bonus to +4. Roll randomly or choose. In case of a training room, it gives two Bennies.
- 2. Lacking:** This facility is understaffed, suffers from a corporate culture of bad work ethic, or is very new or very old. The staff is barely helpful. The Tank can only resupply two levels here (see page 39).
- 3. Reputation:** The facility is known for some reason (roll or choose): 1. an important, positively-received event happened here; 2. an important, negatively-received event happened here; 3. a major disaster was averted, thanks to the facility or visiting Agents; 4. a huge scandal happened here, and the facility or visiting Agents were to blame.
- 4. Secretive:** This facility is hidden and is considered a “black ops site,” either as part of a close relationship with the local political power or completely unknown to them.
- 5. Multi-purpose:** This facility also serves as a different kind of thing altogether, such as a mercenary outfit, a fort, a theater, a dam, an observatory, etc.
- 6. Weird:** The facility is built or staffed in an unusual way: underwater, filled with robots, using a shard, etc.

Other Syn Facilities

On paper, Syn also maintains five research labs in remote locations around the conti-



nent. Specific coordinates, as well as the projects they are working on, are classified.

Persistent rumors also mention “the End-game,” but Agents who have shared these rumors have either disappeared or progressed to become one of the twelve Heroic Agents—who now hunt such Agents themselves.

THE SYN CITADEL

Everyone in the Five Lands knows that Syn is a technological power to be reckoned with, even without their Crystals. The sight of the gigantic Syn citadel floating quietly behind a cloud will alarm just about anyone.

The Syn citadel (occasionally referred to by Agents as the Syntadel) is a large structure combining a Bygone Age building with modern architecture, built on a floating rock. Many suspect the citadel was built on a Maseian floating mountain, but any specific details about it are kept secret, even from Agents.

The citadel has a comfortable barracks capable of hosting thirty Agents, as well as mess halls, study rooms, armories, and the like. The main garage holds four Tanks that are not currently on duty, as well as Syn’s three famous autoplanes: airplane-like vehicles that are used to get on and off the citadel.

About a third of the citadel is restricted, requiring a special clearance which Novice Agents can only get on a limited basis. The

restricted areas include the following:

- **Crystal Database:** A computer server disconnected from the main servers, containing all available information on retrieved Crystals and shards. Also includes all sensitive research data regarding Crystal theory.
- **Crystal Repository:** Dozens of rows of shelves housing all Crystals not currently in use, kept under highly-regulated conditions. It is rumored there’s a sub-basement in which Syn keeps all of the hearts it has removed from its Agents, even though there’s no known method to keep a heart from evaporating (or is there?).
- **Situation Room:** The main operation hub for high-Ranked Agents and administrative personnel, where analysts turn data into intelligence.
- **Main Servers:** Syn uses a sophisticated computer network to automate as much as possible, but this network only operates within the citadel—radio-based data communication is still in its infancy. The server rooms are also the offices of administration personnel, where mountains of orders, receipts, and instructions are printed and sent out into the world.
- **Council Chamber:** The strangest thing about the five leaders of Syn is that they seem to never *leave* their chamber. It could be that this is not only where they meet, but also where they are kept—erm, live.





- **The Cells:** When an Agent has done something seriously wrong, Syn sockets them with a very weak Crystal and keeps them locked up in a deep sub-basement, usually for several months. At least three Agents, however, are incarcerated for life.

Facilities: The citadel offers all types of services one can find at a Syn facility, and they're all State of the Art. It has no quirks; although, in a way, it has all of them.

COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION

All main facilities, as well as the citadel, have a radio tower, but this technology can be unreliable: weather has a big impact on broadcast quality and the range is limited. With the citadel being in high altitude and constantly on the move, these are big issues. Therefore, most communication with the citadel and between the facilities is made via the autoplanes.

Syn's autoplanes are always on the move, visiting every main facility two to three times a week, bringing supplies, moving Agents and Crystals around, and delivering reports. Even some remote way stations get visited, usually once a week—but seeing as Syn only has three autoplanes, a place needs to be *really* out of the way to justify this privilege.

With landing strips being rare and only usable by Syn, the preferred mode of travel is by Tank. Special aerial pickups are sometimes authorized, especially when a mission demands it (Specialists tend to travel around a

lot), but in general the autoplanes have a standard flight plan and they stick to it.

Hierarchy Within the Organization

Not every Syn member is an Agent, and not all Agents are the same.

Administrative staff: These are the people who keep the gears moving and the organization organized. There are about two hundred of them spread throughout the citadel and land facilities. They include managers, office administrators, talent hunters, diplomats, trainers, teachers, doctors, researchers, mechanics, legal advisors, guards, and the like.

Agents: Any person who is equipped with a harness is an Agent. The five Ranks of *Savage Worlds* characters correspond to Agent ranks within Syn (and to Crystal power levels; see page 54).

Agents in training: Very few people apply to become Agents every year, and of them, even fewer can be equipped with a harness—not everyone passes the required tests. Only about eight Agents join Syn each year, becoming two teams of three or four. They train for six months, two teams at a time, receiving their harness around half-way through this period.

Novice Agents: These new and inexperienced Agents are all Crystal Hunters, given a route and tasked with finding Crystals. It's a dangerous job: about a third of the Hunters don't make it past their second year, dying in various horrible ways in some ancient tomb or by some unknown beast.

Seasoned Agents: Having survived a year or so (which equals one or two routes, generally speaking), an Agent graduates to Seasoned. Some of them become Special-





ists, but many continue Hunting. There are around thirty Novice and Seasoned Agents in about eight groups.

Veteran Agents: Syn employs about twenty-five Veteran Agents, most of whom are Specialists or Free Agents, with some Subduers.

Heroic Agents: There are only twelve Heroic Agents, and they are well-known among the Novice Agents as paragons of Agentness. Most Heroic Agents use Veteran Crystals, as Heroic Crystals are highly regulated and usually kept in the vaults.

The Council of Syn: Legendary founders and leaders of Syn, the five councilmembers are aloof and remote. Only two of them are known (and feared) among the Novice Agents; the other three keep to themselves. They are the only people allowed to carry the only five Legendary Crystals ever discovered.



Death of an Agent

Agents almost always work in teams. Even Free Agents like working together (perhaps because their fellow Agents are the only people who can relate to them). When an Agent is incarcerated or killed, a replacement must be found.

Fortunately, a replacement is almost always available. Teams of equal-Ranked Agents can be disbanded by Syn because of infighting, because they suffered some casualties themselves, or some arcane reason. They say that Syn psychologists occasionally bring certain people together for experiments in team dynamics.

The newly-arrived Agent is usually at least somewhat known to the others, since all Syn Agents have a vague familiarity with each other. Still, Syn might decide to bring the team back to the citadel for a week of training to have them get to know each other better.

The dead, meanwhile, are not forgotten. If the dead Agent's body can be retrieved, and if enough of it is left, and if Syn scientists haven't confiscated it, then the family of the deceased is presented with their remains—usually by their teammates.

Requisition

When an Agent needs something from the organization, they Requisition it. Requisition is an abstract measure of how much Syn believes you can be trusted with costly equipment and valuable information. It's also used instead of money when paying for goods and services outside of Syn: it's seen as your promise on behalf of Syn to provide money, goods, or services in return. Syn always honors promises made by its Agents, and agents know that if they promise too much they might not get to see another point of Requisition for a long, long time.

Your Requisition score can be used in two ways: as currency when buying things outside of Syn, and as a modifier to a skill roll when asking for things from within Syn (Crystals are a special case; see below). The highest it can go is 10. It can be reduced to zero and even become negative (In which case, Syn doesn't allow you to even ask for new equipment until you prove yourself and get back to at least 1).

Requisition can't be transferred between Agents.

GAINING REQUISITION

Novice Agents begin the game with one point of Requisition, and gain a point whenever they advance a Rank. Requisition also increases as you prove yourself in the following ways.

Doing your duty: Whenever a group of Agents arrives at a way station or a Syn facility (see page 31), they file a report of their journey and get debriefed. The Agents need to show that they participated in active duty and went through meaningful events (had an adventure!). Crystal Hunters usually gain one Requisition point every two months on duty. Specialists gain 2 points when returning from a mission. Free Agents need to report on their progress, and gain 2 points whenever they achieve a goal they set for themselves.

Completing a bulletin board request: Syn facilities keep track of requests by local authorities. Successfully completing a bulletin board request rewards each participating Agent with one or two Requisition. Successful missions can usually be reported to any Syn facility, not necessarily the one that issued the bulletin board request. Syn goes to great efforts to keep all Syn facilities up-to-date with the latest information. (See Communication and Transportation, page 34).

Retrieving a Crystal: When a new (or previously lost) Crystal is delivered to a Syn facility, all Agents in the team gain a point of Requisition per Rank of the Crystal.

ROLLING FOR GEAR

Syn supplies most of the basic things an Agent needs: lodging, clothes, food, ammo, and more.

When you want to get something from the Gear and Equipment section (see page 38), roll one of the following skill checks and add your Requisition as a modifier. Some items may be temporarily unavailable, GM's call.

- **Battle:** Justifying the need for an item or service by showing how it's going to be used in the field.
- **Persuasion:** Talking through the bureaucracy, finding the right people and saying the right things to them.
- **Research:** Finding, filling, and filing the right forms in the right order.



This is a regular skill check. It can Ace, you get your Wild Die, and you can spend Bennies on it. You can even Support one another (see Responsibility, below). Consult the following for the result:

- **Success:** The Agent gets issued the piece of gear they requested or the service they asked for. Reduce their Requisition by 2.
- **Raise:** The Agent gets everything they wanted, and reduces their Requisition by 1.
- **Failure:** The Agent gets what they wanted, but there are complications; draw a card and consult the table on the opposite page. They also reduce their Requisition by 1.
- **Critical Failure:** The Agent doesn't get anything, but doesn't lose any Requisition. They might have gained an *enemy*, though, and they're told to never again ask for whatever they requested.

Each attempt represents several hours, or occasionally several days, during which the Agent is busy with the request.

Penalties: Syn expects Agents to ask for something once every few weeks (once per adventure, more or less), usually a single



YOU GOT IT, BUT...

Card suit	Complication
Spades	The item is fine but the maintenance is a killer. As long as you have the item, someone on the team must make an Engineering roll every morning or it inflicts a -1 penalty on every Trait roll made with it. This stops when you get a raise on the Engineering roll, but might return depending on the GM's decision.
Hearts	For whatever reason, your current Crystal doesn't resonate well with the new piece of gear. As long as you have the item, you must make a Spirit roll every morning. If you fail, then after every Crystal Channeling roll made that day you become Distracted. This stops when you get a raise on the roll, but might return when the GM decides so.
Diamonds	Your request forced Syn to pull the item from someone else who was asking for it or already using it. They're not happy. Take them as a Minor Enemy. The GM can decide their displeasure is satisfied by having them reduce your Requisition by 1d4.
Clubs	The piece of equipment is flawed. Until you manage to repair the item (Hard Engineering roll with specific materials) you become Vulnerable whenever you draw Clubs in combat.
Joker	A serious misfiling accident leads to you having received the latest prototype! It's better by one point, or twice as quick or effective.

item or a kit. Making more frequent requests or asking for more things is considered unusual, and the GM should apply a -1 to -2 modifier on the roll. Note that rare or expensive items incur additional modifiers, as noted under Gear and Equipment.

Responsibility: The equipment you roll for becomes your responsibility. While it's possible for an Agent to Requisition things for other Agents, Syn discourages this (in the form of a -1 penalty per other Agent) as they prefer each Agent to take responsibility for their own gear.

An Agent can Support another Agent's Requisition roll, but this means they both share the responsibility for the item. A Supporting Agent adds their own Requisition modifier to their roll.

If a piece of gear that you're responsible for is ruined or lost, you might be penalized several Requisition points.

Example: The team gets ready to head into the Fjordstadian Wilds, and they all Requisition winter survival gear; the GM references the Savage Worlds gear chapter, and decides the modifier is -1. Beuford's Requisition skills are all either low or non-existent, so they're worried they'll get a faulty coat. Noelani comes to their rescue with her d8 Persuasion and Supports their roll, helping them get a success. Should this coat be ruined, both Beuford and Noelani will be penalized for it.

Noelani considered Requisitioning the winter gear for the whole team by herself, but the GM informed her she'll have a -4 penalty on the roll (-1 per other Agent), meaning should she fail they might all get faulty gear... None of the others is likely to be able to Support her successfully, so she decided against it.

BUYING THINGS WITH REQUISITION POINTS

Some special services need to be bought with Requisition by spending an appropriate number of Requisition points. Several Agents can spend points together on the same purchase. You can't pay with what you don't have, so your score can't be brought down to a negative number—unless some interesting skill rolls are involved!

Access, favors, and purchases: When dealing with people from outside of Syn, Requisition can be spent as a combination of money and influence in order to gain access to restricted places (the VIP section of a club), pay for services (go and guard the caravan until morning), or purchase items (I need three hundred chicken eggs right now, don't ask why).

As a guideline, a point of Requisition can be spent to buy something uncommon or costly. It's the equivalent of around \$250 from the *Savage Worlds* core book. A point of Requisition can also be paid to add +2 to Networking rolls.

Syn's Involvement in Your Game

Some groups will want to have Syn less "in their face," keeping the organization as a background story and nothing more. Others may want to have complicated relationships with the organization, perhaps even focusing their campaign on exploring Syn and its many secrets.

Dropping some elements is easy ("We don't need Requisition, let's just get what seems plausible") but increasing Syn's influence requires extra effort. The *Living in Syn* expansion has lots of options that'll enrich your Syn experience: training rules, random events, more mentors, services, Edges, storylines, and more. It's available through uptofourplayers.com/CrystalHeart.

It can be safely assumed that Agents have enough local money to buy simple and common things. Beyond that, the rarer the object, the less likely its owner is to agree to sell or trade it.

Dossiers and maps: Requisitioning special information can only be done at Syn facilities and way stations. As a guideline, a point of Requisition can be spent once per Research check to add +4 to the roll (not including Research rolls made as Requisition requests). The more obscure the information, the less likely it'll be available in the facility, and therefore will need to be brought from the citadel or some other location. This usually takes a few days, a week at most. Way stations only have information about the Land they're in.

Known Crystals: Requisitioning for Crystals can only be done at Syn facilities and way stations. You can ask for a specific Crystal from the list of known Crystals, provided it's currently available (not used by another Agent or allocated to research). The cost in Requisition is 1 + the Crystal's Rank.

Since each Agent is only allowed to carry one Crystal, you must return your previous Crystal after receiving the new one (no, you don't get a "refund"). If you want to carry two, you'll need to persuade some higher ups you have good reasons to carry both, and will probably be asked to return the extra one after a while. Or, you can take The Right Crystal For the Job Edge (page 19).

Availability is up to the GM, but as a general rule, most Novice and Seasoned Crystals should be available while most Veteran Crystals should not. If another Agent is carrying the desired Crystal, they can perhaps be persuaded with a promise of favors, Support rolls on future Requisition requests, etc. It takes about a week for the request to be sent to the citadel and for the Crystal to be brought back from the Repository; twice as long if correspondence with another Agent is required (provided that Agent is available at all!).

Asking for Heroic Crystals always requires justification. An Agent must come to the citadel for an interview in which they explain their need for the Crystal. These Crystals are given on a limited-time basis, and cost 6 Requisition. Legendary Crystals cannot be requisitioned.

Gear and Equipment

Syn supplies everything you need, most of the time.

GETTING GEAR

All Agents begin with some basic gear as described in the *Agents of Syn* chapter.

Availability: Most mundane pieces of gear are available for Requisition in the main facilities, but way stations are not as well-equipped. The Requisitioning Agent might need to wait a few days for their request to be received at the citadel and brought by an autplane. All Syn gear technically belongs to Syn, and is only *loaned* for the duration of the Agent's mission. Agents are expected to return any piece of gear ASAP if asked to.

Requisition Modifier: Each item has a Requisition modifier which is subtracted from the roll (or occasionally added, if it's easy to make or readily available). The rarer or more specialized the gear an Agent asks for, the higher the penalty. Asking for many units of an item may incur additional penalties at the GM's discretion.

Replacement Gear: Once you are issued an item, it means Syn thinks you deserve to always have it (until returned). If it's lost or damaged you'll get a replacement, no Requisition roll needed. If you lose too much gear or something unique, you might be penalized a Requisition point or two, though.



Most personal gear in Syn is custom-made especially for the Agent. Should a replacement be needed, it can be quickly fabricated in the citadel and delivered to the facility where the request was made within two to three days. If Syn has given you a great axe, you will always be delivered a replacement if you need it—but if someone else wants one, they'll need to make a Requisition roll (there are no great axes just lying around in Syn facilities).

Note that nothing prevents you from carrying around five rocket launchers should you be able to find and wield them. However, Syn will not provide ammo, maintenance, or replacements to items it did not issue.

Returning Gear: Once you're done with a piece of equipment and have no more use for it, you can simply return it at the next Syn facility you visit. You don't get any "refund", but at least you're no longer responsible for the item. On occasion, you might be asked to return an item you're not finished with if it's needed somewhere else or has scheduled maintenance.

Ammo and Supplies

To track consumables, such as ammo and grenades, we suggest a variation on the Allies ammo rule from *Savage Worlds*.

Any Agent who uses guns, grenades, throwing knives or any other weapon that can "run out" has a supply level of High. After each fight the supply level goes down by one, first to Low and then to Out. If an Agent is dealt a Two during an action scene, their supply level drops down by one after that round.

The Tank carries enough stuff to resupply any consumable issued to the Agents, but its space is limited to eight levels of supplies. Whenever an Agent resupplies from the Tank, reduce the Tank's supply by one and increase the Agent's supply to High.

The Tank is fully restocked whenever it arrives at a Syn facility, no Requisition roll required (if the facility is lacking, it resupplies only two levels; see page 32). It is assumed that the facility received beforehand a list of ammo types required by the Agents, knowing they'll be coming this



way. If the visit was unexpected, the GM can rule that some types of supplies are unavailable (usually those that originate in other Lands). The GM might deem it possible to refill some types of consumables in the field by purchasing goods or salvaging.

PROTECTION

Combat Armor: The epitome of Syn defensive technology has ballistic protection (-4 damage from bullets) and an adjustable helmet. There are only a handful of these in existence.

Environmental suit: This full-body suit provides immunity to several specific Hazards and grants +2 to Vigor checks against others, depending on the specific suit. It is cumbersome, making you Clumsy.

Reinforced suit: Same as the Syn suit, but reinforced with ceramics and extra protection for sensitive areas. While the regular Syn suit is custom-made and therefore cool-looking, the reinforced suit is like a custom-made *battle upgrade*, and therefore super-cool-looking.

PROTECTION

Type	Armor/ Cover	Min Str.	Weight	Requisition Modifier
Syn suit (torso, arms, legs)	+1	d4	8	+0
Reinforced suit (torso, arms, legs)	+2	d6	20	-2
Combat armor (head, torso, arms, legs)	+4	d8	25	-4
Helmet (head)	+3	d4	3	+0
Shield	+2 / -2	d4	2	-1
Environmental suit (entire body)	+2	d6	30	-3

Syn suit: Each Agent is issued 3 custom-made suits tailored to their measurements. The suit is made with reinforced fabric which provides one point of Armor, and has various pockets or sashes so the wearer can carry their favorite weapon with ease. The suit is also insulated, providing basic protection in harsh weather.

MELEE WEAPONS

The Five Lands are varied and strange, but Syn's fabricators are flexible. Many types of weapons are available to the Agents.

You can use any Medieval or Modern weapon from the *Savage Worlds* Melee Weapons list. When Requisitioning a weapon from these lists, the GM should apply any Requisition modifier that seems reasonable (at least -1 if it's Modern).

The following is a list of weapons generally available from Syn or unique to the *Crystal Heart* setting.

Syn Knife: Stainless steel, good grip, elongated shape. You can get up to five.

Syn Sword: These statistics represent a generic sword, but it's possible to Requisition some modifications. Any of the following can be added, up to twice each: AP 1; Parry +1; Reach 1; increase damage die by one step. Each modification costs 1 point of Requisition (2 if taken a second time) which is spent after the roll. Having more than one modification increases the sword's minimum Strength requirement to d8.

Bogovian Charm Mace: Bogovians are superstitious and poor. The charm mace is the natural result of these two aspects: it's a repurposed heavy item, usually an old hammer, metal pan, or even a mail post. It is adorned with half a dozen charms, each with some

significance to the owner, such as a reminder of her village or a symbol of his religious sect. Simply wielding this weapon in combat provides the Bogovian owner with the Strong Willed Edge (or an additional +1 on the rolls if they already have it). Anyone else will roll Fighting with -2 because of the strange balance of the weapon.

Bogovian Fourstaff: Also nicknamed "false staff", the fourstaff is made of four pieces of hollow, hard wood. Each piece is about a foot in length and internally connected with a thin chain or rope. When extended, it looks like a regular staff. Originally used by shepherds to knock over an escaping sheep and carry it back on their shoulders, the fourstaff became a common farmer weapon.

It can be used to knock someone off their feet, usually by hitting the knees. The attacker makes a Called Shot against the target's leg (-2). On a success, the target must make a Strength check against the damage of the attack or fall prone. When used in grappling, an Entangled or Bound victim must make their breaking free roll with -2.

Island Walrus: The walrus is a yard-long staff with a curved walrus tusk at both ends. In the Islands, the walrus is an important part of a Capoeira-style martial art form.

When used to attack with the Frenzy Edge, it allows you to roll an extra Wild Die. As with your regular Wild Die, the extra one doesn't add an additional attack, but instead can replace a Fighting result. Extras get a single Wild Die. When used to hang on high branches, it can grant +1 on Athletics checks.

Maseian Slash: An elegant scimitar-like sword, carved from animal bones. It's surprisingly sharp when held correctly. When



getting a raise on an attack, it deals +1d8 damage instead of +1d6.

Zingamaian Snakebite: The snakebite is a very thin, very elegant knife favored by members of high society. The hilt is hollow, typically containing a single dose of a potent paralyzing agent (Vigor -2 or paralyzed for 1d6 minutes). If the target is unaware of the knife, the attack can be made with a Thievery check instead of Fighting (and also, The Drop!).

Zingamaian Whip: The whip is a staple Zingamaian weapon; it's easy to get vines in a jungle. It can also be used to disarm and then tie someone up, which is useful if you want to trade the victim for ransom later (killing your enemies directly is considered very bad taste in Zingamaian society). A whip provides +1 on the Fighting roll during disarm attempts, while also forcing the target to roll their Strength roll with -1. Provided there's something to wrap it around, a whip can also triple the length of a jump. A whip cannot be used against adjacent foes.

RANGED WEAPONS

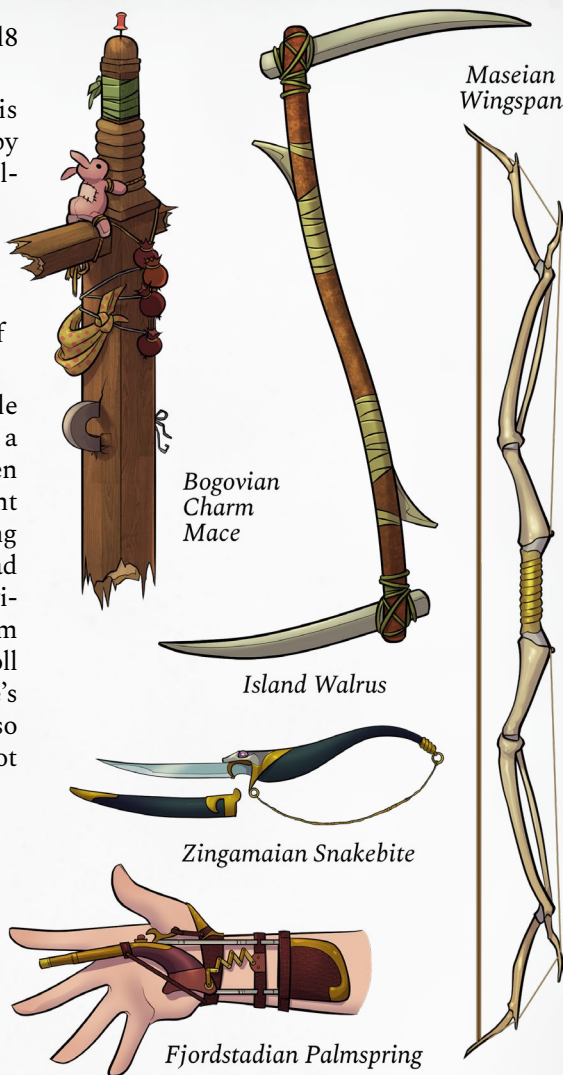
The introduction of firearms during the previous generation hasn't (yet) revolutionized combat, mostly because all firearms still need to be manufactured personally by craftsmen and ammo is rare.

You can use any Ranged, Black Powder (only pistols and muskets) or Pistol (only revolvers) weapon from *Savage Worlds*. When Requisitioning a weapon from these lists, the GM should apply any negative Requisition modifier that seems reasonable, at least -1.

The following is a list of weapons generally available from Syn or unique to the *Crystal Heart* setting.

Syn Pistol: A simple revolver, reliable and light. Can be upgraded to an advanced, semi-automatic version for -2 Requisition, increasing the range to 12/24/48 and the number of shots to 10. A second upgrade, which must be taken after the first, increases the damage to 2d8 for -4 Requisition.

Fjordstadian Buzzer: The buzzer is a bulky, anti-riot ranged weapon, which shoots dozens of small electrically charged balls. It uses the shotgun rules, but deals nonlethal damage.



Fjordstadian Palmspring: The palmspring is a small, surprisingly flat pistol. It rests under the base of the palm, tied to the wrist with a reinforced leather strap. It's hard to Notice (-2 on the check) unless one is searching specifically for it. The palmspring can be shot without being held in your hand, with a twist of the wrist, but it still takes an action to do so.

Island Whistle: A whistle is a boomerang-shaped stick, carved to create a chilling whistle as it flies through the air. It is usually thrown in a "chorus": three whistles launched in rapid succession in different arcs. When doing so using Multi-Action, the whistling seems to come from all directions at once, forcing the target to freeze. This is resolved as a Test using the highest attack result against the target's Smarts, *before* any

whistle hits. A whistle that missed its target returns to its owner's hand at the end of their turn; if all three miss, the thrower should probably duck.

Maseian Wingspan: A collapsible, highly flexible compound bow made from the bones of a bird. It is usually carried by Maseian princes, in a scabbard next to a slash.

Zingamaian Dart: This is a short, thick, and light aerodynamic sting, made from the branch of a naturally toxic tree. On piercing the skin it releases a powerful depressant (Vigor -2 or take a level of Fatigue; fall unconscious on a Critical Failure). Despite being somewhat "primitive" for the fine tastes of Zingamaian society—it's basically a sharp stick—it remains popular thanks to the fact that its natural toxin remains effective for several years. Most other poisons turn inert mere minutes or hours after being exposed to air.

