THE DRAGON PRINCE

Tales of Xadia™

ROLEPLAYING GAME



GAME HANDBOOK

CAM BANKS & DAN TELFER

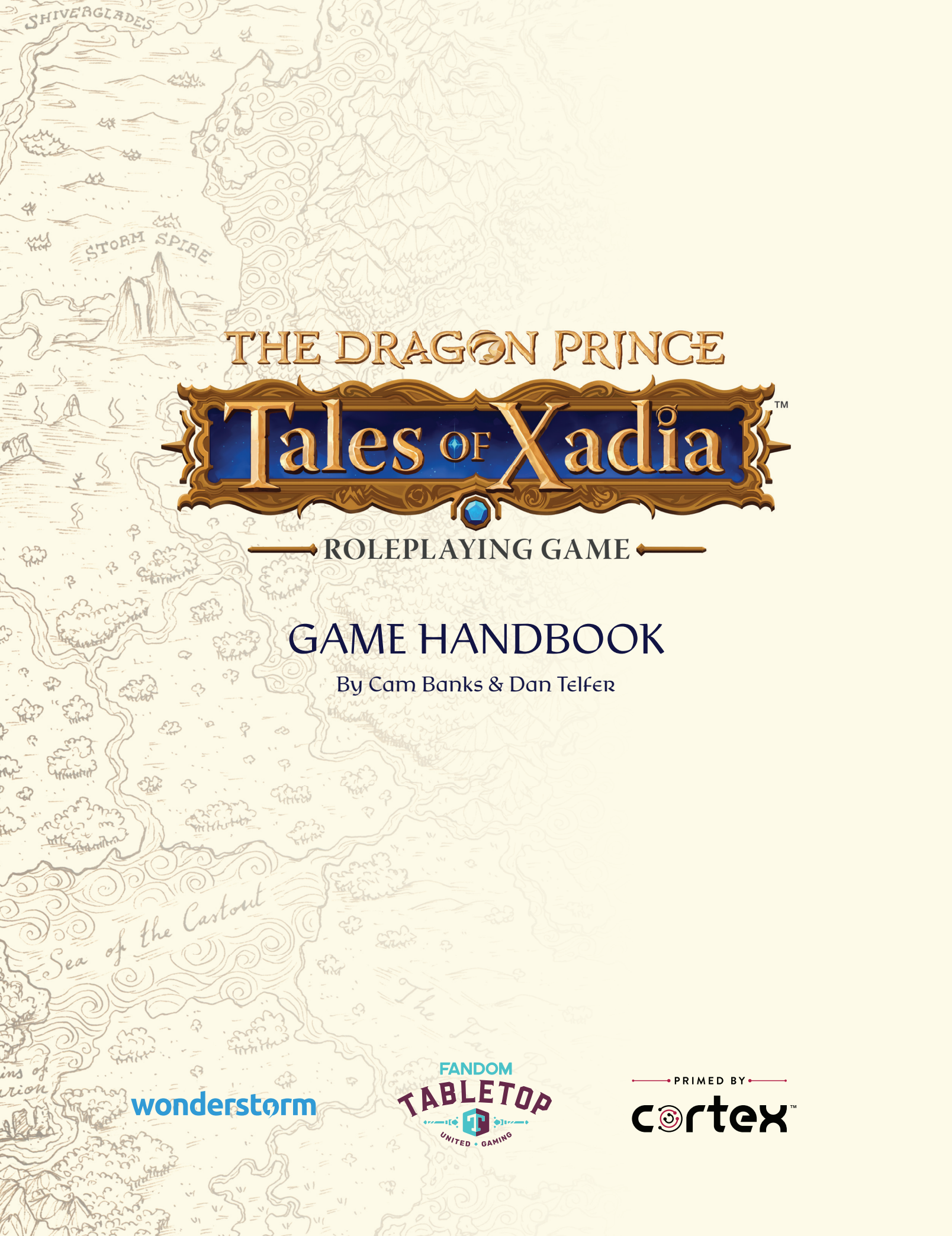

The Five
HUMAN
KINGDOMS
N
W
E
S
Skall's Hook
EBOREUS
Neolandia
BERYLGARTEN
Duren
SERPENTONGUE
Del Bar
THE BORDER
HINTERPEAK
KATOLIS
Katolis
The Cursed Caldera
Moon Nexus
Mount Kalik
Evenere
Independent Isles
Pawprint Isles
Weeping Bay
Dragontail


Tadia
The Shards
Frozen Sea
Shiverglades
The Black Tundra
Tidebound Archipelago
Lux Aurea
Storm Spire
Uncharted Forest
Midnight Desert
Drakewood
Umber Tor
Silvergrove
Moonshadow Forest
Sea of the Castout
The Far Reaches
Ruins of Elarion
Ocean Point


Del Ba
HINTERPEAK


Katolis
The Cursed Caldera
Moon Nexus
ATOLIS
Kalix


Frozen Sea
LUX AUREA
Midnight Desert
Duren
THE BORDER
The Breach
Moonstone Path
SILVERGROVE
Moonshadow Forest
Gulf of Tenebris



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ROLEPLAYING GAME

GAME HANDBOOK

By Cam Banks & Dan Telfer

wonderstorm

FANDOM TABLETOP UNITED • GAMING

PRIMED BY cortex™

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The chickens, foster kittens, snakes, French bulldogs, and cats both sweet and sassy that helped (and hindered) us along the way:

Ernie	Lawnmower	Benny
Priscilla	Cardi	Agnetha
Wanda	Nicki	Florence
Artoo	Iggy	Meow Yun-Fat
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Cécil	Impurrator Furryosa	Tortellini
Onyx	Anni	Kathi Roll
Goober	Björn	But not Penzey. She knows what she did.

Adam Bradford for bringing Cortex and Cam to Fandom and spearheading the Tales of Xadia project with his fearless vision and big ideas.

Joe Starr, William Boxx, Aliza Pearl, Michael Galvis, Amy Dallen, Vanessa Guerrero, and Trisha Hershberger for their dramatic interpretations of *Tales of Xadia* on Fandom Tabletop's Twitch channel.

With heartfelt dedication to Jackie Hofer.

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Published by Fandom.
FTT01100
ISBN: 978-1-64853-002-9
Printed in the USA.

Tales of Xadia: The Dragon Prince Roleplaying Game is published by Fandom Inc.
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FOREWORD

Although we didn't know one another at the time, Aaron and I grew up in the same extended family. One that met for hours at a time, huddled together in basements or around kitchen tables, dreaming up adventures and rolling dice to determine the fate of entire worlds. So, when Fandom came to us and said they wanted to make a TTRPG set in the world of Xadia, it was a dream come true.

But how would we even begin the seemingly impossible task of taking the lore and stories of Xadia—a world that largely existed in a few peoples' heads—and turning it into the amazing book you are now reading? We never should have worried—Fandom was more than up to the challenge, and we could not be happier with the results.



Huge thanks are in order... to everyone at Fandom, especially Cam, Dan, and Ti, along with our team at Wonderstorm who helped along the way, including Emily, Devon, Iain, Justin, and Tim. And last but certainly not least, thank YOU: the amazing community of individuals who love this world as much as we do.

Shared storytelling helped shape who we are, and we are so excited to give the same opportunity to *The Dragon Prince* community. We welcome you deeper into Xadia with open arms, and we can't wait to see what you all dream up with us!

JUSTIN & AARON

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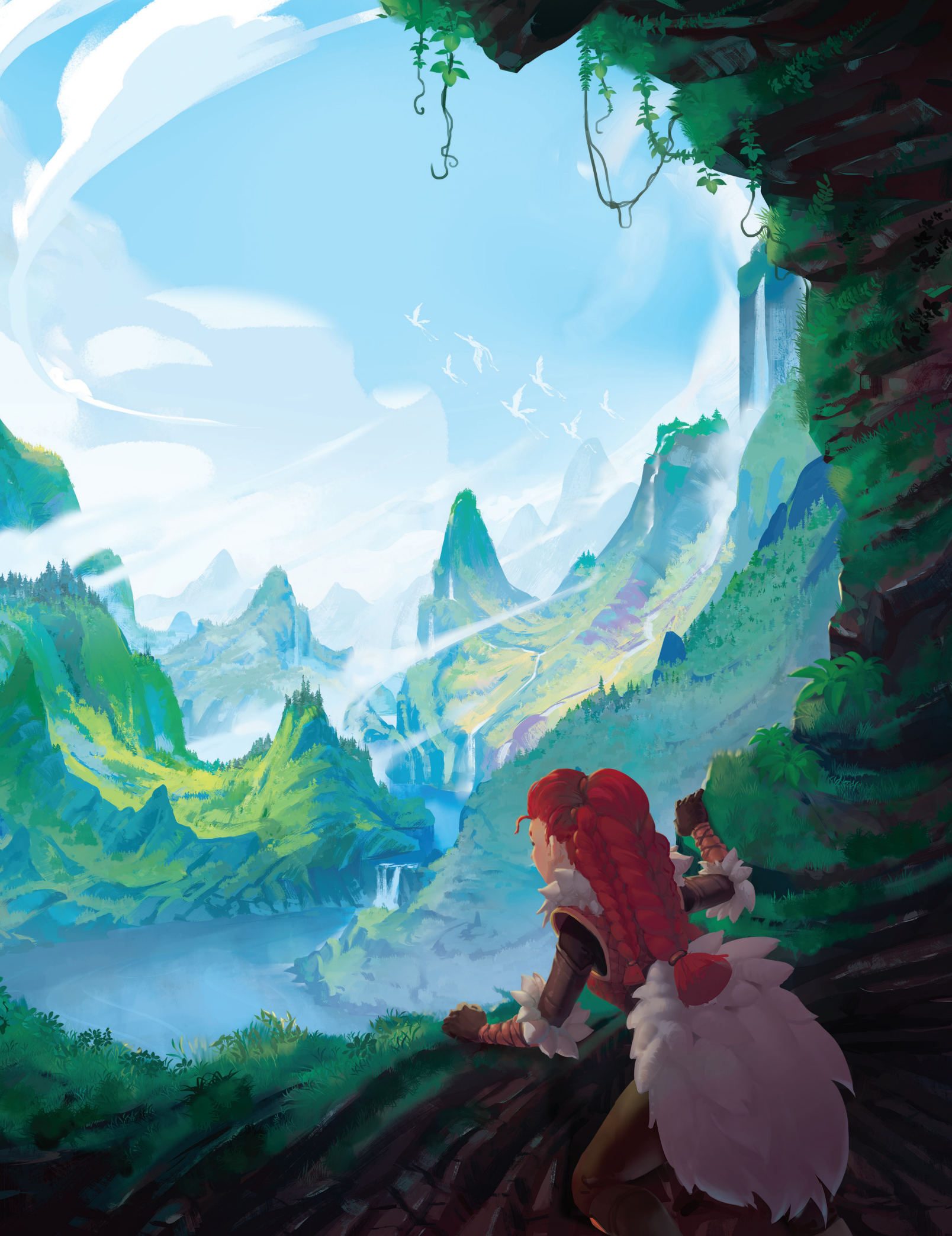
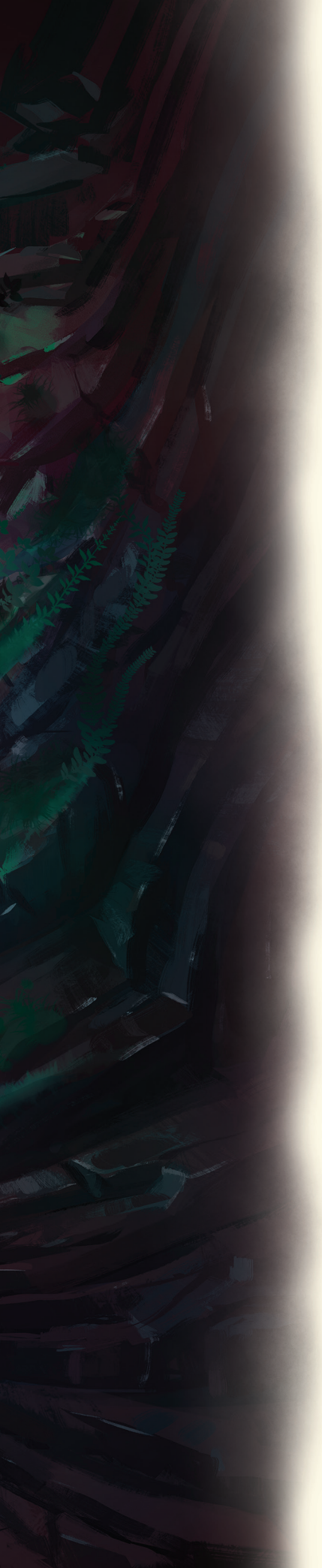




I

"Long ago, Xadia was one land
rich in magic and wonder."

AARAVOS
Book 1: Moon, Chapter 1: Echoes of Thunder

Welcome to Xadia

Whether you are new to Xadia or a seasoned visitor, knowing the history of key locations, individuals, and events adds flavor and depth to the tales of your own making.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

A World of Magic: A brief overview of the lands of Xadia, including its inhabitants and its connection to magic of all types.

A Land of Schism: A peek into the shifting political landscape of Xadia.

A Time of Opportunity: A summary of potential drives and motivations for the inhabitants of the Human Kingdoms and Xadia.

The Dragon Prince: An essential timeline of recent events and key individuals you may encounter.



A World of Magic

Do you dream of another world? Ache for ancient power? Hunger for hidden knowledge? Or maybe you just wish you could fire shadowy tendrils from your fingertips. All these adventures and more lie before you, in the *Tales of Xadia: The Dragon Prince Roleplaying Game!*

The lands of Xadia are replete with adventure and promise. To the east, elves seek balance and beauty in primal magic alongside myriad mystical creatures. To the west, the Human Kingdoms use their cunning and intelligence as they strive for survival, power, and peace in a land without magic. That is, of course, save the one practice that led the elves and dragons to drive humans out of the east: dark magic.

What role will you play in this world? What legends and wonders will you witness and achieve? Before you write your own place in Xadian history, it's important to know the tales history has already woven.

Humans, Elves, and Dragons

Humans, elves, and dragons share a complex and bloodied history, with centuries of wrongs and crimes on both sides of their conflict. At the center of their struggle, though, is magic.

The humans of Xadia are tenacious, adaptable creatures, known for their ingenuity and ability to survive in a world that hasn't always been kind to them. You see, unlike most other denizens of Xadia, humans are born entirely without magic.

Myths and legends whisper of human mages once upon a time, but most humans know they're just that: stories. Humans live in the western part of Xadia, where natural magic has all but vanished from the world around them. Humans once lived alongside the elves and magical creatures to the east—until they discovered a new kind of power, a magic that humans could finally harness as their own: dark magic.

But dark magic comes with a price: the sacrifice of another creature's magical essence. Horrified, the elves and dragons drove humans and their despicable dark arts to the west, beyond a guarded **Border** that has separated them ever since. Humans, always stalwart survivors, built up powerful kingdoms of their own in the west. There they thrive, even under the watchful eye of Xadia from just across the Border.

To the east in the magical lands of Xadia dwell six kinds of elves: **Moonshadow**, **Skywing**, **Sunfire**, **Earthblood**, **Tidebound**, and **Startouch**. While all elves share a set of distinct physical traits—pointy ears, four fingers on each hand, four toes on each foot, and a pair of horns on their head—each type of elf is deeply distinct from the rest. Most importantly, each type of elf is born with a unique and magical connection to the primal source for which they're named.

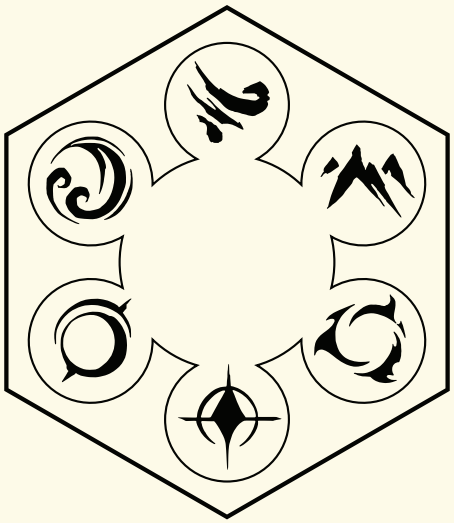
Some elves, like the Sunfire elves, make their homes in sprawling cities that have stood for centuries. Others, like the Skywing, are nomads, as elusive as the wind beneath their wings. The forest-dwelling Earthblood elves rarely venture beyond their forest homes. Most elves tend to gather and live amongst their own kind, but nearly all of them share a common belief: humans are not to be trusted. While humans and elves rarely cross paths, they're natural enemies and their hatreds run deep. Elves share this hatred of humans with the dragons of Xadia, the land's most fierce and powerful beings.

Ah, yes. The great dragons of Xadia. Teeming with primal magic and coming in all shapes and sizes, dragons are an awe-inspiring sight for humans and elves alike. The most immense and mighty are the archdragons. Ancient beings of unfathomable power, the sheer size and majesty of the archdragons command the reverence of all who behold them. They have ruled the eastern lands of Xadia as kings and queens for thousands of years.

Primal Sources

The fundamental lifeblood of Xadia is the six primal sources of magic: the **Moon**, the **Sky**, the **Sun**, the **Earth**, the **Ocean**, and the **Stars**. Primal magic is in everything. The Ocean is both the dew on spring flowers and the crushing swell of the tides, the Sun a raging inferno and a candle's flame in the dark, the Earth a tree's deepest roots and a mountain's highest peak.

While all six primal sources exist in harmony with each other, all magical creatures—from elves to adoraburrs—are uniquely connected to one primal source in particular. This intrinsic connection manifests at birth, and it grants Xadia's creatures unique and powerful abilities that come as naturally to them as breathing, as much a part of them as the beating of their hearts.



Some, however, take their magical craft further and hone their abilities into powerful spells. These devoted and studious individuals are called mages.



To know the ever-shifting power of the Moon is to be in touch with elements of illusion, mischief, duality, serenity, and subterfuge.



Magic of the Sky encompasses the invisible breezes and winds, storms and electricity, and the freedom of the sky's vast expanse.



The Sun has a dual nature: its primal magic is both destructive and life-giving. It evokes fire in all its forms, and harnesses the power of light, warmth, and healing.



Mages who wield the magic of the Earth hear the whispers of the land itself and can coax forth the might of stone or the secrets held in a single seed.



The magic of the Ocean streams together the energy of currents, floods, and waves, from the vicious cold of ice to the ebb and flow of the tides.

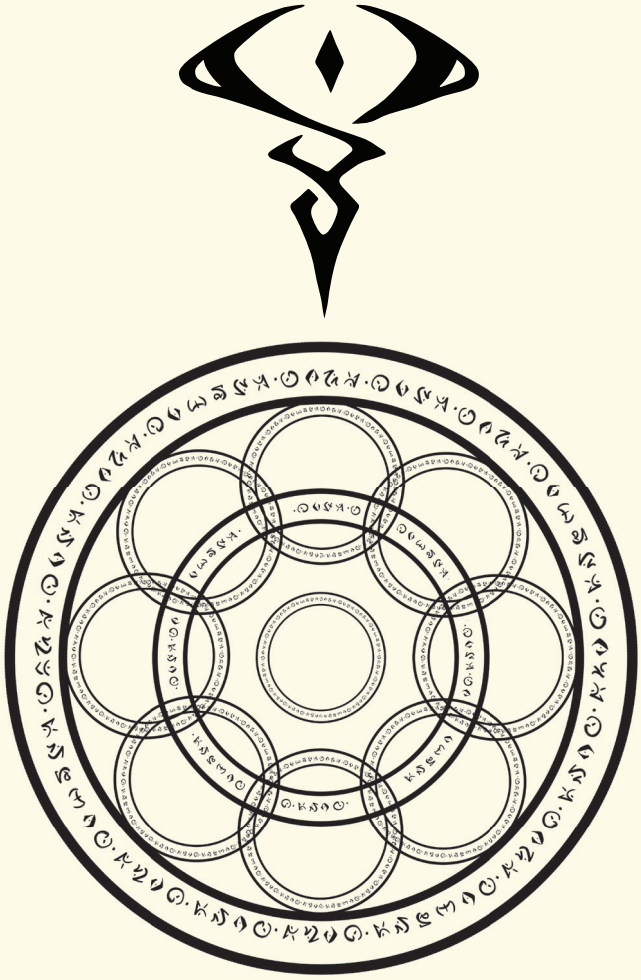


Most mysterious is the magic of the Stars. So rarely is it seen in action, so distant is its source, that it is rare to even speak of Star magic.

Elven mages can master primal magic by studying and nurturing their magical bond to the primal sources. The most powerful mages in Xadia are called archmages, an honor that can take a lifetime to earn.

Humans cannot harness primal magic: the primal sources will not bend to their will, nor answer their most desperate call. It is this disparity, this imbalance, that drove the most ambitious humans in Xadia's history to the practice of dark magic.





Dark Magic

Unable to harness primal magic, ancient humans struggled to survive in a hostile world that, to their eyes, treated them like vermin: pitiable weak things with no power of their own. Some say humans reached for dark magic out of greed, others out of desperation, and still more out of sheer curiosity. No matter the cause, the discovery of dark magic changed Xadia forever.

Dark magic comes with a cost of magical essence: a dark mage's spell uses the primal magic inherent to a sacrificed creature as the source for the spell's power. Dark mages believe this is a small sacrifice for the power it grants, and that the only limit to dark magic's potential is the mage's own ingenuity and imagination. Ancient human dark mages learned to harvest magical creatures for their horns, their feathers, their tails and talons, all to serve as reagents for dark magic spells. It's grisly work; though the harvest doesn't always end a creature's life, a dark mage may leave a griffon blind for use of its eyes, or a phoenix flightless for want of its wings. The process marks its wielder, too: years of dark magic leave mages with pale complexions, bruise-like blemishes across the body, and blackened eyes.

For better or for worse, dark magic became the key that unlocked a place of power in Xadia for all of humanity. No longer were humans the starving, frightened things that dragons crushed beneath their claws: humans were a force to be reckoned with.



A Land of Schism

Of course not all humans could stomach the cost of dark magic, but all humans were punished for it nonetheless. While the entire continent was once known as Xadia, dark magic led the elves and dragons to split the land in two. Now, Xadia ends at the Border; humans were banished to the west, which is now known as the Human Kingdoms.

Human Kingdoms

The five Human Kingdoms are **Katolis**, **Duren**, **Del Bar**, **Neolandia**, and **Evenere**. Each has their own rich history, beliefs, and leadership, but they carry the same shared legacy of banishment from their ancestral home.

The kingdom of Katolis, with its capital city of the same name, lies along the Border, a dangerous and precarious position they share with their northern neighbor Duren. Katolis maintains a mighty army and protects the Human Kingdoms from elves and Xadian threats from the west.

Duren, a kingdom blessed with rich soil, provides much of the Human Kingdoms' food supply. Neolandia spans a great desert, its sands glittering with gold. Del Bar reaches the highest peaks of the westernmost mountains, and Evenere's swamps to the southwest hide a myriad of mysteries. (See the Gazetteer of Xadia on page 32 for a closer look at each of the Human Kingdoms.)

Elven Lands

The elven civilizations to the east have deep histories that trace back farther than any written record. Kingdoms of elves rose, thrived, fell, and were forgotten long before humans discovered dark magic and changed the world forever. Some elven kingdoms have withstood the test of time. The great civilization of the Sunfire elves is perhaps the strongest and proudest in living memory. Thousands of Sunfire elves call its capital, the golden city of Lux Aurea, their home and have done so for generations.

Other elves gather in smaller groups, from the quiet forest villages of the Moonshadow elves to bustling ports off the eastern coast where all manner of elves mix and mingle. Many elves are content to live in locations that reflect their unique connection to the six primal sources: the **Uncharted Forest**, for example, is peppered with settlements of various kinds of Earthblood elves, some viciously territorial and others peacefully reclusive.

> CALLUM: One does not simply walk into Xadia!
>
> RAYLA: Actually, one does simply walk into Xadia!
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 7: Fire and Fury*

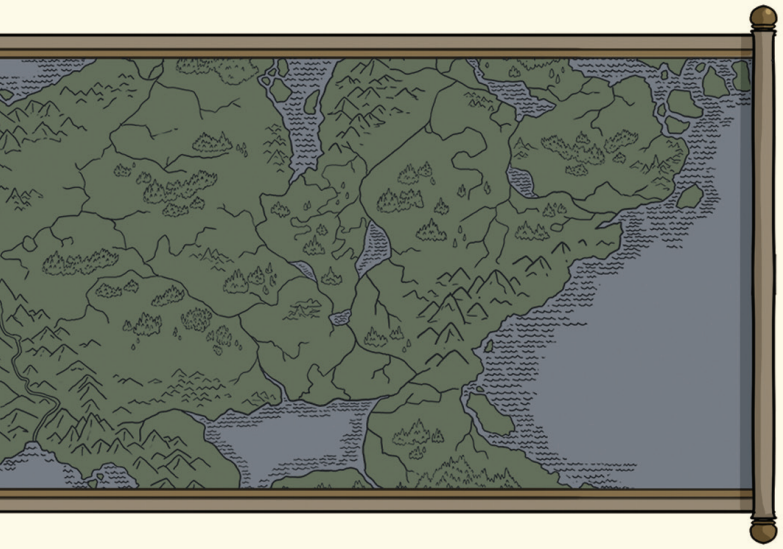
The Border

Between the Human Kingdoms and the magical lands of Xadia is the Border, a river of lava that splits the land in two.

When the elves and dragons drove humans to the west, they devised a brutal way to keep them there forever. The archdragons called upon their kindred and the full might of their primal power to tear the land asunder. Earth dragons carved and shattered the stone, Sky dragons drowned mountains with their terrible storms, Sun dragons rained fire on the forests from north to south, and Ocean dragons churned and froze the seas at either end. When the smoke and ash cleared, what remained was a jagged, scarred land with a river of magma running through it. Dragons and elves protected the Border for centuries, striking down any human that dared get too close to Xadia.

It was long believed that the Border was uncrossable—at least for humans. Elves devised ways to cross the Border when necessary, by wing or whispered secrets. However, as clever and determined as their ancestors, humans explored and tested the Border until they discovered the **Breach**, a passage that allowed the most determined explorers—and dark mages—to cross. Through the Breach, dark magic ingredients and other powerful artifacts from Xadia have occasionally slipped past the Border into the Human Kingdoms for centuries.

Recent events, however, have led to the destruction of the Breach itself. A new path has entirely opened up the Border: a scar left by war, this new crossing serves as the first real path between the Human Kingdoms and Xadia in centuries. Whether it symbolizes the first wound in a battle that will tear the world apart again or a bridge that brings the land together—well, you have a part to play in that, don't you?



Worlds in Collision

The Human Kingdoms have seen their share of internal war and strife. For centuries, they clashed and squabbled for resources and power, but eventually settled into an era of relative peace and prosperity—an era that ended with four of the five kingdoms united in war against Xadia.

> "After centuries of fighting amongst ourselves, the five human kingdoms finally found a balance. An era of peace. But a new threat has arisen to challenge all of humanity. A threat from Xadia."
>
> VIREN
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 5: Breaking the Seal*

Under the command of a dark mage called **Viren**, Katolis led a massive army composed of soldiers from nearly all the Human Kingdoms across the Border and into Xadia. Viren's campaign, fueled by generations of humanity's pain and resentment of Xadia, devastated Lux Aurea and carved a path to the **Storm Spire**. There, in a terrible, bloody confrontation now known as the **Battle of the Storm Spire**, humans, elves, and dragons came together as allies for the first time in generations to defeat Viren. (For more context and a deeper look at the events that led to this important moment in history, look ahead to the Gazetteer of Xadia on page 31.)

That day, the world changed. The old world—the divided world—is gone, and a new world rises from the ashes before our very eyes.

In the west, the Human Kingdoms are reeling. Even common citizens can sense a turning of the tides. Shall old hatreds be put to rest, or stoked anew? Will the new leaders of the Human Kingdoms choose peace, or another endless war?

Across the world, Xadia faces a reckoning, too. The Sunfire elf city of Lux Aurea, once the greatest stronghold in the land, fell to Viren's army, corrupted by vile and horrific dark magic. Are humans to be forgiven? Are they even to be trusted?

> "There are centuries of history, generations of wrongs and crimes, on both sides! I am responsible for some of those wrongs. I've done terrible things. I thought they were necessary. Now I don't know."
>
> HARROW
>
> *Book 1: Moon, Chapter 2: What Is Done*



A Time of Opportunity

The Battle of the Storm Spire has turned the page on a new chapter of Xadian history with endless potential. One you can help to write!

New World, Old Conflicts

As you find your place in Xadia, remember that every conflict has its roots in another. The resentment and hatred that culminated at the Storm Spire began long, long ago—and will continue long into the future.

Who struck first?

It seems like a simple question... but look closer.

Who struck first in the conflict between Xadia and the Human Kingdoms? Was it Viren, the Katolian dark mage who led the war that culminated at the Battle of the Storm Spire? Or were Viren's monstrous actions the tragic yet inevitable result of Xadia's centuries-long condemnation of all of humanity for the crime of dark magic?

Should dark magic be considered evil? Was it a necessary step in humanity's struggle to survive, at the mercy of a world that carelessly trampled them, that pitied them, that wounded them again and again and again? Or is it always unforgivable, in every single circumstance?

Say, for the moment, you're an elf. Now that humans may wish to cross peacefully into the east, is reconciliation with any humans safe or even justified? Is there more to humanity than what you've been taught? Or is there nothing to humans beyond dark magic—a power that butchers your Xadian kindred? An art that some humans still practice today?

And what of humanity? You are able to cross into Xadia—your ancestral homeland, forbidden to you all your life—and you are the first humans to do so in centuries. You have so long been disregarded by Xadia as lesser, barbaric, even expendable. Will you prove your worth? Is this a second chance, or an opportunity to seize what was rightfully yours all along?

Are your old enemies still enemies, or new friends?

Shall we build borders or bridges?

The answers, of course, are up to you.



Friendship

> "No matter how dark the night, the Sun is forever your friend."
>
> *Sunfire Elf proverb*

War and strife cast long shadows, but beneath them shines a brilliant ray of hope: love and friendship are stronger!