GRENADES

Grenades are quite popular in some of the Lands, and many have unusual payloads.

A character choosing a type of grenade as a weapon is considered to be carrying three of them in various accessible pockets of their suit, with several more in a backpack (three of which can be retrieved as an action). There's no need to keep track of every grenade—it's recommended you use the Ammo and Supplies rules (page 39).

The following is a list of the grenades available from Syn or in the wider *Crystal Heart* setting.

Bogovian Papricrash: The papricrash is a small bundle of crushed seeds tightly wrapped in leather. It has several uses.

If thrown as-is, the highly spicy powder is released mid-air and gets into the nose, eyes and mouth of anyone failing a Vigor roll (at -2 with a raise) in a Small Blast Template, making them Stunned.

If mixed with the right dosage of water and some other common ingredients (an Engineering roll if in a hurry), the small satchel can be used as an explosive. It deals a number of d6s equal to the number of satchels (up to three) in a Small Blast Template. This can be thrown like a regular grenade, but it's heavy and clumsy, and the range is 3/6/12.

Finally, the papricrash seeds can be used to season a meal, usually potatoes in a stew.

Fjordstadian Flashflash: Crafted in Frahnauffen, the Fjordstadian city of lenses, this variant of a stun grenade is what happened when its inventors stubbornly refused to cooperate with people from Zeltser, the city which specializes in sounds. While the real-world flashbang releases a flash and a bang, the flashflash releases—you guessed it—two flashes.

The first flash is a sudden light in Medium Blast Template, forcing all targets to make a Vigor roll (at -2 with a raise) or suffer a -2 penalty to all actions requiring sight until the end of their next turn.

At the start of the next round, the tiny reflecting particles released by the first burst react with the air, creating a very bright flash in a Large Blast Template. Targets must make a Vigor roll or become Stunned; if they were blinded by the first flash, they make this roll with -2. Targets who know this second flash is coming can prepare by closing their eyes for the entire round, thus being immune but also effectively blind with -6 to all physical tasks that require vision.

Island Dreck: The fist-sized fruit of the dreck tree is pointy and smelly, but its insides are savory and delicious—until it rots, at which point the fruit becomes so amazingly putrid it can be weaponized. A thrown dreck is soft enough to explode on contact, releasing a stench that forces everyone in a Medium Blast Template to make a Vigor roll or become Distracted (or even Stunned on a Critical Failure).

Carrying dreck fruits for more than a month is risky business. On the one hand, they achieve such incredible levels of putridness that the Vigor roll is made with a -2. On the other hand, they're getting ready to burst, and will eventually open on their own to release their gunk all over the insides of your Tank—or in your hand, if you were dealt a Club on your turn.

The Fjordstadian city Lebeny has a similar weapon, the canned fooya fish. The can must be opened before being thrown, not unlike pulling the safety pin from a grenade.



MELEE WEAPONS

Type	Damage	Min Str.	Weight	Requisition Modifier	Notes
Syn Knife	Str+d4	d4	1	+1	-2 to be Noticed if hidden
Syn Sword	Str+d6	d6	2	+1	Varies
Bogovian Charm Mace	Str+d6	d6	10	+0	
Bogovian Fourstaff	Str+d4	d4	8	-1	Parry +1, Reach 1, two hands
Island Walrus	Str+d6	d6	8	-2	Parry +1, two hands
Maseian Slash	Str+d6	d6	2	+0	
Zingamaian Snake-bite	Str+d4	d4	1	-2	Poison
Zingamaian Whip	Str+d4	d4	3	+0	Disarming, Reach 3

RANGED WEAPONS

Type	Range	Damage	RoF	Weight	Requisition Modifier	Shots	Min Str	Notes
Syn Knife	3/6/12	Str+d4	1	1	+1	-	d4	-2 to be Noticed if hidden
Syn Pistol	10/20/40	2d6+1	1	4	-1	6	d4	AP 1
Fjordstadian Buzzer	10/20/40	1-3d6	1	8	-2	2	d6	Nonlethal, Shotgun
Fjordstadian Palmspring	3/6/12	2d4	1	1	-2	3	d4	Revolver, -4 to be Noticed if hidden
Island Whistle	4/8/16	Str+d4	1	2	+0	-	d6	
Maseian Wingspan	12/24/48	Str+d6	1	3	-1	-	d6	AP 1
Zingamaian Dart	3/6/12	1d4	1	1	+0		d4	Poison

GRENADES

Type	Range	Damage	Blast	Weight	Requisition Modifier
Bogovian Papricrash	4/8/16	Special	SBT	2	+0
Fjordstadian Flashflash	5/10/20	Special	MBT/LBT	1	-1
Island Dreck	4/8/16	Special	MBT	1	-1
Maseian Glass Spiker	5/10/20	2d6	MBT	2	-1
Maseian Glass Statue	4/8/16	3d6	SBT	3	-1
Zingamaian Acid Bomb	5/10/20	2d6	MBT	1	-1
Zingamaian Smoke Bomb	5/10/20	Special	MBT	1	-3



Maseian Glass Spiker: This simple clay pot hides a deadly secret. When thrown against a hard object the pot shatters, mixing the two compartments within that contain special sand and a catalyzer. A chemical reaction heats the sand by several hundred degrees in milliseconds, turning it into dozens of sharp glass shards that erupt outward. The shards remain on the ground after the damage is dealt, making it Difficult Ground. A creature can ignore this penalty by making an Athletics roll, but they take 1d6 damage if they fail.

Maseian Glass Statue: Twice as big and heavy as the spiker, the statue utilizes the same chemical reaction in a very different way. Upon shattering, the sand crystallizes into glass in a sudden growth upward from the point of impact, creating a thick column. Creatures in the area must make a Strength check to avoid being pushed away 1d6 inches.

Zingamaian Acid Bomb: This is a small, thick globe of specially-crafted glass, holding less than an ounce of powerful acid. The acid is released on impact. At the start of the next round it deals damage again to everyone who was hurt by the blast, but of one die type less (2d4). A high-concentrate version of this weapon exists, starting with 2d8 damage, but these are costly to produce and come with a Requisition modifier of -3.

Zingamaian Smoke Bomb: Similar to the acid bomb, this even smaller glass globe contains a gas-based acid which erupts into a thick cloud that obscures vision (-4) in a Medium Blast Template. Anyone who breathes in the smoke starts coughing, becoming Vulnerable on a failed Vigor roll (at -2 with a raise). The bomb is commonly used by assassins who drop it at *their own feet* to escape unseen; they take a breath a moment before to avoid having to roll against choking.

UNCONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

There exist in the world semi-automatic pistols, shotguns, some rifles, and even lasers, and all can be used as starting weapons with a good rationalization. They are all (probably) prototypes, and therefore harder to Requisition than normal with a modifier of -3 to -5, GM's call.

Assault rifles, submachine guns and machine guns should not be available for Agents, but might be found in the hands of killer robots or Bygone Age security systems.

Example: Guy, Macintosh's player, wants to start the game with a shotgun. Mac comes from a noble Fjordstaditan family and he's a trained engineer, so the GM agrees that he probably crafted this shotgun himself. Guy and the GM decide it's a Double-Barrel shotgun, because it seems the most fitting for Mac.

SPECIALIZED GEAR

Common gear: Most items of gear from *Savage Worlds* can be Requisitioned with +1 to -2 modifier. See Technology (page 84) for guidelines on what's available.

Skill kit: Each skill kit is a pack of tools and equipment which either enable new actions—such as spelunking, skiing, or golf—or provide a +1 bonus when used to achieve a specific task.

Some skill kits include:

- **Academics kit:** A collection of books, diagrams, and essays about a specific topic, granting +1 on relevant Academics and Research checks.
- **Chemistry kit:** Grants +1 on Academics checks to identify materials and compositions.
- **Climbing kit:** Includes a rappelling rope, ice axe, carabiners, and more. Grants +1 on Athletics checks to climb.
- **Disguise kit:** Includes many types of make-up, with a variety of styles of clothing. Allows an Agent to disguise themselves with Performance (opposed with Notice).
- **Diving kit:** A scuba diving suit and an underwater light. Allows diving for long periods of time, with +1 on the Athletics checks.
- **First aid kit:** Most Healing checks require a first aid kit, otherwise they are made with a -1 modifier. This includes recovering from desync. Every Tank comes stocked with a first aid kit.
- **Locksmith kit:** Grants +1 on Thievery checks to disarm traps and mechanical devices. Can also be used to pick locks.
- **Mechanic's kit:** Includes a blowtorch, monkey wrench, and a variety of tools and



SPECIALIZED GEAR		
Item	Requisition Modifier	Weight
Common gear	Varies	Varies
Skill kit	-2	Varies
Skill kit, state of the art	-4	Varies

VEHICLES						
Vehicle	Size	Handling	Top Speed (MPH)	Toughness	Crew	Notes
Tank	5 (Large)	+1	120	14 (2)	1+5	Four-Wheel Drive, Air Bags & Safety Harnesses
Autoplane	8 (Huge)	+2	540	16 (2)	12	Night Vision
Snow Glider	0	+1	50	7	1+1	Tracked
Syn Boat	7(Large)	+1	32	15 (4)	1+5	-

replacement parts. Grants +1 on Engineering checks to repair large devices.

- **Performance kit:** Includes a few useful tools for a specific type of performance, such as musical instrument and notations, costumes, books about rhetoric techniques, etc.. Grants +1 on a relevant Performance check.
- **Riding kit:** Everything one needs to ride a specific type of creature, with +1 on the Riding rolls.
- **Sailing kit:** Maps, measuring tools, sextant, compass and spyglass, granting +1 on Boating when navigating.
- **Scouting kit:** Includes binoculars, silhouette guides, lamp lights and more, granting +1 on Notice checks in the wild.
- **Skiing kit:** A pair of lightweight collapsible skis and footwear clips, including skiing poles.
- **Tinkerer kit:** Includes soldering iron, tweezers, hammer, screwdrivers and many replacement parts. Grants +1 on Engineering checks to repair small devices.
- **Stealth kit:** A variety of camouflage makeup and clothes grant +1 on Stealth checks.
- **Survival kit:** Includes guides, water filters and basic camping gear, granting +1 on Survival checks in a specific Land.

Skill kit, state of the art: These kits include durable, high-quality pieces of equipment that aren't part of the regular kit. They provide a +2 bonus on relevant skill checks.

THE TANK

The Most-Terrain-Vehicle is aptly named. While it can drive on many surfaces, it can't go underwater, and Syn takes its definitions seriously. In any case, most Agents call it the Tank.

About a dozen of these vehicles exist, each assembled and maintained by Syn engineers. At any given time, about four Tanks are at the citadel for repairs and upkeep.

Inside the Tank

The front seat of the Tank has room for a driver and two passengers, with four more in the back seat. The cabin serves as a small mobile house, with four foldable beds (and bedrolls if there are more Agents in the team), insulated walls, and even a sink and shower.



The Tank's cabin holds enough supplies and ammunition for about a month. It also has six compartments to store Crystals to keep them from turning feral, as well as a repair kit, several small replacement parts, and a first aid kit.

The Tank has enough fuel for a week or so and is refueled at every way station. Generally speaking, running out of fuel should be a narrative decision of the GM.

The Tank's tires are fantastically durable. They're made from a self-sealing material called cyclipede, manufactured by Syn using a Crystal.

AUTOPLANES

Syn has three autoplanes to transfer people and cargo between the citadel and the ground, and to deliver information between all of its main facilities. See Communication and Transportation, page 34.

The autoplanes have a small cockpit, but it's rarely used—only a handful of Agents and engineers know how to pilot them. Most of the time, the planes navigate with an automated system that relies on radio transmissions from the citadel and the main facilities on the ground. Storms disrupt the signals, so Syn prefers to avoid sending out planes during adverse weather conditions. Syn's engineering department wait eagerly for these pauses in service, because they hardly ever get time to maintain the planes.

One of the three autoplanes is nicknamed "The Mammoth". It's Size 10 (Huge) with Handling -2, capable of carrying 20 people, lots of cargo, and a Tank.

OTHER VEHICLES

Syn has access to the following motorized vehicles and possibly others.

Snow Glider: These snow bikes are used almost exclusively in Fjordstad. They have room for a driver and one rider.

Syn Boat: The "sea Tank" is Syn's solution for Agents moving through the Islands, and has similar features to a Tank. They are technically usable in most rivers as well. There's one allocated to a facility on the Golden River in Zingama.

Is Syn a Force For Good?

That's a question many Seasoned Agents start to ask themselves at some point. While it's true that many Crystals are a danger to those around them, after a few months on a route an Agent gets to see that it's not all black and white, and some Crystals, maybe, should not be disturbed. In some cases, Syn's claim that "All your Crystals belong to us" can seem like downright bullying—if a village has been using a Crystal's byproducts for hundreds of years, who is Syn to come and claim they can just take it?

Syn wants all the Crystals. But why? And is it worth the cost in ruined lives? The doctrine demands all Crystals be brought back to the citadel, but the people who issued this demand are either unaware of the implications or turn a blind eye. Can it be that the end goal is **that** important, that the end justifies the means?

Eventually, it's up to the Agents to answer these questions on a case-by-case basis.

The Twelve Heroic Agents

The following collection of unusual people is a list of Syn's most powerful Agents: The Heroics. Most Novice Agents have heard tales of them and see them as paragons of Agent-iness.

Most Heroic Agents use Veteran Crystals, as Heroic Crystals are highly regulated and usually kept in the vaults.

Adventure Seeds

The Game Master can read about the secrets and motivations of each of these Agents, along with their full statistics, in the *Adversaries and Challenges* chapter.



BACH

A skeptical Fjordstadian researcher who seeks to explain events through science.

Early in Bach Schwarzschild's childhood, he was diagnosed with a cracked heart: a terminal disorder that quickly led to severe health issues. During his early years as an adult, a solution to his problems came from a most unfortunate source. His best friend Mori died in an accident, but his heart remained intact and fit for a transplant. It was one of the first ever performed.

Throughout Bach's twenties, Syn's influence steadily grew around Fjordstad and the world. Bach became fascinated by their Crystal technology, especially since it required one to remove their own heart—a concept which was, well, close to his heart.

Bach soon joined the organization, determined to solve the riddle of how a “prosthetic heart” such as a Crystal could be created, and by whom. He quickly climbed the ranks, being persistent—some say too persistent—in his efforts to research the Crystals and explain their powers by scientific means. This narrow focus often leads him to mistrust the use of Crystals, since he is not at all convinced they were created for the role they now fulfil.

He firmly believes in keeping a rational mindset, and occasionally obsesses over seemingly supernatural mysteries, unrelenting until he finds a rational explanation. He strongly believes that if he unlocks the inner workings of the Crystals he will help humanity move past superstition and what he calls “primitive thinking.”

Bach carries Geist (Veteran), with which he can interact with the wisps of memories left within hearts. He can also read and occasionally re-write memories, whether the heart is dead or alive.



GARRIDAN

A studious Bogovian engineer who simply cannot refuse a good mystery.

At first glance, Garridan Gouyar looks nothing like an Agent. He is overweight, scruffy, and carries around an old tool belt. But take a look in his eyes, and you'll see the spark: serious, thoughtful, and *hungry*.

Studious and determined, Garridan got into a lot of trouble with his parents for taking things apart to see how they work. His family indulged him and funded his studies at the best Bogovian institutions, but the ancient colleges weren't enough for him and the mysteries of Crystals proved too alluring to ignore.

Garridan is very book smart. Once his wandering mind settles on a new question, he will spend a lot of time and energy to find the answer. He keeps many personal notebooks with details on every topic that ever interested him, including one notebook for each Crystal he encountered. The first pages of the notebooks are meticulously kept, but should an answer be out of reach, the writing becomes sloppy as obsession turns to frustration and he has to turn away from his quest for knowledge.

As the least favored of five children, Garridan never thought of himself as a family man—but recently his mother fell ill, and something shifted within him. He now would very much like for his family to *feel* like a family again, which is why he chases down his siblings—who regularly squabble with one another—in an effort to bring them together.

Garridan carries Sketch (Heroic), with which he can manifest imagined things as constructs in the real world or become slightly imaginary himself.



IVAN

A serious, efficient Bogovian who carries the weight of the world on his shoulders.

At 56 years old, Ivan Novak is one of the oldest Syn Agents on record. A Subduer for many years, he knows more about the true nature of the world, the Crystals, and Syn than almost any other Agent. He is also aware of how important it is to keep this information completely secret.

Throughout his prestigious career, Ivan has only ever used five Crystals, claiming it's better to focus one's skills with a single Crystal as much as possible. He has achieved fantastic control over his most well-used Crystals, and is considered highly dangerous even with Novice ones.

Ivan was instrumental in the establishment of many of Syn's protocols. He took part in some of the earliest recovery missions, and lost a friend (and a leg, he walks with a prosthetic) trying to overcome a feral Crystal's manifestations. It became a dream of his to gain control over that Crystal, Revert, and he used his power within the organization to prevent any other Agent from socketing it until he felt confident enough to try himself. After finally taming Revert, and believing himself to have achieved the peak of discipline, he set his sights on a very different goal.

Revert (Heroic) allows Ivan to undo anything man-made, then redo it. Ivan doesn't have the Right Crystal for the Job Edge, yet he is allowed to carry a second Crystal, Light-headed (Novice), which makes him very light and gives him easier maneuverability. He switches between the two Crystals with no risk using a unique mechanism that's placed on the chest. Ivan spends most of the time with Revert, but likes to switch to Light-headed on occasion, claiming the Crystal's meditative-like disposition helps him think.



JORDAN

An overly serious Fjordstadian bureaucrat who has trouble relating to people.

Jordan Flak's background is unusual for a Syn Agent, because he is one of the very few who joined the ranks after already being a part of Syn. He entered the organization as an accountant and was head of the logistics department for many years, until one day something happened (he keeps the specifics to himself) that made him decide to be more than just a bureaucrat.

Jordan joined the training program late in life, but it didn't prevent him from achieving greatness. In fact, his deep understanding of Syn protocols helped him not only survive through several dangerous missions, but become a Heroic Agent in a few short years. He did it without much help from his friends within Syn, since he barely has any.

Jordan's interpersonal skills were always his greatest weakness. He is overly direct, never relaxed, and needlessly wordy. Jordan's sister Sara is a scientist working for Syn and his closest friend. They talk for long hours during which he advises her on many topics. Even though she rarely needs his long winded advice, she is happy to spend the time with him.

Jordan carries Absence (Veteran), a Crystal that can make things disappear forever, forgotten by all.



KELLY

A welcoming, supportive Islander who has no quarrels with anyone.

Kelly K'wanga is a people person: she'll talk to anyone about anything. Despite her natural social intuitions, she doesn't really *get* the difference between a beggar and a king. Even after many years of interacting with cultures across the world, she just can't seem to understand the structure of society and the concept of status. She realizes that others find worth in differentiating between people, and most of the time she's able to account for that in her plans, but occasionally she simply forgets. People find her somewhat weird, but also very charming.

Kelly spent seven years as a Crystal Hunter—longer than most—enjoying the chance to get to know hundreds of people from all over the continent. For the past two years she's been working as a Free Agent, an ambassador of goodwill for Syn, helping in public relations around the Lands.

Kelly slots Ego (Veteran), which enhances her ego to ridiculous levels: it allows her to have more Kelly, and even some Kelly in other people.



MARC

A friendly and courageous Bogovian trouble-maker who frequently leaps before he looks.

Marc Zest is one of the friendliest Agents in Syn. People often ask him why he joined, simply because his answer is so endearing: "I wanted to help people, and this seemed like the best way to do so."

While this is true, it's also true that Marc hardly ever thinks two steps ahead. When he first heard of Syn and their willingness to risk themselves for others, he joined on the same day. Joining an organization that brings so much good to the world simply seemed like the best thing to do at that moment. It's a decision he hasn't regretted since, despite leaving behind important people and duties.

When Marc was young he rescued a wolfhound pup from a hunting trap, and the two immediately bonded. Morgana is his constant companion, and he finds her inspiring. She doesn't judge or lecture him about the complications brought on by his impulsive decisions; she just acts like a beast, immediately taking care of the current issue head-on.

Marc currently carries Beast (Veteran), a Crystal that forces one's primal beast to manifest.





NUI

A courageous Islander sea captain who hunts treasure.

Ever since she was rescued by an Agent when she was a teen, Nui o Mua has been taken in by the awesomeness and romanticism of Syn. The life of a Syn Agent is so full of adventure, she just had to become one! She devoted herself to joining the organization and quickly proved her worth.

Nui is excellent at everything she does, and it's important that everyone knows this. She has a tendency to show off to fellow Agents and civilians, especially children—"just look how amazing Syn is!". She also enjoys mentoring rookie Agents, making sure they work hard "to earn the right to be one of us."

Nui tends to stretch the rules until they snap, which frustrates many administrators in Syn. She has become an excellent ship's captain, and spends much of her time as a Free Agent learning how to drive all of Syn's vehicles—including the Mammoth, in a stunt she wasn't at all authorized to pull. She is always on the lookout for the next exciting experience, and tends to switch Crystals on a monthly basis. The fact she's kept Consistent for more than a year shows she really, *really* likes it.

Nui loves a crowd, but she doesn't have many friends. One of the people closest to her is Kingrove, a Zingamaian Agent who is intent on perfecting his seacraft abilities. She's been more than enthusiastic to help in his endeavor: the two disappear into the Islands for weeks on end (without bothering to report their location, of course).

Nui doesn't like to commit, which is why she took the The Right Crystal for the Job Edge. She carries two Crystals: Split (Veteran), which allows one to split their presence between several places, and Consistent (Veteran), which is all about perpetual motion.



NYAMA

A self-destructive Zingamaian champion who throws herself at any danger.

After winning the Sash of Splendor, nothing was the same for Nyama Wilcken. Achieving the highest honor of the Pentadome Arena and being acknowledged as one of the top athletes in all of Zingama had been her dream since she saw her first wrestling match. When it was all behind her, she felt empty.

The stage wasn't enough anymore, so Nyama joined Syn, looking for a real challenge, real dangers. She destroyed everything in her path, except for things that managed to send her into long months of recovery—then she would just jump straight into action again. Eventually even that wasn't enough. By socketing more and more powerful Crystals, she managed to beat harder and harder foes.

Nyama became Heroic because she wanted to get the most difficult missions Syn could throw at her. Her friends are worried for her, and occasionally for themselves, because she never tries to mitigate any collateral damage. Her results can't be ignored: Nyama is Syn's hammer, being thrown with great purpose at the organization's enemies, while being kept away from delicate situations.

Nyama's Crystal, Intense (Veteran), allows her to become stronger than strong, pushing beyond her limits at a great cost. She can run like a horse and kick like an elephant, but quickly becomes tired and sometimes injures herself.



TOKPELA

A kind-hearted Maseian fighter of short stature who found a home in Syn.

Tokpela's life was defined by an event that happened during his childhood. While walking down a hill he tripped and fell into a pit, onto a shard which lodged into his lungs. On the brink of death, he was taken by his family to Syn, where the experts managed to identify the shard. They taught Tokpela how to activate it, enabling him to save his own life.

Since that day, Tokpela has been a part of the organization. Despite still being connected to his family, he grew up considering Syn as his *real* family, which he loves with all his heart. He is fiercely loyal, and has dozens of friends throughout the organization. He will do anything for Syn.

Tokpela's shard constantly regenerates his injury and his body, keeping him alive but also hampering his aging. He still looks like a kid, which is a touchy subject for him. He often feels unappreciated or out of place, and occasionally overcompensates by trying to be "the most adult" in the room.

Tokpela's Bellow (Veteran) is all about being VERY LOUD, allowing him to blast people with his voice or turn everyone's attention to him.



TU'AMQOLO

A paranoid Maseian spy trying to prevent her prophesied death.

There's a small village hidden in the valleys of western Maseia where a clan of witches live in secret, away from society. In this village, the Oracle reveals a child's future in a prophecy on their sixth birthday. While many of these prophecies are simple or benign, Tu'amqolo's was grim and ominous. "In a night so sharp, your life thus ends; by bloodied hands, by red-clad friends".

Tu'amqolo has lived her whole life in the shadow of this prophecy. By the time she was old enough to care for herself, she left the village with a singular vision in mind: to prove that destiny can be overwritten. She has no doubt in the Oracle's prophetic power, but she intends to live through the sharp night.

Joining Syn was a natural course of action for Tu'amqolo. She needed answers, and more importantly, to become powerful enough to live through the prophecy. In her journey she has uncovered secrets and kept them to herself. She learned how to read people and carefully judge them. None can be trusted, especially those wearing red.

She still uses her starter Crystal Tattletale, the only Crystal she ever felt comfortable with, despite its problematic disposition: it makes her want to tell everyone all her secrets. She sees it as a personal challenge that constantly needs to be overcome. When the urge is too great, she'll cover her mouth to prevent her words from escaping.

Tattletale (Novice) allows Tu'amqolo to uncover hidden truths, secrets deliberately kept buried. Thanks to the Crystal Specialization Edge she has developed several new powers for it, becoming an incredible spy.



TUHINGA

An early generation Crystal Hunter Islander searching for her lost daughter.

Tuhinga Mata was chosen to be a Crystal Hunter before she was born. In the tradition of her family, each generation's first-born must take a role in an ongoing cycle: the offspring of the head of the clan is to be a priest; the priest's child is to be a hunter; and the hunter's child would be a leader once more.

Tuhinga, as a hunter, had the duty to reach out into the world, experience it, and return to raise a wise and open-minded leader. This was during the early days of Syn, when the organization was no more than a small group of like-minded individuals. One of them was Tuhinga, who was compelled to explore.

Tuhinga found it difficult to return. In all of her years, she only ever loved one man—but after she gave birth to their daughter, he passed away from illness. Tuhinga raised their daughter on her own and on the road, promising herself she will bring the girl back home to be a leader but never following through. At fifteen the girl had had enough of her mother's moods, and ran off to find her own way. Tuhinga has spent many years since then in search of her daughter, hoping to reconnect with her. The weight of her familial obligation is heavy on her shoulders.

These days Tuhinga is old and gray, but still one of the most formidable Agents around. Due to an accident during her Crystal implementation process—in those early days, the harness was still a distant dream—she lost the use of her eyes, but her other senses are sharp enough to help her get by.

Since Tuhinga can't change her Crystal, she took the Crystal Specialization Edge to make the most out of it. Sympa (Heroic) allows her to see and touch emotions as physical entities.



YURHANT

A feral Fjordstadian outdoorsman who would nevertheless guard the pack (team) with his life.

Yurhant Hagspiel lives in the moment. The past is in the past. How he got here doesn't matter. Only braving the storm matters.

A true man of the wilderness, Yurhant spends barely any time at Syn's citadel or facilities. He is unaccustomed to any of the comforts of civilization, and he isn't interested in them. He lives out in the Fjordstadian Wilds, and while he isn't concerned with Syn's goals, he cares greatly about his fellow Agents. He doesn't understand them, but that doesn't matter. They are his kin, so he will guide and protect them.

Yurhant once saw a vision in the northern lights, which can occasionally be seen in the tundras of northern Fjordstad. Some say that what he saw was something else altogether: lights created by a Crystal he found, and that Yurhant joined Syn just to learn more of this Crystal and coax it into revealing more of its secrets. Yurhant doesn't respond well to rumors, and he isn't big on answers.

Yurhant has recently (maybe?) befriended a strange beast, a shaggy bear-like creature, which Syn zoologists are unable to identify. They've asked Yurhant for details, but he just walked back into the raging snow storm with the beast at his side, probably toward one of the many hideouts where he keeps his many ancient secrets.

Aurora (Heroic), the Crystal Yurhant sockets almost exclusively, allows him to become a part of nature. He is capable of feats such as moving plants, sensing his environment, granting the wisdom of the earth, speaking with beasts, and even walking the secret paths through the wild.



Crystals and Hearts

This chapter covers Crystals and their uses, and provides a list of appropriate Crystals for starting characters. It also discusses the unique hearts of the people of the Five Lands.

Crystals

The Bygone Age left many wonders throughout the world, old pieces of ingenious engineering and unparalleled science. The most prominent legacy of the Bygone Age, though, is the Crystals.

A Crystal is a fist-sized object resembling a huge gemstone. Because of their likeness to human hearts (see page 79) and because they're commonly found in close vicinity to remnants of the Bygone Age, the common theory is that they're artificial hearts created by the Bygoners to grant superpowers.

Crystals come in a variety of colors and shapes. While some may look similar, every Crystal is essentially unique. Each Crystal has a *theme*: a specific way in which it affects reality in a manner currently not understood

by science. If left unattended for more than a few minutes, a Crystal starts manifesting its theme in uncontrolled ways, going “feral.”

Common knowledge is that touching a Crystal grants one the ability to control it, but always at a hefty price, since they are temperamental and dangerous. It is now known that to fully control a Crystal in a safe and reliable way, one must use a harness installed by Syn. Rumors are always circulating about people who manage to find new ways to control Crystals, or even create or destroy them. Syn is quick to investigate such stories, but they don't share their findings with junior Agents.

CRYSTALS IN SOCIETY

Most people view Crystals as dangerous, unpredictable, and uncontrollable sources of power. Early in recorded history, many people tried using Crystals in order to establish themselves as rulers or to help their societies. This almost always ended badly. The main lesson most people remember today is to stay away from Crystals.



Are Crystals Magic?

Syn is clear on the subject: Crystals are natural. All “supernatural” effects created by Crystals are, in fact, part of the regular physics of the world; therefore, they can be discovered by the scientific process. It might be difficult to do so, perhaps even beyond the capability of current technology, but it’s possible.

That being said, the world of *Crystal Heart* is obviously using natural laws that differ from our own. For example, the Crystal Bam-Bam allows its bearer to infuse inorganic matter with crackling energy. Where this energy comes from and what it actually is (it’s not electricity) isn’t clear to the characters or the players. The important thing is that it acts in a semi-predictable way by adhering to its powers and maintaining a consistent interpretation of its theme. There’s no need to actually *know* the physical laws in order to keep them consistent.

Syn appeared on the scene relatively recently. The organization has been around in one form or another for about thirty years, but it only came into the public sphere about twenty years ago by sending its Agents into the world and establishing ties with local authorities. Despite Syn’s proven successes and the immense power it has gathered, most people eye it with suspicion because of its use of Crystals. Every proper person knows they are not to be toyed with.

Some people in the more accepting or forward-thinking communities see Syn’s taming of Crystals as a sign of things to come: the beginning of a new, glorious age. They say it’s only a matter of time until Crystals can not only be controlled, but also created for the betterment of humans everywhere. The glory of the Bygone Age is within reach! Syn, meanwhile, keeps most of its discoveries and developments top secret—so secret that even most of its own Agents don’t know about them.

Most Crystal experts outside of Syn have only rudimentary knowledge of the working of Crystals, comparable to that of most junior Agents. However, because each Crystal is unique, it’s quite possible that a specific expert or the people of a specific society will have a good understanding of the workings of a Crystal in their area. It’s probable that this Crystal has been a

part of their environment for hundreds of years, so they might know some of its feral manifestations as well.

ANATOMY OF A CRYSTAL

A Crystal has a **theme**, which determines its powers, abilities and disposition. It also has a **Rank**, which corresponds to the amount and variety of **powers** it has and the ongoing **benefit** it grants to the person socketing it. Finally, it has a **disposition**: the way it influences the moods and demeanor of the person socketing it.

Rank

Each Crystal has a Rank denoting how powerful it is, based on its theme and the number and types of powers it gives access to. You’ll begin with Novice Crystals, but might later gain more powerful ones.

Syn recognizes five ranks of Crystal. This classification is rarely used, or even known, outside of the organization.

Novice Crystals give you useful powers, but are mostly of a passive or supportive nature. A feral Novice Crystal might make a room very warm, or make everyone think annoying, repetitive thoughts.

Seasoned Crystals provide you with one or two powerful abilities, usually a bit more focused compared to the Novice ones. A Novice Crystal might allow you to create light or darkness, but a Seasoned one will allow you to control the shape and strength of your shadow. A feral Seasoned Crystal might turn a building jungle-like and fill it with poisonous plants, or make the water in a river purple and hallucinogenic.

Veteran Crystals have a wider range of abilities, and can provide their bearer with several always-on powers to make them effective and strong at all times. A feral Veteran Crystal might make the walls of an entire cave complex like rubber or keep an army of walking dead around it.

Heroic Crystals are amazingly powerful, giving you a huge range of abilities; they basically turn the Agent into a one-person army. Even the most high-ranked Agents only use these on occasion, as they are highly regulated and usually kept in the vaults. Most use Veteran Crystals instead.





Only five **Legendary Crystals** were ever discovered, and only the five members of the Council of Syn are allowed to carry them. Rumors claim these Crystals are *too* powerful.

Theme

A Crystal's theme is its main concept—what it's *about*. The theme is manifested in the Crystals' powers and their trappings. The more an Agent understands a Crystal's theme, the more new powers they can create out of it (with Power Stunts, page 58). Syn has a good understanding of the themes of most of the Crystals in their Repository, but some are only half understood (and some are misunderstood).

A theme also helps the Game Master decide how the effects created with a Crystal interact with the world and other Crystals, especially regarding synergy (see Trappings, *Savage Worlds*). As a rule of thumb, if something matches a Crystal's theme, it should interact with its powers. In some cases this is obvious: if you have a Crystal that's all about controlling fire, and a fire breaks out, you can control it—but you can't control water. This becomes especially important when comparing the powers of different Crystals.

Casual Use: Most themes can manifest in simple ways without needing a Crystal Channeling roll. Such casual uses can add +1 to a relevant Trait check, but can never be activated against someone or something else, or while under stress (such as during a combat situation). If there's any hint of effort, this is no longer a casual use—it's a Power Stunt (page 58).

Players should feel free to suggest casual uses for their Crystals as long as they maintain the themes.

Each Crystal's theme is followed in *italics* with several suggestions for casual use.

Benefit

Each Crystal has one or more abilities which are always active. Simply having a Crystal inside you is enough to give you some sort of an advantage—usually an Edge, but occasionally



an ongoing die upgrade to one or more of your Traits. All powers that are not part of your benefit must be activated as an action, usually with a Crystal Channeling check.

An Edge granted by a Crystal's benefit is considered to be yours for all purposes *except* during Advancement. If your Crystal gives you Acrobat, you can gain the one-time use of Combat Acrobat with a Benny (using the Syn Training Setting Rule, page 83), but you can't gain it permanently by spending an Advance. You *can* gain Acrobat using an Advance, making you "double edged."

Double Edged: An Agent might find themselves socketing a Crystal that gives them an Edge that they already have. In that case, the character gains the upgraded version of that Edge (Sweep → Improved Sweep), ignoring its requirements. If she already has the improved version, or if the Edge doesn't have an improved version, instead increase all numerical values by one. Dice are increased by one step. If the Edge grants a reroll, you get an additional one.

For example, a Quick character who gains another Quick Edge will now re-draw whenever dealt 6 or lower (instead of 5). An Agent with Improved Counterattack who gains another Counterattack Edge gets a free Fighting roll against up to four foes per turn (instead of three).

Disposition

A Crystal influences its bearer's psyche. This is usually in the form of a personality trait but occasionally a physical disability, and it is always related in some way to its theme. The disposition is usually expressed in the form of Hindrances. The Agent socketing the Crystal is affected by its disposition at all times.

Some Agents find their personality completely overturned in a moment, while others are merely troubled by thought patterns they're not used to. The higher the Rank of the Crystal, the stronger its disposition.

Double Trouble: An Agent might find themselves socketing a Crystal that gives them a Hindrance they already have. In that case, the Agent suffers from the Major form of that Hindrance (if applicable) or has all its numerical values increased by one. Double Clumsy subtracts 3 from Athletics and Stealth rolls, for example. In some cases this doesn't make sense—a Blind Agent can't become more Blind—so either ignore the extra Hindrance or find an interesting substitution.

If the double Hindrance doesn't have a mechanical effect (such as with Cautious or Driven), the combination of the character's natural and artificial inclinations becomes almost all-consuming. Should an opportunity present itself to act according to this Hindrance (GM's call), the character must make a Spirit roll to behave in a different manner. Having a double Death Wish is dangerous indeed.

Powers

A Crystal gives its user access to several powers that share a common theme.

Most of the powers presented in this book are used differently than in *Savage Worlds*, as explained in each entry.

- The power's in-world name is given first. This is the name Agents usually use to describe this power.
- The name is followed by parentheses, with the power's *Savage Worlds* name, and an indication if it can be used as Ongoing (see next page) and what its activation modifier is; this does not include the difference in Ranks between Agent and Crystal (see below). When two or more powers are listed, they are all activated together with the same roll.

- The power's rules are then listed. Assume the power functions as it does in *Savage Worlds* unless noted otherwise here.
- If the power allows any optional Modifiers, they are listed last. The common Modifiers are noted only if they're always activated; otherwise, they can be used if it makes sense (see Power Modifiers, next page).

CRYSTAL CHANNELING

Crystal Channeling is the act of harmonizing the connection between yourself and your Crystal, pushing against it with your mind to try and goad it into creating a desired effect. It's a mental exercise practiced using both biofeedback and psychological techniques.

Arcane Background (Crystal Channeling) does not use Power Points. Agents simply choose the power they want to activate, and if it requires a check, they make a Crystal Channeling roll. This skill is based on Spirit and is a core skill for all Agents (they begin play with a d4 in it). Activating a power doesn't usually require speaking, but some might require gestures. When a power is activated the Crystal glows with its distinctive color, usually bright enough to be visible through clothes.

The Crystal Channeling check is made with a penalty equal to half the Power Point cost of the power (rounded up) as noted in *Savage Worlds*. This penalty is already listed for all of the powers in this book.

Activating a Power

Once a power is activated with a roll, check the results below:

- **Success:** The power activates as normal. Assume the power follows the rules as noted in *Savage Worlds*, unless otherwise noted in the Crystal's description.
- **Raise:** A raise on the roll grants any additional bonuses stated in the power's description.
- **Failure:** The power doesn't activate. You can choose instead to make it activate (as if your final result was a 4), by taking a level of Fatigue that can only be reduced by a few minutes of meditation with no active powers. If this makes you Incapacitated, the power activates before you're out.
- **Critical Failure:** Treated as a failure, and you also desync (see next page).



Difference in Ranks: The difference between the Crystal's and the character's Ranks is added to the difficulty: a penalty if the Crystal's Rank is higher, or a bonus if the character's Rank is higher.

Example: Noelani, a Novice Agent, socketed the Crystal Infuse (Seasoned Rank). When she activates the healing power, she rolls with -2 (half the Power Point cost of the power, rounded up) and an additional -1 (the difference between her Novice Rank and Infuse's Seasoned Rank).

Maintaining Powers: All non-instant powers can be maintained for as long as the character desires (dismissed as a free action) but each power maintained inflicts a -1 on Crystal Channeling rolls.

Power Modifiers: To use a Power Modifier, subtract from the roll half of its cost rounded up. This is usually -1, so it's safe to default to it. For those who want to be as technically correct as possible, add the Power Point costs of the power and the Modifier, then halve the sum.

Each power lists the Power Modifiers it allows. The common Modifiers (see Power Modifiers in *Savage Worlds*) are generally allowed, but only with a good rationale and the GM's permission. Exactly how it works is a matter of description, but it must always be relevant to the Crystal's theme.

Some powers are always activated with a specific Modifier, which is already reflected in their listed penalty. Activating such a power without this Modifier requires a Power Stunt, as it's essentially a new power.

Example: Chel wants to activate a blast power which has a -2 modifier, but she also wants to hit a Large Blast Template (with the Area Effect Modifier, which the power allows), make it Selective, and cause Fatigue. The total modifier is increased by -1 for each Modifier to a total of -5.

Power Preparation: An Agent may prepare powers by concentrating for an entire round (no movement or other actions, and they must not be Shaken or Stunned). If successful, they ignore 2 points of penalties on all Crystal Channeling rolls on their next turn.

Ongoing Powers: Outside of tense situations, such as combat, activating Ongoing powers does not require a roll. The Agent takes a few moments to focus themselves and release the potential from within the Crystal. They can even choose to activate the power as if they got a raise on the roll. During an action scene, activating an Ongoing power requires an action and a Crystal Channeling roll like any other power.

Ongoing powers always come with a drawback. An activated power reflects switching the Crystal to a higher setting—you become stronger, but so does the disposition.

Losing Sync (Desync)

A Critical Failure on a Crystal Channeling check (as well as some other game effects) creates a backlash between your psyche, your Crystal's resonance, and the harness that's connecting the two—in effect switching it off. Your Crystal stops functioning as your heart and you immediately begin choking. This is called desyncing, and it's the main danger one must face for replacing their heart with a strange device.

You're essentially suffocating. You can hold your breath for a number of rounds equal to 2 plus your Vigor die, or half that if you weren't prepared and didn't have time to take a good breath (which is usually the case with a Critical Failure). Another person can resync you with a Healing roll made as an action, with -1 if there's no first aid kit available. You can try to resync yourself, but with a -2 modifier.



When you run out of breath you become Incapacitated and lose consciousness. You'll die in a number of rounds equal to your Vigor die. If someone can get to you before then, you can be resuscitated with a Healing roll at -2.

You don't have access to your Crystal's powers while desynced, and all of your maintained powers are dropped. A desynced Crystal might or might not still imbue its bearer with its benefits and disposition, GM's call.

Power Stunts

The powers within a Crystal represent only some of the uses of its theme, which come reflexively to its bearer. Agents who put their mind to it can activate their Crystal's theme in new, unusual ways. This effectively grants an Agent a temporary use of any power, as long as it makes sense as an extension of the theme.

The cost is a Benny, which grants a one-use effect of any instant-Duration power from *Savage Worlds* or three rounds of any other power (a new Crystal Channeling roll made before the end of the duration adds another three rounds). The Benny is paid only after both the GM and the player agree on the power and the interpretation of the theme. Calculate the penalty as normal (half the Power Point cost, rounded up) and don't forget to include any Power Modifiers used.

Power Stunts always require an activation roll; they are never Ongoing.

Upgrading to a Permanent Power: If an Agent gets two raises on a roll when activating a Power Stunt, something "clicks" and they gain a new understanding into the theme of the Crystal they're using. They now know this Stunt as a new permanent power. This remains true even if they change Crystals later—they will always know this power with this Crystal.

What Power Stunts to Allow? A note to the GM: reward creativity, but remember that Stunts aren't meant as a way for Agents to gain access to every conceivable power. Some thought should go into justifying each Stunt by referring to the Crystal's theme. A Crystal with a theme of energetic radiation shouldn't be used to slow people down, unless both you and the player agree on a reasonable explanation. Trappings matter!



If needed, discuss the theme among yourselves and decide how to interpret it from now on, adding a few notes to the Crystal's description so that you'll remember what you've agreed on.

SOCKETING A CRYSTAL

Setting a Crystal (or "socketing") means removing one's current Crystal and inserting a new one.

In many cases the socketing is done under controlled conditions by another Agent or qualified Syn personnel. There's usually no need for a check. In an intense situation, such as a combat scene, make a Healing check and consult the results.

- **Success:** The character manages to insert a Crystal into the harness and sync it with the bearer. The Agent immediately gains the Crystal's benefits and disposition. If Shaken or unconscious, they also get an immediate Vigor check to become un-Shaken or return to consciousness.
- **Raise:** The Agent also has a burst of energy, allowing them to ignore all Fatigue



and Wound penalties until the end of their next turn.

- **Failure:** The character can't safely remove the Crystal, and must try again with another action.
- **Critical Failure:** The Agent is left mid-process, with no Crystal inside the harness. They begin suffocating, as with a desync.

Trying to self-socket is a bad idea, with a -2 on the check. You do realize you're trying to unhook your own heart from your body and replace it with another, right?

THE HARNESS

All Syn Agents have passed medical tests and physical requirements, allowing them to be surgically equipped with a harness: the only method so far discovered which controls a Crystal with relative safety and reliability.

A harness is a sophisticated bio-tech device engineered and manufactured exclusively by Syn. It is inserted into the upper chest, replacing the heart with a socket-like cavity lined with special materials and equipped with an armored cover. The implantation process takes several stages and requires a week of intensive care available only in the Syn citadel. Not everyone can undergo this procedure and survive, so Syn has developed a screening process to identify who is compatible.

Only about eighty people in the entire

world are equipped with a harness. Most are Syn Agents, but Syn has also gifted this device (along with specific Crystals) to a select few outside the organization as part of special deals.

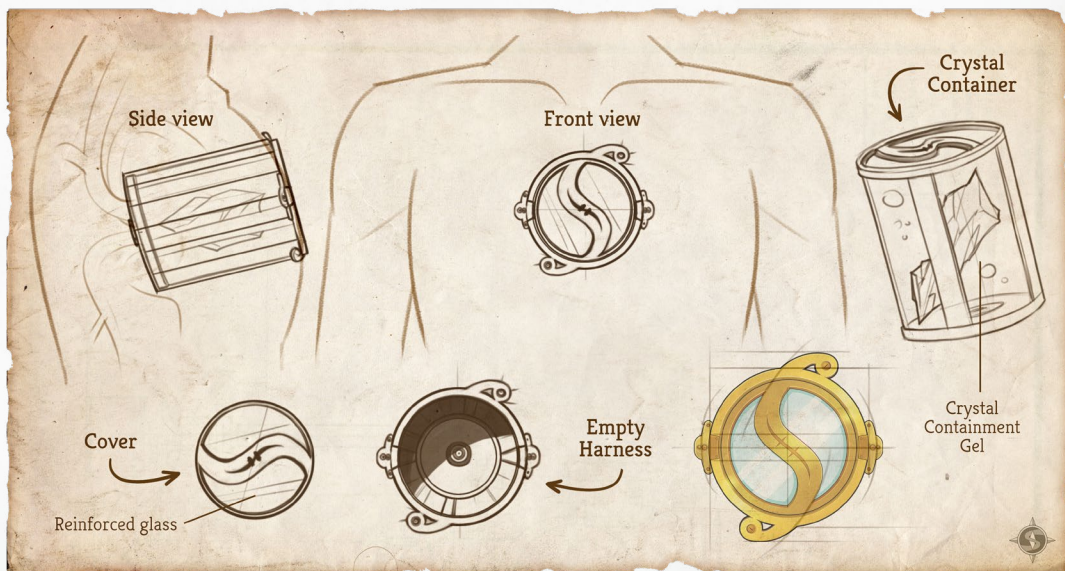
A person with a harness can have a Crystal container fitted into it in a quick (although not completely safe) procedure. The Crystal completely replaces normal heart functions, namely circulating blood (see page 79).

The harness is specially designed to allow a Crystal's power to flow into the body, and cannot normally be equipped with a regular heart. It is a sturdy and reliable piece of equipment that hardly ever breaks, and requires only a once-per-year maintenance check at the Syn citadel.

While it might be possible to remove the harness entirely so a person will regain their normal heart, it has never been done and Syn has no intentions of pursuing this possibility. Therefore, a person who decides to gain a harness also commits to leaving their heart behind forever. There is no known way to prevent hearts from sublimating (see page 79), but rumors claim that Syn secretly keeps all of its Agents' hearts in the flying citadel's Repository.

Harness Complications

The harness is not completely foolproof: Syn has recorded several conditions in which it might function in a less than optimal way.





Syn agents are advised to be on their guard in the following situations, but it should also be noted that other unknown factors might influence the harmonization process which keeps the Agent's psyche and their Crystal in sync.

Strong magnetic fields cause a drain on Crystal powers, inflicting a -1 on all Crystal Channeling rolls. They also increase the penalty for maintaining powers from -1 to -2.

Intense cold slows Crystal powers while also empowering them. A Crystal Channeling check can only be made after taking a turn for Power Preparation, but that preparation also grants a +2 bonus on the check.

Radiation causes severe interference with the harness. At the end of every turn in which the Agent performs any physical activity more intense than walking their Pace, they must make a Vigor roll. On a failure the harness "hiccups," their Crystal literally skipping a beat, and they are Shaken.

Life abundance is a strange environmental effect. It can be detected from a distance by noticing the higher-than-usual plant growth and animal presence. *All Syn Agents are forbidden from entering life abundance areas without proper authorization.*

Surgical Crystal Implantation

This is an alternative to implanting a harness. The procedure is reserved for people outside of Syn, occasionally given to the organization's allies as part of an agreement. Surgical Crystal implantation is a lengthy and dangerous operation performed by trained doctors and Crystal specialists.

The operation takes many hours and a success on Healing and Academics rolls, and the patient will require extended hospitalization. Failing any of the checks results in the person's death. A Critical Failure also turns the Crystal feral.

Activating Crystals Without a Harness

The harness allows Agents to access the full range of a Crystal's powers in a reliable, safe way. That's what makes it so unique and important. Any person can try to make use of a Crystal, but unless they're using it with a harness, any or all of the following will apply:

Limited: The person holding the Crystal manages to activate only a specific manifestation of the theme (which may or may not correspond to one of the Crystal's regular powers).

Unreliable: The holder can't make the Crystal do what they want it to, and the results are unexpected.

Unsafe: The holder harms themselves or others simply by touching or activating the Crystal; the Crystal's disposition overtakes the person's personality, driving them mad; the Crystal creates uncontrollable feral manifestations; or all of these together.

Anyone can touch a Crystal and activate it with a thought—it's just that they're likely to explode in some exciting way, probably after losing their mind.

FERAL CRYSTALS

When a Crystal is "in the wild," not tamed inside an Agent's harness or a Syn Crystal container, it's considered feral. Such Crystals manifest their theme in uncontrolled ways. Approach with extreme caution!

A feral Crystal's manifestation is only somewhat related to its Rank and theme. Although rare, Syn has recorded cases of a Heroic Crystal with a lightning theme manifesting as little pricks of static electricity, and of a Novice Crystal with a softness theme manifesting as quicksand that can swallow buildings. The environmental conditions surrounding the feral Crystal seem to have a large influence on the form and intensity of its manifestation.

Containment Procedures

Each Agent is provided with two Crystal containers: one that holds the Crystal in their own harness, and an extra one to contain feral Crystals. The container has a sliding lid and is filled with soft gel which needs to be replaced every few months.

When approaching a feral Crystal, Syn Agents are advised to first subdue any manifestations such as walking trees, choking water snakes, or zombified corpses. This allows for a short period of calm, usually around ten minutes, before the Crystal re-manifests its theme. During this time the Agents should place the Crystal inside a container using gloves.





If subduing the manifestations is not feasible (what can you do against an avalanche?), a feral Crystal can also be tamed by being held for several seconds in a container, a harness, or someone's hands. Crystals really don't like being held like this and tend to react in unexpected ways, akin to an angry cat.

Agents are advised to wear gloves while handling feral Crystals. For some unknown reason—perhaps something about the way the energies of two Crystals clash—when an Agent touches a feral Crystal barehanded, they must roll Vigor or take a level of Fatigue. On a Critical Failure, they desync! This roll repeats at the start of every turn until the Agent releases the Crystal or it becomes tamed, as noted below.

Grappling with a Crystal: Trying to grab a feral Crystal or trap it in a container is similar to grappling. Most times it requires an Athletics roll to grab the Crystal, at -2 if you're trying to push it into a container.

The Crystal must be held down for several seconds, forcing a Strength roll on your following turn to keep it secured (with +2 if you've got it in a container). If the Crystal fails to escape, it calms down and stops being feral, all of its manifestations disappearing. Unless the Agent is wearing gloves, they must make Vigor checks throughout this process, as noted above.

Each Crystal has its own idiosyncrasies. Some start hovering as you approach, nimbly escaping your grasp; others start shooting energy beams or create mental pulses that cause headaches. Still others might be surrounded by a layer of stone or embedded in a gooey slime creature, which must be dealt with before the Crystal can be contained.

Ongoing Containment: A Crystal inside a container remains tamed for about two weeks, but will eventually go feral again. There are only two known ways to prevent this from happening.

It can be kept inside a climate-controlled, magnetically-regulated safe—the Tank has six such slots for containers.

Otherwise, it can be placed inside a person, either with a harness or through implantation. The harness accepts a Crystal



container which is filled with stabilizing gel, but technically there's no need for it: once inside a human, Crystals never misbehave.

Basically, Crystals not directly inside your body should be considered akin to grenades. Handle with care, and always place inside safe containers.

Identifying a Crystal's Powers

Syn guidelines require every new Crystal to be brought to a Syn facility for a full diagnostic and an evaluation. However, Agents are known for their curiosity (it's one of the reasons they're in the job, after all), so it's an open secret that many Agents try out the Crystals they've gathered while still in the field. Some of them are never heard from again, so, you know. Be careful.

To identify a Crystal you need a few minutes to examine it closely in a Crystal examination chamber, available in many Syn facilities (see page 32). You automatically learn its Rank. You then make an Academics roll, with a +2 bonus if you've seen the Crystal's feral manifestation in action. Other Agents can Support you.



On a success, the Crystal is identified: you know the Crystal's benefits, disposition and powers. You get to name it! The GM gives you a vague description of its theme, which can later be clarified after seeing the Crystal in action a few times. On a raise, the GM tells you the theme straight away.

On a failure, the Crystal's capabilities remain unknown until tested in Syn's citadel, where it is automatically identified as with a success on the roll. Alternatively, you can try to slot it and see what happens.