Not everyone in Xadia lets themselves be confined or consumed by the conflicts that have shaped the world around them. Many see past the scars on the world and instead embrace its beauty, its potential.

Some elves are obsessively curious about humans, their history, and their cultures. They can't wait to get their hands on human books or fiddle with human trinkets. It's incredible what humans have managed to accomplish with so little magic in their lives. Many humans, too, have dreamed of a conversation with an elf. How delightful it would be to tend to a garden alongside the green thumb of an Earthblood friend! What marvelous tales Skywing elves must weave, having seen the world from on high!

Humans, elves, and dragons have a myriad of differences between them, but they share the same world. They are bound together. Perhaps, hand in hand, they can triumph together, too.

Adventure!

If there's one thing anyone, human or elf, can agree on, it's this: Xadia was made for adventure.

In a land full of magic and secrets, unlimited excitement awaits those bold enough to find it! You might explore the strange marshes of Evenere with help from your promising new pals. Maybe the **Uncharted Forest** calls to you, begging for you to come chart it! The **Gulf of Tenebris** and the **Spinning Sea** may be too treacherous to sail alone, but a team of brave, salty sailors might find the quest of a lifetime in those dangerous waters!

Tales abound for you and your friends! We provide one of our own later in this book (page 207), and we hope you're also excited to spin a tale of your own making.

Ready for adventure, or need more inspiration? Gather your companions (and at least one glow toad) and perhaps peruse our Gazetteer (page 29) together—there's sure to be something that sparks your imagination. Onward, to Xadia!

The Dragon Prince

Wait! We've forgotten something, haven't we? That seed of hope a few humans returned to the Queen of the Dragons—the reason the entire continent didn't fall into all out war immediately after the Battle of the Storm Spire—where did all of that begin?

The Fall of Two Kings

About ten years ago, **King Harrow** and **Queen Sarai**, the royal family of Katolis, set out across the Border on a dangerous quest. The Human Kingdoms were suffering under an unbearably harsh winter where widespread famine would claim countless lives unless they could retrieve an ingredient for a powerful dark magic spell: the heart of a magma titan.

Their mission succeeded: High Mage Viren's dark magic spell saved the Human Kingdoms, but at a terrible cost. The **Dragon King Avizandum**, enraged by the human incursion into Xadia, struck down Sarai as the humans fled back across the Border. Countless lives were saved, but King Harrow lost the person he loved most. His hatred of Avizandum festered. Years later, Harrow returned to Xadia with Viren and a dark magic weapon. With it, they did the impossible: they slayed the Dragon King.

Xadia viewed the death of Avizandum as an unforgivable act of war. Elves struck back without mercy: a group of elite Moonshadow elf assassins crossed the Border to kill King Harrow. When the King of Katolis fell, his High Mage, Viren, stoked humanity's thirst for vengeance into an inferno.

As the world spiraled towards inevitable bloodshed, three unlikely heroes discovered an amazing secret.

The Rise of Three Princes

The night King Harrow died, his sons, princes **Ezran** and **Callum**, encountered a foe of their own: a Moonshadow elf assassin named **Rayla**. During their clash, they uncovered the egg of the Dragon Prince, hidden away by Viren in the depths of the castle.

All the world assumed the egg was destroyed when King Harrow killed Avizandum. Shocked that it was hidden by Viren to be used in heinous dark magic spells, the three realized that they alone had a chance to restore peace to both their lands. Together, Callum, Ezran, and Rayla put aside their conflict and resolved to return the egg to its mother, the **Dragon Queen Zubeia**.

The companions embarked on a perilous adventure across the world to Xadia. To their surprise, the egg hatched along the way, and the lovable baby dragon Azymondias—Zym to his friends—was born. When Ezran, Callum, and Rayla finally returned Azymondias to his mother, their selfless act touched the hearts and fates of humans, elves, and dragons alike. Perhaps peace was possible after all.

You might not cross paths with these famous friends during your time in Xadia, but consider taking a lesson from their story. With the strength of their hope and friendship, they altered the fate and future of the entire world.

You'll hear more about Ezran, Callum, Rayla, and many more legendary characters in Xadia. But they're just part of a larger world! Xadia's future is an open book, and many would-be heroes and villains strive for peace or rush to seize power. Everyone has a part to play... especially you!

> "When I first came here, I was on a quest for revenge. But the moment I saw that egg, everything changed. Now this is a journey of redemption."
>
> RAYLA
>
> *Book 1: Moon, Chapter 5: An Empty Throne*







II

"You practicing magic or are you losing to Bait at a game of rolly-cubes?"

RAYLA
Book 2: Sky, Chapter 7: Fire and Fury

Welcome to Cortex

What is Cortex anyway? In this chapter, we provide a brief overview of the game and introduce you to some of the terms you'll encounter later on in this book.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

What Kind of Game Is This?: A summary of the *Tales of Xadia* roleplaying game system.

Example of Play: Follow along with an example scene.

What's in this Book?: A breakdown of the remaining chapters of this book.



What Kind of Game Is This?

Tales of Xadia is a **tabletop roleplaying game** about people who experience love, war, family, heartbreak, and triumph in the world of Wonderstorm's *The Dragon Prince*. With your friends, you create **characters** whose tales you want to tell. In your shared imagination, you forge alliances, uncover secrets, engage in mighty battles, and protect those you love from peril and prophecy. Work together or at cross-purposes... or both! Whatever your chosen path, your characters explore the mysteries of the elves, the Human Kingdoms, and the dragons, as well as the primal sources that flow through everything.

To play *Tales of Xadia*, one person acts as the **Narrator**. Everyone else is a **player**. You also need game **dice** (physical or virtual), a pencil and some paper or a blank character journal (or a tablet or other mobile device) to record your **character traits** and info, and a supply of game tokens such as poker chips or beads.

PLAYING WITHOUT A TABLE

The term "tabletop" doesn't mean you have to play this game sitting around a table. We use this term to distinguish it from computer RPGs and MMOs, which are video games. We support *Tales of Xadia* with online digital tools, character journals, and virtual dice—at its heart, it's a shared story adventure game, and your table can be virtual if that's how you want to play it.

For more information about our virtual tabletop offerings, visit *talesofxadia.com*.



Players

Tales of Xadia works best with two to six players, each creating and playing their own **player character** (PC). You record your player character's vital statistics and information in a **character journal**. As a player, you imagine what your character would do; describe their actions, feelings, and experiences; and use the game rules to see if they succeed or fail.

As a player, you are responsible for:

- Deciding what your PC does.
- Confronting any problems that the Narrator throws in front of your PC.
- Pointing your PC in directions that make for good stories.
- Supporting other PCs and giving them a shot at what they're good at.
- Deciding how your PC changes and grows over time.
- In general, exploring the world of Xadia and telling your character's story.

Narrators

The Narrator presents exciting scenes, locations, and **Narrator characters** (NCs) in the form of an open-ended **tale**. Often, but not always, the Narrator is the person who bought the game and has read the rules a few times. As the Narrator, you give the players fun situations to respond to and use the rules to reveal how their characters interact with the world they're in.

As Narrator, you are responsible for:

- Preparing and presenting the tale to the players.
- Acting out the parts of NCs and deciding how they react to the PCs.
- Asking leading questions of the players to lead them into further adventure.
- Revealing the important details of the world to the players.
- Watching over the game rules at the table and managing the pace of the session.
- In general, bringing the world of Xadia to life in the minds of the players.

Dice

We use five different kinds of dice in *Tales of Xadia*: 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12. The number tells you how many sides the die has; the more sides, the bigger the numbers. A handful of dice together is called a **dice pool**. Roll all the dice in a dice pool together, right out in the open—even if you're the Narrator!



4 6 8 10 12

Any time you roll a die, the number you get on the die is called the **result**. Usually you choose two results to add together to get a **total**. Adding two or more results together is about the only math you need to do in *Tales of Xadia*. A third die from your dice pool, called the **effect die**, might be chosen to show the impact of your success.

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
6 6	5 3 4	8
6 8 12	2 6 11	17
4 6 8 10	4 6 7 3	13

We differentiate the dice results by the color of the outline, interior, and numbers.

- 6 Blue shape with white number is die type.
- 6 White shape with blue outline and black number is a chosen die result.
- 6 White shape with grey outline and number is an unchosen die result.
- 6 Green denotes the chosen effect die. For more information on effect dice, please see page 74.

Dice are used to resolve **tests**, **contests**, and **challenges**. They let you know if your PC succeeds, fails, or turns the story in their favor.



TEST **CONTEST** **CHALLENGE**

We categorize tests, contests, and challenges with the above icons. They are used primarily in our tales, *The Lost Oasis*, *The Gloaming Glade*, and *The Corrupted Core* (page 207).

Traits and Die Ratings

All characters in *Tales of Xadia*, whether they're PCs or NCs, are described using game **traits**. Traits cover a range of descriptive elements, grouped into **trait sets**. These include **attributes**, **values**, **distinctions**, **assets**, and **specialties**.

Every trait in the game is rated with a die, called a **die rating**. Whenever you use a trait, you pick up a die of that many sides for your dice pool. In this way, your dice pool is made up of all of the traits that might affect how successful your PC is in doing what you want them to do.

The die rating tells you how much of an effect that trait has on the outcome of any given test, contest, or challenge. They're a useful shorthand for how strong, smart, serious, or skilled your character is.

More sides don't always mean better, so much as they mean more important or significant in the story. Having a d12 in a trait like **Strength** vs a d12 in a trait like **Justice** doesn't mean that physical strength or valuing justice measure the same things. It just means that being inhumanly strong can affect the outcome just as much as being obsessed with justice can.

Here's a selection of Rayla's attributes (a type of trait) from her example journal on page 22. If a test calls for **Agility**, add a d10 to your dice pool.



d10 **Agility**

d8 **Awareness**

What kind of character traits can you expect to find in *Tales of Xadia*? Here's a quick list:

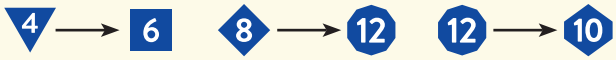
Attributes	Values	Distinctions
Agility	Devotion	Kindred
Awareness	Glory	Vocation
Influence	Justice	Quirk
Intellect	Liberty	
Spirit	Mastery	
Strength	Truth	

Flip to Understanding Your Character on page 65 for more details about these traits.

Stepping Up and Stepping Down

Sometimes you swap out one or more dice in your dice pool for dice with more or fewer sides. This is called **stepping up** or **stepping down** a die rating.

To step up a die by one, swap it for a die that's one step bigger than the original, like a d6 to a d8. To step down a die by one, swap it out for a die that's one step smaller, like a d6 to a d4.



Stepping Up by 1 | **Stepping Up by 2** | **Stepping Down by 1**

Die ratings can only have five possible steps, from d4 to d12. If you step a d12 in a dice pool up by one, it remains at d12, but you can step up another die in your dice pool by one step instead. If you step a d4 down by one, it's removed from the dice pool.

If you're asked to step up a d12 that isn't currently in a dice pool, it remains at d12, but you gain a d6 alongside it. Wherever that d12 goes, the d6 goes with it.

Hitches and Botches

Any die that comes up with a result of 1 is called a **hitch**. Set hitches aside; they can't be included in a total and they count as zeroes. The Narrator has the special ability to activate hitches; this is covered later in the Player's Guide (page 76). When the Narrator rolls a hitch, it's called an **opportunity**. Why the different terms? It's because some game effects apply only to hitches, and some only apply to opportunities.

If all your dice come up as 1, that's a **botch** and it's a sign of trouble, as your total is effectively zero. Failing a dice roll isn't that bad most of the time. The story moves forward, just not how your PC might like it to. With a botch, there's no ambiguity—things are bad for your PC, and their story hits a brick wall for a moment.

Dice Pool	Dice Results	Total
d6 d6	1 1	0
d6 d8 d12	2 6 1	8

1 Black with blue outline and a white "1" is a hitch.

Plot Points

Plot points (PP) are a way for players to affect the tale beyond the roll of the dice or their own choices. Plot points can be spent to give yourself more dice for your dice pool, make the dice you have more powerful, or activate certain traits or trait special effects (SFX) on your character journal.

You need a way to keep track of plot points. One way is to write them in your character journal as tally marks. Another option is to use poker chips or some other kind of token (pennies, paperclips, glass beads... you get the idea).

Keep a pile of them in the middle of the table for everyone to draw from. Toss them back into the pile when they're spent. When players earn PP from activating certain SFX, or when the Narrator activates player hitches, these PP come from an unlimited supply.

The Narrator uses plot points as well. Important NCs have their own PP, which are the Narrator's responsibility to keep track of.

Stress

When bad things happen to your PC or to the NCs they're dealing with, we use a kind of trait called **stress** to keep track of the consequences. Stress comes in six different types: **Afraid**, **Angry**, **Corrupted**, **Exhausted**, **Injured**, and **Insecure**.

Characters don't have a die rating in any stress types by default. Once they take stress from failing a test, contest, or challenge, or by rolling hitches and having them activated by the Narrator, a die rating of that stress becomes attached to the character, at a minimum of 6. The bigger the die rating, the more that stress is affecting the character's chances of success.

Stress isn't included in your dice pool like other traits. Instead, it gets included in your opponent's dice pool, effectively making things worse for your character. If stress is stepped up beyond 12 for any reason, the character becomes **stressed out**. A stressed out character can't do anything until their stress is **recovered** or reduced.

Stress that lasts longer or is much worse is called **trauma**. You gain trauma once you're stressed out. Even if you recover your stress and get rid of it, trauma stays around and must be recovered using more time and more help.

What a dice pool may look like if no characters have stress

CHARACTER'S DICE POOL	NARRATOR'S DICE POOL
4 8 10	4 8 10

What a dice pool may look like if the PC has Angry 8 stress

CHARACTER'S DICE POOL	NARRATOR'S DICE POOL
4 8 10	4 8 8 10

What a dice pool may look like if the NC has Corrupted 10 stress

CHARACTER'S DICE POOL	NARRATOR'S DICE POOL
4 8 10 10	4 8 10

Your Character Journal

Your PC has a **character journal** that you use to keep track of vital statistics, personality traits, and important game notes. All your traits, including their die ratings, are recorded on your character journal together with other useful information. When you're playing the game, the character journal helps you build your dice pool.

You can use pencil and paper or print out a copy of a character journal to keep track of your info, or you can use the digital tools at *talesofxadia.com*. If you use the online tools, you can also roll virtual dice and manage plot points that way.



RAYLA (she/her)

As of the end of *Book One: Moon.*

VALUES

Devotion 10

Love and devotion compel and define me.

Glory 4

If those I care about know me, that's all the legacy I want.

Justice 8

At great personal cost I will strive for what's right.

Liberty 8

My real allegiance is to my heart and those who know it.

Mastery 6

I am naturally talented and feel little need to seek training from others.

Truth 6

I search for my own truth, rather than the truth others feed me.

DISTINCTIONS

Moonshadow Elf 8

As a Moonshadow elf, Rayla draws power from the Moon and is at her strongest at night, especially on the night of a full moon. Her heritage provides her with greater natural agility and speed than other elves.

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Elf Grace:* Spend a PP to step up your **Agility** die in a test, contest, or challenge that factors in your elven speed and balance.
- *Moonshadow Form:* When trying to hide, sneak, or go unseen during a full moon, spend a PP to double your **Moonshadow Elf** distinction die and keep an extra die in your total.

Reluctant Assassin 8

Rayla's been trained since she was young to join Moonshadow elf hunting parties, but her heart just isn't in it.

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

Act First, Think Later 8

More often than not, Rayla leaps into action regardless of the consequences, which can make her seem both brave and reckless.

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.



SPECIALTIES

Sneaking 6

Used for getting around without being noticed.

Swordplay 6

Used when doing battle armed with swords, knives, and other bladed weapons.

Tracking 6

Used when following or pursuing others by the evidence they leave behind.

ASSETS

Elven Butterfly Blades 8

Rayla's twin weapons are both deadly and versatile, capable of transforming between lethal blades and curved hooks. While a sharp blade is always useful in a fight, a surprise hook to the legs can catch an opponent off-guard.

Example of Play

So what does this look like in play? Here's a short example based on the scene in the first episode of *The Dragon Prince* Season One, where Rayla encounters a Katolian soldier and has to make a difficult choice.

Paula is playing Rayla, the Moonshadow assassin. Justin's the Narrator for this scene.

> **Justin**: So, let's start a new scene. Runaan has already made it clear that if you see any guards or soldiers, they must be killed before they can warn the castle.
>
> **Paula**: All right. Do I see or hear anyone nearby?
>
> **Justin**: Let's try a test. If you succeed at this you can use the effect die to create an asset, which you can use later. If you fail, I'll tell you what happens.

Justin picks up d8 d8 to represent the difficulty of the test. He rolls them both: 6 and 3. He adds them together for the total.

> **Justin**: I get a 9.

Test: Detect any guards or soldiers (CHALLENGING d8 d8)

Justin's Difficulty Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
d8 d8	3 6 4	9

Since Justin only rolled two dice, he uses the default d4 effect die.

Paula looks at her character journal.

> **Paula**: I've got an **Awareness** attribute of d10 and a **Reluctant Assassin** distinction of d8. She's motivated right now out of duty to the elves, so that's the value of **Devotion**, which is d10. Rayla has a specialty of **Tracking** at a 6, so that goes into my dice pool also.



- d10 **Awareness**
- d8 **Reluctant Assassin**
- d10 **Devotion**
- 6 **Tracking**



Paula: Total is 13. That beats the difficulty. I use a leftover 8 for the effect die, so does that become a 8 asset?

Justin: That's right. What do you want to call that?

Paula: How about **On the Hunt**?

Justin: Okay. There's a single soldier, walking alone. You know he can't see you yet, but he's sure someone is out there. "Declare yourself in the name of King Harrow!" Lightning strikes overhead, outlining your band briefly in blue-white light. He triggers his crossbow but the bolt hits a tree trunk harmlessly, and he spins and runs away as fast as he can.

2

Paula's Roll Against Justin's Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
6 8 10 10	4 5 6 7	13

ASSET CREATED FROM EFFECT DIE

On the Hunt 8

Paula: I go after him! I go back and forth between the ground and the trees, trying to cover the distance and catch up to him.

Justin: We don't need a test for this chase. He trips and falls once or twice, and you easily catch up. As the rain continues to pound around him, he raises his crossbow again. You don't think he can see you, and he's panting, out of breath.

Paula: I jump at him, trying to knock him down and get the crossbow out of the way.

Justin: Sounds good! This will be another test, though. It's possible he avoids your attack and might get away, so put together a new dice pool while I roll the difficulty...

Justin rolls 8 8 again, adding the soldier's **Man-at-Arms** 8 trait as well, and gets 5, 3, and 2.

Justin: ...which is 8.



Katolian Soldier

Man-at-Arms 8
Crossbow 8

TEST: Prevent the Katolian soldier from avoiding your attack and escaping (CHALLENGING 8 8)

3

Justin's Difficulty Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
8 8 8	2 3 5	8

Paula: Okay, so this time I'll switch to my **Agility** 10, this is **Reluctant Assassin** 8 again, and I think this is still **Devotion**, so another 10.

Justin: Yes, but since you're only using your feet, you won't include your **Elven Butterfly Blades**.

Paula: So no blades, but another 8 for my **On the Hunt** temporary asset.

Rolling...

Paula gets two 1s, a 4, and a 5, for a total of 9 and two hitches.



10 Agility
8 Reluctant Assassin
10 Devotion
8 On the Hunt

4

Paula's Roll Against Justin's Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
8 8 10 10	4 1 5 1 4	9

Justin: That's a success, but I'm going to buy those hitches from you, and let's say that while you do knock him down he's not disarmed just yet. Here's a plot point, and you gain **Insecure** 8 stress. That's 6 for the first hitch, and the next hitch steps it up by one.

Paula: So I'm losing some confidence here, yeah?

Justin: Right. Both feet slam into him, and knock him backward, down a slick slope and into a gully. He lands in about two inches of running water, but he still has that crossbow.

Paula: I leap down, and this time I really want to get that crossbow out of the way, with my butterfly blades all the way out.

How does the number of hitches affect the stress rating?

1 Hitch	6 Insecure
2 Hitches	8 Insecure
3 Hitches	10 Insecure
4 Hitches	12 Insecure



8 **Insecure**
+1 PP

Justin: All right! Let's set this difficulty for you. He's going to try to use his crossbow on you, so that's a **Crossbow** 6 added to his **Man-at-Arms** trait, and only 6 6 this time for difficulty since he's kind of at a disadvantage now. But he does get to roll your **Insecure** 8 stress, too. Rolling... 5, 5, 4, 3, and 2. A total of 10.

TEST: Defend yourself against the Katolian soldier's counterattack (EASY 6 6)

5

Justin's Difficulty Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
6 6 6 8 8	5 4 3 5 2	10

Paula: I'm using the *Elf Grace* SFX on my **Moonshadow Elf** distinction to step up my **Agility** to 12. That costs me a plot point. But I think I'm starting to worry about this, so I use the *Hinder* SFX on my **Reluctant Assassin** to make that a 4 and get a plot point for it. With my **Swordplay** 6 specialty and **Elven Butterfly Blades** 8 asset, I'm not worried about failing this roll. My temporary asset is still around, right?

Justin: Only if you spend a PP. Then you have it until the end of the session.

Paula: Okay, so I spend a PP and add **On the Hunt** too.

Paula gets a 10 on the 12, a 1 on the 4, a 1 on the 6, and a 3 on both of the 8s. Two more hitches! Her total is 13.



12 **Agility**
-1 PP

4 **Reluctant Assassin**
+1 PP

6 **Swordplay**

8 **Elven Butterfly Blades**

8 **On the Hunt**
-1 PP

6

Paula's Roll Against Justin's Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
4 6 8 8 12	1 1 3 3 10	13

Justin: You're having some bad luck with those hitches. Here's another plot point, but I'm stepping up your **Insecure** stress twice more to 12. You still succeed, though, so here's what happens. He brings up his crossbow, your blades knock it to the side and out of the way. You have him entirely at your mercy! You can see that he's terrified. He says, "Who are you?"

Paula: I could just end it right here, but I don't think that's what she wants to do. So she just hesitates. That **Insecure** 12 stress is pretty overwhelming. What does he do?

Justin: His eyes are wide, but then they narrow just a little, and he scuttles away from your blades.

Paula: I let him go.

Justin: Okay. He runs off into the night, and leaves you there standing in the rain, thinking about what just happened. Great scene!

1 Hitch	**Insecure** 6
2 Hitches	**Insecure** 8
3 Hitches	**Insecure** 10
4 Hitches	**Insecure** 12



12 **Insecure**
+1 PP

EFFECT

If Rayla's **Insecure** 12 stress had stepped up one more time, she would have been stressed out and taken out of the scene.



What's in this Book?

In addition to the two introductory chapters, Welcome to Xadia and Welcome to Cortex (you're reading this one right now!), *Tales of Xadia* has five sections that cover the rules of the game and the fantastic world of *The Dragon Prince*.

- **Gazetteer of Xadia**
  This section covers the many diverse and colorful creatures, people, and places of the setting of *The Dragon Prince*, from the Human Kingdoms in the west to the lands of elves and dragons in the east. It opens with a timeline of major events in the history of the world, and then describes many of the important locations a player or Narrator needs to know about to create new characters and new tales.
- **Player's Guide**
  This section expands on the basic information of Welcome to Cortex and goes into greater detail on how to create your own character and fill out their character journal. It breaks down the important rules for tests, contests, and challenges, and how your character grows over time with each session of play.
- **Mage's Guide**
  This section goes into greater detail about the six primal sources of magic and the seventh source, dark magic. Rules for spells, mystical artifacts, and primal stones are all here.
- **Narrator's Guide**
  This section introduces the Narrator to all of the advice, guidance, and rules needed to narrate a game of *Tales of Xadia* successfully. It includes information on Narrator characters, catalysts, and building your own chronicle of tales for players to interact with.
- ***The Tale of the Corrupted Core***
  This tale starts immediately after the end of Season Three of *The Dragon Prince* and brings the PCs together for the beginning of an all-new chapter in the story of Lux Aurea, the Sunfire elf capital city. Can the PCs heal the Sunforge of its corruption? Or will they join the fate of so many Sunfire elves after Viren and Aaravos' horrific act?







III

"As a father, I have a selfish wish. And that is for you and Ezran to be free. Reject the chains of history."

HARROW
Book 2: Sky, Chapter 6: Heart of a Titan

Gazetteer of Xadia

In this chapter, you'll find everything you need to flesh out the backstory for your tale. From the political machinations of the Human Kingdoms, to the cultural practices of elves, to the habits of the elusive dragons, get ready to dive deep into the rich tapestry of Xadia.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

Timeline of Events: A brief history of Xadia, beginning with the fall of Elarion.

The Human Kingdoms: A breakdown of each kingdom's characteristics, resources, and legends.

The Border: A glimpse into the creation of the great division and the various paths across.

The Elves: A summary of what's known about the six types of elves.

The Dragons: A description of the many types of dragons and their primal connections.

Xadian Creatures: A selection of creatures, magical and otherwise.

Timeline of Events

Where did all of this begin, and where are we now? What events and conflicts shaped the world your characters inhabit? Let's take a walk through the pages of Xadia's history. It all began in a city called **Elarion**...



Once Upon Elarion

The fall of Elarion is an event shrouded in whispers and rumors, but this ancient city laid the foundations for the conflict in *The Dragon Prince*. Players and Narrators alike should know some details of what happened there.

Elarion was the first great settlement of humans, powerless creatures with no magic in their blood. It arose long, long ago in Xadia somewhere near what later became the Border. The humans of Elarion struggled together against famine, plague, and the indifference of Xadia's magical denizens, at the mercy of the world around them.

One heart took pity on the plight of humanity. A unicorn, unique among her own rare kind, saw the strength and ingenuity of the human spirit where others saw weakness and beastly ignorance. Her name was Leola. While elves warned that if humans were meant to wield magic they would have been born with it, she gifted the wisest humans with secrets: the language of the dragons and the runes that shaped spells.

With the unicorn's gift, the most determined minds among the humans could finally harness primal magic. It was difficult and dangerous work, and few could bear the grueling path of a rune mage. With just a small taste of magic, humanity thrived. Elarion grew from the seedling of a settlement into a beautiful white city, nestled in the shadow of a great mountain. But that small taste left some humans hungry—starved, even—for a better path. An easier path. And thus Elarion became the birthplace of a new form of magic, a shortcut to primal power: dark magic.

Dark magic required the sacrifice of magical creatures for their innate primal magic, a price that horrified the elves and dragons. As zealous dark mages spilled blood for their craft, the King of the Dragons, **Sol Regem**, confronted **Ziard**, humanity's most powerful dark mage, and offered an ultimatum: give up the practice of dark magic, or he would reduce Elarion to ash. Ziard refused the Dragon King, and Sol Regem set out to raze Elarion to the ground. Ziard, desperate to protect his home and the innocent people within it, challenged Sol Regem with a powerful dark magic spell: fire met fire, and Ziard was incinerated, while Sol Regem was struck blind by the mage's flames.

It was but the first strike in a long, vicious struggle. Some Xadians sought to wipe out humanity entirely, but others proposed a compromise: a dividing of the world with humanity banished to the west, and the rest of Xadia across the Border to the east, free of dark magic's vile taint.

And so the world was split in two.

Rise of the Human Kingdoms

Thrust out of their ancestral homeland and into the unknown west, humanity once again struggled to survive in a new and hostile home.

As they built new civilizations from nothing, humanity began to tear itself apart. Humans struggled for control of the region's resources, from food to wealth to safety from Xadia's wrath. Through the chaos, the practice of dark magic became instrumental: kings and queens offered riches and prestige to dark mages in exchange for their power—and, more importantly, their loyalty. Eventually, though, the dust settled, and five powerful kingdoms emerged from the ashes of the conflict: **Katolis**, **Del Bar**, **Duren**, **Evenere**, and **Neolandia**.

Duren and Katolis, the two kingdoms along the Border itself, claim the most fertile soil and most forgiving climates in the west, but such blessings come with a burden. Both kingdoms live in constant threat from elves and dragons across the Border and have built up impressive military might to protect themselves and the rest of humanity from Xadian incursions. The three westernmost kingdoms—the mountainous Del Bar, the desert Neolandia, and the swampland Evenere—endure challenging landscapes and harsh climates, but the threat of Xadia rarely reaches them.

The last ten years or so have been a time of relative peace among the five Human Kingdoms. Together they overcame a great famine, and the resulting prosperity has softened old resentments and wounds between them. Leaders from each kingdom, together known as the Pentarchy, come together for diplomatic summits to discuss and resolve disputes without rushing to war or bloodshed.

Without reason to fight each other, though, perhaps it was only a matter of time before the Human Kingdoms united against their oldest enemy: Xadia.

Battle of the Storm Spire

Tensions between Xadia and the Human Kingdoms reached a breaking point when **Avizandum**, the King of the Dragons, was killed by **King Harrow** of Katolis. In retaliation, a squad of elite Moonshadow elf assassins took Harrow's life in kind. Not even a month later, more assassination attempts—some successful—struck the other Human Kingdoms' leadership as well. The dark mage **Viren** pointed a scathing finger of blame at the east.

Seeking revenge for their leaders and safety for their people, Del Bar, Evenere, and Neolandia allied with Katolis, joining Viren's campaign against Xadia and together crossed the Border. First, the combined armies marched on **Lux Aurea**, and left the city in chaos when Viren's dark magic corrupted the great **Sunforge**. Then, imbued with terrible stolen power, the armies reached the Storm Spire, home of the **Dragon Queen Zubeia**.

Viren's undoing, however, was a historic alliance that came together to oppose him. Under the command of **King Ezran** of Katolis, **Queen Janai** of Lux Aurea, and **Queen Aanya** of Duren, elves, humans, and even dragons stood side by side and defeated the dark mage's armies. The Dragon Queen and the young Dragon Prince, **Azymondias**, were reunited at last.

History's Precipice

We have come to a pivotal moment in Xadia's history. After the Battle of the Storm Spire, both humans and elves stand at a crossroads: down one path, peace. Down the other, more conflict and strife.