The Hands-on Approach: An Agent can slot a Crystal into their harness to try it out. You will immediately identify its Rank, benefits and disposition, and get a vague feeling about its theme.

You can *try* any power you can think of; if you manage to discover one, it activates as normal. You can also use a Benny for a Power Stunt. Before you roll, the GM will tell you if the power you're trying to activate is natural for the Crystal or costs a Benny.

Until the Crystal is properly identified, every time you fail a Crystal Channeling check with the Crystal's powers you must make a Spirit roll or take a level of Fatigue lasting for several minutes (if you choose to succeed instead of failing, you take *two*).

An Agent can come to fully identify their socketed Crystal by simply keeping it socketed for several days, experiencing its presence and attempting to achieve a deeper understanding of it.

Roll Spirit every morning. After a number of successes and raises equal to the Crystal's Rank, the Crystal is fully identified.

A Critical Failure also makes the Crystal fully identified...but with a huge misunderstanding of its theme. The Agent suffers a -1 penalty on all Crystal Channeling checks with this Crystal and can't use Power Stunts until they have a good reason to reconsider their approach, such as by seeing someone else using it properly.

Why Do Crystals Have Dispositions?

A person's heart is created by their personality. The heart's characteristics, including its shape, density, and even color, are parts of the person's identity (mostly memories and general disposition), encoded in a physical form. As the heart hardens during childhood, it starts to affect conscious behavior. If your heart was developed to be kind, you'll find yourself generally guided toward kindness. It's akin to a river: the water carves a path, but the path then guides the water in a never-ending dynamic.

All of this is true in our real world as well, only for us it happens in the brain. For Agents in *Crystal Heart*, things get more complicated since changing your heart means replacing your personality core.

Crystals, being foreign objects which act as hearts, push against one's consciousness in ways that were not developed by one's life experiences. More importantly, Crystals only *dictate*. No matter how kind you are, if you're socketing a Crystal with a mean theme then you'll find yourself constantly pushing against its unkind influence, as Crystals never "change their opinions." In the river metaphor, they are a huge boulder in the middle of the stream, forcing the flow to reshape itself.

How Does it Feel to Control a Crystal?

Novice Crystals give you access to a broad aspect of the world. Activating a Novice Crystal usually feels like surfing a big wave: trying to ride a powerful force and guide yourself along it in a specific direction.

Seasoned Crystals take an aspect of the world and focus it. It sometimes feels like trying to control an angry, powerful dog using a sturdy leash: guiding a force that's already going in a specific direction in an effort to prevent any unintended consequences.

Veteran Crystals take a specific aspect of the world and exaggerate it. It can feel like being filled up from within like a hot air balloon, lifting you up but also stretching you out.

Heroic Crystals take a broad aspect of the world and give you full control over it. You're like a one-person-army. You have access to a huge arsenal, but you must also adhere to a strict regimen: the Crystal's powerful disposition.





Starter Crystal List

Each player chooses a Novice Crystal for their Agent as part of the character creation process. Several Crystals had previous owners, and others have a bit of a history. Syn is not big on information, so only tidbits of rumors might be known to the Agents.

NOVICE CRYSTALS

The following is a list of beginner Crystals currently authorized by Syn. Choose or roll for one (1d20). The GM can add or remove Crystals from this list as they see fit.

BUDDY

Description: Yellow bulb with purple streaks, giving the strange impression of a joyful fruit.

Theme: Being really, really helpful to your friends, a supportive part of the team. *Instinctively say the right word and laugh at the right time, making others feel as if you're all in on a private joke.*

Benefit: Reliable Edge. When you Support an ally, they gain +2 for a success and +3 with a raise (instead of +1 and +2). On failure, however, they subtract 3 instead of 2.

Disposition: Delusional (Major): Everyone is nice! Even the most horrible person secretly wishes me the best, I just need to help them dig down for that friendliness and bring it to the surface.

Let's Do This! (*boost Trait, Ongoing, -1*). You increase your helpfulness to absurd levels, becoming obsessed with a specif-

ic task and doing it with all your might (probably while screaming). Choose a Trait: both you and a teammate within a range of Smarts increase your die types by one. You can only maintain this level of enthusiasm for a short time. While active, after every ten minutes of activity or when you draw a Heart in combat, you must make a Spirit check or take a level of Fatigue. On a raise, you both increase your die types by two, but if you don't use the Trait on a round, the power ends.

On My Way! (*teleport, -1*). When someone needs you, you're there. When a friend is faced with a task they can't do by themselves and genuinely asks for your help, you sense it no matter the distance and can activate this power to appear next to them. On a raise, you also appear with the right tool for the job, if it was reasonably within your reach. Your friends can spend a Benny to force you to use this power as a free action, even when you're unconscious.



CONSCIOUS-SENSE

Description: Pink-white elongated, thin spheroid.

Theme: Perceive and create vibrations on the mental plane. Such vibrations are formed by conscious thoughts, like objects moving on a lake's surface. *Sense the presence of an ant colony inside the wall; make a cat drowsy.*

Benefit: Combat Reflexes Edge, as you're able to shake your own awareness back into action.

Disposition: Thin Skinned (Minor). The vibrations accompanying an attacker's insults cause you to feel them more intensely.

Awaken (*relief, -1*). You push against the target's mind, forcing it out of being Shaken and back into full consciousness. You cannot remove physical Fatigue, such as from poison or dehydration.

Detect Consciousness (*detect arcane, Ongoing, -1*). You sense all sources of awareness in range, even through walls or earth. You know how "big" the consciousness is, so you can differentiate between a dog and a person. With a raise you can recognize specific people if you previously had some interaction with them. Crystals can also be detected.

Lull (*slumber, -1*). You send a disruptive wave through the mental plane, trying to "mute" the target's awareness.



**DANCER**

Description: Pink, swirly, with splashes of red.

Theme: Sleek movements, graceful thrusts, elegant execution. *Catch the wine-filled glass before it falls to the ground.*

Benefit: You're a brilliant dancer on a stage and an efficient killer in a fight. You're Quick.

Disposition: It's hard to see someone being better than you. You're Jealous (Minor).

Graceful Dance (boost Trait [Fighting and Performance], Ongoing, -2). Self only. While active, you continuously dance, which might interfere with delicate actions.

In the Zone (warrior's gift, Ongoing, -2). Self only. You get Acrobat (and Combat Acrobat with a raise). You also get Berserk, which activates after becoming Shaken for any reason. While active, you hush everyone who's talking frivolously—they're making it hard for you to concentrate.

**DUMB LUCK**

Description: Flat blue with turquoise spikes. Senior Agents don't take this Crystal seriously, but it can't be denied that several Agents owe it their lives.

Theme: Luck is river rapids, and you're in a boat. *Get heads twelve times in a row; fall down the stairs, but into an important clue; correctly guess the password to the secret club, then enter it and realize it's the wrong club.*

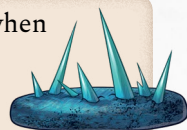
Benefit: The Dumb Luck setting rule applies to you, even if your group is not using it in the game. To get a raise on a roll, you only need 3 more than the target number instead of 4. However, you get a Critical Failure not only when the dice

show double-ones, but also when they show a 1 and a 2.

Disposition: You've got Bad Luck.

Contagious Bad Luck (lower Trait [Athletics, Fighting or Shooting], -1). It's not that they're any less skilled, it just that they seem to run into an unprecedented amount of disturbances. Allowed Modifiers: All.

Missed Me (deflection, Ongoing, -2). Self only. You seem to slip and fall at just the right moment and the bullet passes right where your head was until a moment ago. While active, you are more prone to accidents. If you move at more than half your Pace, make an Agility roll or fall prone.

**HEADLIGHT**

Description: Black and shiny, with reflective surfaces. Looks a bit like a modern art statue. Was found by the famed Agent Contessa.

Theme: Playing with the intensity of light, increasing or decreasing brightness. *Shine a light with the palm of your hand; cover your face in darkness.*

Benefit: You ignore up to 2 points of Illumination penalties from darkness.

Disposition: Habit (Minor). Feeling "enlightened," you're prone to saying semi-insightful but essentially meaningless phrases.

Control Brightness (light/darkness, -1). You can see through the darkness you create with this power.

Darksight (darksight, Ongoing, -1). Self only. Your eyes become accustomed to seeing only in darkness. You ignore illumination penalties from darkness as noted in the power's description, but bright light now inflicts a -2 illumination penalty on you, -4 with a raise.

Lights Out (blind, -1). You create a persistent darkness around someone's head or flash a bright light in their eyes.





HIGH SPIRITS

Description: A small gem, half yellow and half gray. It was widely used in the early days of Syn, which means there's more data (and war stories) about it than most other Crystals.

Theme: Clever ideas, sudden inspirations; foolish behavior and odd whimsy. *Get a brilliant idea; tell a stupid joke.*

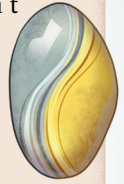
Benefit: This unusual Crystal is always in one of two extremes. While you're "clever," increase your Smarts by a die step, and reduce your Spirit by one. You also gain Jack-of-all-Trades. You can switch off being clever as a free action, at which point you become "emboldened." This increases your Spirit by one step and reduces your Smarts by one. You also gain Strong

Willed. Once you switch, you can't switch back for several hours.

Disposition: While you're "clever," you spend much of your time writing down your ideas, thoughts, poems, drawings, anything (they're not necessarily any good, though). This is an Obligation (Minor). While "emboldened," you're Stubborn (Minor) and it's hard to make you choose any course of action besides what you are used to.

Clever Solution (*warrior's gift*, -2). Self only. Only when clever. You devise a brand new approach to the situation.

Emboldened Action (*speed*, -3). Self only. Only when emboldened. Always activated with the Quickness Modifier. You're so sure of yourself that you move fast and act faster.



JINGLE

Description: Thin and twirly, multi-colored.

Theme: ♪ It's unusual but, technically it's art; there's a jingle in your heart! (in your heart) ♪ *Drown your thoughts in repetitive songs; remember some details by encoding them in a simple rhyme.*

Benefit: ♪ Your Performance skill is raised one die, and you can Test it vs Smarts if you'll just try! ♪

Disposition: ♪ Annoying, annoying, you bet that it's annoying! ♪ It's a Habit (Minor) inflicting a -1 on your social interactions. You are also occasionally overwhelmed by repetitive jingles: whenever you draw a Heart, make a Spirit roll or become Distracted.

Earworm (*confusion*, -1). You sing a jingle at a target, and they just can't stop thinking about it. All mammal minds might get affected, except for swarms. Because the target keeps mumbling the song, it's contagious: at the beginning of its turn, every enemy within a distance of 5" must make

a Smarts roll (-2 if you got a raise on the original activation) or suffer the same effect. The original victim might get re-infected if it starts its turn too close to someone they infected. When first activating the power, you must roll Smarts against it yourself, or catch the earworm and become infectious to your allies.

A Little Dance Number (*deflection and relief*, -2). You allow the jingle to flow through your entire body and do a little dance routine. All allies who see you are either inspired or amused, but either way they can remove their Shaken status (Stunned with a raise) and ignore the penalty from being Fatigued (Exhausted with a raise) while you keep dancing. You can continue to dance each turn as an action, no roll required, and gain *deflection* while you do, thanks to your footwork. This power is fueled by a jingle; if you fail the activation roll, it means that jingle didn't inspire you to dance and you must think of a new one (so you can't choose to succeed by taking a level of Fatigue).



PATCHWORK

Description: Lumpy and misshapen, this brown and gray Crystal is theorized by some to be a combination of shards from two different sources, though this is considered to be impossible.

Theme: You intuitively understand complex mechanisms, both biological and artificial, and recognize any fault in their internal processes. *Fix a squeaky hinge with a touch; fix the jukebox to make it work again.*

Benefit: You gain the Mr. Fix It Edge.

Disposition: Quirk: You occasionally confuse people for machines and vice versa; they're all mechanisms, after all.

Find Weakness (*boost Trait [Notice], Ongoing, -1*). Self only. You intuitively notice faults in items, dealing +2 damage to them. If you make a Notice Test against a creature and make them Vulnerable, you recog-

nize their weak points and can ignore 1 point of penalty with Called Shots made against them. While active, your focus makes all sounds seem to disappear: you're Hard of Hearing (Minor).

Fix it Up (*healing, -2*). Can be used on machines as well as living creatures. You must have some basic tools—a first aid kit or work tools—and the process takes five minutes of work per point of Size. If fixing a machine bigger than Size 0, add its Size as a negative modifier to the roll.

Work Mode (*boost Trait [Engineering and Healing], Ongoing, -1*) Self only. You allow the Crystal's power to fill you, becoming highly attuned to any mechanism you're examining. While active, you lose the ability to distinguish between people and machines, treating them equally.



RALLY

Description: A bright orange lump of three squat spheres held together by a black crusting.

Theme: Rising to the occasion, rallying your brethren, leading by example. *Say an encouraging word; think of an inspiring quote; slap the pain away.*

Benefit: Command Edge, as your mere presence helps others feel more secure in themselves.

Disposition: Loyal Hindrance, of course.

Behind Me! (*deflection, -2*). You can only activate this power if Command Mode is already active. Your sheer *heroism* can shield you and others from attack. Allowed Modifier: Additional Recipients.

Command Mode (*boost Trait [Battle], Ongoing, -1*). Self only. You leap forward to lead your friends when they need you most. You also gain the Inspire Edge. While active you must always try to be the spearhead, to reach for the goal, to lead your allies; if you stop leading by example for any reason, the power ends. Maintaining this power does not inflict the normal -1 penalty on Crystal Channeling checks.

Encouraging Word (*relief, -1*). You can only activate this power if Command Mode is already active. You say an encouraging word to an ally who's feeling unwell, helping them get back into action. Allowed Modifier: Additional Recipients.





RASCAL

Description: A swirling, tantalising wisp of turquoise. After a big scandal involving two Heroics and several people from admin, this Crystal is no longer allowed to be used at Syn parties.

Theme: Provides complete fluency in body language. *Wink to make someone lose their train of thought; understand who's in charge by the way they stand.*

Benefit: Charismatic Edge. Subtle body language adds much to your words.

Disposition: Quirk: you're flirtatious to the point that your teammates sometimes need to pull you away from a conversation to continue on the mission.

Body Language Literacy (*empathy*, -1). You attune yourself to the body language of a specific individual, making a Crystal Channeling roll vs the target's Smarts. This does not work on animals.

Conflicting Signals (*confusion*, -1). Can only be used on the target of *Body Language Literacy*. You express two conflicting meanings, making the target confused for a moment.

Deep Meaning (*mind link*, *On-going*, -1). You connect with another individual on such a basic level that the slightest movements convey huge amounts of information, allowing you to talk through simple gestures that others might not even notice. In order to communicate you must see each other. Suffering a Wound is not dangerous to the linked ally. While active, it's harder for you to speak using your mouth, so you are Tongue-Tied. Allowed Modification: Additional Recipients.

Disparaging Expression (*lower Trait [Spirit]*, -1). You convey deep disrespect with a subtle gesture, making the target doubt themselves without even realizing why. Allowed Modification: Strong.



RICOCHET

Description: Bronze, sleek, but cracked. This Crystal was found inside a fish, of all places. It was pretty hard to catch that fish, though!

Theme: Trick shots, perfect aim. *Flick a coin into a glass; spit into someone's eye.*

Benefit: You have Steady Hands.

Disposition: You keep throwing things into other things; it's an annoying Quirk. You always hit, though.

Ricochet Mode (*boost Trait [Shooting and Athletics (throwing)]*, *Ongoing*, -2). Self only. You can ricochet your bullets, arrows, and even knives off walls and ceil-

ings. Your attacks ignore Cover. While active you are focusing on ranged combat, so your Fighting die is decreased by one (if already at 1d4, to 1d4-1; this reduces your Parry by 1).

True Aim (*boost Trait [Notice]*, -1). Self only, and affects your current turn only. If all you do on your turn is activate this power, Aim, and a single ranged attack, the Aim affects this attack and you don't suffer a Multi-Action penalty on any of the actions. If you fail the activation of the power, you still Aim and attack, but with the full -4 Multi-Action penalty—effectively negating the Aim.



**SILENT THOUGHT**

Description: Yellow, thin, shaped like an hourglass. Originally named Castle Cravin, after the place it was dug out of, it earned the nickname Good Fellow in testing and usage. After being lost and found again, it was renamed Silent Thought.

Theme: Receive mental signals and surface thoughts from conscious beings, almost like a mental antenna. *Detect basic urges and simple mental states, such as reading the mood of a chicken.*

Benefit: Thanks to your increased empathy, you gain the Charismatic Edge.

Disposition: You're easily distracted because of the many mental glimpses you receive, resulting in -2 to Notice checks.

Deep Connection (*empathy, -1*). You focus on receiving a specific person's surface thoughts. This power is resisted with

Notice instead of Spirit to notice your somewhat strange behavior (staring at them intently, mouthing their words slightly as they speak). If they begin to suspect you are using a power on them, the sudden self-reflecting realization forces you to lose focus on them, ending it.



Mental Antenna (*mind reading, -1*) You try to attune yourself to another person's brainwaves to receive their thoughts. The target is not aware of this. A raise on the check allows you to gain a second truthful answer or more details.

Mental Vortex (*divination, -3*) Opening yourself to the world at large, you receive thoughts and memories—maybe even echoes from the deceased—in an almost overpowering surge. Sitting as quietly as you can for five minutes, you sift through the cacophony in search of useful information.

SLANTED

Description: Sharp orange, triangular in shape. When placed on a surface, it stays standing in whatever position it was placed.

Theme: Up and down are subjective to you, meaning that they don't necessarily align with the world. *Place something on your skin at a weird angle, making it behave as if your center of mass is the source of gravity.*

Benefit: You can walk and run on walls at up to a 90 degree angle as if you're on the ground. You can even make short jumps while staying aligned to the wall's surface, but losing contact for more than a few seconds (a turn) aligns you with the ground again. This doesn't require conscious effort, so you can even sleep on a wall.

Disposition: You lose orientation easily, and occasionally the world seems to swirl all around you. When you draw a Heart during combat you must make an Agility

roll or lose balance and fall prone.

Deflection (*deflection, Ongoing, -2*). Self only. You "convince" incoming weapons or projectiles that gravity is pushing away from you. Maintaining this power requires ongoing conscious effort, inflicting a -1 penalty on *all* actions, not just Crystal Channeling rolls.

Walk Over Everything (*wall walker, Ongoing, -1*). Self only. You increase the Crystal's benefit ability to the max. With a success, you can walk on all solid surfaces, whatever their alignment is to the ground: ceilings, ropes, your teammates, etc. With a raise, you can also run. You do not become lighter or more agile, meaning you might still need to balance (in the case of ropes) and be conscious of your weight distribution (in the case of teammates). While this power is active, you have a -1 penalty on all Agility and Agility-based skill rolls.





SPOTLIGHT

Description: Wide, purple and pink, eruptive. The Crystal was in use by a popular Maseian singer; only after being removed did anyone realize the singer was a nest of bees. Great buzzing, though.

Theme: Become the center of attention for a few moments. Burn twice as bright, half as long. *Draw someone's attention with a "hey!"; have everyone look at you as you enter the room.*

Benefit: Whenever you make a social skill roll, draw a card. If you got a Heart, you deliver your intent in a surprisingly bombastic way, catching your opposition off-guard and making them Distracted for a few moments.

Disposition: You're Mean. You don't intend to be, but you just miss cues or ignore manners. It's because your Crystal focuses all of your social capability into single bursts,

meaning that the rest of the time, you're lacking.

All Eyes on Me! (*boost Trait [Taunt], -1*). You draw as much attention as humanly possible to yourself. You gain the Humiliate, Provoke, and Rabble-Rouser Edges. This power lasts until the end of your next turn.

Hear Me! (*boost Trait [Intimidation], -1*). Self only. You ready yourself to give a ponderous threat or lecture. You gain the Menacing and Strong Willed Edges. This power lasts until the end of your next turn.

Lend Me Your Ear! (*boost Trait [Persuasion and Performance], -1*). Self only. You ready yourself to give a convincing argument or a brilliant performance. You gain the Charismatic and Work the Room Edges. This power lasts until the end of your next turn.



STRONGARM

Description: Golden in hue, this Crystal looks like a jumbled knot of thick strands.

Theme: Arms, arms, and more arms. You are able to even physically manifest the mere concept of extra arms. *Show off your powerful arm musculature; win at arm-wrestling; give amazing hugs.*

Benefit: Increase your Strength die by one step.

Disposition: Overconfident. You can handle anything by yourself. After all, you have the arms for it!

Arm Yourself (*warrior's gift, Ongoing, -2 per arm*). Multiple golden arms sprout from around your shoulders, phasing through clothing and armor. You can create a number of extra arms up to half your Spirit. Each additional arm gets its own action, separate from your regular actions, and you have the Two-Fisted Edge

(which affects *all* of your extra hands). They are all Off-Hands, but on a raise, you are also Ambidextrous. While active, it seems to you that the solution to *any* problem is *obviously* to handle it with your bare hands; any other action is done at -1 per extra arm.

Armed and Dangerous (*smite, Ongoing, -1*). You infuse your arms and any melee weapon you are holding with great armness. While the power is active you also gain the Martial Artist Edge, and your arms leave a golden aftertrail. While active, whenever you have a moment or two alone, you focus your attention on flexing your arms.

Grab Tight (*wall walker, Ongoing, -1*). Two golden arms sprout from your torso to grasp and hold onto sheer surfaces. The power deactivates automatically when the arms no longer have a surface to hold on to.



**SURVIVOR**

Description: Boxy, deep blue. A common choice for Agents who've heard about Novice Agent mortality rates.

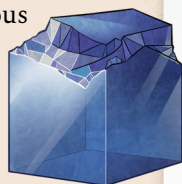
Theme: Enduring in any condition, surviving through any hardship. *Ignore minor pains; hold your breath for five minutes; run on burning coals.*

Benefit: Increase your Vigor die by one step.

Disposition: Stubborn. Your body isn't the only thing that remains unchanging—your opinions do as well.

Enhanced Constitution (*boost Trait [Vigor], Ongoing, -1*). Self only. Blue protective energy infuses your form. While

active, you have the Suspicious Hindrance as Minor, or Major with a raise. To truly survive through anything, one can never be too careful!



Fortified (*protection, Ongoing, -1*). Self only. A deep-blue force field surrounds you, tight against your form. It stacks with any armor. While active you are Overconfident; there's nothing you can't do. Allowed Modifier: More Armor.

Survive Anything (*environmental protection, -1*). Self only. A thick deep-blue force field engulfs you, pushing back against environmental harm while sustaining your body temperature and breath.

VERBALLISTIC

Description: Dark green with a twisted top, and a bulbous middle that seems to glow a little when fully charged.

Theme: Words are like bullets, and you're set to auto-fire. Only problem is, you also need ammo. *Talk a lot; make someone shut up for a moment.*

Benefit: Releasing words in a barrage comes naturally to you. Increase your Taunt die type by one and gain the Humiliate Edge. Most powers used through this Crystal (probably also Power Stunts) require and consume "charges," essentially speech itself, which must first be accumulated within the Crystal by use of the Siphon Words power. Up to three charges can be stored. It can usually be assumed that you begin each adventure with three charges.

Disposition: Big Mouth. There's just so much to say! Unless you're reigning in your instincts, you express yourself wildly and with body language.

Command (*puppet, -2*). You give such a sharp, forceful command that the target must obey it if they fail their opposed Spirit roll (a command to harm one's self or friends is automatically ignored). The power has a duration of Instant. The command

must be a single, short sentence, and the target will try to complete it on their next turn. You can keep giving commands to the same target on your following turns, once per round, as an action. This doesn't require further Crystal Channeling rolls, and the target doesn't get further chances to resist. If a round passes during which you don't give a command, this effect ends. Each command, including the first, requires and consumes a charge. If you got a raise, the first command is free.



Insult Mode (*boost trait [Taunt], -1*). You lower the dam fully, and a flood of words washes over your foes. You gain the Rabble-Rouser Edge, but it affects everyone, not just enemies. To activate this power you must have at least one charge, and it consumes a charge every three turns.

Siphon Words (*silence, Ongoing, -1*). You greatly reduce all speech (with a raise, all types of sounds) to a whisper within a Large Blast Template centered on you. While active, you can barely express yourself; you have the Tongue-Tied Hindrance instead of Big Mouth. For every twenty minutes spent in silence you gain one charge, up to a maximum of three. For every conversation that you silence during this time, reduce this duration by half.





WIDE SIGHT

Description: Small and flat, like a lumpy coin, with a bronze tint. Users of Wide Sight tend to scoff at users of Ricochet, and vice versa.

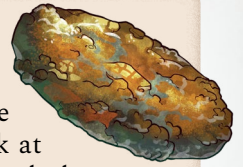
Theme: Extreme visual acuity. *Read fine print from across the room; differentiate between similar shades of color.*

Benefit: Nothing escapes you. You have the Alertness Edge.

Disposition: Quirk. You're very self-conscious about your appearance, willing to spend more than the usual amount of time and effort on grooming yourself.

Focus Mode (*boost Trait [Shooting and Notice], Ongoing, -2*). Self only. While active, you only ever look at things while aiming, through the scope of your ranged weapon, or with one eye closed. Your face is locked in a display of highly focused attention.

Telescope (*farsight, -1*): Self only. You increase your eyesight to absurd levels, but this focus can only be maintained for a few moments. The effect lasts until the end of your turn.



WOLFSBOON

Description: Red and angry. This Crystal was found in the possession of a reclusive family in Bogovia.

Theme: Makes you werewolf-like. *Sniff the presence of rodents; etch a mark into a wooden surface with your fingernail.*

Benefit: Increase your Strength die by one step.

Disposition: Bloodthirsty. The only good enemy is a dead enemy.

Go Feral (*boost Trait [Fighting], Ongoing, -1*). Self only. You gain the Berserk Edge

and it immediately activates. You also gain the Martial Artist Edge and your fingers seem almost claw-like; you gain +2 on climbing rolls, just like real claws. This power ends when your Berserking ends; ending it voluntarily requires a Smarts -2 roll. While active, you keep growling and groaning.

Sniff (*boost Trait, Ongoing, -1*). Self only. While active you gain +2 to Notice checks involving smells: you're as sensitive to smells as a dog. At the same time, you suffer a -2 penalty on Notice checks involving sight.



ZAP

Description: Sharp, spikey, yellow and blue. One Agent, now deceased, used to slot Zap in order to "get bright ideas," claiming its theme is misunderstood.

Theme: Creating sharp spikes in the voltage of existing electromagnetic fields. *Touch someone to make them go "ouch!"; safely discharge static electricity from an object.*

Benefit: You're jittery: you've got the Quick Edge.

Disposition: You're *always* jittery. Talking really fast, relentlessly, is a pretty annoying Habit (Minor).

Jolt (*confusion, -1*). You create a sudden jolt in someone's nervous system. If you Critically Fail with this power you are not only desynced but also Stunned, as your own nervous system suffers from the feedback.

Sense Electricity (*detect arcana, Ongoing, -1*). You can sense electrical currents in the environment, allowing you to notice living creatures, metal objects, and even weather patterns. While this power is active you must close your eyes, so you're Blind.



**Optional Rule: Syn Crystal Recall**

Unless an Agent is a Specialist who got issued a specific Crystal for their job, there is always the chance that some other Agent will requisition their Crystal or that Syn will decide it's better used elsewhere. This rule suggests a fair and random way to do so. Use this rule if your group isn't too attached to their Crystals and enjoys having to try new approaches now and again (and to increase the control Syn has over its Agents' lives).

Between adventures, or whenever the Agents arrive at a Syn facility, have each Agent draw a card:

- **2-10:** Nothing happens.
- **Face:** Syn has requested the Agent's Crystal.

In order to keep it, the Agent can roll Battle, Persuasion, or Research, adding their Requisition as a modifier. On a failure, they can still keep it, but only if they spend a number of Requisition points equal to the Crystal's Rank. If the group has no extra Crystals available, the Agent is provided with a Novice Crystal from the Repository.

- **Ace:** The Crystal is vital to a mission somewhere else. The Agent is provided with an alternative Crystal of the same Rank from the Repository.
- **Joker:** The person requesting the Crystal is high-ranking. The Agent is given a one-time Requisition bonus equal to the Agent's Rank as compensation for the inconvenience.

SEASONED CRYSTALS

Starting characters can spend one Requisition point to get one of the following Crystals instead of a Novice one.

The GM can add or remove Crystals from this list as they see fit.

BUBBLE

Description: Round, pink, but almost translucent. The Crystal was found washed ashore in the Islands.

Theme: Create translucent pink bubbles on or around your body. *Create a bubble around an apple; envelop your head in a bubble.*

Benefit: You can create a small, hard bubble in your hand as a free action and without a roll. You're instinctively good at throwing it, gaining +2 on the Athletics roll. The bubble deals Str damage, with a Range of 3/6/12. Bubbles exist for several seconds (a round) but you can concentrate to keep some bubbles existing (up to your Spirit); this is considered maintaining a power. Bubbles have a Hardness of 5. Left unattended, bubbles have a strange tendency to become slightly buoyant, hovering an inch or so above a surface.

Disposition: Curious, as you become bub-

bly, impulsive, and whimsical.

Bubble (*protection*, -2). Always activates with the More Armor Modifier. You touch a target and cover them with a bubble, which dissipates when you stop maintaining the power or when an attack manages to break through the bubble (surpassing the target's Toughness or Hardness). While active, the target can't touch anything outside of the bubble. The bubble is air-tight, so the target gains a basic version of *environmental protection* against the outside atmosphere, but after five minutes the target begins suffocating. If the target is unwilling they can resist with Spirit, and can also attack the bubble itself (Hardness 5) if they want to break out. Allowed Modifiers: Additional Recipients. Also, for a -2 penalty you can make everything inside the bubble weigh a tenth of its normal weight.





FASTER

Description: Green, cube-shaped, with smooth surfaces.

Theme: Everything's quicker; you're buzzing with movement. *Pull off sleight of hand tricks.*

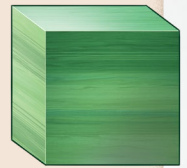
Benefit: You gain the Quick and Fleet Footed Edges. Better get moving!

Disposition: You're Hard of Hearing (Minor), because of constant background buzzing. You're constantly moving, which

can make people frustrated; it's a Habit (Minor).

Quick Instincts (*deflection, Ongoing, -2*). Self only. You respond immediately to any threat. While active, you constantly dodge and crouch and roll.

Quicker (*speed, -1*). Self only. You become even faster than usual. Allowed modifier: Quickness.



FIREBALL

Description: Orange ball. This isn't the most sophisticated of Crystals, but it does the job.

Theme: Creating a sudden burst of fire, launching it outward. *Throw an eruption of flame from a finger.*

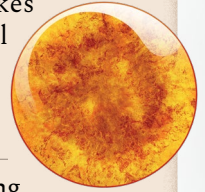
Benefit: You're more destructive than usual and have the No Mercy Edge.

Disposition: You are prone to sudden emotional eruptions. When you fail a Spirit roll, or when you draw a Heart in combat,

an unexpected emotion takes over you for a moment. Roll a die: odd, it's not appropriate to the current situation; even, it is.

Fireball (*blast, -2*). You bring your hands together and launch a fireball. Allowed modifiers: All.

Fire Bolt (*bolt, -1*). You launch a bolt of fire from the palm of your hand, with a range of 12/24/48. Allowed modifier: Damage.



HARD SHADOW

Description: Blue, thin, and drop-shaped.

Theme: Your shadow becomes corporeal. The whole shadow is one big "muscle," moving all at once. *Push open a door on which you cast your shadow.*

Benefit: You can use your skills at a distance, wherever your shadow falls. Any such action requiring delicate manipulation is done with a -1 penalty and takes twice as long. You need to be able to see what you're doing, as usual. If something bigger than you covers all of your shadow, it means you're not casting a shadow at all.

Disposition: Mean. Shades of meaning are for other people; you no longer have any

tact. You're also, ironically, afraid of the dark, since there are no shadows in complete darkness. It's a Phobia (Minor).

Shadow Strike (*bolt, -1*). You stretch a piece of your hardened shadow and put all of your Crystal's weight behind it. Range and Cover do not apply, but Illumination penalties apply as normal, and even affect your damage roll. Allowed Modifiers: Damage.

Shadow Wall (*barrier, Ongoing, -1*). You harden your shadow, pulling it off the surface it's on and stretching it into a thick, three-dimensional barrier. Allowed Modifiers: Hardened, Shaped, Size.



**INFUSE**

Description: Dark green, root-like, and soft to the touch. This Crystal was found protected by a thicket of animated trees in Zingama.

Theme: Infuses the bearer with pure, uninhibited life energy. The bearer can unleash this energy in barely-controlled blasts, directing it into living things. *Excite bushes to make them rattle; keep yourself energized as if you've had a good cup of coffee.*

Benefit: Fast Healer Edge, Healer Edge. The life energy fills you, and helps you heal others.

Disposition: Quirk: You're energetic all right, being boisterous and loud all the time. You quickly lose interest if a task takes too much time, resulting in -1 on such tasks, including most Research rolls.

Entangle (*entangle*, -1). You infuse the plants around a person or an area with

life energy, making vines, branches, leaves, and roots grow uncontrollably. Allowed Modifiers: All.

Infuse Health (*healing*, -2). Every raise heals a Wound, not just the first one. Allowed Modifier: all except for Neutralize Poison or Disease, since the power doesn't differentiate between the life of the patient and that of the disease!

Unleash (*havoc*, -1). Medium Blast Template centered on you or a Cone Template emanating from you. Fully unleashing the Crystal's energy into every living thing in the area, including yourself, forces them to jump, run, or spasm in a random direction (roll d12 and read it like a clock face). You are affected too, but have +2 to resist. This power might also turn the area into Difficult Ground if there's enough vegetation. Allowed Modifiers: All.

**TRANSLUCENT**

Description: A crystal-clear lump.

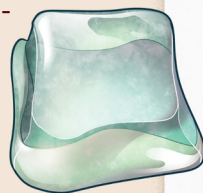
Theme: Things go straight through you, like you're not even there. It doesn't work the other way around, though—you can't pass through things yourself. They must be aimed at you. *Not catching something being thrown at you; avoiding a conversation with an annoying relative*

Benefit: Even if they manage to hit you, it's usually softer than planned. Your Vigor die increases by one step, and you have Combat Reflexes.

Disposition: It's hard to get your attention and keep you in the conversation, as words that are said to you occasionally just pass by your ear. You have -2 to Notice someone addressing you and -2 Athletics to catch things aimed at you.

Disappear (*invisibility*, *Ongoing*, -3). By focusing hard you can avoid someone's attention even when it's directed at you; their gaze will just skip over you. While active you can't draw attention even if you want to, and are Mute.

Transparency Mode. (*intangibility*, *Ongoing*, -3). You are completely immune to all physical attacks aimed at you: they just pass through you. This includes area attacks and even hazards, as long as it wasn't you who put yourself in danger in the first place. Suddenly collapsing ceilings won't damage you, but if you walk into a poisonous swamp, you've brought it on yourself. If you attack someone, any immediate retaliation by them is fair game—watch out for enemies on Hold. While active, your personality is transparent; you have Big Mouth and Habit (Minor; too honest about your thoughts).





Creating New Crystals

Game Masters may want to create new Crystals for their Agents to find, and experienced players may want to create new Novice Crystals for their starting characters. This process can begin anywhere: sometimes you'll get a cool idea for a theme and go looking for powers, other times you'll have a cool new power in mind and will need to figure out an appropriate theme. Follow these guidelines and don't hesitate to tweak the rules later during the game—playtest is key.

Legendary Crystals are not like other Crystals. Canonically, there are only five such Crystals, and they are in the possession of the five members of the Syn Council. If you want to create one, it should be used as a narrative device for your campaign—give it any power or ability that befits the story.

Note that as far as Syn knows, there is only *one* of each Crystal. That being said, feel free to create Crystals with themes that are very similar to those of existing Crystals, so that they're doing sort of—but not exactly—the same things.

Decide on a concise theme: Think of a mood, concept, or item, and try to describe a specific aspect of it in a single sentence. "A lot of flames" is too broad, but "igniting things with a sudden spark" is better. If your description starts with "it allows you to..." you're describing the benefit or one of the powers, not the theme. Try to finish that power, and then go back and extrapolate the theme from it.

Note that themes have some interaction with the Crystal's Rank (see page 54, and the sidebar on page 62). During the design process you might need to rephrase a theme or re-Rank your Crystal. Since Ranks tend to be more important game-wise (you'll usually design a Crystal with a specific Rank in mind), you should be open to changing your theme. Almost every theme can be separated into several different aspects or combined with other concepts if you're willing to tweak it.

Example: Amy creates a Veteran Crystal. Crystals of this Rank tend to "take a specific aspect of the world and exaggerate it." The idea that



first excited her was "calmness," but she's not sure how to take it to the extreme. She doesn't want to change the Rank, so she sits down to think of new ways to interpret "calmness." She finally decides to focus on "airy, light-headed, light as a feather." That's a start!

Translating theme into effects: Consider how to evoke a Crystal's theme with Edges and powers. Go through the lists from *Savage Worlds* and make a shortlist that includes anything that seems plausibly related. When deciding on a power, you should *almost always* change it in some way, customizing it to the theme—trappings come first! Consider which Modifiers should be allowed or which are always affecting the power.

Most of the time, this customization will lead to a power being very focused on doing one thing, meaning it's less useful or versatile than the original version. That's a good thing: by keeping the effect focused you keep the feel of the theme, and by having restrictions you force the Agents to come up with innovative solutions.

If a power has a duration and doesn't have a target that can try to resist it, it's probably Ongoing. See sidebar on the next page.



Remember that a Crystal's powers don't represent all of its theme's expressions, just the ones which are "easiest" for the Agent to create; those that come "naturally." This is a simple excuse to allow us, as designers, to give access only to specific powers, the ones that are most fun to play. At the same time, this limits access to overpowered effects (by requiring the player to spend a Benny on a Power Stunt) even if they seem like they should work well within the theme.

A power is "overpowered" when it gives the player too much control over what's happening in the game compared to the Crystal's Rank: it's too versatile. A Novice Crystal's power should not allow the Agent to teleport however and wherever they want—so while Buddy allows some teleportation, it's only done under strict limitations.

While *Crystal Heart* ignores a power's Rank, you should use it as a guideline. Higher-Ranked powers tend to be more versatile, and therefore require more customization when given to a low-Ranked Crystal to limit their use to the desired level.

Example: Amy creates a Crystal with a theme of "flighty, light and airy." She imagines a simple offensive power for it: making people so light that they float around aimlessly for a moment, as if in zero-g. She figures this can be a stun power, but because of the trappings, the targets must make an Agility check instead of a Vigor check to avoid being Shaken.

Creating benefits: In many ways, the benefit is the most important part of the Crystal. Because it's a constant effect, it's usually the go-to expression of the theme in the player's mind. Since benefits are always on, they are usually an Edge or an increase of a Trait die type by one. In some cases, however, they provide the basis upon which other powers operate. These special benefits require a lot of careful design (and playtest).

Assume each Crystal gets a number of Hindrance points equal to its Rank plus one or two. These are usually spent on Edges, but you can use them to buy positive racial abilities as well. If you "spend" more or less points than the recommended amount, balance it either with an equal amount of Hindrances in its disposition, or with the number of powers.

Keeping Ongoing Powers in Check

Many Crystals allow their bearer to gain an Ongoing empowerment, usually one which further enhances an ability granted by the Crystal's benefit.

Technically, nothing prevents an Agent from waking up in the morning, activating the power, and leaving it on for the rest of the day. However, in many cases this is not exactly an exciting choice, meaning we might as well just have the Crystal grant that ability as a benefit. Keeping the power active should be an interesting decision, not just a default state.

To keep that mindset, ask yourself "How am I paying for this?" All Ongoing activations should come with some form of drawback that's fun to roleplay. It can be a simple give-and-take—when you increase your Smarts, you decrease your Strength—but it can also be an unusual implication or exaggeration of the Crystal's theme (for example, constant excessive drooling). It's not the sort of thing you would probably want to keep "on" for the whole day—but if you do, you'll get interesting interactions out of it.

Note that the benefit should only reflect the most basic thing a person can do with the Crystal, which usually means it affects the bearer at close range or in a specific way. In order to do something fancier with the Crystal, the bearer should need to use its powers (or even a Power Stunt).

How many powers: Novice and Seasoned Crystals should have three powers at most, with a combined cost in Power Points of around six. Veteran Crystals might have four powers, with a combined cost of about eight Power Points. Heroic Crystals can go beyond these limits.

These limits keep Crystals manageable, both from a pacing perspective (to keep the game fast and furious) and from a balance perspective (to keep the game challenging).

The number of powers also depends on the Crystal's benefit, especially with Veteran and Heroic Crystals. If the benefit has only niche uses, so it doesn't allow for versatile problem solving, make sure to give the Crystal more powers to compensate.





Example: Amy decides to make the “flighty” Crystal Seasoned, so she gives it three powers. Beyond stunned, she goes with fly (of course) and confusion (makes people extremely light-headed). That’s six Power Points all-in-all.

Creating dispositions: Start by trying to find the most obvious repercussions of the Crystal’s theme. Does the Crystal allow you to become transparent and move through walls? Maybe you get sudden urges to peek into places and become Curious. Or maybe you yourself become transparent—personality wise—and lose a die of Spirit. If it’s a high-Ranked Crystal, maybe it’s both!

As a general guideline, Novice Crystals have a single Minor Hindrance and Seasoned have a single Major Hindrance. Veteran and Heroic have three or even four points worth of Hindrances, which should be Major when possible; it’s best to keep the total number of Hindrances low to make it easier for the player. Hindrances can also be replaced with negative racial abilities of equal cost.

These Hindrances can certainly be physical, when it fits the theme. The Crystal Faster creates a constant, annoying ringing in your ears because of the constant vibrations. Warp (page 202) makes space around you contort in uncomfortable ways, effectively making you Slow.

Here are some suggestions for dispositions:

- Makes your arms, legs, or eyes twitch on a regular basis
- Exaggerates a cognitive bias, such as Confirmation Bias, Stereotyping, or Negativity Bias
- Changes a speech mannerism, making you mumble, talk too loudly, or try to rhyme everything
- Shifts your priorities, making you think a lot about birds, or to try to take a nap whenever possible
- Gives you a new worldview, such as filling you with wonder about everything or making you see the worst in everyone

Be flexible: The first few times your Crystal sees action it might not be as cool, useful, or streamlined as you imagined. You may find that when used in the game, the pow-

ers don’t seem to connect into a coherent whole with an actual theme, and/or that the Crystal lacks personality. Maybe you’ll find that you created too many powers, some of which don’t really come into use—a common mistake among new Crystal designers, who try to model *all* the ways a theme can be expressed.

Consider the first few sessions as tryouts or playtests, and take feedback from the other players. If changes are needed, consider first increasing the specificity of the Crystal’s powers (fewer powers, limited targets, narrower range, giving an Ongoing power a harsher drawback) and second, increasing its Rank. Syn can always demand that the Crystal be taken back to the citadel (see the optional rule on page 72).

Example: Later on, Amy realizes the flight power is very useful, yet it doesn’t answer the question “How am I paying for this?”—which means there’s no reason not to keep it always on (see the sidebar Keeping Ongoing Powers in Check). That’s not how she imagined the Crystal: she wants the flight to be an occasional thing, not a constant benefit. She decides to add a limitation to it: while flying, the Agent is swept easily by winds. Worse, they’re pushed away from the ground, making it hard to get down again. She starts thinking of the mechanical implications of this.

There are exceptions to these rules: Any Crystal is allowed to break any of these guidelines. Even the best scientists at Syn aren’t really sure how Crystals work.

Novice or Seasoned?

Seasoned and Novice Crystals can seem quite similar. When creating a new low-powered Crystal, ask yourself the following question: can this Crystal be the character’s “main thing?”

Novice Crystals are generally supportive in nature, enhancing an Agent’s already-existing abilities. Seasoned Crystals can have powers which attack or influence others, giving the Agent something new to do: an ability which could become their most go-to solution.





Crystals in the Game

Here are a few things to keep in mind to stay true to the spirit of the setting.

Crystals are old. They've been here longer than anyone alive today. The people of the Bygone Age seem to have had many uses for them, so you can find them deep in the wilds or within ancient ruins. They've been there for so long that they've affected their environment.

Using Crystals is new. You might be the first to master yours, the first one to properly use its powers. You can name the new ones you discover—no one has seen them before! (Well, most of the time). Syn personnel are the most advanced Crystal users, and even they have only been doing it for about thirty years. While it's true that people have been using Crystals for hundreds of years, if you don't have Syn training or equipment, it might be more accurate to say that the Crystal uses *you*: its theme and disposition take over and its powers get out of control.

Everything supernatural can be traced back to a crystal, except (perhaps!) the flying mountains of Maseia. A rain of frogs? There's probably a Crystal in the lake. Someone's spirit returns from beyond the grave? They probably died next to a Crystal with death powers. Crystals can influence the environment as if infusing it with a sort of "radiation," usually referred to as corruption or taint. If you see something that isn't natural, there *surely* is a Crystal behind it. Even if not here and now, you can trace a link to a Crystal somewhere.

Crystals move around. You may use a Crystal for an entire adventure only to switch to a different one at the end. It might be taken from you by Syn to be used in a different mission, or to help train new agents. The powers of a foe you encounter might be known to you if they're from a Crystal you yourself have used before... and the other way around. Known Crystals and most information regarding them are not public knowledge, but important people and those in the know might be prepared for you.

Crystals are mysterious. We don't know *why* they have a theme. We don't understand how they're able to create their powers. If there's a pattern to their colors and shapes, no one in Syn knows about it (probably). But you still use them. And Syn always knows more than you do.

Shards

Some Crystals have shattered into pieces. Since Crystals are diamond-hard it's unclear how this can happen, and yet it evidently does.

These shards are simultaneously less and more powerful than a whole Crystal. On the one hand, each is only capable of creating a single, quite specific effect. On the other hand, they are easily usable by humans: anyone who touches a shard can use its power safely and reliably. Well, anyone except Agents, as their Crystal's resonance doesn't mesh well with the external power.

Most common people won't be able to distinguish between a Crystal and a shard. A Syn Agent will roll their eyes and point out the obvious differences in size and power scale, but to the person on the street it's all the same thing.

Syn Agents are required to gather shards whenever possible, and not only for the protection of the Lands. When all the shards of a single Crystal are brought together (usually three or four) they reforge themselves into the original Crystal. Surprisingly, the powers of this new Crystal do not necessarily resemble the powers held by its shards.

Shards don't have themes, but the Crystal from which they broke does. Shards of the same Crystal are like puzzle pieces, each revealing a part of the picture.

Designing Shards: Each shard holds a single, non-modifiable power. Occasionally a shard might contain two powers that are always activated at the same time, usually in an inconvenient way, such as *boost Agility* with *lower Smarts*, or *healing* that also creates *havoc*.

Using Shards: Non-Agents just roll Spirit to recognize what the shard does and then use it. Agents need to roll Crystal Channeling and *any* failure results in a desync.

You can't use any Modifiers or activate Power Stunts with a shard.



Human Hearts

In the world of *Crystal Heart*, all humans have small stones instead of flesh-and-blood hearts.

Human hearts are hard, gemlike objects, around an inch or two (3-5cm) long and an inch (3cm) in diameter, changing slightly in shape and greatly in color from individual to individual. At birth, the heart is only a small, colorless pebble. As the person grows, develops a personality and a world view, the heart solidifies into a unique shape and hue.

These hearts do not function like real-world hearts. They're not connected to any blood vessels or any other organ. They don't receive any nourishment from the body. However, the presence of a heart is essential to a person's health.

The heart beats slowly by shaking lightly, enabling blood circulation in a way theorized by modern medical science to be similar to a magnet creating a magnetic field. It is also theorized that the power that fuels this beating is the person's soul. This idea is strengthened by the fact that a person's mind shapes his or her heart in a very physical way. If the soul leaves the body, such as at the moment of death, the heart stops functioning immediately. If a heart is taken out, the person starts suffocating, unable to breathe.

A heart outside of a body does not function, although occasionally it might beat when held by a person (this is considered gory and horrific, just like holding a real heart in the real world). Over a period of several months it slowly sublimates, turning into vapors.

It's important to note that animals have flesh-and-blood hearts. Biologists in Fjordstad and Zingama have reached the stage where they are starting to be puzzled by this discrepancy between people and animals, but to most this is a simple fact of the world.

Heart Transfer

Hearts do not transfer well from one person to another, although it

is possible to transplant a heart in a surgical operation. This procedure requires extended hospitalization, like a real-world heart transplant. A person is only compatible with close family members and people who share their general disposition and worldview.

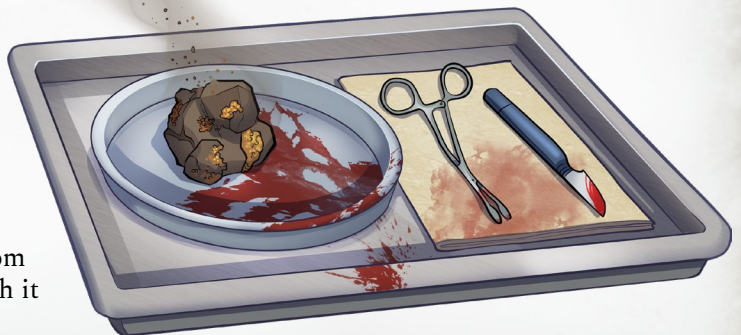
In the case of a successful transplant, the person receiving the heart gains a general insight into the original owner's state of mind, as well as limited hazy access to some of their memories. It's possible to try and experience a specific memory more clearly with a Smarts roll.

Broken Heart

It is possible for a person to become so fatalistic that they stop willing their own heart to continue functioning—at least, this is the current medical view on the matter. The facts are that sometimes people become very desperate and melancholy, and at the same time their hearts crack and stop functioning. However, correlation doesn't mean causation, and it is unclear if the person *actually* stops willing themselves to live or if their condition is the result of the failing heart.

When a person is brought down so hard that their psyche can't handle it anymore, they're on the verge of a broken heart. The person is allowed three Spirit checks, one each morning, after waking up. If they fail all three, they become heartbroken. From that moment on, any negative emotional event might trigger one last Spirit check. Failure results in death, as the heart literally breaks. These checks can receive up to a +2 bonus if a friend helps by cheering the person up or discussing the matter that is weighing so heavy on their heart.

In the world of *Crystal Heart* depression can literally kill you, unless you get help.





The Five Lands

This chapter covers *Crystal Heart*'s world, starting with the Setting Rules which give it its unique feel.

Setting Rules

We recommend using the following Setting Rules from *Savage Worlds*, summarized here for your convenience. Crystal Channeling is a variation on the No Power Points rule—see page 56 for the full details.

Creative Combat: A successful Test works as usual, but if a Wild Card character succeeds with a raise while in combat, their foe is not automatically Shaken. They instead roll on the Creative Combat Table.

Dumb Luck: A player can spend a Benny (and only one) after a Critical Failure. The critical failure still happens, but if the reroll is successful, the task somehow results in success through sheer dumb luck.

Fanatics: When a Wild Card enemy character is hit by a successful attack and the GM

thinks it is appropriate, one of the henchmen, goons, or other allies jumps in front of their leader and takes the attack instead.

Fast Healing: Wild Cards make natural healing rolls once per day instead of every five days (twice per day with the Fast Healer Edge).

NEW SETTING RULES

The tone of *Crystal Heart* can vary wildly depending on the Land you're in and your group's play style, but generally it doesn't stray too far from light-hearted cartoonish action with bits of philosophical drama. The Setting Rules listed below support this tone.

CHASING LEADS

These fun side-stories are a variation on the Interlude and Travel Encounter rules. Syn Agents spend a lot of time on the road, moving between rumored Crystal locations. These routes are constructed based on Syn's intelligence, sending the Agents to chase



every lead—but most of the leads *don't* lead to Crystals.

Before the start of each adventure, do the following:

- One player draws a card and consults the list *It Starts With...* below, to tell what happened when the team first started chasing this lead.
- The storyteller chooses another player to draw a second card for the *And Then...* list and explain how this complicated the situation. Repeat until the player before last, who tells how the mission ends.
- The last player draws a card and consults the *Back on the Road* list to say what happened between that lead and the start of the next adventure. Everyone can then suggest how the team dealt with this encounter using their resources, wits, and personalities. No rolls are made: this story is to help convey the feeling of going through hardships on the way to the adventure itself.
- Finally, everyone gets a Benny and a Requisition point. After chasing down all of these leads, the Agents deserve it!

For inspiration, ask yourself: which Agents were able to use their abilities, skills, or ingenuity to overcome these problems or fail in an entertaining way? Success and failure have no consequences here, so choose what is more interesting to you.

Remember: these leads *never* end with finding a Crystal. In case a shard was retrieved, the GM may want to rule that its powers are very specific (“It makes birds itch”) or benign (“It makes fruit wet”). It should be effectively useless in any other situation except the one it was found in.

It Starts With...

- **Spades: Ruins.** It's an old, dangerous place that hasn't been explored by Syn yet.

It's a flooded underground basement; There's a giant moss-covered statue of a frog, but no actual buildings; This suit of armor turns to look at me suspiciously as I walk down the corridor.

- **Hearts: Denial.** Something unusual is going on, but whatever's behind it, the answer is not straightforward.