The Human Kingdoms are fractured. Del Bar and Evenere are leaderless. Neolandia lost a favorite son, **Prince Kasef**, to Viren's manipulation. King Ezran of Katolis works hard to reach across the Border to mend relationships with Xadia, but **Lux Aurea** remains corrupted and too dangerous to approach, and old hatreds lie smoldering amongst the embers of the war. Any single step might change the course of history. The choices of any human or elf might shape the world for generations to come. Imagine the possibilities they see, standing on the precipice of history: what role will they play? What side will they choose?

A Neolandian scholar might explore the ruins of Elarion, hoping to find ancient heirlooms of their ancestors, left behind when the world was divided.

A Moonshadow elf herbalist might search for medicinal plants in Katolis near the ancient Moon Nexus, but live in disguise to keep the local humans from discovering her.

An Evenerean dark mage might hunt rare creatures in the **Shiverglades**, where the cold turns away even the most seasoned adventurers and only the strongest beasts survive.

Humans and elves might forge alliances—even friendships—to protect the world they share.

They could all be you.



The Human Kingdoms

Humans have lived in Xadia for thousands of years. Now they're mostly found west of the Border in one of the five Human Kingdoms: Del Bar, Duren, Evenere, Katolis, and Neolandia.



Del Bar

- Perilous Peaks
- Treacherous Tundras
- Posturing Poets

Current Ruler

A new ruler shall be determined following a traditional Del Barian Gladiatorial Moot, wherein seekers of the throne engage in combat and the mightiest hand rises to claim the vacancy left by the assassination of **King Florian**.

Topography

To the south lies a vast and nigh-impenetrable mountain range. To the north lie hills that contain Del Barian forests, lakes, and rivers, rich with wildlife and precious natural resources, and some of the finest and sturdiest wood in all of Xadia.

Hinterpeak

Centuries ago, the largest mountain in Del Bar was devoid of people, and its slate-cliffed confines contained the lair of a vile dragon. Del Barians say their first king slew the foul beast and hurled it down the mountain. The dragon fell to the earth with such force that it left a rift in the land itself. The rift flooded and became the Serpentongue River. This moment is a popular tale, depicted in various works of art by thousands of craftsmen. Today Hinterpeak is filled with swordsmiths, stories, and song. Hinterpeak's most famous feature is the massive, imposing gate carved into the icy side of the mountain itself, but the city within its tunnels bustles and swells with the fiery warmth of life.

Serpentongue

Between the fork of two rivers lies the bustling trade city of Serpentongue, a marvel of Del Barian craftsmanship. Though new visitors might think its name sinister, the name is inspired by geography only, and the culture here is eclectic and more accepting of outsiders than other more war-like human settlements. Their tales differ from those of Hinterpeak: they tell a tale of a clever hunter who stroked the ego of an ancient dragon and pulled out its tongue to make the Serpentongue river.

Diplomacy

Humans of other lands rarely quarrel with Del Bar. The exception is Evenere—a land of parallel hardships, they cultivate a different temperament and Evenereans and Del Barians are known to have a cold indifference towards each other. Del Barians, used to clear and open mountain air, find Evenere's reeking bogs suffocating.

Culture

The people of Del Bar are varying degrees of warrior poet, from boastful barbarians to blithe bards and everything in between. Competitive tall tales keep them warm during the cold taiga nights. Most central to their culture is The Great Hunt, wherein great beasts are hunted and slain. Before the beasts are served as a meal, the hunters must tell great tales of the hunt in honor of its sacrifice. The hunter with the most satisfying tale is named the Great Hunter. Del Barians swear that the stories are as nourishing as the meal.

Flora and Fauna

Hostile musk bears are known to roam the foliage-darkened forests of Del Bar (at least until a Del Barian wrestles it to the ground), and the smaller critters in the woods have developed remarkable intelligence in order to avoid them. Stories play a great part in Del Bar's perception of their own history, and tales of their mythical beasts are as tall and treasured as any. For example, some say the mountains still contain an Earth dragon in exile who causes minor tremors from time to time, but since the triumph of the first king it dares not show its face. Others say it's a horrible living avalanche covered in eyes that churns within the mountains.





Legends

Soup for the Soul

During a long and terrible winter, a hunter had no luck finding food for her family. Every night she returned home to her hungry husband and children completely empty-handed, and every night she told them about the fierce battle she'd had with a noble elk or fierce bear or trickster rabbit. Though they should have starved, her family survived the long winter nourished by her stories, for it's just as important to feed the soul as it is to feed the body.

The Stag in the Sky

A hunter chased a stag all the way to the top of the highest mountain in Del Bar, so high that the stag's antlers pierced the sky and became stuck. As the hunter approached, the stag begged the sky to help him. A lonely star in the sky said she would free the stag if he stayed with her forever, and the stag agreed. When the hunter reached the top of the mountain he found nothing, but when he looked into the sky he saw a new star twinkling bright and beautiful in the black of night.

Duren

- Gorgeous Gardens
- Bountiful Breadbasket
- Matriarchal Mountains



Current Ruler

Queen Aanya, preceded by **Queens Annika** and **Neha**, a matriarchy whose royal line is said to have been selected by the Goddess of the Harvest.

> "But sometimes it's not the hard threats, but the soft threats that are the worst. Sweet words can be more dangerous than hidden daggers."
>
> QUEEN AANYA
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 5: Breaking the Seal*

Topography

Small towns and villages line Duren's rolling green hills and mountains. The soil in Duren is so generous that its people trade much of the land's natural spoils with the people of drier Neolandia. The volcanic landscape along the Border is dangerous, but the occasional farmer still risks cultivating the rich soil there.

Berylgarten

The proud capitol of Duren lies to the west, near the border it shares with its friends in Neolandia. Both kingdoms combat river pirates; the legendary defenses of Berylgarten are known to chase the worst of them south, where Durenian, Neolandian, and Del Barian forces can easily dispose of them. The city is more fortified of late, as there are rumors of internal treason. The farmers worry that young Queen Aanya isn't old enough or wise enough to protect what's been built over the centuries.

Diplomacy

Neolandian raiders plagued Duren for years, desperate to bring food to the barren lands to the west. Peace was finally achieved when a group of farmers took pity on the raiders and began willingly offering food to them. This sacrifice of bounty is recreated annually with a harvest holiday feast at the border between the two kingdoms, a pageantry of brightly colored flowers, vegetables, grains, and fruit that Neolandia is formally invited to attend.

Duren is grateful that Katolis' armies help defend it from Xadian warriors and assassins from the east. Duren's people know little of Del Bar besides basic trade and military cooperation, and even less about Evenere; some Durenians think it might really be a secret population of elves hiding in the Human Kingdoms.

Culture

Most of the Human Kingdoms rely on the agricultural richness of Duren. Pastoral rural life is the norm here. Although the Duren military believes in a more intellectual approach to defense, don't underestimate their resourcefulness. Almost every farming implement is easily converted into improvised weaponry, and even the elves have grown to fear the wild and inventive fury of the common folk. Leaders outside of the royal line include scholars, heralds, and beekeepers. Durenian honey is as good as gold in the Human Kingdoms. Duren's stone gardens, temples, and fortresses are massive, all of them overflowing with beautiful flowering vines.

Flora and Fauna

Most Durenian creatures have been domesticated in one way or another, though the occasional longneck hillwolf leaps west across the Border to terrorize the livestock.

But the many lines of Durenian bee are considered the most legendary of the domesticated animals. Coming in a veritable cascade of colors and shapes, they're also said to share some of the scholarly intelligence coveted by Durenian humans. Local beekeepers have observed that their dances can be interpreted into human tongue, always as abstract poetry.

Legends

The Bluebell's Omen

Many years ago there was a Durenian beekeeper who kept bluebell dusk bees and a pet chicken named Fizzwhistle. Humans were just beginning to translate the dances of bees, and this beekeeper was quite fond of using the cipher given to every beekeeper to learn the poems of their bees. One day she discovered the poems were increasingly urgent, describing a "lanky nightmare." After hiring a hunter from Berylgarten, she discovered the bees were trying to warn her about a longneck hillwolf that was stalking Fizzwhistle. The hillwolf was frightened away, and bluebell dusk bees became the traditional favorite bee of Eastern Duren.

The Banished

A cruel queen once ruled Duren with an iron fist. Anyone who crossed her was banished to the icy north, where she expected them to die. But the people she banished found each other, helped each other, and survived together. Soon there were so many banished—so many people the queen had declared her enemy and doomed to die alone—that they realized they were a small army. Arm-in-arm they marched back to Berylgarten to overthrow the cruel queen and return peace to all the land.

Evenere

- **Independent Isolation**
- **Secretive Swampland**
- **Transient Tribes**

Current Ruler

Queen Fareeda ruled until she was assassinated by a Moonshadow elf, though it was later revealed that **Viren** of Katolis orchestrated it. Since the queen's death, several prominent families have quarreled over the throne.

Topography

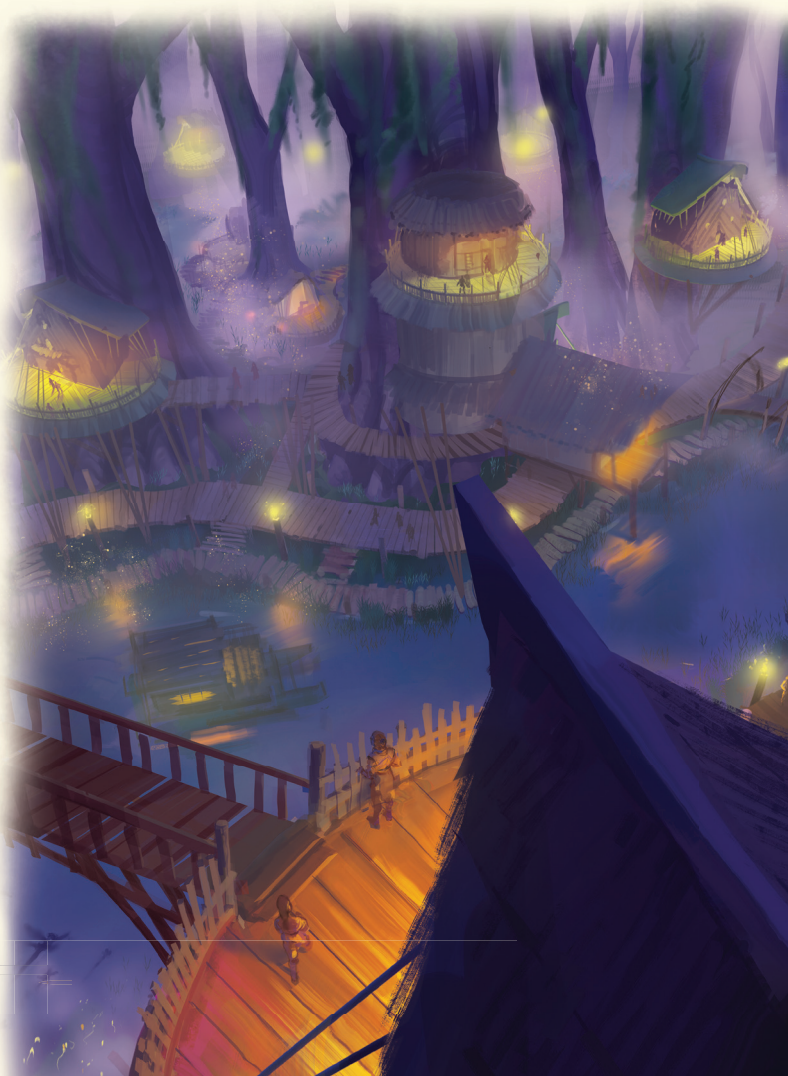
This island kingdom is a maze of dense swamp. Those who know its marshes find unique plant and animal substances that create useful products such as medicines, waxes, and sealants. These commodities make up the bulk of Evenere's trade with the other Human Kingdoms.

Settlements

The smallest of all the Human Kingdoms, Evenere lacks a central city or capitol; Evenereans instead live in small, lantern-lit settlements and nomadic groups. Even the royal family prefers to visit constituents on a modest houseboat. Though fiercely independent, Evenereans are loyal to their own, and many communities stick together in free-floating residential flotillas.

Diplomacy

A reclusive nation, only Evenere's small ports have a connection with the rest of the world through limited trade with the other Human Kingdoms. Evenereans prefer to stay out of the conflicts outside its borders. The ruling royalty takes great interest in Evenere's own affairs, but rarely sends out emissaries. Evenerean warriors rarely train in standard war tactics, but are skilled at battling the massive creatures lurking in nearby inlets.



Culture

Every Evenerean takes pride in their ability to navigate the dangerous swamp landscape. However, not all of their time is spent surviving—Evenereans are known to be studious and intelligent across several disciplines. Teachers are well-respected, and they travel across the swamp in schoolboats.

Once a year, nomadic communities gather for the migration of the brightly glowing dragonfly in a celebration known as the Festival of Dragonflies. The dragonfly is central to Evenerean culture—they have even adapted their language to include dragonfly-like humming.

Flora and Fauna

The Evenerean swamp is never quiet. Eight-legged water striders are hunted by marsh toads, who are snapped up by flying batfish, who evade vicious bog hyenas. Giant beasts like the eon-mawed megagator lurk beneath the murky waters. It's rumored that there is some undisturbed, ancient magical wildlife hidden in the marshes. Occasionally, a dark mage visits to try to find ingredients for their spells—but their level of success is unknown.

Evenereans are capable of protecting themselves from the dangers around them, but when a particularly troubling creature antagonizes a flotilla community, one of Evenere's wandering warriors neutralizes the threat. Even so, injuries do happen. Luckily, Evenereans have vast knowledge of herbal remedies. From salves and herbs to the creation of beautiful prosthetics, healing is woven into the fabric of swamp life.

Legends

Poison Greed

Though he was the largest and strongest creature in Evenere, the eon-mawed megagator wasn't satisfied. One day, he encountered a traveling mage and stole a magical artifact, hoping it would grant him great power. The megagator swallowed it... and to his delight, he began to grow. But as he grew, his stomach ached. The artifact had bled strange magic and poison into his body. Cursing his mistake, the giant megagator perished. His body became a hill in the middle of Evenere and his toxic blood entered the waters. To this day, few things survive where the megagator fell—not much can thrive once greed takes over.

The Puddlewave Bug and the Soilmonger Beetle

The rains came after a long drought, and the puddlewave bug and the soilmonger beetle saw their old lives disappearing under the encroaching water. "Float on my back," the puddlewave bug said, "and we can swim until the waters subside!"

But the soilmonger beetle didn't want to leave his wealth behind and tried in vain to drag his hoard away from the water. The puddlewave bug begged the soilmonger beetle to accept the bug's help to safety, but the beetle insisted that he couldn't live without his treasures. The floods came. The beetle drowned with his worldly goods, while the puddlewave bug floated atop the water's surface, unburdened and free.



Katolis

- **Ancient Architecture**
- **Militaristic Might**
- **Respected Royalty**

Current Ruler

King Ezran, preceded by former King Viren, who ascended from his position of High Mage under treasonous circumstances.

> "The people of Katolis have made strides in architecture, in scholarship, in the arts, and in weaponry; the kingdom is lauded for its innovation. But if you really want to know the soul of Katolis—that, you can only find in the delicious center of a homemade jelly tart."
>
> LADY VERAI, *Katolian Noble*

Topography

The landscape of Katolis is widely varied; its great capitol, the city of Katolis, is flanked by a lush forest and a churning river. To the south and east are extensive mountain ranges, to the west a wide gulf, to the north-east, miles of low-lying fields. And far past those fields, the Border cuts harshly through the land, marking the end of the Human Kingdoms.

Katolis

Katolis is the oldest human city, and every fortress and library is built upon at least one older version of itself. It's not unusual for homeowners to discover they have a third or fourth basement buried beneath their stone foundation.

The dense population represents every class of society. Due to Katolis's advanced infrastructure and welcoming culture, people from every kingdom immigrate here.



Diplomacy

As the most advanced kingdom and the mightiest militarily, the leadership of Katolis has been historically respected throughout the Human Kingdoms. However, since the death of King Harrow, inter-kingdom relationships have become unstable. Duren fought against Viren in the Battle of the Storm Spire, while Neolandia fought with him. Since King Ezran has come into the throne, he has championed pacifism, which appeals to the reclusive people of Evenere. Many in Del Bar, however, doubt the effectiveness of a child king.

Culture

While Katolians pursue greatness in art and education, their greatest pride lies in their military. As Katolis shares a border with Xadia, the kingdom has a fraught history of conflicts with elven forces. Unfortunately, because of this ever-present threat, many Katolians are afraid of elves and believe them to be "monstrous." This belief is slowly changing since the Battle of the Storm Spire, due to King Ezran's consistent advocacy on behalf of elves and dragons.

Flora and Fauna

The woods of Katolis are full of banthers, wolves, squirrels, and birds, and its bodies of water are plentiful in fish and the occasional river monster. Berry bushes flourish in its forests, and wildflowers bloom in the fields. Very little magical wildlife is currently present in Katolis, except for in the **Moon Nexus**, a powerful location connected to the Moon primal, which is hidden in a mountain range called the **Cursed Caldera**.

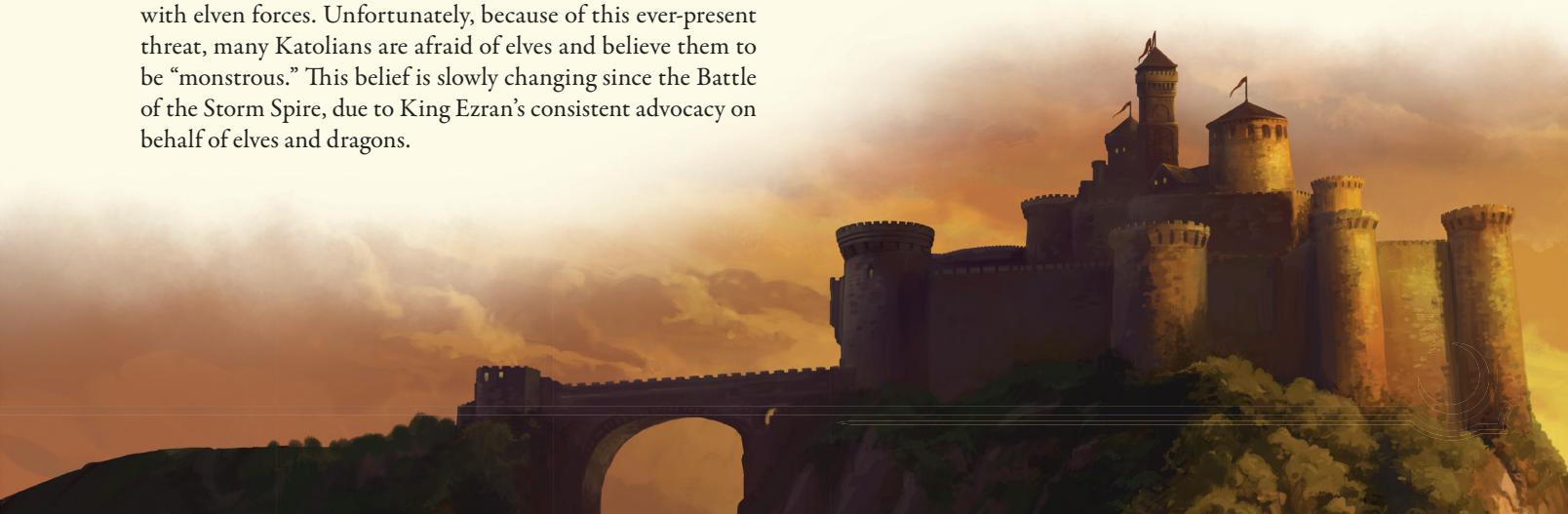
Legends

Lasair the Insidious

Leave nothing precious behind an open door at night—that's what all children of Katolis are taught. Open doors are an invitation to Lasair, the elven thief who takes what you hold most precious—a shiny coin on your table, a young lamb in the barn, a wedding dress draped over a chair—and leaves cold ashes in its place. Some say a young child in search of a midnight cup of water saw Lasair leave a beautiful flower with a soothing scent, but it was gone in the morning. Most know the child was dreaming, but others claim to have seen Lasair's blossoms—proof their hearts are pure and their fingers clean.

A Prince's Torment!

Long ago, a Katolian prince was plagued by a vile elf that came to taunt him in the night. At least he claimed it was vile—according to the prince, the elf crawled up the walls of the castle on spindly legs, or it flew with horrible demon-like wings outside his window, or it rearranged things in his room to confuse and frustrate him. Outraged by the elf—a bored and harmless prankster if there was any elf at all—the prince set a trap; he'd heard that elves loved to drink the blood of a pig, so he fashioned a fake pig and filled a bladder inside it with poison. He set it next to his bedroom window, giddy with excitement, and bragged to the entire royal court that they should come by in the morning to see the slain elf. When he awoke, he realized to his horror that the fake pig had been replaced with 47 live pigs milling around his room! The royal court stood by, laughing at the prince. And this is the origin of the Katolian saying, "If there's one thing an elf likes more than blood, it's cruelty."



Neolandia

- **Dramatic Desertland**
- **Opulent Oases**
- **Especially Elephants**

Current Ruler

King Ahling recently lost his eldest son, **Prince Kasef**, though his family is still large and powerful. Others may seek power in the military during this time of tumult and change.

Topography

Most of Neolandia is desert, dominated by the heat of the oppressive sun. Yet lush oases teem with life: verdant vegetation, cool breezes, and fresh water.

Eboreus

The port city sprawls across the point where Neolandia's rivers meet. Dozens of bridges crisscross the main waterway and the canals that spring off it. The design of prominent city bridges emulates an elephant's tusks. The hub of Neolandia's international and domestic trade, Eboreus brings food and other essentials to the entire nation, and it's proud of its resiliency.

Diplomacy

Despite a combative history, Neolandia is staunch allies with Duren and Katolis; Duren shares agricultural innovations to improve Neolandian farming. Neolandians respect Del Bar's powerful warriors, but they jest that the profoundly bland food of Del Bar is a weakness; just add a pinch of spice to a Del Barian's meal and watch them keel over.



Culture

Neolandians, proud of their wealth, often adorn themselves with gold and gems when they travel. Riches are awarded to the champions of the traditional elephant jousting tournaments. Celebratory feasts featuring complex magma-hot spices have brought many a mighty foreign warrior to their knees, but not any Neolandian worth their salt... or pepper.

Flora and Fauna

Much of Neolandia is a vast and sprawling desert stretching from horizon to horizon. Some say great leviathans called "solar remoras" and "abyssal whales" haunt the dunes. Others say the wastes are full of naught but sand, heat, and the skeletons of fools. The oases, though, abound with colorful life. Cascader skinks rippling with waves of color skitter throughout the city streets, while friendly tropical birds nest on the high architecture in groups of vibrant rainbow feathers.

Legends

A Peanut for a Palace

There was once an orphan girl with nothing to her name except a kind heart and a clever mind. She came upon an injured elephant and she nurtured it back to health. In return, the elephant gave the girl a single peanut. Next she met a hungry tailor whose lunch had been stolen, and she traded her peanut for one of his cloaks. Next the girl met a traveler new to Neolandia who had plenty of supplies but had underestimated the intensity of the sun, and she traded the cloak for some of his waterskins. She met a cobbler, hot and thirsty in her marketplace booth, and traded the waterskins for a pair of boots. She traded the boots for a horse, and the horse for a caravan—up and up she bartered until the clever girl had traded all the way from a peanut to a palace of her own.

Friendship Falls

A traveler crossing the desert on his loyal elephant found an oasis with a waterfall. He filled his cup, but his elephant smacked it from his hands. The traveler filled the cup again, and again the elephant hit the cup. This happened again and again until, in a fury, the traveler chased the elephant away and drank greedily. Only after he drank his fill did the traveler see a dead venom wyrm lying in the oasis pool, its blood poisoning the water. The traveler fell moments later, his eyes full of shame and regret as they turned to his trusty elephant, who could only mournfully watch its companion perish in the sands.



The Border

The Border is the defining line of conflict between the powers of Xadia and the Human Kingdoms. Magma flows through this great divide, carved into perilous black cliffs centuries ago by the dragons themselves. Along each side are the remnants of countless battles both ancient and new where thousands of humans, elves, and several dragons have lost their lives.

Scar of Division

Dragons expanded the river of magma when **Queen Luna Tenebris** declared that humans deserved banishment. The Dragon Kings and Queens of Xadia took it upon themselves to guard the Border and keep the humans out of Xadia at all costs. Thunder patrolled the Border with zealous cruelty, annihilating any humans who dared try to cross it on his watch.

After Thunder fell, Sol Regem has ruthlessly guarded the Border, though he may unwittingly let some transgressors pass.

Any humans or elves who live near the Border experience the tension on a daily basis. Years of mistrust and resentment have built up along this stretch of land.

The Breach was a secretive path across it, hidden beneath a lavafall. It was found and destroyed.

The Moonstone Path is a rune-lined series of rocks that Moonshadow elves use to skip across the Border, but only the most agile dare try. Even then it's a hopeless feat unless the stones' secret is known—safe passage is revealed by moonlight.

To cross into Xadia, the dark mage Viren parted the river of lava with a spell cast from the horn of a fire dragon. The lava on both sides solidified, leaving a new and permanent path known as the **Scar** between both sides.



The Elves

Among the oldest of the magical races, the elves are said to be the children of the primal sources themselves. Like all magical beings, elves are born with an innate connection to primal magic, but their ability to enhance and deepen that connection sets them apart from other denizens of Xadia.

Moonshadow Elves

Moonshadow elves believe in oath and duty above all else. Their bond with the Moon primal is exemplified through their elusive nature and profound connection with the concept of balance. Stealthy and speedy, they're well-suited to the role of assassin or scout. Though many are peaceful guardians of the forests in southwestern Xadia, Moonshadow elves are among the most feared kinds of elves. Some human cultures consider them synonymous with death itself.

Fashion

Moonshadow elves usually wear garments that allow them to move quickly, comfortably, and silently. They favor dark garments that evoke the colors of the night sky and the shadows below, such as deep green and violet. Horn rings and decoration are a traditional symbol of marriage. Elves express affection and intimacy by braiding each other's hair.

Culture

Moonshadow elves tend to live amongst the trees or near the mountains. Because they guard their emotions well and the more martial among them are trained to never show fear, they can appear rather rigid to outsiders. Yet they incorporate dancing into their rituals more than any other elves, from magical protection spells to marriage ceremonies.

History

In ancient times, before they assisted in the banishment of humans, there were Moonshadow druids in western Xadia. Conducting their studies around the Moon Nexus, they created the Moon Henge, which allowed them to open a portal to the strange and dreamlike realm between life and death. Unfortunately they were forced to destroy it when the world was divided, separating them from their most sacred place of power.

Cursed Caldera

Humans tell stories of the terrible monsters that infest this mountain. In truth, the mountain peak is the home of the Moon Nexus, once the center of all Moonshadow power. As it lies within human territory, it's mostly abandoned, guarded by a solitary Moonshadow mage who protects its magic and many secrets with terrifying illusions that scare away any human who dares approach.

The Silvergrove

Deep in the Moonshadow Forest lies a hidden community of Moonshadow elves. Home to the most feared assassins in all of Xadia, it's also known for its weaponcraft. The village's entrance is difficult to find without a Moonshadow guide, and the assassins there might not have a warm welcome for every party that manages to get past their entryway defense. Despite their hostile reputation, the elves here value tranquility.

The Hollow Wood

A bustling village of trade, it has a less elaborate magical spell protecting it from outsiders than that of the Silvergrove. Though founded and inhabited by Moonshadow elves, the village entertains Sunfire elves, Earthblood elves, and others who come from faraway cultures to enjoy the outdoor markets—even the occasional human.

Individuals of Note

A former leader of the Silvergrove assassins, **Runaan** disappeared and is presumed dead after invading the Katolian capital city. **Tiadrin** and **Lain**, two heroes of the Silvergrove chosen as **Dragonguard** to **Queen Zubeia** and her unhatched heir, also vanished years ago. Their child, **Rayla**, is a member of a small group of friends that has shaped the future of Xadia by defending Queen Zubeia's child. A powerful mage, **Lujanne**, watches over the Moon Nexus in secret.





Stories

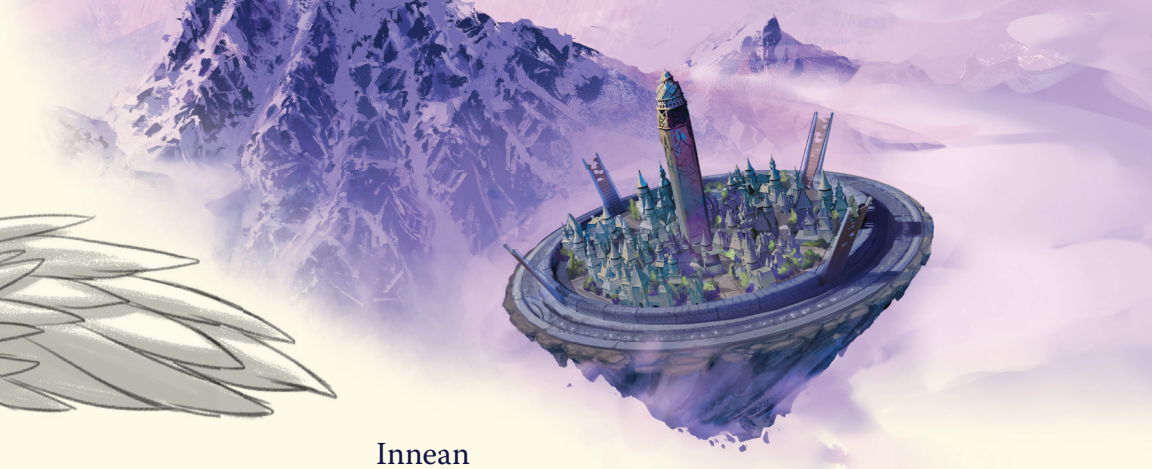
Blood Moon

Long ago, a group of Moonshadow elves embraced a forbidden practice: they drank the blood of still-living beings to extend their lives and enhance their magical powers. Their fellow elves shunned them, and eventually the blood-drinkers were hunted down and killed by their own kind. Only one is known to have survived: their former leader, **Kim'dael**, or as most know her, the Bloodmoon Huntress.

Flowers of Elarion

When the world was divided in two, an unfortunate elf called Lasair was stranded in the west. Lasair lived in fear of human hunters and mages, tormented and lonely for years. While not a thief by nature, they began to take items left unattended out of necessity, but never without an exchange. Lasair left beautiful blooms called flowers of Elarion, rare and precious blossoms that glow with soft light and have a scent that can soothe the most ragged spirit. While Lasair hoped the trade would lay the grounds for friendship with humans—a fair exchange of beloved for beloved—they never saw the precious blossoms fade and turn to cold ashes when exposed to the dawn. They never learned their gift was perceived as a curse, not a trade, and never knew why their name drew ire and hatred across the Human Kingdoms.





Skywing Elves

They're sometimes seen as aloof, but you'll never see a Skywing elf get literally lost in the clouds. Fewer than one in ten is born with wings, but even those who can't fly have a tendency to listen to the air around them to learn more about their surroundings. Some mages figured out how to turn their arms into "mage wings" to compensate for their lack of natural wings.

Fashion

Skywing mages often favor light robes or armor that allow freedom of movement. There's an element of boldness and variety to their dress, expressing each Skywing elf's unique personality. One common element, though, is that they like to subtly incorporate feathers into their dress. Because they're so mobile and don't like to be tied down, they carry a lot of their possessions on their person.

Culture

Skywing elves value freedom for better and for worse. They make incredible thinkers and scholars and problem solvers, yet some of the most famous and legendary thieves in Xadia are Skywing elves. They're highly individualistic as opposed to communal.

History

When it came time to judge the humans, Skywing elves were the least hostile, leaving outward aggression to more suspicious elves. Long, long ago they occasionally made attempts at centralized communities, but such places almost always developed into occasional meeting places.

Innean

Long ago, a town of wingless Skywing elves noted the increasingly solitary culture of their people and decided to soar alone, together. With Earthblood elf help, they carved out the bedrock under the city and floated it into the sky with the power of the Primal Well. Recently, Innean drifted into a mountain and literally fell to ruin. Thankfully the Primal Well and most of the townspeople escaped intact.

Individuals of Note

When Queen Zubeia fell into slumber and her protectors vanished, **Ibis**, a Skywing mage, came to the Storm Spire to protect her. He shared some helpful knowledge with **Callum**. A winged Skywing elf named **Hendyr** was once a member of the Dragonguard; it's believed that he abandoned his post. A notorious winged Skywing elf named **Nyx** journeyed with Callum, **Rayla**, and **Zym** across the Midnight Desert; she's quite the flagrant thief.

Stories

Featherborne

An ancient Xadian legend tells of the Featherborne, wingless Skywing elves who made their home on the back of a massive seraphswan. One day, the seraphswan was caught in a violent storm that ripped the feathers off her wings. Flung from her back, only a few elves survived by clinging to fallen feathers that carried them to earth. Descendants of the Featherborne believe that, if they can only collect all of her lost feathers, the swan will return to life and carry them on the winds once again.

Skybound

Twin Skywing elf brothers were born, one with wings and the other without. The wingless brother was so jealous that, in a fit of rage, he tore off his brother's wings to make them equals. But the winged brother's connection to the Sky itself was so strong that he was able to cast a spell to turn his arms to wings—*Manus, Pluma, Volantus*—and reach the clouds again, leaving his jealous brother seething far below, bound to the earth forever.

Sunfire Elves

Connected to the primal source of the Sun, Sunfire elves are the most populous type of elf in Xadia. They have produced many legendary warriors, aided by their exceptional Sunforge weaponry. Many Sunfire elves can heat their skin to a magma-like temperature and texture, often triggered by strong emotions.

Fashion

Sunfire elves usually prefer bold reds and golds, unified in all things including fashion. They deeply value the roles of soldiers or servants who honor their Queen, and the style of their dress communicates this. Even civilians tend to wear clothing that displays gold-fringed pride. They adorn their horns with golden embellishments that denote military rank and social standing. Familial crests and emblems represent long-standing military history and achievement.

Culture

Unified around a singular monarch, the royal family's heritage goes back hundreds of generations. They revere Sol Regem, the archdragon of Sun, and use his distinct six horned iconography in many of their designs. Primarily a warrior culture, Sunfire elves are intensely devoted to martial prowess, but Lux Aurea is also home to some of the greatest artisans and smiths in Xadia equally dedicated to honing their crafts. Sunfire elves value honesty, forthrightness, and integrity above all else.

History

Zealously defending the Border from human incursions alongside the archdragons, Sunfire elves are a proud people with a long, storied past of conflict and conquest, as Sunfire elves won't hesitate to remind you. Many of their greatest monarchs and warriors fall into legend, like the honorable **Queen Khessa** or the **Queen Aditi** who mysteriously vanished long ago during the height of her people's most vicious struggles. Yet even through the darkest of times, the shining city of Lux Aurea and its buildings have stood bright and tall since the time of Elarion. Only recently has this city's future become uncertain after being corrupted by dark magic. Yet Viren's treachery inspired an unlikely alliance between the Sunfire elves and **General Amaya**, temporarily ceasing the clashes long fought with the human encampments along the Breach.

Lux Aurea

For many years, Lux Aurea was the beginning and the end of Sunfire elf culture. Then the human dark mage Viren corrupted the Sunforge, the source of the sprawling city's power; now the



city is enveloped in a powerful dark energy that corrupts living things that enter its aura. So much knowledge lost and so many ghosts: the proud Sunfire elves are still in a state of shock. It's unlikely that they'll embrace sorrow and mourn for long, but where they will build again—and what magic they'll use to power such a place—remains to be seen.

Individuals of Note

The most recent Sunfire elf monarch, Queen Khessa, was a proud and imperious ruler who believed in justice, honor, and integrity. Her crown has passed to her sister, **Janai**. Janai has been so busy fighting the Battle of the Storm Spire that she hasn't yet taken an official title; she's still known as the Golden Knight of Lux Aurea. And there's one curious figure that appears to be insinuating themself into the fabric of the Sunfire elves' future. You'll meet the one we speak of when you play to the very end of *The Corrupted Core*, page 207.

Stories

He Who Kissed Fire

A Sunfire elf warrior called **Calex** fell in love with a Sunfire elf mage named **Erian**, but never told him of his feelings. When Calex fell in battle, and he lay dying in Erian's arms, he finally spoke the truth. Erian kissed him, and it's said that Erian's magic poured into Calex's heart through his kiss. Calex's heart became fire, not flesh, and he returned to life like a roaring flame. Sunfire elves believe that Calex was the first warrior to ever enter heat-being mode.



Earthblood Elves

Earthblood elves are among the most physically diverse of all elf types, thanks to their varied places of origin around Xadia. Earthblood features are often suited to, and sometimes reflect, their "home soil." Those born in the **Uncharted Forest** typically have antler-like horns and plant-like features, while those from Xadia's more mountainous regions often have crystalline horns and rock-like skin.

Earthblood settlements and lifestyles are equally diverse and adaptive. Some elves, like the **Drakewood**'s notoriously vicious drakeriders, are highly territorial warriors who live entrenched in remote mountains or underground strongholds. Others are worldly globetrotters, traversing great distances by way of ancient tunnels threaded beneath Xadia, harnessing natural magics found in crystalline caves and exotic oases. Their adaptation is ongoing; it's said that the longest-lived Earthblood elves slowly become one with the Earth itself, and that Xadia's oldest trees and stones are, in fact, their ancient ancestors.

Despite their differences, many Earthblood elves share some traits of personality and habit. As a group, these elves tend to have practical natures and are usually more concerned with comfort and efficiency than ceremony and formalities. Earthblood elves often wear simple clothes designed to harmonize with their environment, and prefer blending in to standing out.

Because of their tendency to avoid external conflicts, Earthblood elves can be seen as detached or introverted. Certainly, some are—but many are as passionate and lively as any Sunfire elf. Earthblood elves have deep love and respect for the natural world, as well as an insatiable curiosity. In getting to know an Earthblood elf, one might discover an affable and knowledgeable companion eager to learn about you—and often with a warm sense of humor to boot!

Given that it's comparatively uncommon to encounter an Earthblood elf beyond Xadia's more remote regions, you might want to head to page 245 to meet **Hestia!** An Earthblood mage, Hestia uses crystals in her magic, incorporating them into her personal style in unique and creative ways.

Tidebound Elves

Tidebound elves are the most elusive of all elven kin. While they aren't necessarily "bound" to the ocean as their name suggests, most do make their homes at sea. The vast oceans of Xadia provide a safe haven far from the squabbles of land-dwellers; in some ways, Tidebound elves live in a world all their own.

As they live primarily in the water, the features of Tidebound elves resemble those of other aquatic creatures, like fins and webbing and horns like coral. Some say that elves in the deep sea have bioluminescent features to navigate the abyss.

Tales tell of a powerful elf called **Archmage Akiyu**, but she has all but vanished from any modern texts, even in Xadia's extensive libraries. Humans have historically mistaken Tidebound elves for sea monsters. Some sailors claim to have gone mad hearing their sea-songs on the waves; others claim kind-hearted Tidebound elves bore them to shore after a shipwreck.

Ripples and Rumors

> I heard a story of a lighthouse keeper in the south of Katolis who disappeared and left a note saying that he had "fallen for the sea." It was assumed he'd drowned himself, but years later, a grave appeared on the island he'd abandoned, and on the tombstone was the lighthouse keeper's name. Atop the freshly turned soil was a sea-glass pendant and a woven kelp love-knot.
>
> —Hensen, a Katolian butcher

> It was another long week of sailing the waters between the Pawprint Isles and Dragontail, hoping to find large enough fish to feed guests from the north. I was getting tired. Complacent. I nearly let the schooner drift into the rocks! But as I was nodding off, my head dipping away from the horizon, I saw a trio of elven forms swimming parallel to my ship in the water below, waving frantically for me to steer east. I looked up just in time! Thank goodness. I was so grateful. As a gesture of respect to the Tidebound culture, I set my catch of fish free.
>
> —Elleth, an Evenerean sailor



> I was the strongest swimmer in the Human Kingdoms, bar none. Folks came from far and wide to challenge me. One day, a strange-looking fellow wearing an odd cap came up to me and challenged me to a race. Once we hit the water... he *became* the water. He was gone in an instant. I didn't stand a chance. All I could do was gape in his wake. Once he finished, he pulled off his cap, and I swear I saw some sort of fin on his head, and pointy ears. He winked at me and disappeared under the waves. I never saw him again.
>
> —Lothis, a Del Barian swimmer



Startouch Elves

No group of elves presents a greater mystery than the Startouch elves. Sometimes called the First Elves, those bound to the Star primal are rumored to have made great marks on Xadia's ancient history—but beyond story and legend, little real evidence is left to us today. A handful of scrolls still survive to tell us of the First Elves, but the text is opaque, and scholars continue to debate their meanings. Some now question whether Startouch elves have ever existed in Xadia; but others look to the night sky, and find all the evidence they need among the stars.

Whether they tell of real elves or beings of myth, most legends agree on several points: Startouch elves are few in number; their lifespans exceed even that of dragons; and their magic is extraordinary, so powerful that the ancients struggled to record it. Beyond this, we know almost nothing about them. Do they live among the stars? Are they mortal? Can they take physical form? We can only guess, or perhaps dream of the answers.

> "I'm not lying. I never lie."
>
> AARAVOS
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 8: The Book of Destiny*

Among the few extant records of Startouch elves are the Scrolls of the First Elves, now kept in the Great Bookery of Lux Aurea. But of course, not all history is preserved in books—one of the rhymes recited by Moonshadow elf children in games of triple skip recalls these beings:

> Startouch, Startouch, what's your name?
>
> Earth and Ocean join our game
>
> Startouch, Startouch, far away
>
> So with Sky and Sun we'll play.

Sources on Startouch elves are all but nonexistent in the Human Kingdoms, with one fascinating exception. The Royal Library of Evenere holds one poem on the subject, titled "The Epic of the Void," written by an unknown poet. Predating even the fall of Elarion, this centuries-old document is kept behind a locked door, further guarded by a gleaming Ocean rune. What's more, those hoping to study the poem must petition the High Mage of Evenere personally, but she is notoriously strict in allowing access to the work. Most hopeful readers are turned away without explanation (and often with a stern lecture on the sacred nature of Startouch scholarship), creating ever more mystery around this ambiguous poem.

Only one stanza of the poem has ever been shared by someone who was granted access to the library. It reads:

> Where do the fabled Great Ones hide?
>
> What secrets have you locked inside?
>
> From rising Sun to Moonlight's grace
>
> I search the Sky for any trace
>
> Of Starfolk, fabled, fallen, found—
>
> Once everywhere, now none around.
>
> Is all we are to know of thee
>
> Consumed by Dark, or cast to Sea?
>
> So bound to Earth, are we denied
>
> The touch of Stars? Have our Gods died?
>
> Where do the fabled Great Ones hide?



The Dragons

> "In a dragon's eye,
> all things belong to dragons."
>
> *Xadian proverb*

Dragons. Living emblems of the primal sources, beacons of strength and guardians of Xadia. Renowned among elves, dreaded among humans, dragons are known to all—but understood by vanishingly few.

Whether you hope to meet a dragon on your journey, or are preparing just in case one should cross your path, know that no written primer can tell you all you need to know. Xadia is populated by an enormous variety of dragons, from minuscule berry dragons to the colossal blueflame dragon. All are epic and majestic beings, but—as with elves and humans—no two are completely alike.

If you do encounter a dragon, there are three crucial Cs to keep in mind. Remember to be *cautious*, as all dragons enjoy tremendous power. Remember to be *careful*, as dragons value their autonomy and privacy above almost anything else. And most of all, remember to be *curious*. Dragons are an unparalleled source of knowledge, and those who engage with care and respect may earn a treasure more valuable than gold.

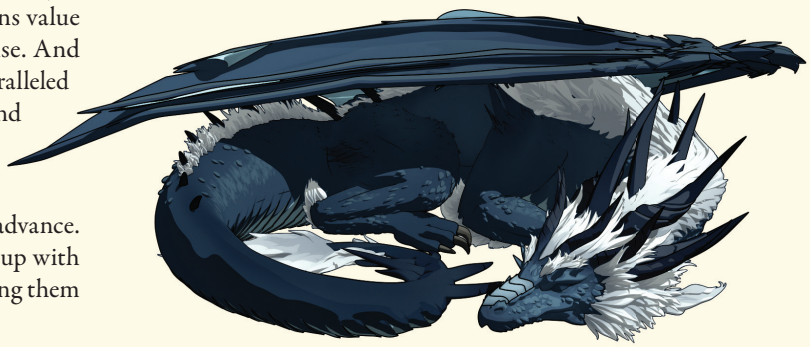
Narrators, remember, it's more about the experience of meeting the dragon than knowing all of its "stats" in advance. Plan for a scene rather than a battle. Feel free to come up with their traits and SFX as needed for the tale you're in, using them in tests, challenges, or contests as appropriate.

Archdragons

Archdragons command the respect even of their most formidable kin. In both size and strength, archdragons are utterly singular. They have been known to grow taller than mountains, and an archdragon's bond to their primal source is so powerful that they act as the complete embodiment of each primal's power.

Xadia is ruled by at least one Dragon Queen or King. The current ruling Dragon Queen is Zubeia, archdragon of the Sky. Her mate, the slain archdragon Avizandum, was previously the Dragon King, and their son Azymondias is the Dragon Prince. Other living archdragons include Sol Regem, archdragon of the Sun; Rex Igneous, archdragon of Earth; and Domina Profundis, archdragon of the Ocean.

Most scholars agree that all primal sources must be connected to at least one archdragon, but no evidence has yet verified the existence of an archdragon of the Stars. Such a dragon would possess unimaginable power, so perhaps this absence is a blessing.





Moon Dragons

> "Was it a shadow? A trick of the light? Was I awake, or was I dreaming? I couldn't be sure—but whatever it was, it had teeth. And I think it grinned at me."

Beautiful and elusive, Moon dragons project an air of mystery that matches their distant primal. All dragons of this type possess a power linked to the Moon primal, such as illusion, illumination, and shadow-craft, and some are affected by various phases of the moon cycle. Historically, Moon dragons have made great impacts on life in Xadia. The archdragon of the Moon, Luna Tenebris, for which the southern Gulf of Tenebris is named, served a long and storied tenure as the Dragon Queen, and the end of her reign changed the balance of power in Xadia to this day.

Dreamwhisper Drakes: A rare wingless dragon, they are also incredibly small. Docile and placid, these uncommon creatures hover high in the sky using their mysterious magic. Half or completely asleep most of the time, it's rumored that they eat dreams instead of food. Taking a dreamwhisper drake in one's hands is not even an option; a strange force propels them away from other people and objects.

Dusk Dragons: Called dusk dragons because they can only be spotted in the final waning hours of daylight, few humans have laid eyes upon these creatures. Some Moonshadow elves say they emerge at dusk to coax the moon itself into the night sky across the entirety of Xadia.

Eclipse Dragons: Bold and frightening to behold, these powerful yet scarce dragons change into something new and dangerous at the turn of each cycle of the moon. This can change their entire personality; no surprise to the dragon but quite confounding to whatever foolish hunter might be stalking them. They're subject to single days of extreme weakness when their transitioning eclipse occurs, a lone spot of good luck for their enemies.

Enigma Dragons: Thin and wiry, their colors vary the most of any Moon dragon. The greatest of tricksters, they delight in laying complicated traps for humans and elves and enjoying the results from a safe distance.

Harvest Moon Dragons: A highly social and traditionally quite friendly sort of dragon, they have never been seen outside of the autumn season. Bright orange speckled with crimson and canary yellow, they delight in dive bombing villages to playfully shake the leaves off the trees. The sight of one is uncommon, of course, and villages fortunate enough to be visited are considered to be magically lucky.

Midnight Dragons: Far more harmless than their ominous name might suggest, they're the most shy of the Moon dragons. They frequently choose to live deep beneath the ground where they can find comfortable, absolute darkness. Their scales are pitch-black, their eyes highly sensitive to any sort of light.

Mirage Dragons: Mirage dragons are one of the rare Moon dragons to primarily appear during the day. They act much like their phantasm dragon cousins, except they disappear from a distance long before anyone can attempt to reach out and test their corporealness.



Phase Dragons: Also known as moon dust dragons (named thusly because as they become visible, they look like gathering dust), they are nearly transparent most of the time, a mere outline. They become more visible and powerful when the phase of the moon they were hatched under rises. Though large, they are fairy-like and eerily beautiful.

Shadow Dragons: Made almost entirely of giant, billowing wings, it's hard to discern their real shape as they look like a silhouette. This uniquely two-dimensional appearance makes it difficult to see their limbs and faces amongst the broad outline of those haunting wings. On clear nights, shadow dragons like to fly low to the ground where they can play at casting the largest possible shadow.



Phantasm Dragons: No phantasm dragon takes the same form twice, possibly because the version of themselves they present is not really them. This means no one knows what one looks like. Famously impossible to kill, their primary skill is projecting versions of themselves that aren't really there and dissipate completely if touched by another creature.



Sky Dragons

> "On particularly blustery, breezy days, Skywing elves warn their rambunctious children to be careful—the Sky dragons are sneezing!"

Sky dragons often have a free-spirited and playful nature—but don't be fooled. As the current ruling family of archdragons, Sky dragons play a prominent role in Xadian politics and have earned their influence through the all-encompassing power of their primal. The Dragon King Avizandum inspired terror across the Human Kingdoms until he was slain by dark magic. Queen Zubeia now reigns in his place, though she has only just awakened from her mourning slumber, and young Prince Azymondias is a source of great curiosity in Xadia. Though the archdragons are, of course, the most formidable of their kind, any Sky dragon is underestimated at the character's great peril.

> "The humans called him Thunder, for when he spoke, his voice shook the earth and the sky."
>
> AARAVOS
>
> *Book 1: Moon, Chapter 1: Echoes of Thunder*

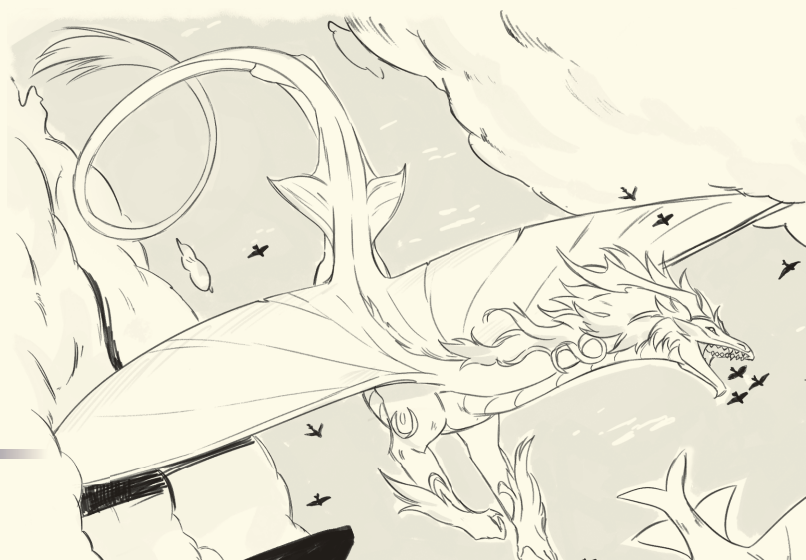
Breezewisp Dragons: Light, wispy, and tiny, breezewisp dragons are paper-thin and serpent-like. They let the breeze carry them in seemingly random and whimsical flights—or did they create the breeze themselves?

Cloud Wyverns: Shimmering, pure-white dragons about the size of a human or elf, they prefer to stay inside the clouds and only occasionally dart in and out when it rains. Old stories say that when a storm is scentless and the air seems cleaner somehow, it's because there are cloud wyverns dancing above.

Dustfury Dragons: Highly territorial, these whirling, four-winged dragons enjoy creating chaos. Most often they're found scavenging failing crop lands for the last of the livestock.

Horizon-Mawed Dragons: Able to adapt the color of their scales to match the sky above them, all you can see of them is an open maw or blinking eye. This makes them difficult to document in almost any way. But they're believed to be quite large and winged, if the frightened folks describing floating teeth are to be believed.

Hurricane's Eye Dragons: Elegant, considering the power of their name, these huge lanky dragons drift silently along the upper clouds of tropical storms. Scholars disagree on whether they are using the storms to hunt the churning seas below, or are the cause of the storms themselves.



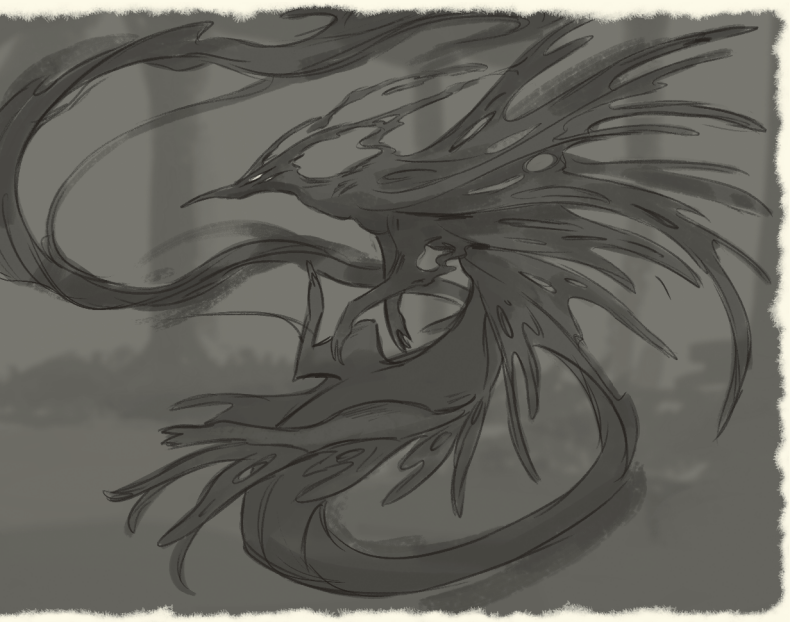
Lightningspear Dragons: Fast and ruthless, these dragons hunt from far outside the visual range of most creatures; they silently dive-bomb their prey, stun them with an electrical burst, snatch them up, and carry them upwards before the prey knows what is happening.

Storm-Maned Dragons: These white-maned dragons summon storms as they fly, attempting to stay hidden at all times. Some say every storm has a storm-maned dragon inside of it, but Skywing elves aren't so sure. Storm-maned dragons are known for being one of the most powerful creatures to possess ice magic. When they shake their hides after being at great altitude, dangerous mixes of sleet and snow can fall from their scales in vast sheets.

Thunder Dragons: It's said that these massive blue brutes appear to roar for several seconds before a terrible booming pummels the ground so hard that it can shake subterranean creatures out of the ground. The deadly nature of this sound-based weapon makes them haunting adversaries, known for causing far more devastation than their opponents usually expect.

Tornado Dragons: Seen most often in open plains where many other dragons might feel exposed, tornado dragons summon whirlwinds in an attempt to suck heavy prey up into the sky. Their scales are usually grey, making it hard to spot them in the torrent of debris.

Whispering Specter Dragons: Only seven feet tall at most, these quiet dragons are sometimes heard before they're seen; their wings make the unusual sound of a person whispering gibberish. They can also take the form of air for a brief moment, allowing them to pass through poorly insulated walls and heavy foliage without a sound. These may be the source of many ghost stories throughout Xadia.



Sun Dragons

> "The dragon rained flames from the sky, all fire and fury. Within moments the town became an inferno, my home smoke in my lungs and ash beneath my feet."

Sun dragons burn hot, it is said. This is literally true, as many dragons linked to this primal breathe fire or are empowered by heat. More importantly, all Sun dragons are beings of tremendous passion. Just as the sun can warm and nurture, many Sun dragons are fiercely protective and loyal. But the sun can also wreak terrible destruction, and passion can turn bitter as ash. Sol Regem, archdragon of the Sun, has burned with hatred for humans even before he was blinded by the dark mage Ziard. A Sun dragon can be an unsurpassed ally—but take care to avoid making one your enemy.

Ash Dragons: Mostly bright white, ash dragons are constantly shedding their scales at a rapid rate as a result of the intense fires brewing in their bellies. Their dead scales fall away as white, grey, and black ash. They lay their eggs in nests made from the ashes of forest fires and try to hatch them before any other life returns. Many destructive forest fires have been blamed on them, though most elves recognize their place in the natural cycle.

Blueflame Dragons: Terrifyingly enormous, blueflame dragons spend their long lives curating one single devastating ball of flame, a flame that burns so hot that it can vaporize someone almost instantly. Only one appearance of a blueflame dragon has been recorded in detail due to the annihilation they leave in their wake. A blueflame dragon named **Caeruleam** arrived to settle a disturbance by humans. The horrible fireball she produced laid low the entire valley, leaving nothing but bleached-white ash. Caeruleam herself was mortally wounded by her own fire, for the throat of a blueflame dragon is the only part that can withstand the heat of its own magic. Years later, not a single blade of grass grows in the valley, now known as Caeruleam Canyon.

Coal Dragons: These strange, dog-sized dragons are covered in hundreds of smoldering nostrils. Ravenous for Sun magic, they dig through fires to devour the delicious coals like a pig hunting truffles, absorbing Sun magic. So hideous are they to behold that many who have seen them believe they're some horrible creature more frightening than a dragon.



Emberdrakes: A rare dragon that prefers to hunt in packs, these quick and lean drakes don't breathe fire but instead summon it at the base of their paws. This allows them to scavenge more than hunt. However, the sight of a pack of dragons, not to mention ones who use their paws like a Sun mage would their hands, is often more than enough to send any elf or human running.

Fire Dragons: This common type of Sun dragon has four legs, two wings, and the ability to breathe fire. **Pyrrha** and **Orta**, veterans of the Battle of the Sun Spire, are fire dragons.

Lavasnarl Dragons: Lavasnarl dragons are covered in bright red scales. Having smaller wings, they prefer dashing to flying as they charge up and down the mountains around the Border. Their agility keeps them safe from larger creatures and allows them to nimbly hop away from their own uncontrollable lava drool. It doesn't hurt their feet, of course. Any adventurer unlucky enough to encounter one should watch their step, be the dragon hostile or not.

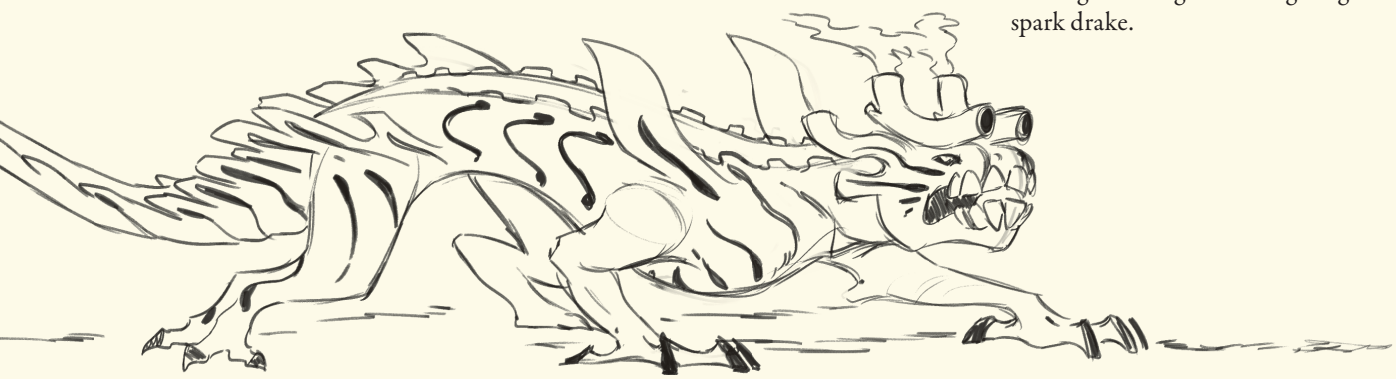
Magma Dragons: These wingless dragons prefer to dig, and the large shingle-like scales on their skin burn white-hot. An ancient king had the terrible idea to train a magma dragon to burrow beneath the fortress of his enemy. The experiment ended in failure when the magma dragon followed him home and turned his castle into a giant smoking pit.

Smoke Winged Dragons: Billows of smoke flow from their wings; they're happiest near huge fires where they can blend with the thick black smoke. They've learned to shroud themselves in white smoke and pass as clouds, too. If they switch between the two quickly enough, they can become all the shades of grey smoke in-between.