The keepers of the grove won't allow us in-

side; The giant turtle with the glowing blue obelisk on its back swims away as we come close; There once was a Crystal here, but it was moved away to another castle. Sorry.

- **Diamonds: Shard.** There's a shard in action here; something is definitely supernatural. *The bikers shoot fireballs at us; The sound of the wind moving through the tree canopy makes everyone sleepy; The tiny officer rides an angry-looking beetle.*
- **Clubs: Misinformation.** Someone, somewhere, made a mistake while gathering or analyzing intelligence. They may have misunderstood the data or accidentally noted non-existent details. *They said it was deserted, but I see about two dozen bears here; Apparently it originally said “strong gusts,” not “strong ghosts.”*
- **Joker: Accident.** You stumbled your way into a situation that seems to have something to do with Crystals. *Hiding in a cave from the rain, a strange fungus starts to speak to you; The Tank falls into a ditch and onto the broken roof of a buried treasure chamber.*

And Then...

- **Spades: Uninvited Guests.** Everything got complicated because of something or someone that had no place being there. *As we got to the caldera of the volcano, a group of Fjordstadian scientists got in the way; While escaping the burning temple, we met another group of Agents investigating this place; A tiger? In Maseia?!*
- **Hearts: It Gets Personal.** Someone took the Agents' involvement very personally. *The chieftain announces a hunt after us!; A clingy fan on the street won't stop following you; The lovers had to be separated—there was no other choice.*
- **Diamonds: Hints of Crystals.** A Crystal-based force influenced the course of the mission, but it wasn't an actual Crystal—it was the Agents themselves, a tainted creature, or something that wasn't local. *An Agent used a power and it fumbled gloriously; A giant mole with pulsing purple veins tried to eat the Tank; The sky above the mountains to the east turned red—better tell Syn to send a group there sometime.*





- **Clubs: Nature Happens.** Weather, natural disaster, an animal or even the time of day have had a huge impact on the mission.

After the snowstorm hit we almost lost track of the yeti-like monster; As the sun set, the shard which was energizing the statues stopped working; A razor snake ambush!

- **Joker: Syn.** The organization itself prevented you from investigating further.

There was a team of Subduers there, telling you to turn away; There's a secret facility doing secret research; The Agent's code specifically states you aren't allowed to do the thing you're trying to do.

Back on the Road

- **Spades: Accidents.** A flat tire, a beast running into the vehicle, falling off the road, something happening inside the Tank...life got complicated, messy, and probably dirty.
- **Hearts: People.** Someone caused some problems for the team: bandit ambush, revenge-seeking lackeys of a beaten foe, an old acquaintance from your life before Syn, a mob preventing you from going through their town.
- **Diamonds: Team Troubles.** An argument got out of hand; an Agent got separated from the rest because of one of their Hindrances; you ran out of supplies and had to push all the way to the next way station.
- **Clubs: Obstacles.** An obstacle is on the road, either because of a natural disaster (e.g. mudslide) or from lack of maintenance

(a fallen tree or ruined bridge).

- **Joker: Crystals.** Some Crystal-related mishap or misuse, either by one of the Agents or a manifestation of some feral Crystal. The latter could be used by the GM to foreshadow the next adventure.

It is recommended the GM use the Chasing Leads rules along with a Structured Campaign (see next page). The episodic format takes away a lot of the players' sense of control over the shared gaming experience by having the GM state the situation at the beginning of an adventure. Giving the players a chance to contribute to the story of the journey itself helps them gain back some control.

DRAWING A HEART

Some Edges, Crystals, and other rules are triggered when you draw a card of a specific suit, usually Hearts. The trigger only occurs for the first card you are dealt, and not on cards from Quick, Tactician, or other sources. The triggered effect only influences you on the round you were dealt the card; if you're on Hold until next round, the effect will fade.

EVERYONE HAS AN OPINION ABOUT SYN

Almost anyone, anywhere, has an opinion about Syn—and more specifically about its Agents. Whenever the Agents encounter a new person or group, the GM rolls on the table or decides what their opinion is of Syn. Use this instead of (or along with) the Reaction Table from *Savage Worlds*.





EVERYONE HAS AN OPINION ABOUT SYN

Roll	Attitude toward Syn
1	Ambivalent
2	Exploitative
3	Provoking
4	Wary
5	Admiring
6	Suspicious
7	Awed
8	Demanding
9	Dismissing
10	Roll twice and combine

NO MAGIC

There are no magic spells or divine miracles in the world of *Crystal Heart*. All powers and special effects are natural (really weird, but natural). All *Savage Worlds* powers can be found in this world in the form of Crystal manifestations, which are many and varied, and of shards, which are portable and powerful.

The only Arcane Background allowed for player characters is Crystal Channeling. Weird Science is a special case: NPCs who've learned the strange techniques of Fjordstad (mostly Fjordstadian natives, but not necessarily) are allowed to have this Arcane Background and the Weird Science skill, representing their unique take on science. They also have access to all of the relevant Power Edges from *Savage Worlds*.

STRUCTURED CAMPAIGN

A *Crystal Heart* campaign is intended to last ten to twenty sessions, from Novice to late Heroic (an Advance every session or two). We encourage playing using a serialized structure which gives an emphasis on fast, furious fun.

The following is the suggested structure for a typical *Crystal Heart* campaign, listed here so that the players know what to expect. Game Master, if you depart from this structure, let your players know in advance!

Think of the campaign as an animated series in three seasons:

Season one ("Crystal Hunters"): During the first few sessions the Agents travel

along their route, playing through mostly self-contained episodes in which they discover shards or Crystals. In-between, they're Chasing Leads (see page 80).

This stage of the campaign is episodic, meaning that each adventure is its own story. An adventure starts like an episode in a television series, with the Agents already at the scene, sometimes even in medias res. All less-exciting background activities should either be waived, played in ways that make them fun (see Chasing Leads), or abstracted (such as with Requisition or the Ammo and Supplies rules).

Season two ("Specialists"): While they were going through their route, the team discovered hints of some larger plot. Now they become Specialists or Free Agents, and are sent (or decide for themselves) to chase some leads and uncover the bigger conspiracy.

This stage of the campaign might be far more open-ended than the previous one, giving the characters more freedom in deciding how to approach each situation.

Season three ("Grand Finale"): As the big bad moves closer to achieving their sinister goals, the team uses powerful Crystals to chase them down, going through exotic locations and making far-reaching decisions, all culminating in one final fight. The campaign now ends—time to start a new one!

SYN TRAINING

Sometimes your Agent's training kicks in at an opportune moment. Like with the High Adventure Setting Rule, Agents can spend a Benny to gain a one-time use of a Combat Edge. Agents are encouraged to save one last Benny for use in an emergency to gain Hard to Kill or Nerves of Steel.

In addition, inspiration can sometimes strike as you use your Crystal. Agents can spend a Benny to gain the one-time use of any Edge as long as it can be explained using their Crystal's theme, just like with a Power Stunt. You must meet the Rank and Edge requirements of the new Edge, but you can ignore any Trait requirements.



Life in the Five Lands

Technically speaking, *Crystal Heart* is a post-apocalyptic setting, because several hundred years ago there was an apocalypse. That being said, this is not a game about scarce resources, surviving at all costs, or rebuilding civilization. All of that already happened many generations ago, and now everyone is sort of okay. It's a game about capable adventurers chasing after cool Crystals while confronting colorful, pulp-inspired challenges. For that, you need a world filled with various types of conflict.

Each of the Lands has its own style and theme as explained in their descriptions, but the world as a whole has a theme as well, a zeitgeist: the Lands are on the verge of an industrial revolution and the rise of globalization. Everyone is used to living in their own part of the world, building and establishing their societies. No one is prepared for the coming globalization, ushered in by new communication and travel technologies—and embodied in Syn. The Agents are literally the heralds of a revolution, and even if the people are not consciously aware of it, they still realize it in their heart of hearts.

TECHNOLOGY

Generally speaking, there are no convenient ways to do modern-day things such as cooking a meal, keeping food cold, or contacting someone on the other side of the continent. Most of the world is in a Renaissance stage of technological sophistication.

There are three notable exceptions to this. A piece of Bygone tech might help a community do something remarkable; a Crystal or its manifestation might be semi-harnessed by locals who know how to make use of some of its effects; and a Fjordstadian city might have engineered something using their specific field of study. Most fantasy or sci-fi effects one can imagine are probably available as a unique technological marvel or a Crystal somewhere. The important thing about all of these is that they're unique, local, and aren't reproducible—at least, not yet.

Crystals don't mix well with technology; or at least, no current-level tech is able to con-

trol a Crystal's power, except for a harness. As far as Syn researchers know, Crystals can at best be kept dormant using a carefully regulated environment such as the one found in the Repository, and can only be controlled when placed inside a human body. There are several speculations as to how and why this is the case, but no definite answers.

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION

Travel between Lands is a relatively new development. Many grandparents can still remember the days of their youth, when people from other Lands were considered demons or invaders with their strange looks and blasphemous customs. These days, after having enough exposure to outlanders to realize they aren't all that special, most people have begun to accept strangers—but many are still bigoted.

Traveling is dangerous business because of weather, wild animals, Crystal manifestations, and bandits, so most people need a good reason to do so. The governing powers of the Five Lands lack the resources to maintain roads, with the exception of Zingama, but Zingamaians have little need for roads as they travel mostly by river. Maseians travel in clans or small bands. Bogovians travel in carts, usually along the same short routes which they know well. Fjordstadians refrain from leaving their city, but within their cities they employ a variety of transport vehicles and devices. These range from automobiles and bikes to public trams and moving walkways, depending on the city.

Compared to the other Lands, the Islands are a grand central station. The major civilizations in the Islands have developed an intricate trade network since traveling by sea is pretty easy when there's always an island on the horizon, and the weather tends to be nice. Some Islanders are even braving the southern edge of Bogovia to get to the many fishing villages on its eastern coast.

The western coasts of the continent are deserted, mostly because of a phenomenon called the Great Steam Wall which stretches along the entire horizon. It is the source of many storms.



COMMUNICATIONS

Most commoners cannot afford to deliver a message in any way except by giving it to someone who's heading toward its destination. Those who have the means, though, can do much better.

Bogovians and Maseians use trained carrier birds to deliver urgent messages, but rely on horse-riding messengers for standard mail. Maseians also put their trust in sky-skiffers, daring windsurfers who travel across vast distances by riding the strong Maseian winds.

Zingama's official mail service, the Zingama Post (ZiP!) is capable of sending information and packages at record times by using carrier *snakes*. Some of them are frighteningly large, but all are well-trained and loyal.

Islanders occasionally use trained dolphins in similar ways, but they're notoriously unreliable and arrive at unpredictable times. The same is true for most other forms of communication in the Islands, but it's an accepted norm in the culture—no one seems to be in a hurry.

A Fjordstadian city or two have developed the telegraph, but the nobles refuse to use it to communicate with each other. This doesn't prevent them—and most other cities—from actually using it quite a lot, in secret.

A few years ago Syn started using radio to allow for quick communications between the citadel and its main facilities. Radio has also become integral to the operation of its autoplanes. Because it's a new technology, only a handful of engineers are able to build, maintain, and operate these radios.

While all Lands have some form of book-binding technique, the newspaper was only invented in Fjordstad a generation or so ago. It's becoming popular in Zingama as well, especially in the form of specialty magazines.

What Exists for Syn?

Syn Agents don't have: Radio earphones, mobile phones, mobile computers, laser sights. They could have, on a one-time basis: Jet skis, jetpacks, walkie-talkies, an actual tank.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Creatures and plants in the Five Lands can be put into one of three categories.

Regular: They're just like in the real world.

Unusual: They're definitely not like in the real world. They're too big, behave strangely, or even combine elements from several creatures. They're still considered normal in this world.

Corrupted: Crystal-touched, infused with some abnormal ability. This can be the result of direct contact with a feral Crystal's manifestation, or it could be an inherited characteristic passed down from an ancestor who was exposed. While these tainted creatures and plants can be considered monstrous (and indeed that's usually the case), some are perceived as divine, or even completely natural, depending on the locals and their preconceptions.

CALENDAR AND SPIRITUAL BELIEFS

The Five Lands have the same seasons as in the real world, and a moon that waxes and wanes twelve times a year. Most religions have something to say about this.

Each Land has its own calendar, with holy days that correspond to important events: the rising of tides in Zingama's river, the gathering of clans in Maseia, the beginning of the storm season in Fjordstad, or the one day of the year when you can actually see the sun in Bogovia. The Islanders tend to commemorate historical and social events more than other peoples, perhaps because the weather tends to be the same all year long.

Bogovians believe in many, *many* things, but above all, in the Faith: a vaguely-defined set of beliefs focusing on family, the afterlife, and the moon. Maseians revere spirits, either of the land or their ancestors, depending on the clan. These two belief systems disagree on many points, which has been a cause for many conflicts. Zingama recognizes an excessive amount of gods, only a few of which are considered "mainstream" at any one time, but their own nationhood seems to be central to their belief system. Fjordstadians are less likely to believe in the divine, but are much more likely to believe in an ideology.

HEALTHCARE

Up until recently, if you got sick, you died. End of story.

This has become much less common in the last few generations thanks to a proper understanding of hygiene, advances such as immunizations, and the rediscovery of Bygone and Crystal-based medicine—the last of which is mostly due to Syn’s explorations.

Many societies are struggling to adapt to this new reality. In Bogovia, having lots of kids is sensible, given that several are likely to die from disease (or be eaten by wolves), but city-dwelling Bogovians are much less afraid of disease (and wolves). Housing is sparse in Bogovian cities, leading the city dweller to create smaller households in conflict with social norms and Faith doctrine. In Maseia, many young people are finding it difficult to find a place in society as most roles are already filled—the clans are facing an uncomfortable rise in “unemployment”, leading to a rise in the number of young Maseians joining bands of bandits or revolutionaries. Zingamaians have more people with more free time than in any other Land, leading to a huge boom in their entertainment industry.

There are no “races” in the Five Lands beyond humans, but it might be the case that there are several types of humans. Strangely, the ethnic separation between Lands has a more deeply biological root than it first seemed.

When people from two Lands have kids, the children are of the same ethnicity as one of the parents—never mixed. Most people don’t ever get the chance to couple with people from other cultures, so this is a rare occurrence, but it is technically possible for a person to have siblings that look very different from themselves.

While most people who are aware of this fact simply accept it, Fjordstadian and Zingamaian scientists are

reaching a point in their understanding of biology that makes them wonder *why* this is the case, seeing as all humans are of the same species.

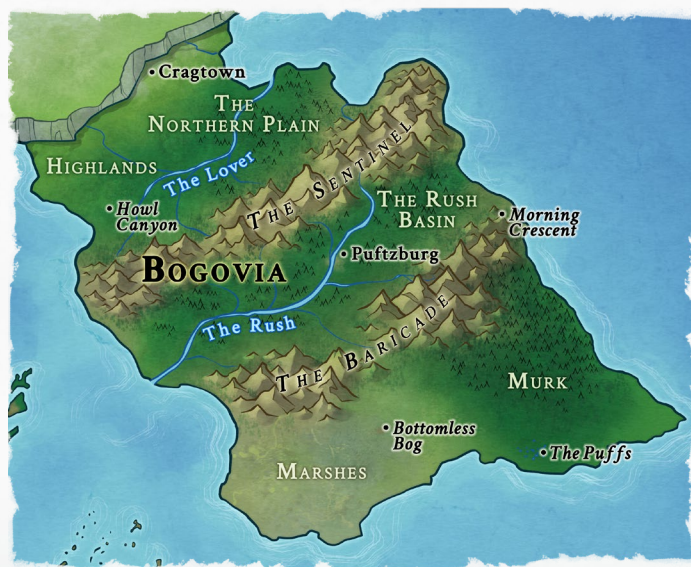
Bogovia

During the short moments when the sun manages to pierce the gray curtain of clouds, it shines a weak light over a gloomy, bleak land which seems to sneer and turn its back on the warmth. Vast pine forests spread down leering mountains, strangling the hills as they turn into muddy swamps. Small settlements cower against the woods, hiding in a mire’s fog or sitting bravely in open farmland, surrounded by thick walls. Bogovia is a land governed by fear of vicious beasts and the hidden past lurking between dark trees.

LAY OF THE LAND

Two mountain ranges, known as **the Sentinel** and **the Barricade**, divide Bogovia into three main territories. Many small valleys and hillsides are hidden between the folds of the mountains, some of which are inhabited. The mountains are passable in several places, but even these passages are unreachable during most of the winter and spring. Being separated, each of the territories developed distinct cultures and accents.

The Northern Plain is wide and mostly flat, an endless forest dotted with countless swamps. The slow Lover river makes its way





north-east toward the sea, collecting from the Sentinel; locals say the water is the Sentinel's tears, the huge mountain range weeping at its eternal separation from the Lover. Most settlements are to the south of the river and along the mountains, leaving the northern forest sparsely inhabited. Toward the west the land slowly ascends and turns into occasional dense woodlands, eventually rising into the desolate **Highlands**, where no one lives and no one goes.

The Rush Basin, between the two mountain ranges, is considered by most to be "true" Bogovia. Puftzburg, Bogovia's unofficial capital city, is situated on an uncomfortable, barely defensible group of hills to the east of the Basin and on both sides of the Rush. Like many other settlements in the Basin, it seems that its founders searched for the most problematic area to settle in, as if defying the Land: a sentiment shared by most of their descendants to this day. The Rush is aptly named, as it is only crossable in a few places.

To the south of the Barricade the land is divided into **the Murk** to the east and **the Marshes** to the south. The Murk forest is renowned for being dark, dense, and dangerous, and yet several villages persist along the seashore. They grow several species of worms which are highly useful in the silk and fishing businesses. The Marshes are musty in the summer and flooded in the winter, vast tracts of land where only the bog dwellers live. They've

been living there since the days of the Bygone Age—hardy, stubborn, and as suspicious toward Bogovians as Bogovians are toward everyone else.

A BIT OF BOGOVIAN HISTORY

THE FOG OF TIME: Bogovians gather in small communities deep in the valleys of the eastern Basin, where there are fewer wolves.

A LONG TIME AGO: Bogovians migrate into the Northern Plain and the Marshes. Around this time, the bog-dwellers began to dwell in their bogs.

THE TIME OF THE WARLORDS: Several powerful leaders rise throughout the Land, fighting each other for supremacy using Crystals and ancient tech. Refugees escape to the Murk. The Highland becomes cursed.

A FEW GENERATIONS AGO: The warlords' aspirations slowly decline and they settle, becoming barons and local nobles who take charge of their serfs. The Faith spreads, helping to unite the people and to keep the barons' power in check. Several towns throughout the Land become central hubs of trade and learning, with Puftzburg in the lead.

NOT LONG AGO: Many Bogovians move into cities, where the slow rise of the middle class brings more power to the guilds. Most Bogovians remain rural, though, and stick firmly to the old ways.

MAJOR LANDMARKS

Puftzburg, Bogovia's unofficial capital city, is a place of contradictions. The residents are known for being some of the toughest, roughest people in the world—but most of them are afraid of black cats and broken mirrors. The Tower of the Moon stands proudly in the middle of town, a center for scientific study of the heavens, but most of its findings are used by astrologists and in heated sermons. Puftzburg is where new urban technologies are suspiciously eyed by a traditional, stubborn society.

Cragtown sits on the cliff wall that is the generally accepted border between Bogovia and Fjordstad; indeed, the town belongs to both. The wealthy nobles of Uptown, the Fjordstadian settlement overlooking the cliff (an outreach of Shmep), control the cliff mines. These are worked by the miners of poor Lowtown at the foot of the cliff, most of whom are Bogovians. The Great Lift connects the two towns, with the entrance to the ancient mines in the middle. A recent miners' strike is slowly leading to the formation of the first union in the Lands.

The City of Crackling Gold is a famed legend in the Basin, describing a hidden valley with an ancient Bygone Age city full of treasure. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of hidden valleys in the Bogovian mountains, so this legend is unlikely to fade any time soon.

Howl Canyon in the Highlands is home to many crumbling stone buildings from around the first century after the Bygone Age. The moon motif is very prominent in these ruins, leading some to believe this is where the Faith originated. The canyon is inhabited by strangely cunning and malevolent wolves.

Bottomless Bog is a pool of stagnant water within the Marshes which appears to have no bottom. Every few days a strange artifact or piece of some unknown device floats to the surface, where it is quickly recovered by one of

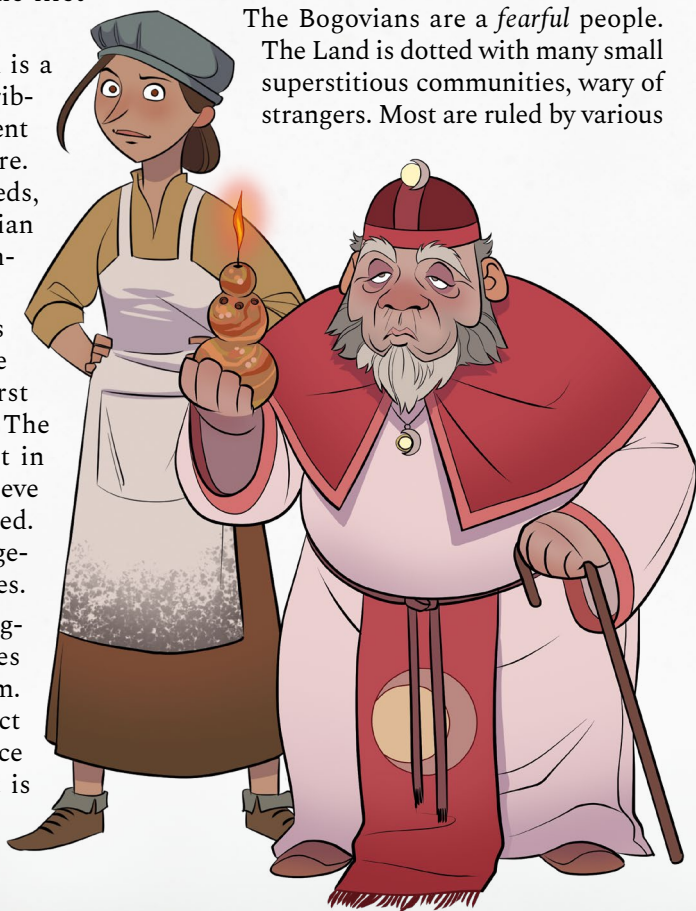
several competing Bogovian families. They then sell the item for its precious metals.

Morning Crescent is a spot on top of one of the higher hills in the eastern Rush Basin. At certain times of the year, early in the morning, the sun and moon seem to collide in the sky above. An ancient group of Bogovians who are faithful to what they claim is “the Old Faith” reside in the area, tending a shrine to the moon. They are locked in fierce rivalry with another ancient group, identical in all respects except that they tend a shrine to the sun.

The Puffs are a series of heated pools and steam-spewing geysers to the south of the Murk. Puff Point is a fabled location within the Puffs, and it is said that if you jump at a specific time of the day, a giant cloud of steam will soften your fall and carry you all the way down. Several people have returned from the Puffs claiming they found the Point but got lost in the mist after reaching the ground, only to be escorted away by short, unusual women.

THE PEOPLE

The Bogovians are a *fearful* people. The Land is dotted with many small superstitious communities, wary of strangers. Most are ruled by various





barons, as they have been for hundreds of years; the nobles have a great deal of power, but only a few abuse it. Bogovians know their place—but they also know where the pitchforks are kept, should their baron misbehave.

The Bogovians' outlook on life can be summarized in the common saying "it'll rain again." Even if it's a little sunny now or there's a refreshing breeze, it'll pass. It'll rain again, soon enough. Bogovians are averse to change and quick to anger. They strike hard and fast at the first sign of trouble: destroy it quickly, before it destroys us.

Each settlement has a **Baba**, the town's "crazy woman." She is allowed to say what they're all thinking and behave in ways they are not allowed to. Baboi act deranged because it's expected and appreciated, but most have an excellent read of the room and can use their act to stand firm before barons and Syn Agents. The tradition of the *baba* stretches back centuries, but the modern day Faith is unhappy with their continuing presence and influence.

The Faith is the name of the Bogovian religion (formally The Holy Church of Safe Haven in Faith). Bogovians are avid believers, although most are unsure what the Faith is actually about—they know most of the tenets and listen to the Holy Fathers' words, and that seems to be enough. The Holy Fathers bless the people who gather in their villages' cathedrals, teaching the doctrine to acolytes. The main doctrines focus on the importance of the heavens, primarily the moon, which guides us during the dark nights. However, the exact dogma is so complex and archaic that probably only the High Priests in Puftzburg understand all of it.

Bogovia is the most lawless out of all the Lands. **Bandits** are a common danger in rural areas, where they raid villages and trade routes throughout the whole year, retreating to hidden lairs deep in the forest or up in the mountains. Even though many small villages are under the protection of a baron, this ruler doesn't necessarily intervene and judge

every crime. A common Bogovian punishment is exile from the community. These exiled are unlikely to find a home anywhere else, seeing as Bogovians are so suspicious of strangers, which often leads to them joining a group of bandits for safety in numbers.

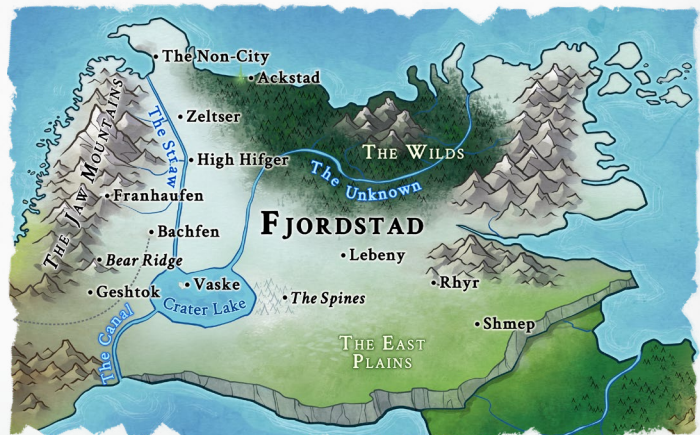
COMMON BOGOVIAN SAYINGS

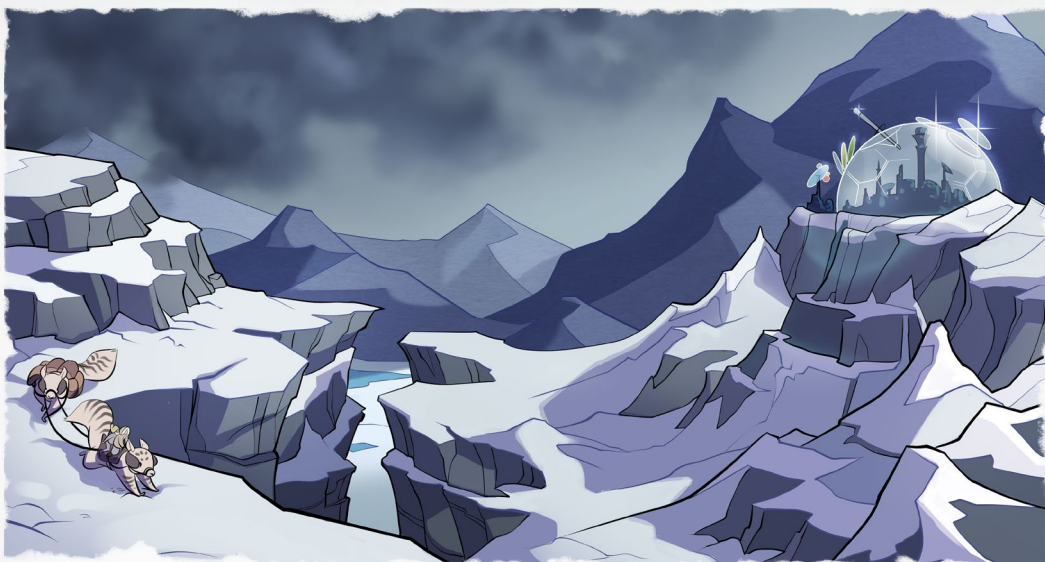
- Visitors bring news, and all news is bad news.
- Family! Can't live with them; got no other choice.
- The forest is a beast. (We milk it while it sleeps, and run away when it wakes up.)
- It'll rain again. (Even if things look sunny, it'll soon be bleak once more.)
- You can't trust those [people of neighboring town]!