Smolder Wyrms: Blurry from the extreme high temperatures they radiate, smolder wyrms don't need to breathe fire—almost everything they get close to bursts into flames. They have bested many a proud dragon hunter who stalked them. Thankfully they're rather slow moving and harmless if left alone.

Spark Drakes: Sometimes confused with baby fire dragons, these chubby little dragons usually clarify that they are spark drakes by loudly belching a shower of massive sparks. This leads to more collateral fire damage than a foolish adventurer might expect from a relatively vulnerable baby fire dragon, and the ensuing shrieking and fleeing delights an adult spark drake.

> "OK, so an enormous angry blind dragon is blocking our path to Xadia. What do we do?"
>
> CALLUM
>
> *Book 3: Sun, Chapter 1: Sol Regem*



Earth Dragons

> "An arrogant thief once stole a relic from an Earth dragon's hoard. As he tried to escape, the ground split beneath his feet and swallowed him up as the dragon reclaimed its treasure."

Contrary to expectations, Earth dragons are among the most secretive and difficult to find of Xadia's dragons. The archdragon of Earth, **Rex Igneous**, has hidden himself beneath the earth and has not been seen in decades. Other dragons linked to this primal can so expertly camouflage themselves amidst forests or stony terrain that passers-by will never know they were in the presence of such a being. But don't worry—Earth dragons' primal powers ensure that if one does want you to know it's there, you will definitely not miss it.

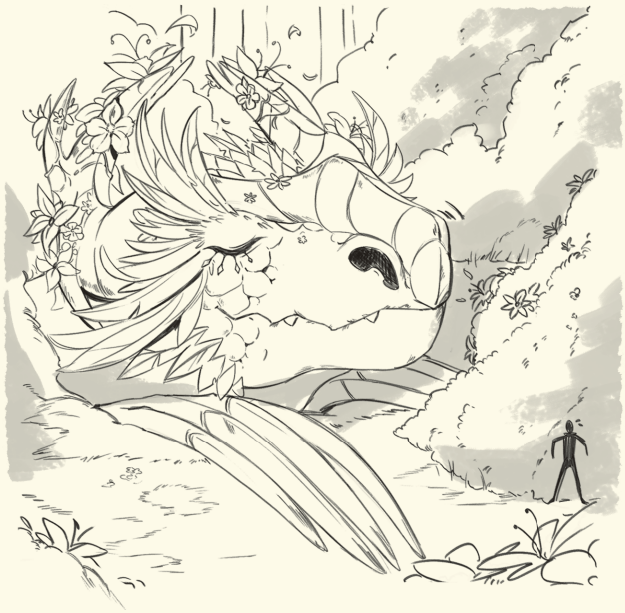
Avalanche Dragons: Perching high in the Xadian peaks, these dragons have segmented shells that enable them to fold up like a pill bug and tumble down the mountainside, crushing everything from settlements to enemies. They are ruthlessly brutal with this ability, clearing any small encampment that dares begin to grow near them.



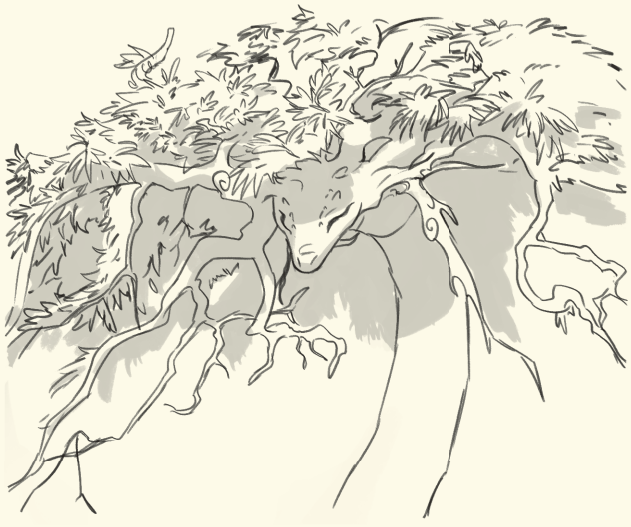
Berry Dragons: You might wonder, are these really dragons? Surprisingly, yes. These almost imperceptibly tiny dragons use hooks on their wings to dangle themselves from tree branches, where they doze happily. Their scales resemble the plump bumps of a blackberry or raspberry, so when they curl up like a bat on a branch they are almost impossible to recognize as anything but a delicious berry. Be careful if you collect berries from a tree in the volcanic territories of Duren; it's likely that berry dragon nosebites are far more common than verified berry dragon sightings.



Blossom-Backed Dragons: The bodies of these massive dragons are the colors of soil and granite, but their heads are covered in flowers of bright pinks, greens, and yellows. Though they burrow, they often poke their heads out and draw magic from the pollen of Xadian poppies and other large blooms, breathing it in deeply with their huge nostrils. Though not particularly hostile, careless free spirits and botanists have seen one all too late while venturing alone in a pastoral field.



Maple Dragons: The maple forests of northern Xadia are home to these unique and docile dragons, who amble gently on long, narrow stilt-like legs that look like the trunks of maple trees. Due to human hunting practices, they have all migrated east, where they have a somewhat prickly relationship with Moonshadow elves who make the mistake of trying to harvest maple branches for tools or tap them for syrup.



Moss Dragons: Large, lumbering, and loopy, these happy-go-lucky dragons have extremely tough scales where magical moss often grows. They will allow a gentle Earthblood elf to collect the moss, but other folk should beware their deep skepticism of two-legged beings.

Mushroom Dragons: If you collect mushrooms deep in the woods and believe you've found the tip of a large subterranean mushroom poking up between the roots of a tree, be careful before you slice off a piece. This may well be the rubbery, tan spine of a mushroom dragon, who keeps mostly underground but enjoys pressing their back up against tree roots to scratch itches. You'll find out soon enough, though; their heads are conical and beaked and can poke up above the soil quickly to say hello.

Sand Dragons: Long and slender, they swim through desert sands like sea water, several feet down where the sand is cooler. Though they can fly, they prefer to do so at night, as they're more sensitive to heat than a Sun dragon might be. They avoid the **Midnight Desert**, however, as they prefer to explore vast sandy seas devoid of Soulfang serpents.



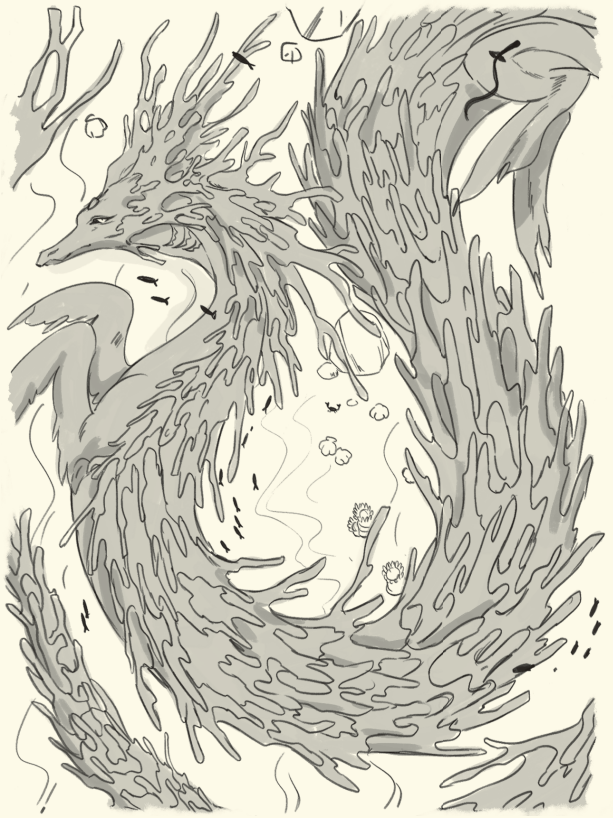
Slate Dragons: Each limb of a slate dragon is encased in massive, jagged, exoskeletal-like scales. They are incredibly strong and can deflect almost any blade. They are slow and lumbering, with great muscles taut and coiled beneath those scales. They're known to seek out larger, more vulnerable dragons and offer themselves as guardians and protectors.

Ocean Dragons

> "The leviathan rose from the waves, higher than the mast and sails, her scales scarred from a thousand battles with a thousand ships—and we were to be the thousand and first."

Like Earth dragons, Ocean dragons aren't a common sight in Xadia. Instead of hiding in reclusive stillness, scholars believe that dragons of this primal are quite social; like the ocean, they live in a kind of constant, even sleepless, motion. **Domina Profundis**, the archdragon of Ocean, reflects the fathomless and mercurial power of the mysterious deep, but her greatness makes her first among many peers. When they disappear into Xadia's waters, be it a great sea or tiny stream, Ocean dragons become part of their primal source and its power, in ways that few other magical beings can ever hope to experience.

Coral Dragons: Perhaps the most elegant of all known dragons, they lie peacefully on the ocean floor. These massive sea dragons have coral-like scales branching off in all directions. A living reef in every sense, each of their scales provides a habitat for hundreds of smaller creatures.



Crested Shore Drakes: These dragons reside on southern beaches, spending their time wading through the shoreline where the tide rolls in. They have massive crests on their back shaped like sea foam or a small cloud, helping them blend into the massive waves they traverse. Don't be fooled by its soft appearance; these crests are hard as bone and are the ultimate form of defense.

Depthcrawler Dragons: Usually found in families of three, they dwell several hundred feet beneath the ocean's surface where the most prominent and powerful ocean currents are focused. They're large and terrifying, with long, flat bodies and massive eyes. A family can synchronize their movements and harness great amounts of Ocean magic, manipulating the very direction of the ocean and repelling any attacker.

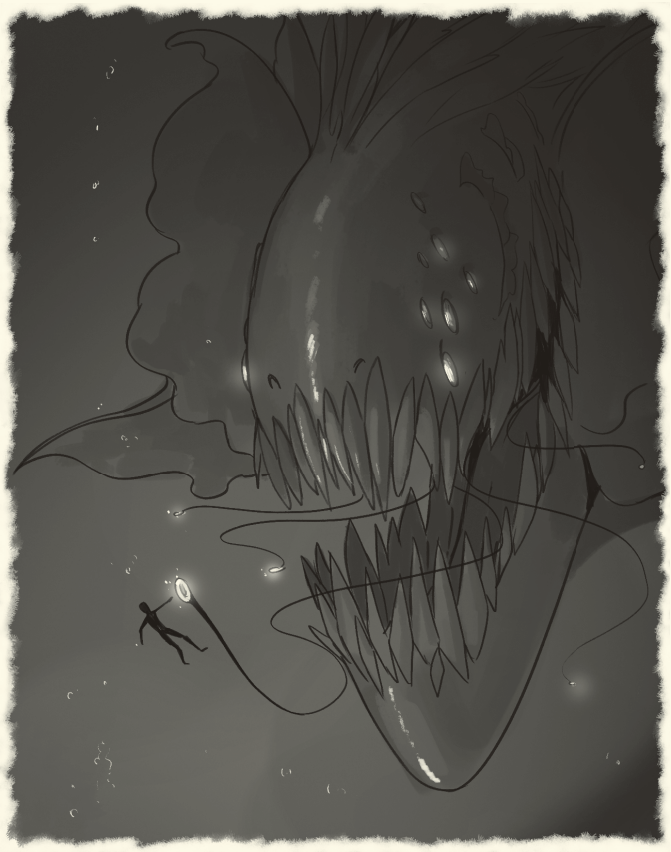
Frost Wyrms: Frost wyrms hide high in the Xadian mountains. They're covered in diamond-shaped scales that rise off their skin and appear transparent and glass-like. When they run or beat their wings, the scales make a tinkling that sounds like an entire orchestra of wind-chimes. But don't be fooled by a frost wyrm's beauty; they breathe a jet of jagged ice knives.



Hot Springs Dragons: The skin of a hot springs dragon appears translucent, with boiling water raging beneath. Tales tell of these dragons descending from a mountain on a bitterly cold winter's night long ago to provide heated water for a freezing elven village.

Kelp Dragons: Nestled amongst beds of kelp and plant life, you're likely to first spot this dragon by its huge unblinking eyes. The long green tendrils that snake off of its body provide excellent camouflage, and even larger ocean creatures fear the strike of a kelp dragon from its hiding place.

Underglow Dragons: A very rare dragon deep in Xadia's oceans, it uses a heatless, glowing yellow lure to attract fish that it can gobble up with its massive mouth, which takes up a disproportionate amount of its body. Scholars at first thought these were rare Sun dragons due to the glow, until a diver escaped a watery doom and reported the icy horror of touching the lure.



Whirlpool Dragons: Rumored to hatch randomly from an already rare depthcrawler dragon egg, whirlpool dragons have similarly flat bodies but are much more lean, muscular, and predatory. Deeply suspicious of humans and the threat they present to magical creatures, they're known to spend weeks quietly making their way into a bustling human port, hoping to use their ability to swim in circles and summon a whirlpool to sink, crush, and otherwise destroy human fishing vessels.

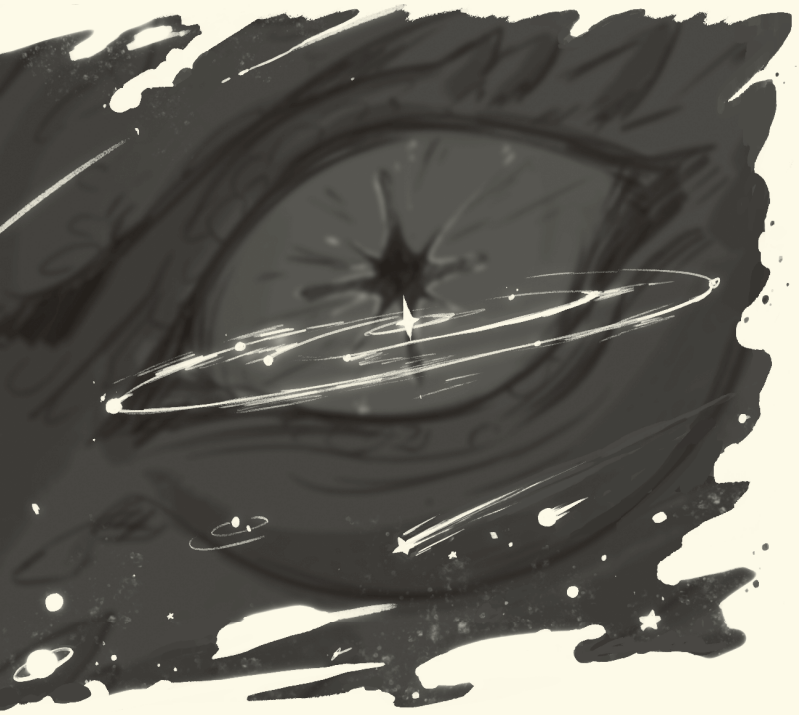
Star Dragons

As with Startouch elves, the existence of Star dragons is only suggested by a few ancient sources. The archdragons may know more than they've shared on this subject, as might the small clusters of elves who revere and guard knowledge of the Star primal's powers. For now, we pass on legend and a few bare facts, behind which hide beings as brilliant as the stars themselves.

Star Devourer Dragons: Legends amongst the eldest of elves say that when a star in the sky disappears, it has been consumed by star devourers flying through its core and absorbing the magic within. It's said that beholding their image instantly drives someone into delirium, and therefore their appearance is unknowable. The only stories of star devourer dragons involve rituals designed to stop them from actually arriving in Xadia. The Sunfire elves have an ancient chant that goes—

> Oh let me meditate on the beast of devouring that feeds on the stars, that star devourer dragon
>
> Let me repel this Star dragon and banish it from the light of my Sun

Void Dragons: It's rumored that these dragons are impossibly powerful and live in the ultimate darkness between the stars. Elves whisper a legend of a king who possessed a void dragon's bone that granted him a wish. He wished to be remembered forever—alas, his legend remains, but his name is long forgotten. Whether this bone exists cannot be confirmed.





Xadian Creatures

Allow us to introduce you to some notable Xadian creatures you might enjoy including in your tale. If a creature wants to play along with a PC, it can become an asset (see page 70 for more).



Adoraburrs

These tiny little fluffy creatures come in different types, corresponding to the different primals.

Amblers

Amblers are massive, long-legged creatures connected to the Earth primal, known to carry travelers across the Midnight Desert.

Archangel Lunaris

These huge, Moon primal moths flock to sources of Moon energy.



Banthers

Very large black-and-grey creatures known to frighten humans away from the woods of Katolis.

Bog Hyenas

Losing a limb to a bog hyena is commonplace in Evenere. Connected to the Ocean primal, they spend most of their time underwater, scanning the surface for large chunks of meat to chomp.



Brightbells

A small Sky primal bird that seeks out the language of humans and elves so it may adopt a favorite word, then spend its life singing it.

Bumble-Scorps

Flying insects with long stingers that tend to ignore people traveling in a group.

Cascader Skinks

These tiny Neolandian lizards project an exact image of the place they were standing three steps earlier onto their scales, making them disorienting to watch as they zoom about.

Chlormeleons

Spry creatures connected to the Earth primal, they can take on the shape and texture of any plant in order to hide from danger.

Crescentpillar Worms

These very rare worms are tied to Moon magic and live to be decades old; they create a few strands of silk only once before they die. They are best known for making not even the slightest sound when they walk, munch on a leaf, or do anything else for that matter.

Curlcoral

Colonies of these Ocean magic animals create incredibly tough coral habitats in the sea; they're capable of growing coral at blinding speeds.

Durenian Bees

Unusually wise bees native to the human kingdom of Duren, these bees' dances have special hidden meanings. There are many subtypes, such as the bluebell dusk bee and the crystal sasser bee.

Emberback Spiders

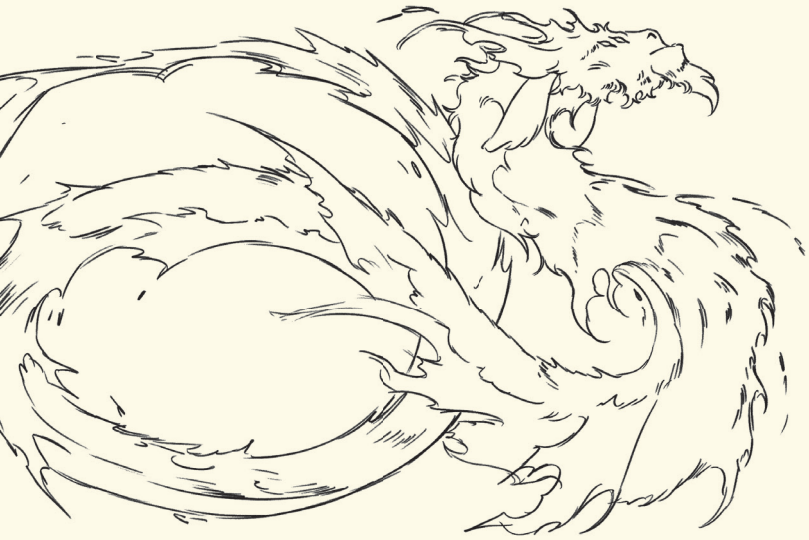
These Sun primal spiders are treated with respect when they're found inside a Sunfire elf home.

Eon-Mawed Megagator

To run into an eon-mawed megagator is to have a story to last a lifetime. With huge torsos that look like fallen trees, they get their name from their teeth. Inside the teeth are rings that can reveal their age, which is sometimes hundreds of years.

Flame Leviathans

Almost spectral in nature, these huge beasts breaching a volcano high into the sky usually portend a coming eruption. They're rumored to occasionally walk the land of Xadia, but haven't been spotted in centuries.



Flying Batfish

It's rare to meet a Sky primal fish, but these are an exception. Gliding silently through the swamps of Evenere, they have characteristically huge wings and ears.



Glow Toads

Though they're surprisingly cute and intelligent, these dog-sized creatures are notoriously delicious and hunted by all sorts of Xadia's most deadly predators. Luckily, they're connected to the Sun primal, change color according to mood, and can flash a bright light as a defense.

Kookaburrow

A large shovel-nosed Earth primal bird that uses its face to dig its nests deep within the dirt.

Longneck Hillwolves

These frightening wooly beasts stalk mountaintops so high that few people are unfortunate enough to meet one. They feed on smaller prey but love to chase larger prey around for fun.



Magma Titans

The extremely rare massive stone beings known as magma titans are linked to the Sun primal. Their hearts are incredibly strong sources of magic.





Mantigrades

These chubby little marshmallow-like insects perch on rocks to feed on nutrients in the air and can usually do little more than wiggle. Feeding them magical foliage is not recommended.

> "Take that, marshmallow monster!"
>
> CALLUM
>
> *Book 1: Moon, Chapter 1: Echoes of Thunder*

Moon Phoenixes

A huge bird that draws power from the Moon primal, Moon phoenixes have a life cycle whose rebirth requires that one of their feathers be carried to the Moon Nexus.

Moonstriders

These are tall, slender Moon primal creatures known to bear Moonshadow elf riders of the Silvergrove. They have a reputation for being a bit fussy and wild.

Musk Bears

These massive muscular creatures of the Earth primal prowl the Del Barian mountains. They have many layers of insulated fur on their broad shoulders, and equally broad, wide horns.

Neolandian Elephants

A massive, wise creature with long, elegant tusks, they are a revered part of Neolandian culture. Disrespecting one is considered unforgivable by its people.

Ringlings

A small, lemur-like creature linked to the Earth primal that trots along on four tiny hooves.

Shadowpaws

Large, fierce felines that grow close bonds with Moonshadow elves and are connected to the Moon primal, shadowpaws can be surprisingly gentle.

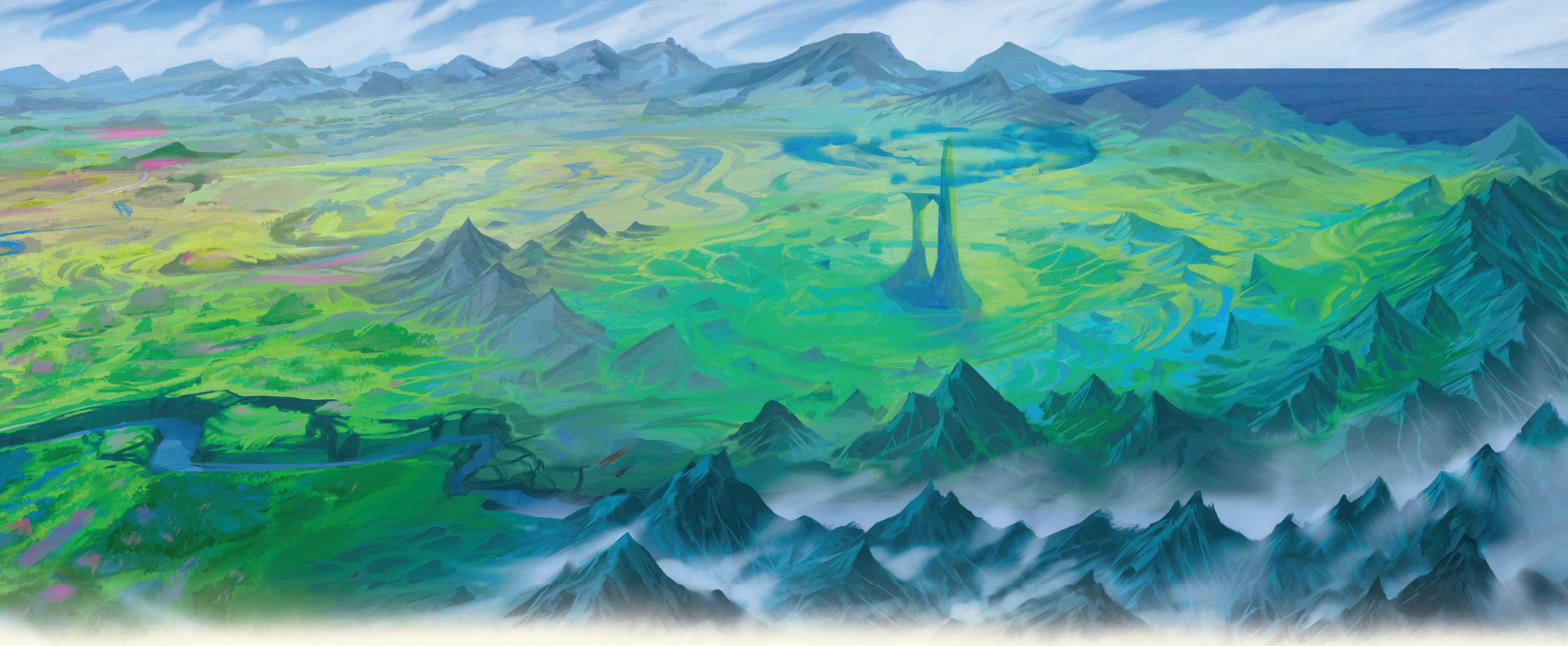
Slowusks

Slowusks are six-eyed Ocean primal snails that move so slowly it's almost impossible to notice them.

Snickeries

A snickery looks like an ordinary chipmunk, but they are masterful thieves because of their chameleon-like camouflage. Connected to the Moon primal, they're best known for infuriating Moonshadow elves with their mischief.





Soulfang Serpents

Scourge of the Midnight Desert, these Moon primal creatures can drain the soul from a person.

Sunbirds

These graceful beings are linked to the Sun primal, and though they are often found with Sol Regem, they rather annoy him a bit at this point.

Sunray Monarchs

These beautiful, brightly colored butterflies are connected to the Sun primal. During the summer, they contain enough magic to glow in the evening.

Swamp Toads

Massive Ocean primal toads the size of a horse, their bodies look mostly toad-ish, but they can also flatten themselves into a liquid-like body with a pair of eyes.

Three-Eyed Nightfoxes

These swift, clever Moon primal creatures are known to sneak across the Moonshadow Path to hunt west of the Border.

Twin-Tailed Inferno-Tooth Tigers

These large, imposing beasts have a connection to the Sun primal and grow naturally close to Sunfire elves, though they will only bond with someone who is pure of heart.

Unicorns

Generous and loving beings linked to the Star primal, they've been hunted to extinction by dark mages eager to poach them for their horns.

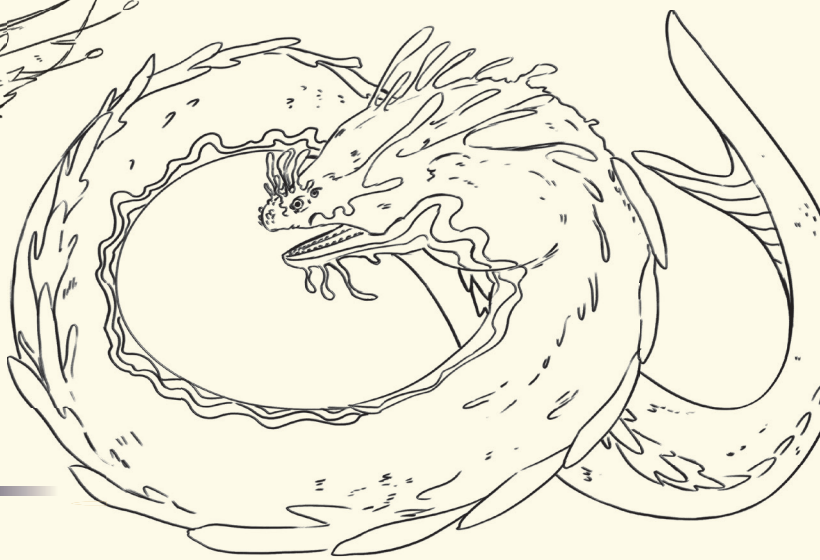
Violet Pandorums

Incredibly rare—only one is known to exist—these beings draw power from the Moon primal. Unlike the majority of Xadian creatures, even some dragons, they can speak... albeit only through telepathy.

Zogmoppets

These eels are native to the marshes of Evenere and are connected to the Ocean primal. They fold their long bodies into legs to move around land in a strange, dance-like walk.









IV

"Who are you, Rayla? What do you stand for?
Once you know that, then wherever the river takes you,
you'll be right where you were always meant to be."

CAPTAIN VILLADS
Book 2: Sky, Chapter 6: Heart of a Titan

Player's Guide

Characters are the heart of any story. As a player, you get to immerse yourself in the story through your character. This chapter has everything you need to choose your own character, understand how character journals work, and learn how to play the game. There are 13 premade characters to choose from if you want to get started right away; we also provide character creation rules so you can easily build your own human or elf player character (PC).

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

Your First Character: Advice for getting started with one of our premade characters.

Understanding Your Character: A breakdown of what the traits and dice on your character journal mean.

Playing the Game: A player-centric version of the game rules that covers key concepts and in-game examples.

Keeping Your Journal: How to track and grow your PC.

Creating Your Own Character: Step-by-step rules for creating an original human or elf character.

So You Want to Be a Mage: A quick start guide for creating a mage PC.

Creating SFX: Rules for building your own special effects.

Your First Character

So you and your group have decided to play *Tales of Xadia*. Maybe you're gathering together at the game table for the first session, or you're making plans online. Regardless of where, when, and how you meet, the most important part of getting started is choosing your first character.

Premade or Original?

For complete newcomers to the game, we strongly recommend playing one of the thirteen premade characters included in this book, beginning on page 238. You can also find these characters on our website as downloads and preloaded into the digital character journal toolset. In other words, it couldn't be easier to get your hands on them!

If you're up for something more challenging, you can use the step-by-step instructions beginning on page 112 to create your own original human or elf character. Lots of folks love this choice because it helps them feel more invested in the character. You can enter all of your game traits and die ratings into an online character journal or print out a blank journal and write it all down in pencil.

A Guide to the Baker's Dozen

So who are these thirteen premade characters and why should you play one of them? Here's a helpful summary, with some advice on why you might want to select Routhna over Pyrda, or Tressal over Diyan. Just for fun, we've included a difficulty rating as well, based on how much you might need to read up on the rules to play these characters, or how complex their story backgrounds and value statements are. Don't let a higher difficulty put you off, though! Each character is ideal for a first-time player. You can find the full character journal for any of the Baker's Dozen on the page noted on their portrait.