Fjordstad

The Land of ice and storms is not a hospitable place. The people of the Eleven Cities huddle in their homes, where they are protected from the harsh weather and the uncivilized barbarians. Encouraged to turn to ingenuity by the mother and father of all inventions—necessity and a lack of resources—the Fjordstadians have developed a bitter inter-city rivalry over prestige and recognition. This has led to a scientific arms race, pushing each city deeper and deeper into its own niche. A cold war (in more ways than one) is raging beneath the surface. Anyone can be a spy, an informant, or a saboteur.

Most Agents who arrive at a Fjordstadian city do so under some cover, usually meeting only higher-ups in secret. The official





word among the noble houses is that Syn cannot be trusted and that Crystals are too dangerous to mess with: Ackstad's destruction (page 96) is still fresh in the collective memory. Unofficially, most noble houses maintain contact with Syn, using a "let's scratch each other's back" approach in order to have Agents sent on missions that benefit them and hurt their enemies. Syn tries to keep track of who's a friend and who's an enemy, but not always successfully—Fjordstadian alliances are as fickle as Fjordstadian storms.

LAY OF THE LAND

Most of Fjordstad is prone to strong winds and sudden storms, which occasionally increase into a full-blown thunderstorm that can last for days. Anyone planning on traveling or trading long distances must take the inclement weather into account, especially during winter. Winter is long and dark, the days grow short, and a heavy cloud cover obscures much of the sky.

The Jaw Mountains dominate west Fjordstad. This mountain range has the tallest mountains in the world. It forms an impassable barrier between the rest of the Land and the west coast, which consists of dozens of small fjords.

Crater Lake is the largest lake in the Five Lands, and also the highest. Fed by constant storms from the south, it freezes during winter and overflows in spring. Unlike most lakes, the Crater is the source for *three* rivers.

First is **the Straw**, which seems to have been dug during the Bygone Age as a canal; it stretches in long, straight narrows along the northern tundra. Second is **the Unknown** river, which leads into the Wilds and beyond. Finally, **the Canal** was recently constructed by the city of Vaske, connecting the Crater to the inner sea through a series of locks.

The Wilds is the name given to the vast forested area that dominates north-eastern Fjordstad. Despite taking up about a quarter of the Land's landmass, it has barely been explored. It's not inhabited—well, except for barbarians, but no *true* Fjordstadian considers them "people." Beyond the forest lie the ruins of Ackstad, lit by strange flames in the sky.

The East Plains is the mostly flat area that stretches along the series of cliffs which form the Bogovian border. There's nothing natural about the flatness of this area, and the ground is littered with signs of ancient land formations. The Plains serve as the main bread basket for some of the Fjordstadian cities.

MAJOR LANDMARKS

The Non-City sits across the sea from the mouth of the Straw. A generation ago, a group of Zeltserians tried to establish "the 12th city" here, but something went terribly wrong. The fault could be in the Bygone tech artifact the city was built around, its vicinity to the ruins of Ackstad, or maybe a strange fungus that came from the unexplored northern sea. Most of the inhabitants have lost



their minds; their bodies are deformed and animated even beyond death. The few survivors still huddle in havens across the ruins of the city, but no one dares to rescue them.

The Ancient Ice is a series of cave networks beneath the East Planes, stretching all the way to the nameless mountains of the Wilds. Some hint at a large Bygone Age settlement that would dwarf all Fjordstadian cities combined. Huge buildings apparently *transformed* into ice sit beneath the ground, barely more than a facade, with nothing but cave walls behind them.

Yamar's Battleground is a stretch of land between Bachfen and Zeltser, named after General Yamar Oiffploutz of the Bachfen Militia. These six bald hills have been used as a battleground by so many cities, and were blasted so many times, that they now resemble craters. Rusted tank carcasses dot the landscape alongside broken steam-mechs, melted death rays half-buried in the ground, and countless concrete barricades.

Bear Ridge is an outcrop of rock, jutting from the Jaws toward Crater lake. It's a snowy cap where—perhaps surprisingly—there are no bears at all. Still, the Ridge is avoided by travelers, because of recurring stories of strange growling noises and avalanches that look like rushing bears.

The Spines is a “forest” of giant frost pillars on the shores of Crater lake. From a certain angle, they almost look like trees. From a different angle, they resemble the spine of some giant creature protruding from the ground. They seem to never melt.

THE PEOPLE

Fjordstadians tend to think of tomorrow. Whatever their current situation is, they wonder if it could be different. Can I improve this? Can I see what's over there? Do they know that I know that they know?

City denizens mostly find comfort in their city's identity, knowing there's a clear “we” versus a clear “them.” The noble families deal with each other

the same way they deal with the other cities: keeping a front that's all patriotic while using covert operations, espionage, and backroom alliances to undermine each other. In many cases the denizens have to take care of themselves, only rarely trusting their governing bodies to do what's right.

The noble houses are becoming something akin to corporations. A generation ago, one of the lesser houses was on the brink of annihilation and opened its doors to “new recruits.” This gave the middle and lower classes a chance to join the elite, which was previously reserved only for those born into it. Within a few short years that house became a booming success, and so almost all of the other houses followed suit. These days, a heavy wall of bureaucracy in the form of application forms, tests, and administration fees has stemmed the tide of new recruits. Regulatory systems, usually accepted by all nobles of the city, manage promotion within the houses.





A BIT OF FJORDSTADIAN HISTORY

THE FOG OF TIME: Fjordstadians huddle in a handful of camps, remnants of cities of the Bygone Age.

A LONG TIME AGO: The camps become well-fortified towns. They contact one another, hoping to establish a society in which all can support each other against their Land's unforgiving temper.

THE RISE OF THE CITIES: Opportunistic betrayals and manipulative dealings lead all settlements to realize they must become more self-sufficient. The leading families take the old customs, which were created to keep order in society, and develop them into a set of strict regulations for trade, communication, and governance under their supervision. All the cities keep a close eye on each others' business, and no shenanigans are allowed in the open. These families become the noble houses.

A FEW GENERATIONS AGO: As the number of people increases, demand for scarce resources results in fierce competition between the cities. Each city keeps its innovations and discoveries to itself, as every secret can provide a crucial advantage. Mistrust between some of the cities escalates to open war, using strange and powerful weapons.

NOT LONG AGO: The cities settle into a fragile truce, the conflict shifting to behind-the-scenes subterfuge and skullduggery. With the increased need for sophistication, the middle class becomes prominent. The noble houses, which by now resemble corporations, open themselves to new recruits.

The cities are similar to each other in many respects. Each has three or four major noble houses, controlling most of the means of production and keeping the city secure against the weather and its enemies. Thousands of denizens live their lives within closed environments, as each city has found its own solutions to the same basic problems: intense cold, harsh weather, scarce farmland, sewage and trash disposal, and attacks by barbarians or other cities.

Alliances between the cities change every year, so a summer's enemy can be next winter's trading partner. Trade is vital to the lifeblood of each city, but they only trade in

resources and finished products—not ideas. Each city is fervently protective of its intellectual property. Most scientists would stare at you in horror at the mere suggestion of collaborating with any other city (Shmep is a grumpy exception to the rule).

In contrast, engineers, who face the challenge of scarce resources in their endeavors to realize their wild ideas in a working machine, might consider turning to other cities if they have better resources or techniques. Those other cities would love to have them, so it's common practice in Fjordstad to keep a careful eye on your engineers and steer them away from trouble—or even worse, *cooperation*. Occasionally, that requires kidnapping their family or placing them under “protection.”

The Fjordstadian **barbarians** are different from the city denizens in one major respect: they're poor. These are the descendants of old mountain people, escapees from ruined cities, exiles from still-standing cities, or simply those who are down on their luck. They live on the outskirts of every city in the trash heaps and sewer systems: the fringes of society. Some even live in the wilderness. There's no room for them in the cities, and not enough resources to care for them—not without everyone's lifestyle taking a huge hit. The common Fjordstadian prefers to believe they are “barbaric” and therefore deserving of pity, rather than accepting his or her own responsibility for their situation.

THE ELEVEN CITIES

Each of Fjordstad's cities specializes in specific branches of science and technology. More precisely, they *try* to, but in fact most of them cross into each others' specialities. Franhaufen and Zeltser, for example, both deal with lenses and optics in different ways.

The proud Fjordstadian cities each have an emblem and a motto. Each also has its own method of protecting itself against the Fjordstadian weather and potential attacks.

Bachfen, “Full Steam Ahead”

Bachfen is the most populous and prosperous of the Eleven Cities, and is probably the most well-known to non-Fjordstadians. Locals jokingly say its motto should be “Bigger Explosions.” Masters of combustion, steam,

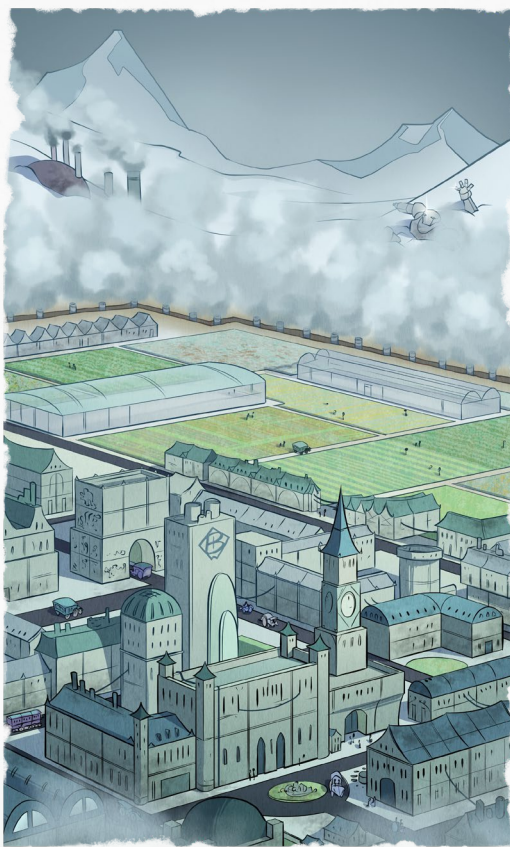




and indeed explosives, the people of Bachfen created many forms of vehicles and engines, using them to drive, ride, and occasionally jet-propel over their well-paved streets. They even constructed the Fjordstad-Maseia Train Line, the world's only railroad, to facilitate quick and (relatively) safe travel through the Badlands and into Maseia.

Bachfen is currently at war with High Hifger. A disagreement over ownership of several metal mines in the Jaws sparked a years-old argument which soon escalated into open war. During the summer, the two cities fight on the plains; during the winter, when fighting is unfeasible, they both turn to industrial espionage and sabotage. For this purpose, the Bachfens have not only built the huge City Cannon that can shoot metal slugs all the way across the plains, but also the steam-mech power-suit division of piloted war machines.

Bachfen's **Steam Barricade** surrounds the city on four sides. These thin canals are filled with pipes spewing boiling hot water, forming a wall of steam which protects the city against harsh weather.



Bachfen's **steam-mech center** is a sophisticated factory: an underground facility filled with conveyor belts, steam pumps, and heavy cogs. The steam-mechs are also stored and maintained here when not deployed to the field.

Franhaufen, "Thinking Clearly"

The city of Franhaufen is a marvel to behold. The tall towers of steel and glass are surrounded by a web of glass sheets, appearing from afar like a single immense glass dome. Built up in the Jaw Mountains, it's the highest of all Fjordstadian cities—but its people seem dissatisfied with their situation and aim even higher. Although the city specializes in all manner of glass production, this is only to support its true passion: building telescopes to discover the mysteries of the heavens.

Franhaufenites have discovered methods for creating immensely wide sheets of glass. This is how they constructed the **Magnificent Array**, a glass dome above the city with openings for a dozen huge lenses held up with cranes and levers. Franhaufen can send beams of intense energy through the focus lenses to dissipate incoming clouds, or the other way around, to increase the warmth of the few rays of sunlight they get during the winter.

Skygazing tower is the tallest astronomy tower for studying the skies. Several years ago it was closed down, the nobles claiming it was unsafe due to faulty foundations. No explanation was given for the disbanding of the Moon and Heavens Society, the collection of scientists and philosophers who were in charge of the tower.

Geshtok, "Finding Solutions"

Resting precariously on the border of Fjordstad and the Maseian Badlands, Geshtok is the city of chemistry. While Bachfens are known for loving explosives, Geshtokians are the ones who supply them. In Geshtok itself, however, explosives are outlawed and the city employs the most skilled police force in all of Fjordstad to enforce its strict rules. Some of these rules include a ban on wide dresses and skirts (they can catch fire if something falls on them), a curfew every noon (taking a nap to restore mental acuity is encouraged, but not enforced), a long list of



demands regarding valve-maintenance (with over a dozen “what’s that smell” warnings), and a steep tax on hats (people in hats are just generally suspicious).

Geshtok doesn’t have a wall to protect against the weather. Instead, it has the **Weather Manipulation Injectors**: an array of catapults which launch chemically treated ice into the clouds, breaking up storms before they form.

Leshper’s Smog is a complex of refineries and warehouses on the outskirts of town, where some of the most dangerous chemical solutions are mixed. It’s guarded at all times by a sophisticated security system which utilizes several purple oozes, strange chemical life forms created with the use of a shard.

High Hifger, “Solid Ground”

The Masters of Metals, as the Hifgerians like to call themselves, live nestled in a deep basin between rolling hills. None of the city’s structures are allowed to extend upward beyond thirty feet in height, making it a stark contrast to the skyscrapers all other Fjordstadian cities seem to enjoy so much. Ironically, Hifgerians have the best construction skills and building materials around: the most spectacular buildings in Fjordstad were constructed by Hifgerian architects.

The reason for the city’s low skyline is practical. During winter or when under attack by Bachfen’s City Cannon, the city descends into the huge caverns below—toward *Low Hifger*. The thick **Ceiling of Concrete** then rises from beneath the surface to cover the city. Low Hifger, with its rich and endless mines, is stationary; as the other half of the city descends, the Low and High parts connect with each other.

Level Eighteen is Low Hifger’s lowest mining chamber. It’s been sealed for several years after the miners stumbled on an underground river. That’s the official story. The occasional roar, rumbling up the tunnels, is left unexplained.

Lebeny, “For Life”

The people of Lebeny are the world’s best taxonomers, a passion which has evolved into a specialization in biology and human medicine. They have brilliant surgeons and

doctors, and their understanding of the human heart is unmatched. However, only the bravest or most foolish of them dare study heart-Crystal interactions, both for fear of Syn (which keeps a very active involvement in the city’s politics) and because memories of the Disaster of Ackstad are still fresh.

The Lebeniyans rarely suffer from the severe storms that besiege all other Fjordstadian cities, as they are situated in a musty ravine thick with vegetation and close to a series of natural hot springs. The city is under a threat of a different kind, though. On occasion, creatures from the Wilds will attack its borders, which is why it too has a protective wall: the pheromone-powered **Scent Barrier**, which gives most predators the chemical signal equivalent of “we are not tasty, turn away”.

Clean, Professional Hospital is the world’s most advanced (and indeed, cleanest) hospital, and one of the only institutions that is dedicated to the complete study of human physiology and psychology. One of the conclusions of their studies resulted in changing the building’s name into its current, positive title. It was previously The Last Breath Asylum for the Insane and Dying.

Rhyr, “Precision in All Things”

The people of Rhyr specialize in clockwork. They mastered the art of devising and assembling small, delicate mechanisms, and now use such devices in all avenues of life. Much of the city is run like, well, clockwork. Rhyr policy makers were the ones who created the first police force as well as the 24 hour day, which is now observed all over Fjordstad and much of the rest of the world.

Spring-powered contraptions provide mobility around Rhyr’s streets and towers, but their most innovative use is seen in the entertainment industry. Turning platforms might reveal new scenes during a play, or large-scale constructs might be built solely to provide a thrilling quick ride up and down a track.

Rhyr’s **Mesh Shield** is a weather shield made of 1,088 hexagonal sheets of copper, which can interlock with great precision to form a complete semi-sphere. The city’s weather tower keeps constant watch, activating the parts of the shield that are



needed to protect against Rhyr's unusually harsh winds.

The Predictorium is Rhyr's most ambitious project. By stealing information from other cities and feeding it into a huge analytical engine, the Rhyrians hope to create a mechanism which will allow them to at least partially predict the future. Most importantly, they want to know what the other cities are planning. It's no surprise that the project is still undergoing construction, as it's being sabotaged on a monthly basis.

Shmep, "But Why?"

The easternmost city in Fjordstad is the laid-back Shmep, where philosophers gather to discuss logic and devise theories of law and politics, examining the human mind and reality itself. Shmep's tolerance, and even celebration, of the liberal arts has made it a haven for all "non-technical" scholars (mostly historians).

While not an especially rich city since they export very few manufactured goods, Shmep's thinkers have developed a wide range of organizational techniques, covering such topics as administration, meditation, professional practices, and more. These teachings draw other Fjordstadians, who are willing to pay to live for a few months with the best minds around. This influx of interest in "practical philosophy" has brought a rise in the study of problem-solving itself, leading to the formation of sociology and psychology.

Shmep's **Wall Against Weather** is a literal wall, a very tall and thick one. It stretches across the city's western limit, since all storms that hit the city are carried from the west.

Shmep's **Underground Bowel Movement** is the most sophisticated sewer system in the world: wide, clean, and efficient. Perhaps because of this, its cavernous spaces have become the home for an entire subculture of groundbreaking artists who experiment in new types of expression. Their recent innovation is something called a "beet poem," celebrating the miracle of produce.

Vaske, "Truth is Fluid"

When one stands on the northern shore of Crater Lake, between the Straw and the Unknown rivers, one can see Vaske some

distance to the south—seemingly floating on water. The city was actually built on an island, but it's grown so much that parts of it have slipped to the water level and below.

Vaske has the unique feature of being a semi-annual peninsula. Instead of being surrounded by water on three sides, it's surrounded for three *seasons*. During winter, the part of the lake that's between the city and the shore freezes over. A road is quickly constructed on it, allowing for quick travel and contact with the other cities. During summer the lake is liquid and usually somewhat misty, with only the rare ship allowing for contact between the city and the shore. Spring is the strangest of times, when the lake thaws and overflows the shores, and many of the lower streets of Vaske become canals for a month. As a city that's disconnected from the rest of the world for a good part of every year, the Vaskians have garnered a reputation for being weird and aloof. They seem to prefer it that way.

Vaskians know more about fluid and air dynamics than they're willing to share. Their protection against storms takes the form of a series of strangely curved fans, known as the **Wind Symphony**, which somehow deter the winds simply by revolving on their axes. This system also supposedly provides power to the city's electrical grid.

The Canal is Vaske's greatest engineering achievement, connecting the Crater to the inland sea through a series of locks, allowing their ships (and submarines? Who knows) to reach new lands.

COMMON FJORDSTADIAN SAYINGS

- Inspiration comes and goes; books are here to stay.
- As bad as [rival city's] plumbing.
- As quiet as a storm. (Said of events which rock the whole city.)
- Full steam ahead with the brakes on. (In Bachfen: they started something they couldn't commit to.)
- That's a Shmep idea. (With excitement, said of something that is brilliant; with sarcasm, said of something that is useless.)

Zeltser, “Perpetual Motion”

When one approaches Zeltser from land, the many varied lights can seem dazzling against the clouds above. When sailing down the Straw river, it looks even more amazing. Zeltser is all about vibrations, researching waves in all forms: light, sound, seismic, and others. They have plenty of energy to power their contraptions, and they sure do love lasers.

Despite being on the open plains, the city and its farms are kept perpetually warm thanks to the **Repulsion Field**, a constant orange-green energy field created by the city’s core.

It’s an open secret that the **City Generator** that provides power to Zeltser’s light shows isn’t a piece of Bygone tech (their official story) but a feral Crystal, somehow contained by early-generation Crystal technology. This Crystal must be one of the first to be assigned the “safe” designation by Syn, putting it on the list of feral Crystals which are allowed to remain in their untamed states.

The Lost City of Sensyble

The city of Sensyble (pronounced Sen-SAY-bel) is suspiciously absent from where all the maps claim it should be. No one has been to Sensyble for more than half a century. Despite this, Sensybles still occasionally appear at other cities to trade, discuss the weather, avoid answering any questions, and, many suspect, perform secret operations for unknown purposes.

Occasionally, someone will claim to catch a glimpse of Sensyble’s famous **Miniature Tower**, the huge building in the middle of the city. It supposedly allows its scientists to not only peek into the smallest of things, but also break them apart.

The Ruins of Ackstad

A hundred years ago, when the Fjordstadian renaissance began and each city started to specialize in a specific branch of science or engineering, the people of Ackstad chose Crystals.

There are many stories about the final days of Ackstad, recounted by some of the survivors who managed to escape and by those who watched the green lights erupting and covering the skies from afar.

Since the disaster, the skies above the ruins are still lit by a strange mirage, similar to the aurora borealis. People say that the ghosts of Ackstad’s denizens wander its cold, eerily-lit streets, hungry for hearts—but even more so for Crystals.

Islands

Welcome to the Islands! We have sun, sky, and sea. We have great harvests and nice neighbors. We have all the time in the world.

Islanders are diverse. They live on the many, many islands of the inner sea, with nothing much to unite them except a general calm demeanor. A few of the Islands have used the waterways to become the biggest trading hubs in the known world, and probably the most cosmopolitan places you can find. On other Islands, fanatic locals will *hunt you down* if you so much as set foot on their shores. Oh, and there are pirates, of course.

A common saying in the Lands goes like this: A Bogovian will charge at you, a Fjordstadian will lay a trap, a Maseian will shoot you from afar, and a Zingamaian will talk you to death—but an Islander will invite you to their home (some add: “and rob you blind”).





LAY OF THE LAND

The Islands are made of three distinct archipelagos.

The **South Chain** is a group of hundreds of small, lawless islands, where many hidden cultures reside (most of which are inhospitable to strangers). Several clues lead Syn to believe there was once a large community here which got separated after some disaster many years ago. The Chain is also where one can find the two main pirate coves, Shimmy's Teeth and Paradise.

Home of Calamity is the western island arc that stretches from Zingama's south-eastern coast. This region suffers from an intense monsoon season for half of the year, followed by a harsh drought for the other half. The people living here are among the toughest in the world.

The main center of the Islands is the **Large Lands**: four landmasses each surrounded by several smaller islands. **Basho** is a green, hilly island, home to one of the oldest cultures in the world, the Hito. They are said to have carved beautiful sculptures on the sides of equally spectacular natural stone formations, but as the Hito are isolationists, it's hard to tell if that's true. **Lay-Lay** is where the concept of "island resort" was invented and is the home of Reefs Market, which is built on stilts. **Motuhake** is dominated by a huge dormant volcano, and it's where many of the best fruits in the world are grown. **Whenua** ties with Basho for the

largest island award, and is so thick with mountains and jungles that the societies who live on its shores have no idea what's going on in its center.

MAJOR LANDMARKS

The Sky Tower is a surprisingly tall rock column in the Home of Calamity, which has been used as a navigation point by ships for centuries. Recently, a group of aspiring merchants created a small outpost on its shores, hoping to establish a stopping point for travelers.

Whataplace is well-known among Bygone Age scholars for the huge, ancient force field that protects its northern shores. A large community of Islanders live under the orange-tinted, semi-translucent force field, kept in a warm and temperate climate all year long.

The Island of Giants is a large Island off Whenua that is considered to be both cursed and curious. The phenomenon of island gigantism seems to have gone into overdrive on this island, with huge mammals, giant birds, and even some giant plants. People tend to avoid the place, but gigantic pelicans (see page 176) are a problem throughout the Islands.

The Oil Stream is a large patch of oil covering more than fifty square miles which seems to be moving around the islands of the Home of Calamity. Through some unknown process, it boils the water it moves

through, leaving columns of steam as well as many dead fish.

The Great Big Manatee is an astonishingly large statue, half-submerged, which dates at least to the Bygone Age and perhaps even to before. Twice a year, pirates from all over the South Chain gather here in a three-day-long celebration. Alliances are forged, slights are forgiven, and crews compete with each other.

A BIT OF ISLAND HISTORY

THE FOG OF TIME: Historians agree that most Islanders originated on one of the Large Lands, although it's unclear which one.

A LONG TIME AGO: The people spread across the island chains, using simple navigational techniques and small boats.

THE GREAT ESCAPE: Something happened in the Large Lands, an event which led the Islanders to seek refuge in other archipelagos. Thanks to many advances in sailing, most managed to escape and build new homes far away from home.

A FEW GENERATIONS AGO: The communities of the Large Lands grow big enough to once again reach far into the seas, and they discover dozens of peoples, most of which are willing to exchange goods and customs. Trade flourishes, as everyone has more to gain from talking to each other than from conquering each other.

NOT LONG AGO: For better or worse, some Islander communities become far more powerful and richer than the others. Increased connection with the other Lands push the Large Lands to begin a “soft” cultural war over who has more influence over the Islands and who’s a “true Islander.” This leads to many smaller communities resisting said influence, finding individuality by returning to old local customs.

Motuhake’s Salt Baths are one of the island’s most sought-after attractions. Secured in a series of steamy caves, the salt baths are considered a marvel of medicine, healing skin diseases and helping with lung deficiencies. The air in the caves is circulated thanks to a Crystal that Syn has designated “safe.”