PAGE 239

Babukar (he/him)

Concept: Sunfire Elf Battle Mage
Difficulty: 10

Play Babukar if you:

- Want to use the Sun primal to cast fire spells
- Love to play smart, battle-tested characters
- Enjoy playing hot-tempered and glory-seeking characters


PAGE 240

Bineta (she/her)

Concept: Sunfire Elf Knight
Difficulty: 6

Play Bineta if you:

- Can't wait to wield a classic Sunforged blade
- Admire passionate, fearless fighters
- Believe justice will drive you to achieve great things


PAGE 241

Diyan (he/him)

Concept: Durenian Soldier
Difficulty: 6

Play Diyan if you:

- Are keen to be a soldier loyal to Queen Aanya
- Would like to be a warrior, but one with heart
- Think culture and elegance are important weapons, too



Draylenn (she/her)

Concept: Moonshadow Elf Rune Mage
Difficulty: 12

Play Draylenn if you:

- Want to use the Moon primal to cast illusion spells
- Can't get enough of cute, adorable critters
- Think pacifism is a highly underrated approach

PAGE 242



Easgann (he/him)

Concept: Skywing Elf Rogue
Difficulty: 8

Play Easgann if you:

- Have a soft spot for sneaky swashbucklers
- Love a character who does good things with a smile
- Think it's fun to play a character with a bit of an ego

PAGE 243



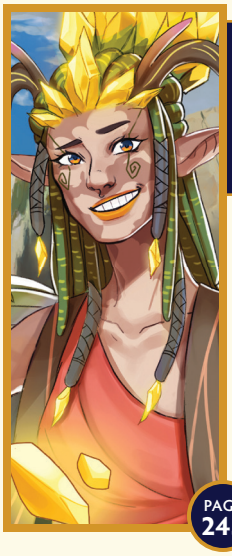
Eljaal (they/them)

Concept: Moonshadow Elf Assassin
Difficulty: 8

Play Eljaal if you:

- Want to explore being an assassin with a unique weapon
- Want a complex backstory lacking complete closure
- Enjoy playing characters who are masters at what they do

PAGE 244



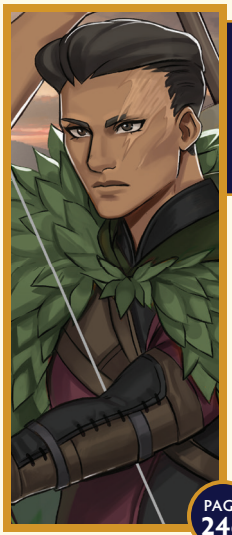
Hestia (she/her)

Concept: Earthblood Elf Rune Mage
Difficulty: 10

Play Hestia if you:

- Want to use the Earth primal to cast earth spells
- Would like to play a character that comes with its own pet
- Love playing wise characters who still appreciate an adventure

PAGE 245



Ponmalar (they/them)

Concept: Evenerean Archer
Difficulty: 8

Play Ponmalar if you:

- Want to play a monster hunter
- Want to be human, but not one sworn to a kingdom's service
- Love the idea of being a stoic archer with a unique bow

PAGE 246



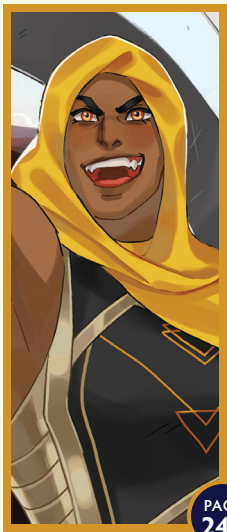
Pyrda (she/her)

Concept: Skywing Elf Rune Mage
Difficulty: 10

Play Pyrda if you:

- Want to use the Sky primal to cast air spells
- Love playing characters who focus on artifacts and knowledge
- Can't resist the idea of having wings and the power of flight

PAGE 247



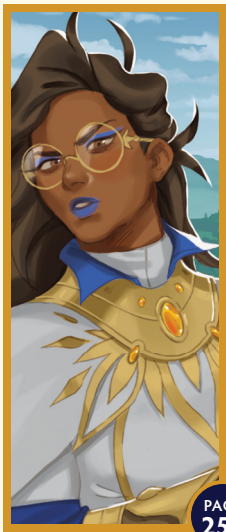
PAGE 248

Routhna (she/her)

Concept: Neolandian Warrior
Difficulty: 8

Play Routhna if you:

- Dream of being an unparalleled warrior with a huge sword
- Laugh in the face of danger and don't worry about manners
- Look for unique combat abilities that can change the shape of a fight



PAGE 250

Vinaya (she/her)

Concept: Durenian Noble
Difficulty: 6

Play Vinaya if you:

- Want unique abilities that don't require any kind of weapon
- Like playing characters that are smart and aren't shy about it
- Want to carry a book of lore that can solve major problems



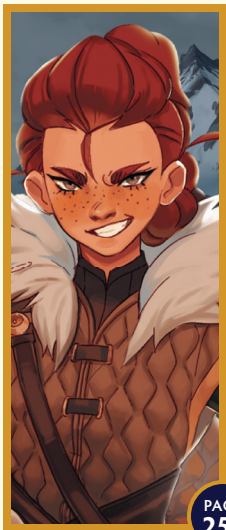
PAGE 249

Tressal (he/him)

Concept: Neolandian Dark Mage
Difficulty: 12

Play Tressal if you:

- Want to use dark magic with all of its pitfalls
- Think a snarky teenager sounds like a lot of fun to play
- Appreciate characters who see through the schemes of the powerful



PAGE 251

Winda (she/her)

Concept: Del Barian Hunter
Difficulty: 6

Play Winda if you:

- Like hunters who are attuned to the wilderness
- Love playing sarcastic, devil-may-care characters
- Want a long-range weapon that will keep you out of immediate danger



Understanding Your Character

As a player, your interaction with the rules of *Tales of Xadia* starts with your **character journal**. Everything you need to discover new places, puzzle out intrigues, and enjoy high adventure comes from the **traits** and **die ratings** you have before you.

In this section, we break down all of these traits and what they mean. You might find yourself referring back to this section a lot when you play your first character and later when you create your own. It's also a handy reference during the game when deciding which trait to include in your dice pool.

> LUJANNE: Real trust is about accepting even the dark parts we will never know.
>
> RAYLA: No, no I don't think that's right. Lyin' and hidin' the truth aren't that different. Strong relationships need honesty, the full truth.
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 2: Half Moon Lies*

Attributes

How do you do the things you need to do? You draw upon your **attributes**: **Agility**, **Awareness**, **Influence**, **Intellect**, **Spirit**, and **Strength**. Every PC has a rating in these six traits from a lowly d4 to a world-class d12. You always include one of your attributes in your dice pool when you attempt a test, contest, or challenge. Which attribute you include depends on the circumstances.

Your attribute's die rating doesn't necessarily mean you are deeply flawed if it's a d4 or the best in the world if it's a d12, but it does show that this is a part of your character that has or hasn't become the focus of your attention, your development, and your story. Most PCs have attribute die ratings of d6 and d8, with a d10 in the attribute they're most known for. A d12 attribute is rare indeed and often comes at the expense of other parts of the character's abilities.

- d4 Underdeveloped. You don't use this part of yourself much.
- d6 Average. You use this from time to time.
- d8 Notable. You use this often.
- d10 Significant. You use this almost all the time.
- d12 Superlative. You have reached your absolute peak with this.

Agility

Agility is your hand-eye coordination.

- Use this when you need to fight, sneak, aim, or balance.
- A character with a low **Agility** is often clumsy, inaccurate, or careless.
- A character with a high **Agility** is often graceful, quick, and nimble.
- This is one of Rayla's best attributes.

Awareness

Awareness is your ability to perceive your surroundings and other people.

- Use this as you pay attention to the world around you.
- A character with a low **Awareness** is often bored, distracted, or preoccupied.
- A character with a high **Awareness** is often vigilant, observant, and intuitive.
- This is one of Amaya's best attributes.

Influence

Influence is your presence and persuasiveness.

- Use this while you convince, coerce, charm, or collude.
- A character with a low **Influence** is often shy, awkward, or abrasive.
- A character with a high **Influence** is often charming, quick-witted, or motivational.
- This is one of Viren's best attributes.

Intellect

Intellect is your capacity to comprehend.

- Use this to study, learn, recall, or solve puzzles.
- A character with a low **Intellect** is often confused, ignorant, or incurious.
- A character with a high **Intellect** is often knowledgeable, careful, or bright.
- This is one of Callum's best attributes.



Spirit

Spirit is your mental resolve and emotional reserves.

- Use this when the situation requires courage, determination, perseverance, or willpower.
- A character with a low **Spirit** is often weary, demoralized, or gullible.
- A character with a high **Spirit** is often brave, stubborn, or committed.
- This is one of Ezran's best attributes.

Strength

Strength is your level of physical fitness and power.

- Use this if you're called to be tough, strong, or use brute force.
- A character with a low **Strength** is often undisciplined, sore, or scrawny.
- A character with a high **Strength** is often muscular, mighty, or unstoppable.
- This is one of Soren's best attributes.

SOREN: Before we left, Dad gave me a secret mission.

CLAUDIA: He did?

SOREN: I was confused and didn't want to do it, but I do want Dad to love me and be proud of me.

Book 2: Sky, Chapter 8: The Book of Destiny

Values

You're about to embark on a story set in the world of Xadia, so you need to know what matters to you and why you do what you do—this is represented by your **values**: **Devotion**, **Glory**, **Justice**, **Liberty**, **Mastery**, and **Truth**. Every character's investment in these six traits runs from a barely interested d4 to a supremely committed d12. The bigger the die rating, the more that value helps you on your journey.

You always include one of your values in your dice pool when you're attempting a test, contest, or challenge; which one depends on what motivates your character in each situation.

Each value has a **value statement** attached to it, which describes how your character thinks or feels about that value. You can use your value statement to help you roleplay your character and make choices about how they might act; you can also **question your value statement** in play, which reflects how people change and grow in their beliefs about the world around them. See page 98 for more on questioning your value statement.

Values always have fifteen die steps in total, with a d4 counting as one step; if you step up one value's die rating, you step down another. This is true for PCs, catalysts, and any other character that uses values. If you step down a value to help another PC out (page 101), the value returns to its original die rating at the end of the session so you don't have to worry about stepping another die rating up.

OPELI: Peace will require just as much strength as war. Are you prepared to defend it?

EZRAN: Yes. [Puts crown on his head] I am.

Book 3: Sun, Chapter 2: The Crown



Use the following as a guideline for determining how much each of these values matters to your PC or to a catalyst. Remember: value die ratings change a lot during play, so don't worry if at first it seems like you don't care much about one of these values.

- d4 "This hardly matters to me."
- d6 "This matters, but so do many things."
- d8 "This is important to me."
- d10 "This is a major part of my life."
- d12 "This is my heart and soul."

Devotion

Have you ever been obligated to others?

- This value is about duty, faith, and friendship.
- You're motivated by the bonds of loyalty and your love for others.
- This is one of Rayla's most important values.

Glory

Have you ever wanted to be celebrated by history?

- This value is about legacy, fame, and fortune.
- You're motivated by praise, acclaim, and your desire to be remembered.
- This is one of Soren's most important values.

Justice

Have you ever been compelled to fix what's wrong?

- This value is about balance, virtue, and reward.
- You're motivated by adherence to fairness and what you think is right.
- This is one of Ezran's most important values.

Liberty

Have you ever resisted the control of others?

- This value is about freedom and autonomy.
- You're motivated by a world without oppression or suppression.
- This is one of Callum's most important values.

Mastery

Have you ever needed to rise above your own limits?

- This value is about control, achievement, and skill.
- You're motivated by power, growth, and progress.
- This is one of Claudia's most important values.

Truth

Have you ever sought out all the answers?

- This value is about fidelity, certainty, and authenticity.
- You're motivated by finding strength in facts and by the principle and pursuit of knowledge.
- This is one of Lujanne's most important values.

Goals

During play you can declare up to three **goals** linked to your values, each at a different die rating from d6 to d12. Goals are things you'd like to achieve during the story, such as *Rescue my sister* or *Explore the Hidden Grove*. Each goal must be tied to a value, and the value's die rating determines the maximum die rating the goal can be set to. Once you achieve a goal, its die rating gets added to your growth pool.

See page 104 for more on setting and achieving goals.



Distinctions

Who are you and where do you come from? What do others remember about you? How are you described to others in the tales told of your adventures? You are the grand sum of your **distinctions**. Every PC starts with three distinctions rated at 8 and players may change them or raise their die ratings over time. You always include one of your distinctions in your dice pool. Which one you choose may have a part to play in the outcome of your test, contest, or challenge.

Distinctions each belong to one of three broad groups:

- Your character's background, kindred, or ancestry
- Your character's training, vocation, or role
- Your character's most memorable or peculiar quirk or feature

Distinctions always have the *Hinder* SFX by default (see Special Effects on page 71). Your distinctions should be worded so that they have a potential downside or means of getting in your way, as well as helping you out. A good distinction covers both! You can find a complete list of distinctions starting on page 252.

Kindred

Where are you from? Your **kindred distinction** reflects where you grew up and what sort of community you belonged to when you were coming of age. Most PCs have either a human kingdom or an elf community as their kindred distinction.

> For humans, this reflects your human kingdom and the part of society you came from.
>
> For elves, this reflects that you're an elf and which type of elf your family belongs to.

Vocation

How were you trained? Your **vocation distinction** represents what you chose to do with your life at a young age, making it part of your youth and upbringing. Even if you're not pursuing this career or role in your current life, the lessons, skills, and knowledge you learned from this make it useful from day to day.

Your vocation distinction always comes with an adjective. This helps differentiate two characters with the same basic vocation. A **Calm Soldier** is not the same as a **Battle-Worn Soldier**!

Quirk

What makes you different? Your **quirk distinction**, more than any adjective or description, best encapsulates who your PC is in regard to everyone else you're likely to meet.

Quirks are often written as sayings or turns of phrase. They can be descriptors or qualities, too. Your quirk sums up the reason your character is unlike somebody else with the same kindred and vocation distinctions.

> CALLUM: Are you like this back flippin', tree climbin', sword stabbin' elven warrior, but scared of a little splish splashin'?
>
> EZRAN: Awwww, that's cute!
>
> *Book 1: Moon, Chapter 5: An Empty Throne*

Assets

An **asset** is something or someone helpful that isn't inherent or part of you, such as a **Primal Stone**, an **Enchanted Staff**, a **Glow Toad**, or a **Faithful Squire**. Assets have die ratings like other traits do, beginning at 6. This represents how much the asset can help you, as well as your own bond with it.

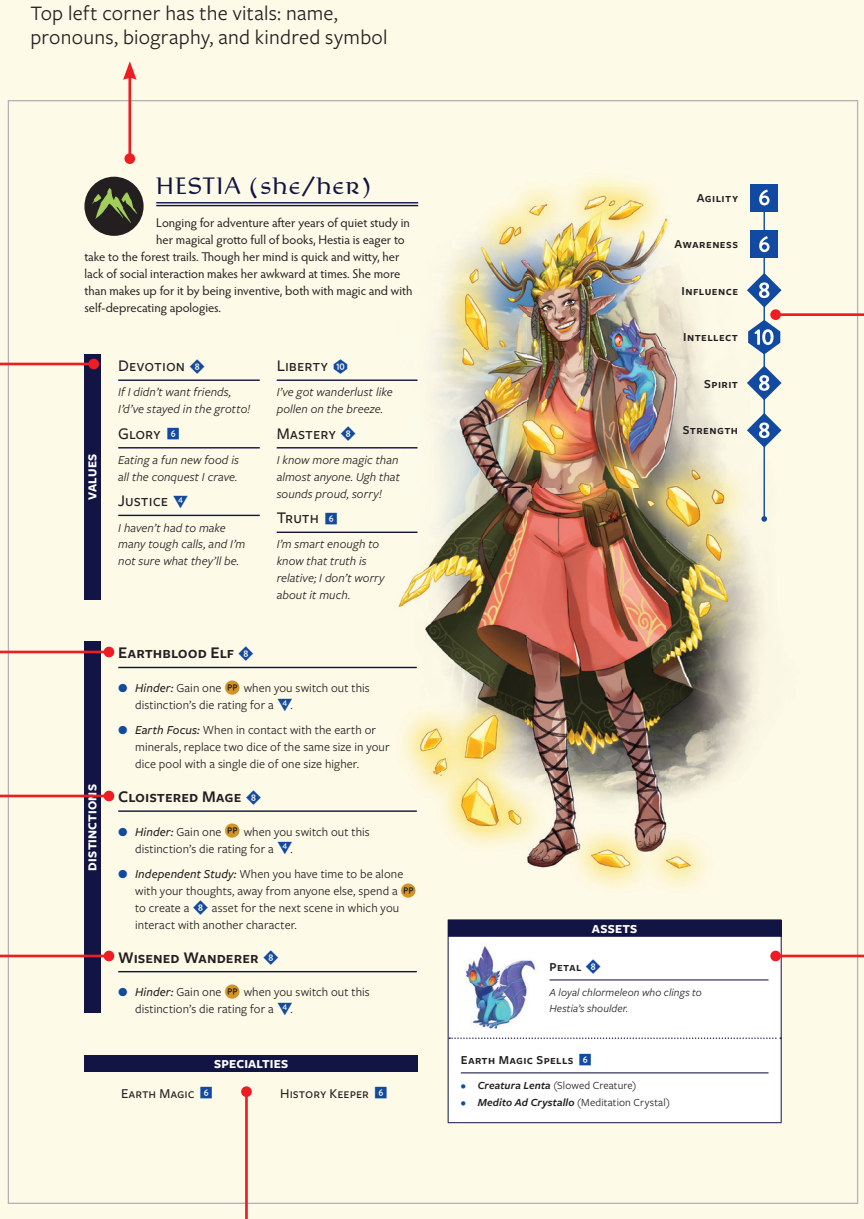
> 6 Something helpful and everyday, or that you've grown accustomed to.
>
> 8 Something special and interesting, or that you have a strong connection to.
>
> 10 Something rare and potent, or that you are defined by.
>
> 12 Something truly unique and powerful, or that transcends even your innate abilities.

You're most likely to have one or more 6 or 8 assets in your character journal, and some may be stepped up with growth. By activating opportunities rolled by the Narrator, you can step up your assets for a short time, also known as **spotlighting** your asset. For a moment, that thing is far more significant or important to the task at hand than it usually is.

You can include in your dice pool as many assets as you have, so long as you can justify why they're helping you out. You can include a combination of assets from your character journal, temporary assets created by you or handed to you by other players, and relationship assets created from growth dice.

An asset is made up of two things: your connection to something, and the something you're connected to. *The die rating belongs to your connection, not to the thing itself.* You and another character might both possess an asset, but at different die ratings. If you borrow another character's asset, you don't get the die rating because you don't have an established connection to it.

It's important to remember that not every item, person, place, or thing in the world of Xadia is an asset. You can swing a sword, ride a horse, or pick a lock without assets—it's just that the sword, the horse, and the lockpick aren't significant enough to have a die rating and be included in your dice pool. You don't have any real connection to them.



Helpful Tools

Some assets represent helpful tools to aid you in your journey. These might include:



- Climbing Rig
- Book of Secrets
- Artist's Kit
- Herbalism Pouch
- Trusty Compass

Friendly Creatures

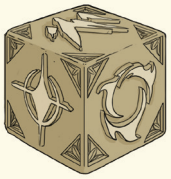
Animals, beasts, and even people can be assets. They're always around, pitching in and being useful. If you've got a friendly creature as an asset, they're a part of your story for as long as you want. Compare this to **relationship assets**, which are temporary and last for a single scene.



- Glow Toad
- Adoraburr
- My Horse, Alphonse
- Beehive
- Friendly Villager

Magical Items

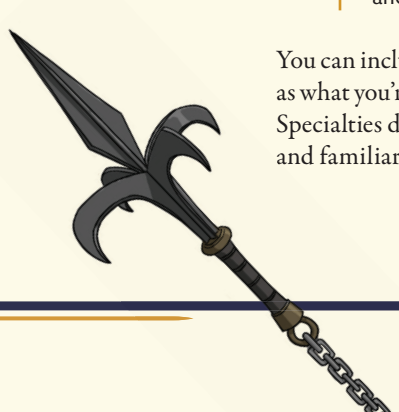
Some magical assets were created in ages past by powerful mages; others are recently enchanted by dark magic. Whatever their origin, they're an important part of your character's useful items. You don't need to know magic yourself to gain their benefit, but rune mages and dark mages get the most use from magical assets.



- Staff of Thunders
- Gem of Light
- Whisper Cloak
- Quickstep Boots
- Cuirass of Impenetrability

Weapons and Armor

Some assets are used in battle and when defending yourself from foes who seek to cause you harm. They can range from the usual swords, shields, and spears to curiosities of war.



- Gleaming Breastplate
- Coat of Mail
- Knight's Sword
- Light Crossbow
- Knobby Club

Temporary Assets

During the game you're likely to create or acquire **temporary assets**, which come from either spending PP to create a 6 asset or using a test to create an asset of a larger die rating. Temporary assets last for a single test, contest, or challenge; if you spend an additional PP, they can last for the remainder of the session. For more on temporary assets, see page 77.

Relationship Assets

Your connection to people and places in the world of Xadia often results from spending time with them (for people) or in them (for places). You can create **relationship assets** by spending your growth dice (see Using Growth on page 109).

Relationship assets are held in store until you want to activate them. You don't have to use them until you want to. When you do, you get to use it for a whole scene, in any tests, contests, or challenges, but at the end of the scene the relationship asset goes away. You may still care about the person or place, but you no longer have a specific asset to represent that in the game.

Specialties

Specialties represent a narrow field of expertise or training, such as **Sky Magic**, **Swordplay**, **Animals**, or **Politics**; specialties aren't used for every roll. A specialty has a die rating that reflects how much time, effort, and investment your character has in that kind of knowledge or skill.

> 6 You're trained. You know more than most people do, enough to do this as your job.
>
> 8 You're an expert. You've got a lot of experience or understanding of this, more than most who have training in it.
>
> 10 You're a master. You've spent your whole life training in this, and you know more than anyone in your community.
>
> 12 You're a grandmaster. Few people in all of Xadia and the Human Kingdoms know as much as you do about this. It consumes your every thought and deed.

You can include one specialty in your dice pool at no cost so long as what you're doing might require this sort of training or talent. Specialties don't just cover knowledge; they include applied use and familiarity with others who might use the specialty.

Special Effects (SFX)

Each distinction comes with one or more **special effects (SFX)** that let you bend the rules in specific ways under specific circumstances. Assets can have SFX as well, especially creature assets or assets that represent items imbued with magic.

By default, every distinction has the *Hinder* SFX:

- *Hinder:* Gain a PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

You may use an SFX whenever it's appropriate, whether or not you're rolling the distinction die that it's attached to. If an SFX specifies that it must be used with a specific trait, make sure that trait is included in the dice pool. More on SFX on page 130.

Stress

To triumph in *Tales of Xadia*, characters often endure great hardships or suffer through perilous situations. We represent these personal obstacles with **stress**, which is rated from 6 to 12. Your PC acquires stress dice through play; track your stress dice on your character journal.

Stress dice are added to your opposition's dice pool whenever it might make things harder for you, so they're like the opposite of assets.

Your character starts the chronicle without any die ratings in stress, and you may wish to avoid taking stress when you can, because it can make things harder for you. On the other hand, taking and recovering from stress with the help of your friends is one way to get more growth dice, so don't shy away from challenging situations that could lead to stress.

Types of Stress

Stress dice come in six different types. Your character may be affected by more than one type of stress, but your opposition can only include one stress die in any given roll. If you take more stress of a given type, it steps up the die, rather than adding another die of the same type.

When any of your stress dice reach 12 and would be stepped up again, you are **stressed out**.

- **Afraid**: This is the stress of fear and panic. Once this exceeds 12, you are gripped in the clutches of terror.
- **Angry**: This is the stress of rage and frustration. Once this exceeds 12, you are lost to your wrath.
- **Insecure**: This is the stress of apprehension and worry. Once this exceeds 12, you succumb to anxiety.
- **Corrupted**: This is the stress of dark magic. Once this exceeds 12, you are consumed with darkness.
- **Exhausted**: This is the stress of fatigue and weariness. Once this exceeds 12, you can no longer remain awake.
- **Injured**: This is the stress of pain and wounding. Once this exceeds 12, you collapse unconscious and may die.

Recovering Stress

You can **recover** stress dice when your PC has time to rest, recuperate, or gain the benefits of medicine.

By spending a PP, you can step down one of your stress dice when the Narrator rolls an opportunity. This represents shaking it off, taking a breath, or realizing that it wasn't as bad as you thought. When a stress die is stepped down to 4, remove it from your character journal.

Friends can test to recover your stress for you. Depending on how well they roll, they can step down your stress die rating or eliminate your stress completely.

See Recovering Stress on page 79 for more about how this works.



Playing the Game

Here we break down the rules for playing your PC and show how they work with the world of Xadia using the Cortex game system. It covers tests, contests, and challenges, as well as how to roll and read dice, spend plot points, and track stress.

Players do more than look up traits, assemble a dice pool, and roll dice. You make decisions for your PC that you think your character would make. Those might be terrible decisions! That's part of the fun of roleplaying. You don't have to be right all of the time, and some of the best scenes in any game come from a character making a choice based on their values, which players might balk at.

Reminder: As a player, you are responsible for:

- Deciding what your PC does. This uses the Cortex dice mechanics.
- Confronting problems that the Narrator throws in front of your PC. This means tests, contests, and challenges.
- Playing through scenes, sessions, and tales with storytelling in mind.
- Supporting other PCs. This means helping other PCs and recovering their stress.
- Deciding how your PC changes and grows over time. This means journal-keeping and growth.
- In general, exploring the world of Xadia and telling your character's story.

What You Do: The Dice Mechanic

Cortex uses standard gaming dice(4, 6, 8, 10, 12) to determine the outcome of a number of situations. We covered this back in Welcome to Cortex, but here's a refresher. Dice are usually rolled for **tests**, **contests**, and **challenges**. You need to know about putting together a **dice pool**, rolling the dice, checking for a **heroic success**, and choosing your **effect die**.

Your Dice Pool

The dice pool represents all the things that contribute to your success: **attributes** for your physical or mental talents, **values** for what motivates you to succeed, **distinctions** for what makes you who you are, and so on. There's no maximum number of dice in a dice pool, but generally the pool includes three to six dice. The more dice—and the higher their rating—the more likely that the odds will be in your favor. All the more reason to seek out situations where you can play to your strengths, rather than just running up to Sol Regem and kicking him in the leg. Even if he deserves it. *(See Example: Your Dice Pool.)*

> **Note**: In a **contest** (page 90) you can change the dice included in your pool every time you roll, narrating how and why the dice have changed. Dice from SFX or spending PP, such as temporary assets, remain for the duration of the contest.

Example: Your Dice Pool

Babukar, Cam's PC, starts a contest with an NC. Cam decides Babukar's approach by building his dice pool.

Cam chooses **Strength** 6 for the attribute: Babukar uses force to succed; **Justice** 8 for the value motivating his actions; and his **Simplicity Is the Best Solution** 8 distinction: Babukar isn't going for a nuanced approach. Looking at Babukar's specialties and assets, Cam asks if his *Circulus Luminis* (Ring of Light) spell is appropriate. Joe, the Narrator, agrees and Cam adds **Sun Magic** 8 and **Sun Magic Spells** 8 to his dice pool.

Joe confirms that the NC has **Exhausted** 6 stress that Babukar can reasonably include. Cam activates Babukar's *Heat Being* SFX, stepping up his **Strength** 6 and **Agility** 8 for the rest of the contest, gaining **Angry** 8 stress in exchange.



Originally a 6, it's been stepped up to 8 due to the *Heat Being* SFX

8 **Strength** 8 **Justice**
8 **Simplicity Is the Best Solution**
8 **Sun Magic** 8 **Sun Magic Spells**
6 **Exhausted**

Babukar can use the NC's stress

Babukar's Dice Pool

6 8 8 8 8 8

Rolling Dice

You and the other players make decisions for your group in response to the situations the Narrator presents. Not every decision leads to dice. Don't bother to pick up dice unless something stands in the way of what you want to do, or the outcome of a roll—success or failure—is interesting or moves the story along. If an outcome is guaranteed, the Narrator either describes what happens and moves on, or has you narrate the outcome of what your character does.

When you roll dice, you want a higher total than your opposition. This is the core principle of the Cortex game system. When you roll two or more dice, you choose two results to add together for your total, and a third die for the effect die. If you roll one die, your total equals the result of that die. If you don't have an available die, your effect die starts at d4. Your effect die indicates how well your efforts did, beyond a simple pass or fail. When you choose the effect die, the number it rolled doesn't matter—just the size of the die.

How Dice Amount Affects Effect Die

DICE RESULTS	TOTAL	EFFECT DIE
6	6	d4
4 3	7	d4
2 5 8 7 2	15	d10

All dice are rolled in the open—yes, even the Narrator—and should remain in view of everyone until the test, contest, or challenge has been resolved. This helps keep other players interested in each roll and how the player's choices may affect the story, rather than wondering why the Narrator is some kind of Machiavellian trickster who always gets their way.

When setting the difficulty for someone else, you put together an **opposition pool** that's made up of **difficulty dice** and any other applicable dice, such as those from stress or NC traits.

For tests, the Narrator assembles the opposition pool and rolls first, so you know the difficulty you have to beat.

For challenges, the Narrator assembles an opposition pool from the challenge pool to set a difficulty for each player's turn.

For contests, each die roll sets the difficulty for the next roll; each side is effectively the opposition for the other.

Choose any two dice for your total. They don't have to be the two highest rolling dice. You could save a die with more sides for your effect die. The Narrator may keep the two highest rolling dice or keep a smaller total. It's up to the person who rolls the dice. *(See Example: Rolling Dice.)*

Once all dice have been rolled, totals compared, and effect dice assigned, you and the Narrator resolve the **outcome**. For more on outcomes, see the sections on tests, contests, and challenges in this chapter, and the section Outcomes on page 98.

Note: To assemble a dice pool, choose:

- One attribute die
- One value die
- One distinction die

If applicable:

- One specialty die
- One or more asset dice
- One of your opponent's stress dice
- Extra dice from your SFX

Example: Rolling Dice

Babukar, played by Cam, is in the midst of a contest with Joe's Narrator character. It's Babukar's second turn in the contest and he needs to beat the difficulty of 11 set by Joe's previous roll. Cam decides to shift to being more nimble and graceful than forceful and strong. Cam swaps out Babukar's **Strength** 6 attribute with his **Agility** d8 attribute. Since Babukar's *Heat Being* SFX is active, his **Agility** is stepped up to d10. Cam decides to keep all the other dice as they were to complete his dice pool, and rolls the dice. His total is 13, which beats the difficulty.



d10 **Agility** d8 **Justice**
d8 **Simplicity Is the Best Solution**
d8 **Sun Magic** d8 **Sun Magic Spells**
6 **Exhausted**

Cam's Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
6 d8 d8 d8 d8 d10	5 2 4 5 8 5	13

Since *Heat Being* is active, **Agility** has been stepped up from d8 to d10

Heroic Success

If you beat the difficulty by 5 or more on a test or on your turn in a challenge, you've got a **heroic success**. You not only get what you want, your roll produces unexpected beneficial results. The **effect die** is stepped up by one for every 5 points you beat the difficulty by. The Narrator may even invite you to describe your spectacular outcome—a chance to really shine!

If your opponent loses a contest by 5 points or more, you get a heroic success and are the clear victor. This is the Cortex version of a perfectly baked jelly tart, so feel free to cheer out loud. The effect die steps up, as with a test or challenge. Remember, a contest isn't a heroic success until one side has failed to beat the other side's total. If one side gives in, there's no heroic success involved. Still feel free to enjoy the jelly tart, though.

In the event that your effect die is a 12 and you gain a heroic success, or you get multiple heroic successes that would step up your effect die past a 12, follow the usual rules for stepping up a die rating after 12. You can:

- Include a second unused die from your roll as a second effect die to create another asset or different type of stress, with a minimum of 6 die rating; or
- Add a second effect die at a 6 rating, assuming there are no dice left from your roll; or
- Stress an opponent out instantly (give them 12 stress and then step it up)

Heroic Successes on an Effect Die of 6

OPPONENT	YOU	RESULT
5	10	your effect die steps up by one to 8
5	15	your effect die steps up by two to 10
5	19	your effect die steps up by two to 10



Effect Dice

The **effect die** is chosen from the dice pool after the dice picked for the total are added together. The effect die is used for things like overcoming challenge dice, creating assets, or inflicting stress dice on others. Only the size of the effect die (number of sides) matters; the result rolled on the effect die has no further use.

Ineligible Dice

Any die that came up as a hitch can't be used as an effect die. If you spend PP to add more dice to a total beyond the first two, those dice can't also be used as effect dice. If there are no dice left in the pool once the total is determined (or the remaining dice are hitches or otherwise spoken for), the effect die is always a 4. This can be stepped up if the roll is a heroic success.

Effect Dice in Opposition

The effect die gives you an idea of how well you did in a **test**. A 12 effect die means the test had a mind-blowing outcome, while a 4 means it was barely successful. If you failed, the Narrator might give you a stress die equal to the opposition pool's effect die. If you succeed, the opposition's effect die doesn't matter.

If you win a dice roll in a **challenge**, the effect die impacts the challenge pool. An effect die that's greater than a challenge die removes the challenge die from the pool. An effect die that's equal to or less than the challenge die steps it down.

Effect Die vs. a 10 10 10 Challenge Pool

YOUR EFFECT DIE	CHALLENGE POOL
8	8 10 10
10	8 10 10
12	10 10

If you win a **contest**, you compare your effect die against the opposition's effect die (from the roll they just made to try to beat you). If your opponent's effect die is bigger than yours, your effect die is stepped down by one before you use it for a stress die. If it's equal to or less than yours, it doesn't change your effect die.

Your 8 Effect Die in Contests

THEIR EFFECT DIE	YOUR EFFECT DIE
10	6
8	8
4	8

Adding Extra Effect Dice

You can spend a PP to keep an additional effect die. This is used to represent doing multiple things with a single roll. Additional effect dice can be used for different things, such as inflicting other types of stress or creating assets.

If you have a **heroic success** with an 12 effect die, you can add an extra effect die. Either choose a second effect die from unused dice, or start with a 6 as your second effect die. *(See Example: Adding Extra Effect Dice.)*

Effect Dice in Automatic Outcomes

In the rare case that you need an effect die and the pool isn't rolled, use the largest die in the player's dice pool if it's an automatic success, or in the opposition pool if it's an automatic failure. *(See Example: Effect Dice in Automatic Outcomes.)*

Dice Result Color Reference Chart (just in case you forgot)

1	A hitch has a blue outline and black interior. Cannot be used in results.
6	Dice type is just blue.
6	A chosen dice result will have a blue outline and a white interior.
6	A dice result you chose not to use is grey.
6	An effect die is green.

Example: Adding Extra Effect Dice

Bineta, played by Mellie, wants to rally support among a group of villagers. Joe, the Narrator, declares this a challenging test and rolls to set the difficulty. **Total**: **8**.

1. Mellie uses Bineta's **Influence** 6 attribute, **Justice** 10 value, **Knight of Lux Aurea** 8 distinction, and **Strategy** 6 specialty. She describes Bineta hoisting her **Sunforge Blade** 8 asset for attention.
2. She rolls a success, but with a hitch. She needs options, so she spends a PP to include an additional effect die in her roll. She can't use the 8 that rolled a hitch so she chooses the 6, giving her both a 10 and 6 effect die. The second effect die has a different purpose, and Mellie uses it to create a temporary asset for Bineta: **Village Supplies** 6. **Total**: **12**.

TEST: Rally the villagers for support (CHALLENGING 8 8)

1

	DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
Joe	8 8	4 4	8
Mellie	6 6 8 8 10	2 6 1 6 4	12

2

Mellie's Adjusted Roll

Mellie	6 6 8 8 10	2 6 1 6 4	12

Example: Effect Dice in Automatic Outcomes

Bineta is preparing a barricade. Mellie reasons that Bineta has experience with such things since she's a **Knight of Lux Aurea** with a specialty in **Strategy**. Between this and the **Village Supplies** asset she created, Joe decides Bineta automatically succeeds. He wants an effect die to represent the quality of the barricade, and asks Mellie to build a dice pool to find the highest possible effect die.

Mellie uses Bineta's **Intellect** 8 attribute, **Justice** 10 value, **Knight of Lux Aurea** 8 distinction, **Strategy** 6 specialty, and her **Village Supplies** 6. Her highest effect die is 10.



8 Intellect
10 Justice
8 Knight of Lux Aurea
6 Strategy
6 Village Supplies

10 Justice → 10 Barricade

Plot Points

Plot points (PP) give players a measure of control over the fate of their characters. They represent luck and fortune, but also narrative authority; they're how we separate important characters in the story from those who aren't as critical. With plot points, you can tweak the results of the dice, activate SFX to do interesting things, and place a hand on the scales for a moment when the dice are fickle. It's rude of the dice to be fickle, really, and hopefully this will teach them a lesson!

Every player gets a PP at the beginning of each session. Unspent PP roll over to the next session, but even if you end a session without any, you always start the next session with one PP. At the end of the tale, any PP that isn't spent goes away—you start the next tale with a single PP as fate and fortune reassert themselves.

Earning Plot Points as a Player

There are several ways for players to earn PP during play. If you earn a PP because of a die roll, such as a hitch, you can't use that PP until your die roll is resolved. You can't roll a 1, get a PP, and then spend it to keep more dice in your total.

- **Hitches**: The Narrator may hand a PP over to you to activate one or more of your hitches once you have chosen your total and effect dice.

  They can give a 6 stress die to your character, step up an existing stress die, create a 6 temporary asset for one of their NCs involved in the scene, or step up a die in a challenge pool (if there is one). If you rolled multiple hitches, the Narrator can step up the stress, asset, or challenge die by one more step for each additional hitch you rolled (maximum 12) without giving you an additional PP. If the Narrator wants to do different things with each hitch you rolled, they need to give you a separate PP for each one. Otherwise you only get one PP even if they use all the hitches to step up one of your stress dice.

- **Giving In**: If you give in during a contest and let your opponent succeed rather than rolling the dice to beat their total, you earn a PP. You only get this PP if you've already rolled at least once in the contest; you don't get a PP if someone starts a contest and you choose not to oppose it.

- **SFX**: Some SFX (including the default *Hinder* SFX for all distinctions) give you a PP.

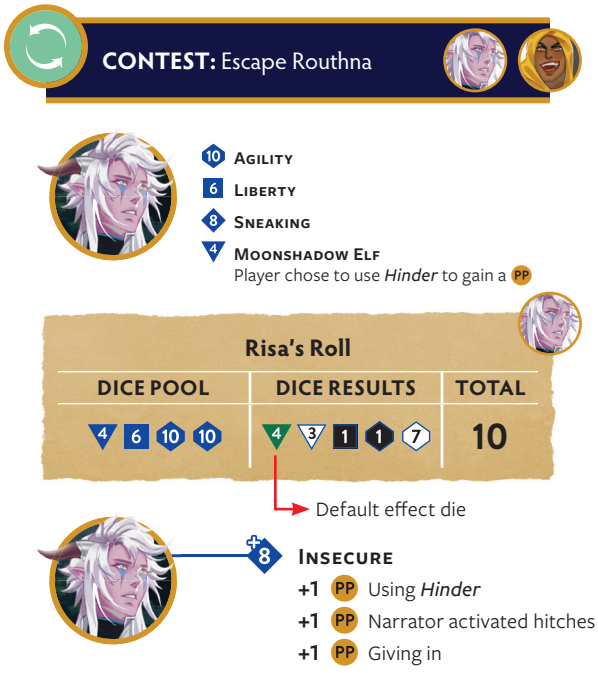
- **Roleplaying**: The Narrator is free to hand out PP for remarkable moments in play, such as making everyone laugh, being truly heroic, and so forth. Limit this to one PP for each occasion.

Example: Earning Plot Points as a Player

Joe, the Narrator, has set a scene in which Risa's character, Eljaal, is trying to escape from their pursuer: Routhna, Becky's character! Joe declares that this is a contest, and Eljaal acts first. Risa describes Eljaal using their **Agility** 10 attribute and their **Liberty** 6 value. She decides to use Eljaal's **Sneaking** 8 specialty to get away from under Routhna's nose. As for Eljaal's distinctions, Risa notes that it's the middle of the day, and decides to use their **Moonshadow Elf** 8 distinction while activating its *Hinder* SFX, earning a PP she hopes will help later. Then, Risa rolls Eljaal's dice pool. **Total**: **10**.

Two hitches! Risa groans, but Joe reminds her that there's a silver-lining to rolling hitches: he gives Eljaal a PP, buying both of their hitches and giving them **Insecure** stress rated at 8.

Becky rolls an impressive pool of dice, using Eljaal's stress against them. She gets a great result, and Risa decides that Eljaal should give in. She takes another PP for doing so, and narrates how Routhna successfully catches Eljaal. Since Routhna is so big and tough, she lifts Eljaal by the scruff and laughs haughtily.



Spending Plot Points as a Player

You can spend PP to do several things. Remember, you can only spend PP you've earned from a die roll after your die roll has been resolved and the total announced.

- **Activate SFX**: Some of your **SFX** must be activated by spending PP. These effects only last for the duration of the roll you're using it on; once you do something else, the effect must be activated again. It can take multiple PP to keep activating SFX during a contest or challenge.
- **Create a Temporary Asset**: You can create a **temporary asset** by spending a PP. This asset has a 6 die rating and you must give it a name, like **Tree Branch** or **Higher Ground**. You can assign it to yourself, or you can give it to somebody else. You can include it in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge, and it lasts for as long as the test, contest, or challenge lasts. If you spend an extra PP, the asset lasts for the rest of the session.
- **Include More Results**: After any roll, you may spend a PP to include more **results** in your total from the dice you just rolled. This way, your total may be three, four, or five dice added together. The only limit to how many results you may add to your total is how many dice you rolled to begin with and how many PP you have available. Remember, hitches can't be added to your total.
- **Keep an Extra Effect Die**: Sometimes you want to be able to achieve multiple outcomes with a single test or contest. In that case, you need more than one **effect die**. You can spend a PP to choose another of your remaining dice as an effect die in addition to the first. You can't do this if you don't have any dice left over from your roll, or if the only dice left over are hitches. These extra effect dice can't all be used in the same way: if you're giving a foe **Exhausted** stress with one effect die, you must choose a different sort of stress or create an asset with the other effect die.
- **Share an Asset**: If you've created a temporary asset or you have an asset of your own that you'd like to share with other characters, you can spend a PP to share this asset with another character. A shared asset keeps the same die rating for anyone else who it is shared with. This lasts for as long as the temporary asset lasts, or until the end of the scene if it's one of your character assets.
- **Activate Opportunities**: When the Narrator rolls an **opportunity**—which is the same as a player rolling a hitch—you can spend a PP to activate it if the roll is opposing you: i.e., if it's being rolled in opposition to you on a test, contest, or challenge. When you do this, the Narrator assigns it to their personal PP supply that's used for all Narrator characters. You can do one of two things: you can step down one of your stress dice or you can step up an existing asset (even one of your character assets) until the asset goes away or the scene ends, whichever comes first. Stepping up an asset with a Narrator opportunity is also called **spotlighting**. Some SFX might activate on opportunities, as well. You can't step up existing stress on an NC with this, nor can you create a new asset.

> CALLUM: No! I get to choose who I want to be.
>
> DARK CALLUM: Your destiny is already written.
>
> CALLUM: No! Destiny is a book you write yourself.
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 8: The Book of Destiny*

Unclaimed Hitches and Opportunities

If somebody rolls a hitch and it isn't activated by the Narrator, or if the Narrator rolls an opportunity and the player opposing the Narrator's character doesn't spend a PP to activate it, these are considered **unclaimed**. These results of 1 are still problems, because they don't add into any totals, can't be used for effect dice, and otherwise are just wasted.

If there's another player involved in the scene, the Narrator might offer them the choice of claiming the hitch or opportunity. If this happens, that player spends the PP to activate it. Usually this means another PC gets to use the opportunity to step down one of their stress dice or step up one of their assets, but another player might even activate a player hitch! If this happens, that player hands over one of their own PP to the player who rolled the hitch, and chooses which stress die to add. Players can't claim another player's hitch to create assets, however.

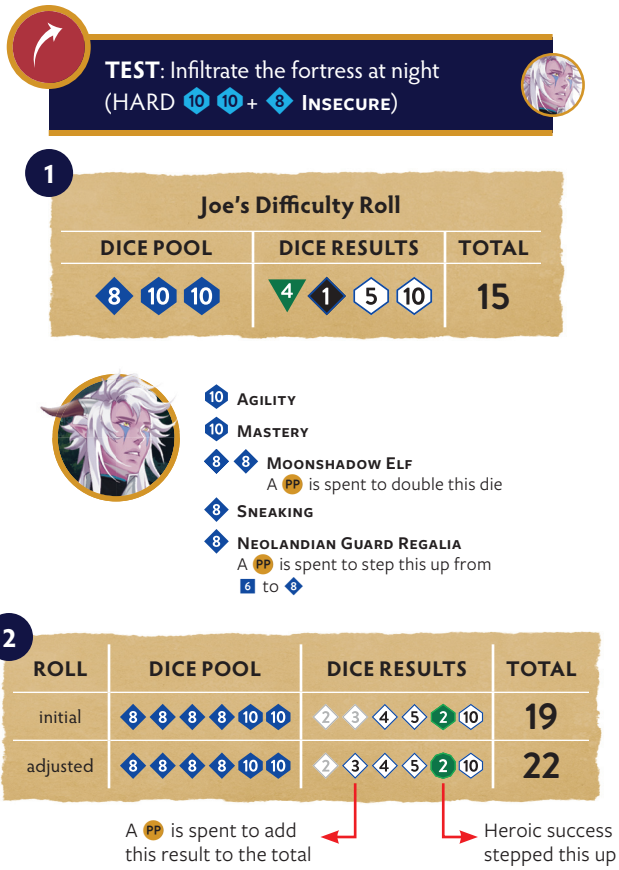
Why would a player activate another player's hitch? It's an easy way to pass PP among players who need it. Yes, it means stress gets added to the other player, but sometimes this can just be **Angry** or **Insecure** stress and it just represents some conflict between friends or rivals. It's always a good idea to ask the other player if this is OK, of course. Consent is important, especially between others at the game table.

Example: Spending Plot Points as a Player

1. Eljaal, played by Risa, and Routhna, played by Becky, have become unlikely allies. The two of them now plot how to infiltrate an impressive fortress together under the light of the full moon. Joe, the Narrator, warns this will be difficult, so Becky spends a PP to create a **Neolandian Guard Regalia** 6 temporary asset as a disguise to help out Eljaal. Risa tells Joe that she wants Eljaal to sneak in unnoticed, and so Joe rolls a hard test, including Eljaal's **Insecure** 8 stress. **Total**: **15**.

2. A hefty roll, but Joe did roll an opportunity! Risa decides to activate that opportunity by spending a PP, and chooses to step up the **Neolandian Guard Regalia** asset to 8. She then begins to build Eljaal's dice pool, choosing **Agility** 10 for their attribute, **Mastery** 10 for their value, and **Moonshadow Elf** 8 for their distinction, then adding their **Sneaking** 8 specialty. With the full moon high in the sky, Risa also sees a chance to active Eljaal's *Moonshadow Form* SFX. She spends another PP and doubles their **Moonshadow Elf** 8 distinction; and adds a note to remind herself that she can add a third die to her total. She gathers those dice, plus Routhna's asset, and rolls. **Total**: **19**.

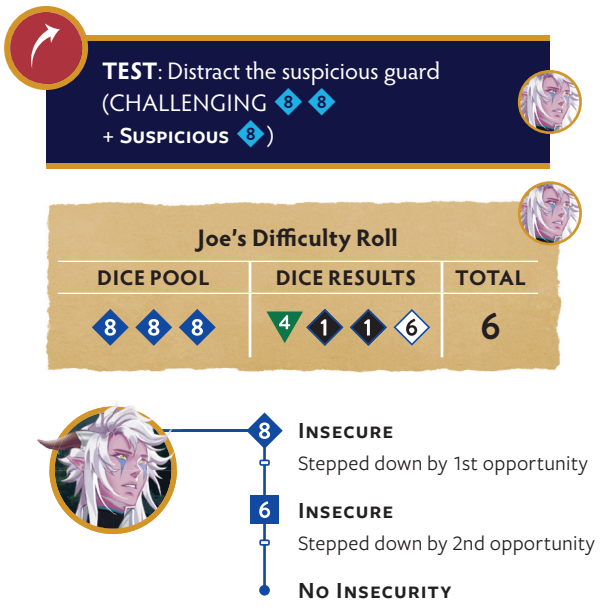
   A success! Risa's glad she activated that SFX. Before she gathers up her dice, Becky points out that Risa is only 1 point away from a heroic success. Risa checks Eljaal's PP, and sees they still have one left. She spends it to add another 3 points to Eljaal's total, giving them a heroic success and stepping up their effect die to a 12. It seems the plan is going well! **Total**: **22**.



Example: Unclaimed Hitches and Opportunities

Routhna, Becky's character, and Eljaal, Risa's character, are sneaking through a fortress together when Joe, the Narrator, introduces a guard that seems suspicious of Eljaal. Becky asks if Routhna can try to distract the guard, and Joe agrees, telling Becky that this will be a challenging test, adding that the guard has a **Suspicious** trait rated at 8. Joe rolls to set a difficulty. **Total**: **6**.

Joe rolls two opportunities! Becky chooses not to activate them, and so Joe offers them to Risa. Risa activates both opportunities by spending one of Eljaal's PP, and uses them to step their **Insecure** 8 stress down twice, recovering it fully. Risa narrates that watching Routhna step up to protect them without a second thought has restored their confidence. Then, it's up to Becky to build Routhna's dice pool.



Taking Stress

Your character takes **stress** when they fail at a test, challenge, or contest. The size of the stress die is equal to the effect die of the opposition pool. Whoever inflicted the stress die on you gets to choose what type of stress it is, based on the nature of the test, contest, or challenge. If the effect die is a d4, the stress is stepped up to a d6; there is no d4 stress die rating.

How Effect Die Creates Stress (starting from none)

EFFECT DIE	STRESS RATING
d4	d6 INJURED
d6	d6 INJURED
d10	d10 INJURED

The Narrator can also step up one of your existing stress dice when you roll a hitch and they activate it; if you don't have any stress dice, the Narrator can inflict one on you at d6.

If all of your dice come up as hitches, this is called a **botch**. The Narrator can inflict d6 stress of any type on your character and step it up by one for every hitch on the roll past the first. If this ends up being more than d12 stress (i.e., you rolled five hitches, which is a d6 stepped up four times) or it steps up existing stress past d12, then your character is **stressed out**. You don't get PP for a botch.

1 Hitch	d6 INJURED
2 Hitches	d8 INJURED
3 Hitches	d10 INJURED
4 Hitches	d12 INJURED

By default, no character has any stress dice. On occasion, the Narrator might introduce an NC who has already taken stress from something, such as an injured soldier, an afraid child, or an insecure mage.

If you take stress of a certain type and you already had stress of that type, it is either stepped up by one (if the new stress die is the same size or smaller than the current one) or replaces the old one (if the new stress die is larger than the current one). This means that if you keep taking d6 stress, eventually your stress gets stepped up past d12 and you are stressed out.

Recovering Stress

During a recovery scene in which your character spends most of the time sleeping, resting, or otherwise taking care of themselves, all of your stress dice except **CORRUPTED** stress step down by one. At the beginning of the next session, all of your stress dice (again, except **CORRUPTED** stress) also step down by one, unless the Narrator decides there's some reason for the stress to persist (such as ending the session on a cliffhanger).

Activating one of the Narrator's opportunities with a PP lets you step down a stress die by one (even **CORRUPTED** stress). This takes place immediately after the effects of the Narrator's die roll are resolved.

Other characters can attempt to recover your stress by making a test against d8 d8 plus the stress die being recovered.

- **If they succeed and their effect die is larger than your stress die**: your stress goes away.
- **If they succeed and their effect die is equal to or smaller than your stress die**: your stress steps down by one.
- **If they fail**: your stress remains the same.
- **If they fail and get a hitch:** your stress steps up by one, but you get the PP.

Stress can't go lower than d6. If it gets stepped down from d6, it's eliminated.

CORRUPTED stress usually requires dark magic, or rune magic in some cases, to purge it from your system. See Mage's Guide: Dark Magic on page 146 for more about recovering **CORRUPTED** stress. It can also be stepped down using Narrator opportunities during play.

Stressed Out

If any stress die is ever stepped up past d12, your character is **stressed out** and no longer takes part in the scene they're in. Once the scene is over, and your character is somewhere that they can rest or recover, the stress die goes away entirely and is replaced by a d6 **trauma die** (page 86). For the rest of the current scene (assuming other characters are still present), your stress is still considered to be d12. This is important, because if for any reason you take more stress of the same sort that stressed you out, it goes straight to your trauma.

Example: Stressed Out

Bineta, played by Mellie, has had little time to rest in between scenes with intense battles and fraught arguments. Now, her **Angry** 12 stress is beginning to get the better of her as she tries to overcome a test presented by Joe, the Narrator. Though the test is easy (6 6), Joe also adds Bineta's **Angry** 12 stress to his pool, and Bineta is unable to roll higher than the difficulty he sets. Joe gives Bineta a 6 stress, and decides to add it to Bineta's **Angry** stress, stepping it up over 12. He allows Mellie to narrate Bineta's pent up frustration over the trials of the day before moving on to the next scene.

Later, Joe sets a scene in which Bineta can rest, but no one rolls to recover her stress. Mellie recovers Bineta's **Angry** 12 completely, but adds **Angry** 6 trauma, which will continue to be a challenge until she can get someone's help to recover.



12 **Angry**

6 **Angry**

Because Bineta failed to beat the Narrator's roll, she gets more stress of Joe's choosing, he chose **Angry**

Stressed Out!
Bineta is taken out of the scene



Trauma
6 **Angry**

Until the trauma is addressed, opposition pools can use 6 **Angry** in their pools whenever Bineta is involved.

There are situations that may just mean your character can't survive what happens to them, and stress isn't a factor (such as falling into a river of lava or off the side of a mountain), in which case the Narrator might say that your character has been lost, died, or suffered some other terrible fate. This doesn't happen often, but if it does, there should be some dramatic send-off to your character. Taking a character permanently out of the game should be a conversation between the player and the Narrator. Tears are shed, friends swear revenge, and songs are sung. Next session, you can start with a new character and a new story.

What does being stressed out look like? Here's a guide.

- **Afraid**: You are gripped in the clutches of terror and can't do anything but flee.
- **Angry**: You are lost to your wrath and can do nothing but scream and curse.
- **Corrupted**: You are consumed with darkness and no longer respond to those around you.
- **Exhausted**: You cannot remain awake or coherent.
- **Injured**: You collapse unconscious and may die.
- **Insecure**: You succumb to anxiety and self-doubt.

Pushing Stress Dice

You can choose to **push your stress**: your PC shoulders through their pain and suffering and uses it as a motivator rather than a setback. To do this, spend a PP and add your stress die to your own dice pool for your next die roll.

Unlike assets or other bonus dice, pushing stress like this only applies to a single roll. So, if you push your stress during a contest or a challenge, once you roll the dice and resolve that step of the contest or challenge, the stress die leaves your dice pool. *(See Example 1: Pushing Stress Dice—Part One.)*

Pushing your stress has an additional cost. After you resolve the die roll (add up your total, declare effect die, and so forth), the stress die you included in your dice pool is stepped up by one. This may result in your PC being stressed out if the die is stepped up past 12. This means that even though you might be successful in your roll, you must accept the consequences immediately after. *(See Example 1: Pushing Stress Dice—Part Two.)*

Even if you push your stress on a test, contest, or challenge, when the time comes for an opposition dice pool to be assembled, your stress may still be added to it. This is less important when it comes to a test or a challenge, as the difficulty is already set before you roll. It's more important when you are in a contest, and your opponent tries to beat your total with their own dice. *(See Example 2: Pushing Stress Dice.)*

> SOREN: Parry, dead.
>
> CALLUM: Are you sure? Even if I was wearing armor?
>
> SOREN: Even if you were wearing the rarest legendary armor forged by Sunfire elves? Super dead.
>
> *Book 1: Moon, Chapter 1: Echoes of Thunder*

Example 1: Pushing Stress Dice—Part One

Joe, the Narrator, has set a scene in which Easgann, Dan's character, and Ponmalar, Ti's character, are required to travel together through a dangerous marsh. From an earlier interaction, Easgann has taken some **Insecure** stress, currently rated at 8. Dan decides to have Easgann confidently travel ahead of Ponmalar, ignoring their warnings, and Joe describes how the dark shadows of the swamp begin to create tendrils of fear in Easgann's mind. Because, sure, Easgann might always pull stunts like this, but he still occasionally regrets it! Joe calls for a challenging test (8 8), which will also include Easgann's stress. **Total**: **10**.

Dan builds his dice pool, choosing to use Easgann's **Spirit** 8 attribute to fend off the fear, his **Devotion** 6 value, and his **Silent Scout** 8 distinction. Wishing he had another die to add to his pool, Dan decides that he wants Easgann to push his **Insecure** 8 stress. Dan spends a PP, and describes how Easgann is covering his trepidation with bravado. Then, he rolls to see just how much of that bravado is bittersweet bluster...

TEST: Resist the swamp's magic (CHALLENGING 8 8 + 8 **Insecure**)

Joe's Difficulty Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
8 8 8	4 4 5	10



- 8 **Spirit**
- 6 **Devotion**
- 8 **Silent Scout**

- 8 **Insecure**
  Added to Easgann's dice pool after spending a PP

Example 1: Pushing Stress Dice—Part Two

After determining the results of the test (which, Easgann's player Dan will point out, was a success), Joe, the Narrator, reminds Dan to step up Easgann's **Insecure** stress to a 10 as part of the cost for pushing the stress.



- 8 **Insecure**
  Easgann wins the contest but his stress still steps up from 8 to 10 from using it in his dice pool
- 10 **Insecure**

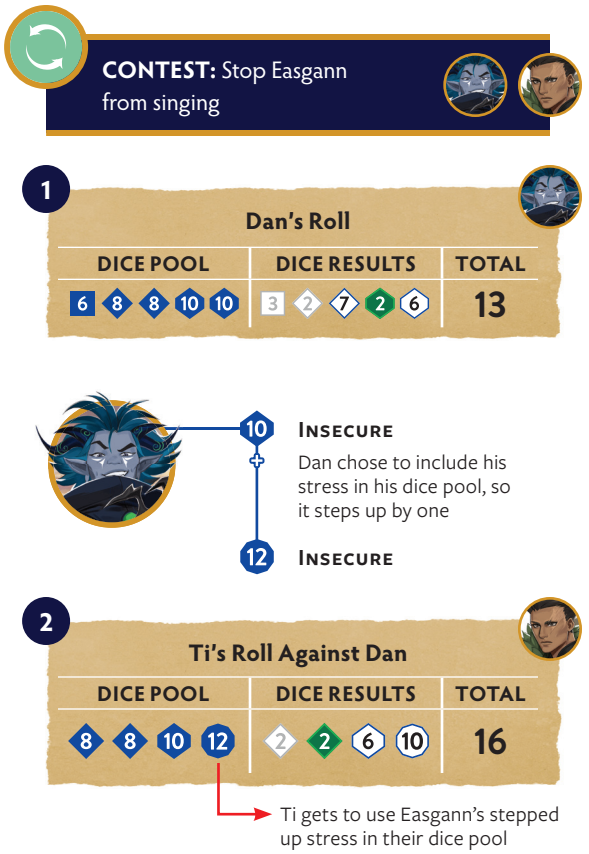


Example 2: Pushing Stress Dice

Later on in the session, Ponmalar, Ti's character, and Easgann, Dan's character, come to a disagreement when Ponmalar tries to stop Easgann from singing. Not that he doesn't have a lovely singing voice—of course Dan does! But Easgann believes the singing will attract an ancient beast of legend, while Ponmalar is concerned that's exactly what will happen. Joe, the Narrator, declares this to be a contest, and has Easgann roll first.