THE PEOPLE

The Islanders’ diverse nature makes it hard to point at common motifs, but there are some customs that seem to permeate most of their cultures.

Food has an important place in Islander society. They like varied diets and go to great lengths to bring fruit, grain, meat, and seafood from other islands, archipelagos, and Lands. **Gastronomes** are people who specialize in understanding food and creating meals. They have an important part in many rituals, and can sometimes work for many intensive weeks before a grand holiday feast.

Many of the cultures of the Large Lands see themselves as **cooperatives**, communal gatherings that anyone is allowed to join. One’s place in society is determined by reputation, so newcomers need to work hard to become known and prove themselves; many are taken advantage of by well-established





COMMON ISLAND SAYINGS

- There's always tomorrow.
- How esoteric! (How strange, in a wonderful way!)
- Boat-worthy (Someone you can trust.)
- Can't tell from those clouds. (Unsure about how things are going to go.)
- Take it and it's yours; give it and it's ours. (Sharing is caring.)
- Don't worry, there are bigger fish.

lished trading families. Most other societies are closed tribes, consisting of several villages over an island or two, with coherent familial units and not much room for outsiders. These tribes also tend to be self-sufficient and less interested in trade.

Pirates are a growing problem in the Islands. As sailing techniques advance, allowing for larger boats and longer journeys, it's becoming easier to raid the seas of the Home of Calamity then go hide in a cove around the Southern Chain. Several families have completely transformed themselves into raiders. The commerce consortiums arm themselves more than ever before, while searching for new trading routes around Bogovia and Zingama.

While Islanders are generally accepting of all, there's a whole group of people who are considered outside of their society: **the esoterics**. Generally speaking, anyone who's not part of the "main" Island society, comprised of the Large Lands and their massive trade network, is seen to be less important and is occasionally regarded with paternalism. The big Islands started extending the esoteric label to some of the islands who are trying to resist the Large Lands' influence and keep their own cultural identity. After all, if they don't accept our ways, they must be a little strange in the head.

Maseia

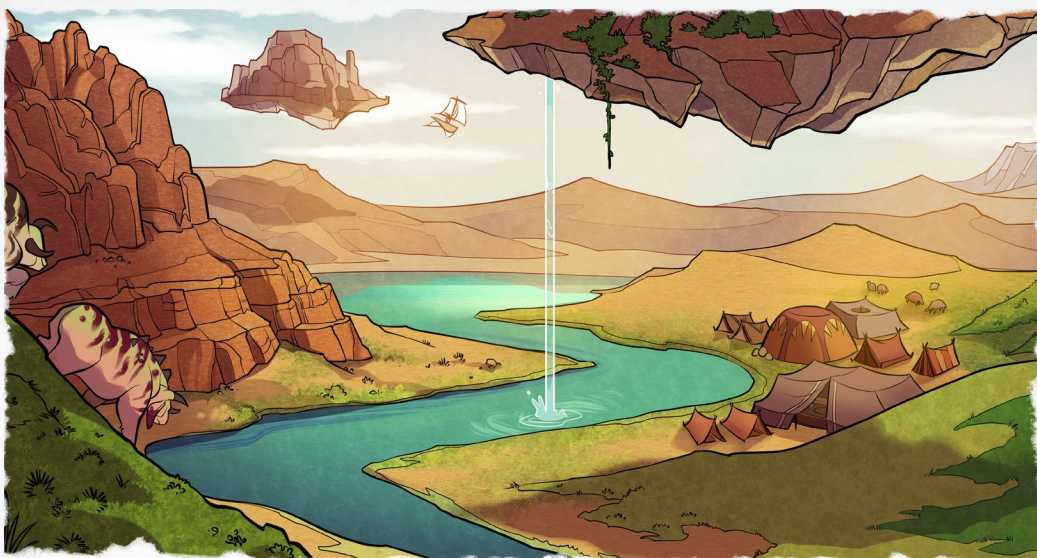
Endless plains roll toward the distant horizon while winds blow past river basins and over herds of leaping gazelles. It's a wide-open world, where everything seems possible and anything could be waiting beyond the next hill. On occasion, a shadow covers the land as clouds pass by...or flying mountains.

A Maseian can go anywhere (their clan goes) and do anything (their clan tells them to do). Fjordstadians envy their lifestyle, Zingamaians idolize their freedom, Islanders appreciate their business acumen (Bogovians have never heard of them), but the truth is, Maseians are rigid. Strict rules prevent them from expressing themselves, pressing them into well-defined roles, with layers upon layers of cultural expectations mixed with religious significance. Most of them think this is how things should be—which is why things remain as they are.

LAY OF THE LAND

Maseia is *big*, but it's essentially composed of three main parts. Starting with **the Perch**, a relatively low but very wide stretch of mountains on the Zingamaian border, the land descends slowly toward the north, turning





into hilly plains with hundreds of rivers and countless small lakes. The largest five lakes have well-known names—Calm Water, Blue Nests, Keeper, Dry, and Duck—but the names of the smaller lakes are usually only used by the clans who live around them.

To the north-west, beyond lake Dry—so named because during the summer season it's almost completely gone—the plains become the **Desert Peninsula**. The few clans who live here are unkind at best, actively hostile at worst. It's said that the largest creatures in the world can be found here, monstrous animals larger than elephants, which survive thanks to shards embedded in their bodies.

To the north-east, the **Badlands** are harsh and dry all year long, with extreme temperature changes between the cold winter and hot summer. During the spring, sudden thunderstorms can rage for hours then disappear just as quickly, resulting in quick and powerful floods. The Badlands are known for having unstable ground, geysers, underground caves, and ancient ruins. Experts also suspect this place played an important role in the events that ended the Bygone Age, as there's evidence that the current Badlands are a result of a huge shift in tectonic plates which pushed against the whole of Fjordstad.

Maseia's famed **floating mountains** are technically hovering, but since the sight of the mountains against the blue Maseian sky makes one think of islands in an ocean, the term "floating" stuck anyway. Most of them move in regular patterns, migrating on

routes that take between a few months and several years. Some, however, are stationary—these tend to be the tallest.

MAJOR LANDMARKS

The Nexus is a trading post serving several clans and built upon the shores of Keeper Lake. It boasts some of the most impressive permanent buildings in all of Maseia; for years, clans would send their people here to learn the craft of construction. Recently, two other "Nexus" trading posts have been established close to the Fjordstadian and Zingamaian borders; the three now fight over being called "the rightful" Nexus. The northern Nexus is known for being the last terminal in the Fjordstadian Train Line.

Heaven's Shadow, deep in central Maseia, is a cemetery exclusive to Maseian leaders. Almost all of the ancestor worshipping clans bring their honored dead to this dry, bleak piece of land directly under the stationary mountain Heaven, which casts an eternal shadow on the graveyard. Clanspeople occasionally make a pilgrimage to Heaven's Shadow to converse with the spirits of wise leaders.

The Timid Mountain is a lone floating mountain that follows an erratic migration pattern (if it follows one at all). It's one of a very small number of mountains which hover around the rocky south-eastern shores. This paradoxically makes it more well-known among Islanders sailing toward the northern trading hubs than among most Maseians.



The Ancestors' Palace is an ancient citadel carved into the side of a once-muddy rock face on the border of the Badlands. It seems to date back to the early days after the Bygone Age, but no one is sure. A group of self-appointed guardians prevents all access to it.

Raptor's Green is a vast, flat green plain covered with tall grass. When you look at it from a certain height at a distance—achievable only by sky-skiffers and autoplanes—you can see angular shapes “drawn” in the grass that are almost definitely stylized birds of some kind. Most people claim these are ducks. The Green's eastern border is, indeed, Duck Lake.

Soaring Woods is a large forest that slopes up and up, *way up*, as if it were a floating mountain trying to soar—which might well be the case! No one can tell for sure. The Woods are known for their large bear population. Local clans use it in their rites of passage, sending the young to the top to bring back one of the glowing rocks that can be found there.

The Granite Flat is a relatively low-floating mountain in the Desert Peninsula which is tethered to the ground with ropes and ladders. The Snives clan claim the Flat as their own. They have turned it into a gorgeous garden, surprisingly lush with both wild and cultivated plants. The Snives bury their dead here in open burial mounds.

THE PEOPLE

The people of Maseia are above all communal. They live in clans which are composed of several families, and care deeply about their clan's prosperity.

Maseian clans place huge emphasis on ritualistic behaviors. Their members spend much of their time making sure they are *correct* in the ways they are knitting, skinning, building, learning, treating injuries, and doing any other task. They keep the social order by filling *roles*—a position in society which must be handled exactly the same way, never mind who is filling it. This sometimes creates situations which visitors might consider absurd. For example, a Master of Boats must always be a tall woman who wears a wide hat (for various reasons, some of them relevant but others lost to memory). If the best candidate is too short, she needs to wear platform shoes; if it's a man, he must shift

A BIT OF MASEIAN HISTORY

THE FOG OF TIME: In the earliest of days, it appears that Maseians lived on the floating mountains.

A LONG TIME AGO: The Maseians came down from the mountains and spread out. They were all nomads, learning to survive in the huge wilderness around them.

THE WARS OF RULERSHIP: The clans go to war over dominance (not resources). Most agree that there must be a ruler for all of society, but they disagree about who this person should be. Those that avoid the war escape to the Desert Peninsula or disappear to the far reaches of the Land.

A FEW GENERATIONS AGO: The wars, having proved bloody but useless, don't result in a single ruler. Several forts and outposts turn into towns, with entire clans settling down to utilize the basic agricultural techniques that were developed during the wars to support the troops.

NOT LONG AGO: Not much has changed. The Maseian lifestyle is, after all, about rigid persistence.

his gender, adopting the socially accepted mannerisms and dress codes for women. In the strange meritocracy that is Maseian society, almost everything about you can change if needed to fit your required role.

The Maseians can be categorized by their positions on two axes: nomads vs. settled, and spirit believers vs. ancestor worshipers.

Nomad clans have migratory patterns, walking many miles across the Maseian landscape to follow herds or move between places where the harvest renews every year. Because most nomads move between the same campsites, they keep several semi-permanent buildings in each—usually nothing more than a few low stone walls and floors. When they arrive, they stretch leathers over the old foundations. Some of these campsites are shared between clans, each taking care of the place during their time there.

Settled clans remain where they are throughout the year. They've built solid buildings, usually well-constructed with thick timbers and several types of stone. The settled tend to have larger communities



compared to the nomads and fewer interactions with their neighbors (nomads must always consider the people they are sharing the land with).

Shifting between the nomadic lifestyle and a settled one, or vice versa, is a huge endeavor. It only happens during times of crisis, but when it does happen, the people readily accept the new set of beliefs. These beliefs include a disdain for the other way of living, since that's what's now *proper* for them to believe in.

Spirit believers are clans that revere the spirits of the earth and the animals. Their spiritual lives are guided by the spirit talkers, who help interpret the spirits' wills. Nomads make sure to appease the spirits of the lands they enter before daring to set foot there. Settled clans keep addressing the same spirits, forming complicated relationships with them.

Ancestor worshipers know for a fact that when their elders die, they join their ances-

tors in the stars (or the wind, or the rivers, depending on who you ask). They tell stories of these ancestors, remembering them and their ways, and always making sure to respect them. They turn to them for advice in times of trouble through each family's chosen ancestor channeler.

Spiritualists think that the worshippers are deluding themselves; worshippers think that the spiritualists are completely mistaken by giving thanks to animals and rocks. When political marriages between clans bring a family of one belief into the fold of another, they all adopt the new approach. As is appropriate.

A Maseian's life is complicated. They try to find whatever freedom they can within the pressures and demands of family, clan, and tradition, but these same structures give them order, purpose, and peace of mind.

Those who fail to find a place for themselves (or are banished by the others), tend to gather in **bands**, small groups of like-minded people. Many clanspeople dislike bands for being outside of normal society, and indeed, many bands have turned to banditry. Others, however, are gatherings of free-thinkers, artists, or craftspersons, who move between the tribes and offer their services. One of the most famous bands is the sky-skiffers, who glide around the Land on their wind-powered skiffs, and are known for being mischievous and daring.

COMMON MASEIAN SAYINGS

- Stand firm, and the world will revolve around you.
- [looking at a floating mountain] Still there. (Things remain as they are, said in objection to someone suggesting a destructive change.)
- No limits to one's breath. (The air you breathe gets to go everywhere; so can you.)
- Nomad flattery. (Said by settled; a fleeting thing, it has little meaning.)
- Settled belief. (Said by nomads; something unimportant, it can be ignored.)



Zingama

Out of the Five Lands, Zingama is the most populated, most complicated, and most moist. It's a huge Amazonian-like jungle, with one major river that serves as the lifeblood of local civilization. This unifying geographical feature led Zingama to becoming the most cohesive of the Five. It has one big government, cutting-edge science, and ever-evolving arts, as well as back room deals, bribery, and all the nepotism one can ask for. The many societies comprising this nation were formerly bitter rivals. They still are, only they have switched the battlegrounds from the jungle floor to the political scene. They use the latest fashions as camouflage and sweeping rhetoric as weapons; and when that doesn't work, there's always poison.

LAY OF THE LAND

The endless jungles of Zingama are crisscrossed by the dozen tributaries of the Golden River, which snakes around the land's hilly features from west to east. It eventually spills into the inner sea in a wide and fertile delta.

The Western Mountains are considered a nameless wasteland, a cursed place where no one goes (the local villagers might disagree, but they're not part of the nation; their opinion hardly matters). Many of the mountains are semi-active volcanoes, and it's not uncommon for the Zingamaian sunset to have strange colors because of the smoke.

The Golden River runs from the mountains to the sea, curving around the land. It is the main lifeline of Zingamaian society, and thousands use it daily to commute or reach recreation facilities. Officially, the nation considers all of the river and several miles inland of its shores to be part of its land, taken during the Great Conquest—but several remote tributaries still belong to the locals, thank you very much.

The Glorious Seat of the Snake Without End, known simply as “the Seat,” is the im-



mensely tall mountain that dominates Zingama's skyline. No matter where you are in the nation, it can probably be seen above the trees. A geographical marvel, the Seat is considered the literal seat of Zingama's main god-like entity.

The Golden Delta is where the Golden River ends. It's remarkably wide and home to hundreds of unique species of animals and plants. It's also Zingama's bread basket—or at least was, until a generation or so ago. Modern farms inland recently began to replace those of the delta, which are quite remote and only semi-reliable during floods.

The Desolace is the stretch of land along the southwestern coast. Technically composed of two different landforms—a basaltic plateau to the west of the mountains, and a chalk cliff to the east—they're the same to the Zingamaians. No Syn route ever went through there. In a world filled with far-away, remote places, the Desolace manages to be the most remote of all.

MAJOR LANDMARKS

The Winding Path: The Path is a sacred pilgrimage that used to begin at the holy city of Tochiyamto, but by popular demand is now allowed to begin in any temple throughout the Land. Officially, it leads toward and then up the Seat, where it splits, winds, and twists seemingly pointlessly. There's no end to the road, so one must decide for oneself when it's time to stop. Walking the Winding Path is an important part of the Zingamaian spiritual tradition, despite it being relatively



deep in the jungle. It is heavily guarded at all times of year.

The Hapana River is filled with crocodiles, and its banks are covered with treacherous roots. It's one of the only parts of the trading network which is better to cross on land—but it's also home to some of the most prominently anti-nationalist villages.

Tumbili, the Sacred City: Located in the Western Mountains, Tumbili was at one time the capital of Zingama. Many years ago, the then-Emperor angered the Snake Without End by abusing his powers during an important ceremony, which led to a horde of apes taking over the city and banishing the residents. That's the story, anyway. The fact is that there's an ancient Zingamaian stone city in the mountains, and it certainly is full of apes.

Rubber Valley: Fifty years ago, the trees of this valley were almost completely cut down due to the rising demand for rubber. Lately, thanks to advancements in sustainability and the increasing complexity of Zingamaian society, the area has become the hub of new, innovative technologies. New development centers had to be built, and Rubber Valley proved just empty and close enough to Zingama City to fit the bill. Zingama still has a lot of catching up to do with Fjordstad, but Rubber Valley engineers are ahead in at least one area: they are very keen on drone technology, and many drones zip around the valley. Radio signals are still insufficiently understood to be safely intro-

duced to urban areas, and electricity isn't all that commonplace, but in Rubber Valley, the engineers sure are having fun.

Zingama City is where everything happens. With more than two hundred thousand people cramming its streets, this is the largest and liveliest city in the world. While some Island towns know how to party, Zingama City never stops partying, despite the inevitable hangover; just power through it! The impressive headquarters of the Zingamaian Post is here, right on the river's edge. The ZiP is known for being the most reliable messaging service in the world, with delivery times rivaling those of Syn's autoplanes despite using mostly water craft and delivery snakes. In a Land that relies on the quick and efficient distribution of information, they are amazingly powerful—which is why they could afford to build their own sports arena right next door, despite it taking precious waterfront real estate.

THE PEOPLE

The Zingamaian people are made up of several clans. The most numerous and important ones are located in and around Zingama City, where many of them work in bureaucracy. The heads of the main families, all part of high society, represent their clans within their Local Councils, or the Upper Council, or the Council of Clans, or the Council to the Emperor. There are many ways to be political in Zingama, and everyone fights over power.



A BIT OF ZINGAMAIAN HISTORY

THE FOG OF TIME: All across the vast jungles of Zingama, clans gather and fight for survival against a deadly environment.

A LONG TIME AGO: Most people gravitate toward the rivers, where it's easier to get water and meet others.

ZINGAMA UNITED: Finding they have more things in common than things that separate them—political marriages have led to many clans becoming kin—the time is right for several of the people to unite under a single leader. This Empress, who was graced by the Snake Without End, began a line of divine rulers stretching to the current day.

A FEW GENERATIONS AGO: More and more villages join Zingama, at first through diplomacy and then through conquest. The Great Conquest brings Zingamaian influence to the entirety of the Golden River, settling on what is considered its modern borders.

NOT LONG AGO: Secured within their glorious country, the Zingamaians develop a national identity, despite (or thanks to?) the many ruling parties trying to control the unofficial narrative of who is a “true” Zingamaian. The old and dirty custom of assassinating your political opponent becomes much less dirty and a lot more profitable when the assassin companies receive official recognition. The rise of consumer culture and a middle class leads to a whole generation, the “Eight-o’s” having more free time than ever before.

Zingamaians who are not a part of the nation are called “**vexed**” or “**displeased**” by the nationals, who believe the reason they reject the gifts of civilization must be their backwards-thinking, savage ways. They make up about a fifth of the Land’s population. Most of them resent the nation’s claim to supremacy, while at the same time benefiting much from its trading resources and ideas.

In the nation, **Zingamaians are all about reputation**, the latest hotness, and the juiciest rumors. They have recently invented tourism, extreme sports, and recreational drugs, and they’d love to try them all at the same time. Out of all the people of the Lands, Zingamaians are the ones most likely

to visit other places. This is not only because there are so many of them, but also thanks to their desire to know more of the world, to explore and tell their friends, or even establish official embassies in other Lands. Explorers come back with a variety of interesting artifacts and animals, showing them around the Land in roving exhibitions, or donating them to the Zingamaian Bygone Age Museum or the Wildlife Resort in exchange for their names on the wall.

Seeing themselves as much more honorable than the other Lands, Zingamaians no longer settle their differences with violence, instead turning to law and order—and when that fails, assassination. **The assassin companies**, previously criminal operations, are now a legal and discreet part of everyday life for high society. Many politicians and heads of houses hire assassins to kill *other assassins*, to prevent them from being a threat. This adds another secretive layer to the entire operation: assassin companies who sign agreements with each other to





lie to their employers about killing off each others' members.

Sports are very important to the Zingamaians. Competitions allow them to support their clan in a non-violent way (and show those bastards from the other clan!). Dangerous sports are especially appreciated, with the Pentadome Arena in Zingama City being reserved for the best of the best. It mostly features wrestling, but also cage fighting against animals and the rugby-like explodiball. Athletes are celebrities, and in general celebrities are expected to show some athleticism.

The Zingamaians are on the cusp of an **industrial revolution**, starting to build factories that produce large numbers of consumer products for the hungry crowds. Better agricultural techniques and biological developments allow Zingamaians to produce more food out of less land—and land is always a problem in such a thick jungle—as well as develop new and exciting poisons and drugs.

The Zingamaian religion places an emphasis on the Snake With No End, who blessed the line of Emperors to be unending. There's also room for several other divine beings who have intricate relationships with each other, shifting and changing according to—who would have guessed—the political climate. The temples of each god and the main temples of each region demand respect, especially as some are slowly being relegated to the status of mascots for sports teams. That being said, the Emperors of Zingama always have access to an impressive array of seemingly supernatural powers which they show off during ceremonies. Syn suspects the presence of a Crystal, but this is yet to be confirmed.

COMMON ZINGAMAIAN SAYINGS

- It's Bygone. (Said by the young of anything older than twenty years.)
- No-end, no-end. (Agreeing enthusiastically.)
- Rain on the leaves. (Something that can't be seen directly, but can be inferred.)
- Centipede win. (Something that will never happen; the Centipedes are a group of explodiball players that have never won the Nationals.)
- Swing this. (Here, try this thing; mostly regarding drugs or alcohol.)





Appendix B:

Supervisors and Mentors

Choose or roll from the following. The GM should consider adding any of the Heroic Agents (pages 47-52) to this list.

Most of the following can be used as either supervisors or mentors (or both at the same time). For brevity's sake, we refer to them as “trainers” and to the Agents under their supervision or mentorship as “trainees”.

If you have the *Crystal Heart Action Deck* you can also pull a random card from it. Treat Aces as 1, so draws of Aces to 10 correspond to the following ten Agents. The Heroics on the face cards are arranged in the following way: Jacks would prefer to be mentors; Queens prefer to be supervisors; and Kings are too busy and important to be either, so pull again.

Arx, the Detached Coach

Quiet, stern, and completely devoid of humor, this Maseian emphasizes maintaining a healthy spirit in a healthy body. His trainees go through a rigorous routine, throughout which he prohibits the use of Crystals that enhance one's physical abilities. He demands that his trainees be immaculately dressed at all times, sleep and eat well, and act with honor. Arx keeps an emotional distance from his trainees, but once one manages to cross that gap, they gain a friend for life. Arx was banned from field duty for reasons he would absolutely never discuss with you.

Beetle, the Keeper of Balance

This short Islander comes from a semi-pacifist society, and like many Syn Agents, his belief in his cultural values has only grown stronger after experiencing so much of the world. He teaches holistic balance, claiming that whenever something is taken, something of equal value must be given. He expects his trainees to leave something behind after they take a Crystal—a useful item, or maybe a lesson—and report it to him. He'll then judge if the payment was fair. If not, he will ask the Agent to restore the balance to the world in some other way.

Calaway Brayton, the Slacker

Calaway is the sort of supervisor you think you want, but after several days under him, you might find yourself reconsidering. This Islander is all smiles and no results, with a very hands-off approach. He seems to know everyone everywhere, hanging around with big-shots from around the Lands as well as joining the maintenance team's karaoke nights in the Syn citadel's engineering bay. You'll mostly get to meet him when you randomly bump into him in a corridor. He'll then ask you to fill in your own evaluation form with some plausible numbers (be a good Agent, why don't you).

Mrs Frodeliani, the Stern

This elderly Bogovian woman has been training Syn Agents since the organization's inception, though she never became an Agent herself. She's warm and motherly toward her trainees, establishing personal connections that one doesn't usually find in Syn. She genuinely cares. Thanks to mentoring lots of Agents and being part of the organization for so long, she has a lot of pull in many branches of Syn. However, she's also a firm believer in Syn's agenda, and requires nothing less than *top* performance from her trainees. When a trainee fails—especially if they do so in an embarrassing way, which she feels reflects on her own reputation—she will not hesitate to punish them harshly.

Iyani, the Spiritual

The stereotypical Zingamaian sees themselves as part of a bigger society. Iyani was the same, before joining Syn, back when he was Kabar. The first time Iyani had a Crystal socketed, they went through a spiritual awakening: their eyes were opened to a world they had never considered before. They left behind their family, their gender, and even their name. While they don't expect their trainees to do the same, they will try to help them harmonize with their Crystals through pilgrimages to wild parts of the



Lands or drug-induced spiritual journeys. They have never removed that first Crystal they socketed, and believe that everyone should find the one true Crystal that resonates with them and then dedicate their lives to achieving perfect harmony with it.

Jamil, the People's Person

Always well-kept and dressed in a myriad of opulent, head-turning styles, this stocky Zingamaian is a master of manipulation. He is a hands-off trainer, but always willing to devote his full attention should a trainee turn to him for assistance. During any conversation with Jamil, he twists and turns the discussion with such elegance that the trainee learns more from the way things were said than from what was actually spoken. Twice a year, Jamil invites his trainees to accompany him to a social event to learn etiquette and meet important people.

Hilda, The Dean

Nothing is more important than a good education, the Dean will tell you. The best armament is a well-thought-out method, she will say. Go to bed early and you will greet the new day with a clear mind, she advises. The Dean places emphasis not only on book learning, but also on the academic lifestyle: being thorough, checking your sources, challenging your own biases (with help), and taking the time to sharpen your skills and teach others. It's all good, but most of her trainees agree this Fjordstadian could do with fewer clever idioms.

Liha, the Artful

You wouldn't know that Liha has no arms just by looking at her. It's not just because of the wide shawls she wears, which obscure her torso, but also because of how *carefree* she is. You can spend an entire lunch with her, during which she eats with a telekinetically-levitated fork, without giving it much thought because of how casual and energetic the conversation is. Liha did not join Syn in search of an "ultra prosthetic" in the form of a Crystal; she joined because she had no choice after being banished from her clan. That's as far as she's willing to tell, though, and if asked will quickly change the topic to what she enjoys most: artful expression of one's inner self. She encourages her train-

ees to express themselves through their actions—what's the point of acting without *living*?—but keeps her own art to herself, locked in her room and unseen.

Mira, the Subtle

This Fjordstadian, who comes from a noble house, originally thought she was better than everyone. Now that she has a Crystal, she knows this for a fact. Relatively young for a trainer and surprisingly efficient (some would say ruthless), Mira makes sure her trainees are well-equipped to face a dangerous world. The cause always justifies the means, and the only time backstabs aren't useful are when you're facing the front.

Schultz, the Hard Worker

If it can be done, then go ahead and do it yourself: that's what Schultz believes in. Those trained under him learn to work hard and to appreciate their own handiwork. Anything from plumbing or replacing a tire to cooking or bandaging a severed leg—Schultz believes everyone should know how to handle, well, anything. Here, have some gruel—yes, it tastes horrible, what's your point?—and get the most out of your five hours of sleep, because first thing in the morning we're digging a trench. Schultz is the kind of Bogovian who sees the other Bogovians as soft.