1. Dan puts together a dice pool using Easgann's **Agility** 10 attribute to keep out of Ponmalar's grip, his **Liberty** 8 value, and his **Dashing Do-Gooder** 8 distinction. He also adds in his **Singing** 6 specialty, of course! With a PP still available to Easgann, Dan decides to push Easgann's **Insecure** 10 stress once more, adding a 10 to his pool in exchange. **Total**: **13**.
2. After finishing Easgann's roll, Dan steps up the **Insecure** stress to a 12—which Ti can now use in Ponmalar's pool! Ti decides to pit Ponmalar's **Agility** 10 against Easgann's, and chooses their **Devotion** 8 value. For a distinction, Ti chooses **Marsh Ranger** 8, and then they add Easgann's **Insecure** 12 to finish their pool. **Total**: **16**.

Ponmalar takes advantage of the situation, but the contest isn't over yet... What will Easgann do? At the very least, Dan will hopefully show everyone what Easgann looks like as he tries to sing while slipping and dodging around. For funzies.



Last-Ditch Effort

In some cases, you may be able to temporarily recover enough stress during a scene after you have been stressed out, which is something we call a **last-ditch effort**. This must be prompted by somebody trying to rouse you, snap you out of it, clear your head, or inspire you with words. Treat it like a test to recover your stress: 8 8 difficulty plus the 12 stress you still have. Take note of the effect die; you may get to use it as an asset in your roll. *(See Example 1: Last-Ditch Effort.)* Stress is not recovered this way, and so does not count towards the growth pool. See page 106 for more on growth from recovering stress.

If they're successful, you can attempt something in the current scene, so long as it's a short or immediate sort of activity. This might be taking a turn in a challenge, or making a test. A contest is probably out of the question! The downside to this is that instead of adding two dice to get your total, you can only use one. You can spend PP to include more into your total, as normal. You may also add the effect die of the test that was made to rouse you as an asset for that roll, if that helps. *(See Example 2: Last-Ditch Effort.)*

> "If you die out there, I swear I'll kill ya."
>
> RAYLA
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 4: Voyage of the Ruthless*

Note that you can't use or affect the stress die that stressed you out while you're in a last-ditch effort—you can't step it down, you can't push it, or anything else. It's still there until your next recovery scene, when it goes away, even if you pulled off the last-ditch effort.

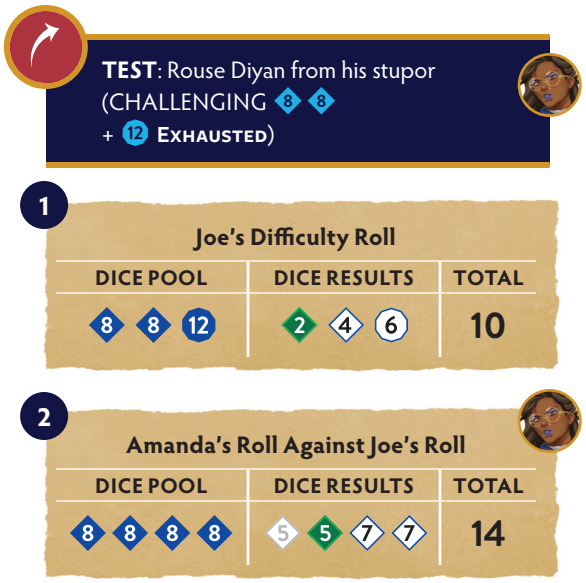


Example 1: Last-Ditch Effort

1. Diyan, played by Evan, and Vinaya, played by Amanda, have spent a day searching an ancient museum for an important scroll. The challenge has been quite difficult, and Diyan was stressed out when his **Exhausted** stress was stepped up over 12! Though they retrieved the scroll, the place is now collapsing around them, and Amanda decides that Vinaya can't do this alone. She wants to rouse Diyan on her turn. Joe, the Narrator, sets the difficulty for her. **Total**: **10**.

2. Amanda builds a dice pool, choosing to use Vinaya's **Spirit** 8 attribute, **Mastery** 8 value, and **Herald of the Queen** 8 distinction. She worries that's not enough, and decides to spend a PP to activate her *Orate* SFX to double her attribute die. **Total**: **14**.

   A success! Diyan, roused by Vinaya's imploring speech, can help with a last-ditch effort. Joe reminds Evan to note the 8 effect die from Vinaya's roll, which he can use in Diyan's dice pool.



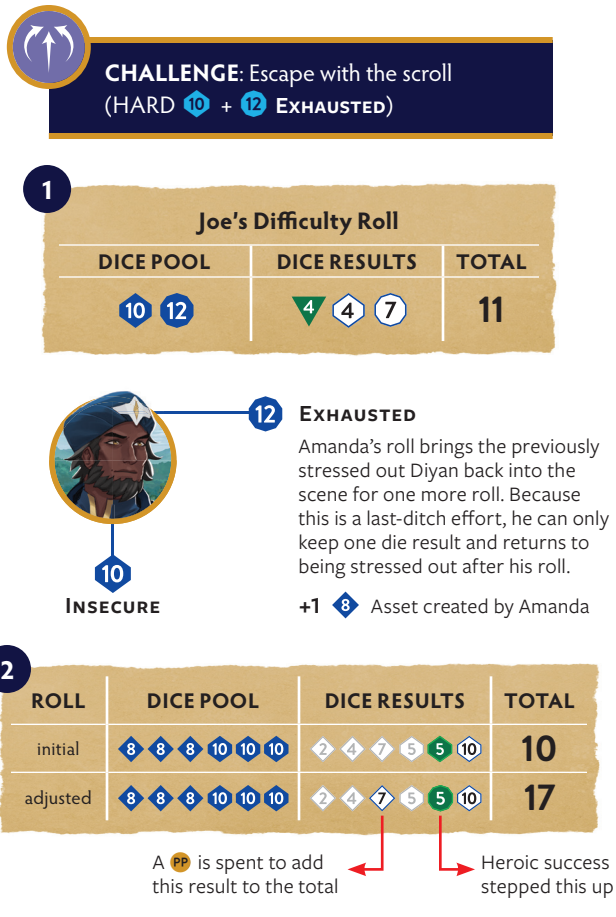
Example 2: Last-Ditch Effort

1. As a last-ditch effort, Evan, Diyan's player, knows that he needs to help Amanda's character, Vinaya, and the scroll get out of the crumbling building, no matter what. Evan wants to use Diyan's spear to hold a column steady just long enough for him and Vinaya to escape. Joe, the Narrator, takes the last remaining die in the challenge pool, plus Diyan's stress, and sets the difficulty. **Total**: **11**.

2. It's challenging, but Evan remarks that Diyan had quite a number of PP before being stressed out. He builds his pool using Diyan's **Strength** 10 attribute, **Devotion** 10 value, **Never Back Down** 8 distinction, and his **Durenian Spear** 8 asset. He also adds the 8 asset Vinaya created by rousing him, and then he spends a PP to activate his *Resolute* SFX, which allows him to add one of his stress dice to his pool. Although he can't add the **Exhausted** stress that had stressed him out, he also has an **Insecure** 10 that may prove useful.

   Since this is a last-ditch effort, Diyan only adds one result to his total by default. Thankfully, Evan has held onto another PP! He spends it to add the result of 7 to his roll. **Total**: **17**.

   Not only did Diyan succeed, he got a heroic success! Evan steps up his 10 effect die to a 12, which is enough to remove the last die of the challenge. Plus, Evan notes, Diyan's *Resolute* SFX lets him step down his **Insecure** stress to a 8. He still ends the scene stressed out from his **Exhausted** stress, but Amanda is sure glad she roused Diyan for help.



If they fail their roll, there's no rousing you, and you remain out of the scene until it's over.

You can attempt to rouse yourself for a last-ditch effort, but it's almost impossible to do! Make the test yourself, and don't add any dice together for the total—it starts as zero. You then spend PP to add dice to this until you either beat the difficulty or fail. Otherwise the rules are the same: you get one chance to do something, add your effect die as an asset, and keep only one die for your total. *(See Example 3: Last-Ditch Effort.)*

Once you do what you could with your last-ditch effort, you are stressed out once again. If you rolled any hitches on your last-ditch effort, whatever it was that you did, the Narrator has the option of activating the hitch, handing you a PP, and stepping up your trauma. So this is not something to attempt lightly.

Stress and Growth

Any time someone else helps you to recover your stress—other than **Corrupted** stress—you add the stress die to a pool of dice called your **growth pool** (see Keeping Your Journal: Building the Growth Pool on page 106). You can use it to grow your character, modify your SFX and trait ratings, and so forth. Even if the stress is not completely recovered, you still add a growth die equal to the size of the stress die before it was recovered, not what it was afterward. *(See Example 1: Stress and Growth.)*

Each type of stress can only contribute one die of stress to your growth pool, so if you later take and recover that same type of stress again, it won't be added to your growth pool unless it's a larger die. This means if somebody else helps you recover stress that was already partially recovered in the same session, it won't add anything to your growth pool because you already added the larger die. *(See Example 2: Stress and Growth.)*

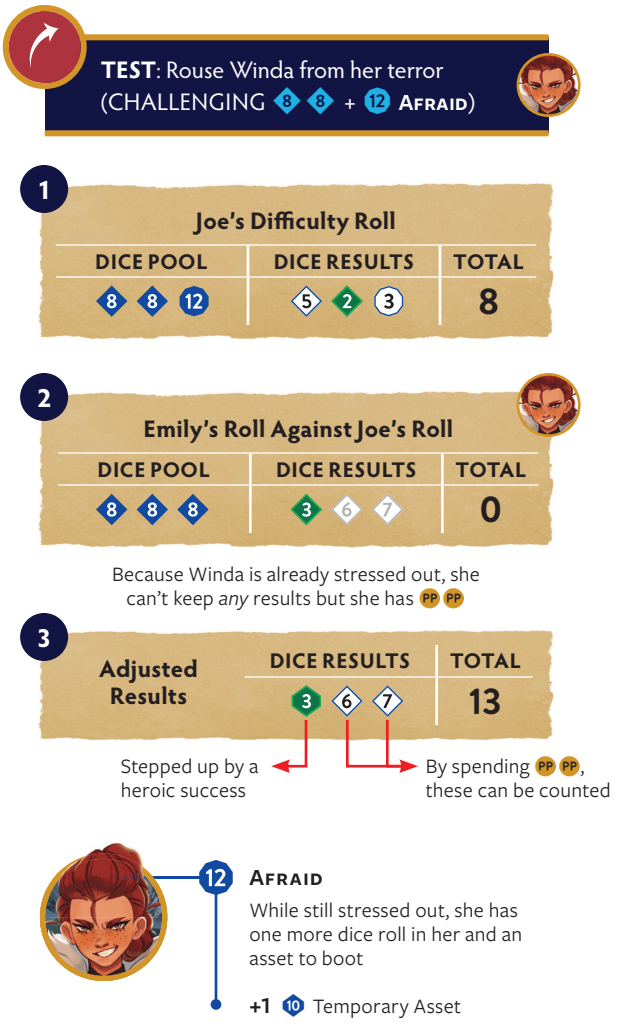
Example 3: Last-Ditch Effort

1. Winda, played by Emily, was stressed out of the current scene when her **Afraid** stress stepped up above 12. Usually, this would mean she can't take any more actions, but she knows that her fellow players need her (and the hoard of PP she's been saving up), and so she attempts the impossible: to rouse herself with a last-ditch effort. Joe, the Narrator, warns her that this is dangerous, because any hitches she rolls could be turned into trauma. Emily insists that it's worth it to help her friends, and so Joe rolls to set a difficulty. **Total**: **8**.

2. Knowing what Winda has to beat, Emily starts to build her pool. She chooses Winda's **Strength** 8 attribute, **Devotion** 8 value, and her **Del Barian Hinterlander** 8 distinction. She saves all of her PP to add dice to her total, and rolls the dice. **Total**: **0**.

3. Emily was hoping she might only need to spend one PP, but at least she has enough left to make a success happen! She spends PP PP to add two of the dice to her total, and manages to rouse herself with a heroic success, stepping her 8 effect die up to a 10! **Total**: **13**.

   Roused and ready, Emily adds the 10 temporary asset to her sheet, and begins to explain her exciting last-ditch effort to the table...

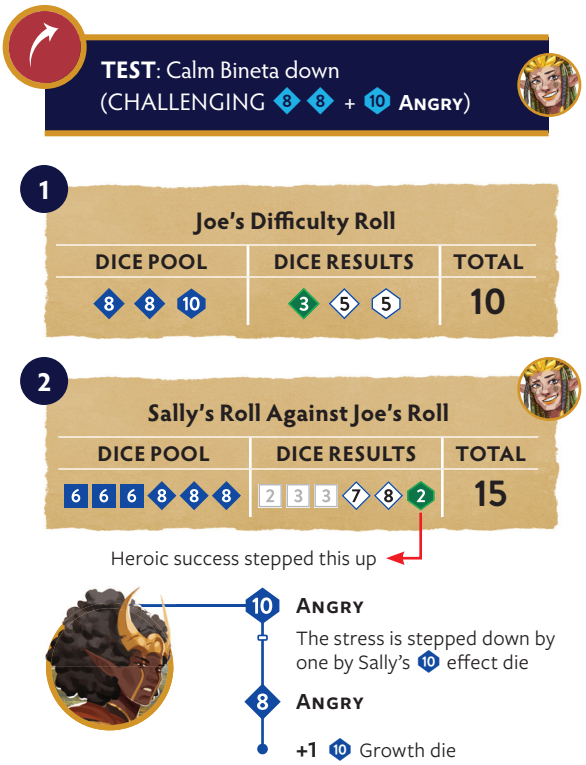


Example 1: Stress and Growth

1. Mellie's character, Bineta, currently has **Angry** stress rated at 10. Sally, who plays Hestia, knows she'll need Bineta's help later, and decides to help Bineta recover stress through the power of meditation (and a little Earth magic). Mellie and Joe, the Narrator, both agree and Joe sets a difficulty for Hestia. **Total**: **10**

2. Sally builds a dice pool using Hestia's **Influence** 8 attribute, **Mastery** 8 value, and **Wisened Wanderer** 8 distinction. Since she's using her magic, Sally also includes Hestia's **Earth Magic** 6 specialty and **Earth Magic Spells** 6 asset. Knowing that Bineta has an affinity for animals, she asks Joe if she can use her chlormeleon, Petal, to help relax Bineta further. Joe allows it, and Sally adds **Petal** 6 to the dice pool, as well. **Total**: **15**.

   A heroic success! This means Sally's effect die, originally a 8, steps up once. Sally compares her effect die with Bineta's **Angry** 10 stress. The effect die is equal to Bineta's stress, which means she can't get rid of it entirely. Instead, she steps the stress down once, to a 8. Mellie thanks Sally, and marks the change on her character journal, not forgetting to add a 10 to her growth pool.



Example 2: Stress and Growth

1. Later in the same session, Mellie's character, Bineta, is still plagued by **Angry** 8 stress. Bineta and her brother Babukar, played by Cam, are trying to keep one another in check. Cam wants to help Bineta recover more of her stress before the scene moves on, and Mellie and Joe, the Narrator, agree. Joe sets a challenging (8 8) test for Cam, using Bineta's stress. **Total**: **11**.

2. Cam decides that Babukar is trying to get Bineta to focus on their task before losing herself to anger. He uses his **Intellect** 10, **Justice** 8, and **Sunfire Elf** 8 traits. Cam says Babukar is using his keen insights to help Bineta overcome her anger, and spends a PP to activate his *Straight to the Point* SFX, creating a temporary **Sibling Connection** asset rated at 8. **Total**: **12**.

   Cam notes that he can beat the difficulty using his 8s. He compares his 10 effect die to Bineta's 8 stress. Since Cam's effect die is higher, Bineta's **Angry** 8 stress is fully recovered! Steam will have to spout from Bineta's ears whistling-teapot-style some other day. Mellie thanks Babukar, and marks off the stress. She notes the 10 die in her growth pool from the **Angry** stress that was recovered earlier. Since the 8 is lower than the 10, Bineta adds no additional dice to her growth pool.



Trauma

Trauma is like long-term stress. When a PC's stress is stepped up past 12, they're stressed out of their scene and they add 6 trauma of the same type of stress. Trauma functions just like stress but is much harder to recover. *(See Example 1: Trauma.)*

In a scene where your PC is stressed out and has taken trauma, more stress of that type goes directly to trauma. This won't happen often! You're already out of the scene, after all. But it might occur under some circumstances.

If trauma is stepped up beyond 12, your character is permanently out of options—they're dead, hopelessly incoherent, lost to their own psyche, or whatever seems most appropriate.

If the next scene allows your PC to recuperate or be cared for, your PC's stress is reduced to zero but the trauma stays the same. Recovering trauma requires somebody else to make the tests to help you. Trauma won't step down on its own, except at the beginning of a new tale.

> DOCTOR: He won't die. He's lucky to have survived a direct attack from a dragon. But he's never going to walk again.
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 8: The Book of Destiny*

This works like recovering stress, but the effect die isn't used, as follows:

- **If the player beats the difficulty,** the trauma is stepped down by one.
- **If the player fails to beat the difficulty**, the trauma does not get any better or worse. The player can't try to recover that trauma again until time passes, although another friendly character might try to help.
- **If the player rolls a hitch on a successful attempt to recover trauma**, the Narrator may hand over a PP and inflict stress of a different type than the trauma that's being recovered, starting at 6 (or stepping up by one if the PC already had stress of that type).
- **If the player rolls a hitch on a failed attempt**, the trauma gets worse, stepping up by one for each hitch rolled. If this steps the trauma up past 12, that's all, folks.



Example 1: Trauma

In an adventure scene set by Joe, the Narrator, Amy's character Draylenn is cornered by corrupted beasts! Draylenn has **Afraid** 10 stress from earlier in the session, and Amy knows the situation is dire. She wants to use Draylenn's affinity with animals to reduce the corruption in the beasts, and Joe decides that this is a challenging test. His dice pool includes Draylenn's stress, and the **Corrupted Predator** 8 trait of the beasts. **Total**: **12**.

Amy builds Draylenn's dice pool using her **Spirit** 10 attribute, **Liberty** 8 value, **Friend of the Forest** 8 distinction, and her **Animal Ally** 8 specialty. She asks Joe if she can use her **Beetle Brooch** 6 asset, to use the Moon magic imbued in it to help cloud the corruption, and Joe agrees. **Total**: **7**.

That's not what she wanted to see! Joe decides to give Draylenn a PP for her hitch, stepping her **Afraid** stress up to 12. Amy can see what that means before he tells her: she also steps up her **Afraid** stress for failing the test, which steps it up above 12. Draylenn is stressed out, and takes **Afraid** 6 trauma after this scene. As Amy updates Draylenn's character journal, she also cringes and squeals as Joe narrates what happens next...

TEST: Reduce the beasts' corruption (CHALLENGING 8 8 + 10 **Afraid** + 8 **Corrupted Predator**)

	DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
Joe	8 8 8 10	2 5 7 4	12
Amy	6 8 8 8 10	3 1 2 3 4	7



10 **Afraid**

Taken earlier in the session

12 **Afraid**

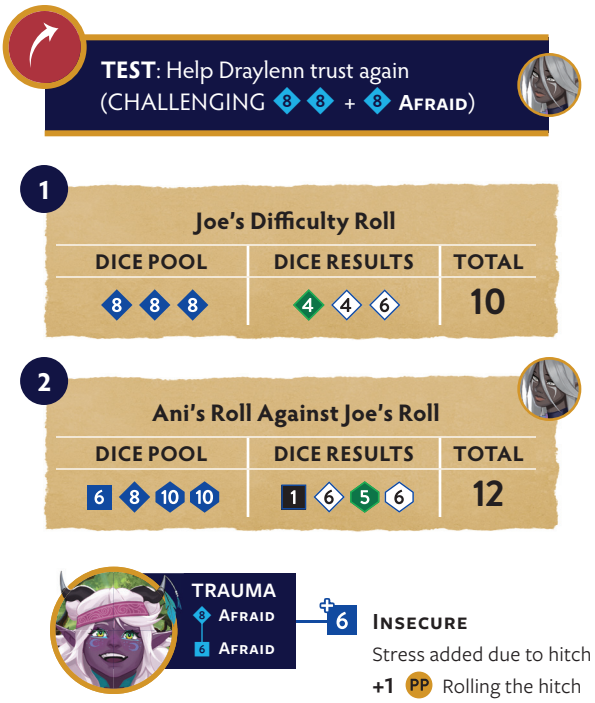
Stepped up for the hitch, gains a PP

12+ **Stressed Out!**
Receives 6 **Afraid** trauma and is taken out of the scene

Example 2: Trauma

1. Several sessions later, Amy's character, Draylenn, has had more troubling encounters, and her **Afraid** trauma has stepped up to 8. Joe, the Narrator, has set a scene in which Pyrda, Ani's character, has found Draylenn, and wants to help her overcome the **Afraid** trauma she took in the dark forest. After Amy describes how Draylenn's fear is impacting her ability to trust the creatures she usually loves, Ani tells Amy and Joe how Pyrda wants to guide Draylenn through the forest and help her to overcome her fears with wisdom. Everyone agrees, and Joe sets a difficulty. **Total**: **10**.
2. Ani builds Pyrda's dice pool starting with her **Spirit** 10 attribute, **Mastery** 10 value, and **Thoughtful Mediator** 8 distinction. She then describes how Pyrda uses her **Glass Bird Artifact** 6 to aid in her lesson. **Total**: **12**.

   She succeeds, but that hitch isn't good news. Joe decides to give Draylenn a PP, and step up her **Insecure** stress to a 6. Still, Pyrda has helped! Amy steps Draylenn's **Afraid** trauma down from a 8 to a 6. Draylenn is comforted, and suddenly has an interest in starting her own glass animal menagerie, but has not yet come to terms with what happened.



Confronting Problems: Tests, Contests, and Challenges

In *Tales of Xadia* your PCs try to achieve their own personal goals while facing many problems, from troublesome magical creatures to complicated political encounters. Most scenes center on situations like these and are resolved by rolling dice. Specifically, we use tests, contests, and challenges.

A **test** is when you roll dice to resolve a situation by determining if there's a successful outcome or a challenging failure. Examples might include climbing a wall, escaping a guard, or solving a riddle. In almost all cases, tests are initiated by the Narrator describing the problem and asking the player, "What do you do?"

When your PC gets into a conflict over something they want, this is called a **contest**, which determines if any other character can intervene, thwart, or oppose your character. Examples include fighting a duel with a foe, arm wrestling a friend, or baking the best pie. Contests are almost always initiated by a player, who picks up dice and says, "I'm doing this. Who's stopping me?"

A **challenge** may arise in a situation that requires more than a single test, is time-sensitive or carries an ongoing risk, and frequently involves several PCs. Examples include fighting back an army, disarming a complex magical trap, or convincing a room full of nobles to do things your way. Challenges start with questions like, "Can you do this before time runs out?" or "How will you tackle this before you're overwhelmed?"

> SOREN: We should stuff them in sacks!
>
> CLAUDIA: Soren! We should try persuasion first. Use our words, not our muscles.
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 2: Half Moon Lies*

You can always choose not to respond to a test or a challenge and find another way forward, in which case the problem doesn't go away but something else happens. You can always respond to a contest by declaring that you don't oppose whoever started the contest, in which case the opposition simply gets what they wanted. In all of these cases, there's usually no need for an effect die; if one is needed, use the largest die in the dice pool (the opposition pool for a test, or the player's dice pool for a contest).

> "Look, I tried it your way, 'using words.' Maybe it's time to do it my way, punching and stuff."
>
> SOREN
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 2: Half Moon Lies*

Tests: Success or Failure

A **test** is the simplest dice roll in *Tales of Xadia* and can handle many situations. Examples of tests include:

- trying to climb a wall
- carving a statue out of wood
- using Moon magic to reveal hidden paths
- searching a room for a missing locket
- deciphering a mysterious inscription in a book
- strong-arming a guard out of a doorway

The period of time the test covers can be short, like a few seconds, or it can span a lengthy period of time, like a whole afternoon. It depends entirely on the nature of the problem.

Setting the Test Difficulty

In a test, the Narrator assembles an opposition pool and rolls it, setting the **difficulty** by adding together two dice and saying the total. That difficulty is the number you need to beat with your own total when you roll your dice for the test. If you beat it, the test is a **success**. If you don't beat it, the test is a **failure**. Beating a difficulty means rolling higher than the difficulty total. If your total is the same as the difficulty's total, you didn't beat it, so this still counts as a failure.

The **difficulty dice** are usually two dice of the same number of sides, based on the situation:

4 4	VERY EASY
6 6	EASY
8 8	CHALLENGING
10 10	HARD
12 12	VERY HARD

In addition to difficulty dice, the Narrator picks up one or more dice based on Narrator character traits, the PC's stress, or anything else that might make things tricky. When in doubt, the Narrator can simply add one or more 6 to represent increasing risk, threats, or challenges, like "It's rocky in here, so it's hard to move around" or "It's raining a lot, so it's hard to see."

Usually the Narrator sets up scenes where you roll tests rather than NCs trying to do things while you watch. If you set the difficulty for an NC's test, you roll first and the Narrator rolls to beat the difficulty set by you.



Test Outcomes

Tests are usually uncomplicated. On a success, your character does what they wanted to do, and on a failure they don't. If the Narrator asks you to describe how you succeeded or failed, use your own dice pool's traits, like your choice of value, attribute, and distinction, to narrate how it turned out.

Usually when you fail a test, the Narrator gives your character 6 stress; if it's applied to existing stress, it steps up the stress die as usual. The type of stress should reflect the nature of the problem. If you were grappling with a guard, you might take **Exhausted** or **Injured** stress. If you were trying to solve a puzzle, you might take **Angry** or **Insecure** stress.

A **heroic success** in a test means you succeeded beyond your expectations. Step up your effect die by one, to a maximum of 12. If it's already 12, you can add a 6 effect die, or choose one of your unused dice as an effect die. Be sure to describe how cool your success was! *(See Example: Test Outcomes.)*

Example: Test Outcomes

1. Joe, the Narrator, has set a scene in which Ti's character, Ponmalar, is attempting to evade detection from a regiment of passing soldiers, one of whom seems suspicious of a sound they've heard in Ponmalar's direction. Ti describes how Ponmalar will try to create a distraction and escape without notice. Joe declares that this is going to be a challenging test (8 8) with an additional 6 for the **Wary Guards**, then rolls to set a difficulty. **Total**: **9**.

2. Ti builds Ponmalar's dice pool using their **Agility** 10 attribute, **Truth** 6 value, and **Watchful Expatriate** 8 distinction. Ti then chooses to use Ponmalar's **Sneaking** 6 specialty. Although they want to use Ponmalar's bow, Ti knows that the spear-like arrows may make it difficult to sneak. Instead, they tell Joe that Ponmalar uses a small pebble, thrown to incite the ire of a sleeping swamp beast. **Total**: **15**.

3. Ponmalar has a heroic success! Ti steps up their effect die from a 8 to a 10, and describes to Joe how the pebble strikes true between the eyes of the swamp beast, a bog hyena, which gives a cranky roar before shaking awake. The soldier's attention is pulled away from Ponmalar and onto retreating, which is exactly what Ponmalar does, as well. However, Joe adds that the roar has caught the attention of another beast, an eon-mawed megagator! As Ponmalar makes their escape, they come face to face with the dangerous predator. Ti is excited to use Ponmalar's bow this time, so Joe begins a challenging test (8 8), including the beast's **Teeth and Claws** 10. **Total**: **16**.

4. This time, Ti chooses to use Ponmalar's **Liberty** 10 value and **Marsh Ranger** 8 distinction, but still keeps the **Agility** 10 attribute. They also include Ponmalar's **Archery** 6 specialty, and **Heavy Bow** 8 asset. Finally, Ti asks Joe if the beast is at least twice as big as Ponmalar, which Joe confirms. Ti spends a PP to activate Ponmalar's *The Bigger They Are* SFX, doubling the **Marsh Ranger** 8 distinction die. They'll also get to keep a third die for their total! **Total**: **16**.

   Unfortunately, a tie isn't going to succeed, which means that Ponmalar fails the test! Joe describes how the megagator swings a meaty tail to knock the spear-like arrow out of the way, and charges Ponmalar, forcing them to run and giving them 6 **Exhausted** stress. Dang, those spear arrows cost a lot of hard-earned cash! Hopefully Ponmalar has another solution up their sleeve...

TEST: Evade the detection of the soldiers (CHALLENGING 8 8 + 6 **Wary**)

1 **Joe's Difficulty Roll**

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
6 8 8	5 2 4	9

2 **Ti's Roll Against Joe's Roll**

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
6 6 8 10	4 5 4 10	15

Adjusted Results	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
	4 5 4 10	15

TEST: Go toe-to-toe with the megagator (CHALLENGING 8 8 + 10 **Teeth and Claws**)

3 **Joe's Difficulty Roll**

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
8 8 10	4 6 10	16

4 **Ti's Roll Against Joe's Roll**

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
6 8 8 8 10 10	2 3 4 6 2 6	16

Due to *The Bigger They Are* SFX getting activated by spending a PP, Ti gets to keep a third die in their total



6 **Exhausted**
Added from failing the test (must beat the total, not just get the same total)

Using Tests to Create Assets

You can create an asset with a test. The goal is to give something (or someone!) that either already exists in the story a die rating so that it can be helpful to yourself or others in future dice rolls, or the test itself represents the act of creating something significant to then use in your own or others' future dice rolls.

To create an asset with a test, declare what it is you're trying to do. Build something? Craft something? Look through a pile of books to learn something of use? Choose something out of an old collection of objects that you think might be useful? Hire somebody from a market to help you out? The Narrator takes this and rolls for the opposition, usually 6 6 difficulty if the object or information is already present and has been mentioned before (and you just want to give it a die rating), or 8 8 if the object or knowledge is new or undiscovered.

If you succeed, you have an asset equal in die rating to your effect die. Keep it for yourself, or hand it to another player. If you fail, you take stress, and can describe how you failed to exploit your own skill or know-how... or learned that what you thought was an important part of the story probably isn't.

These assets are always temporary assets (see page 70). That means they typically last only for a single test, contest, or challenge, and even if they persist longer, they are gone by the end of the scene. Spend a PP after you create an asset with a test, however, to make it last the rest of the session. If you're also sharing the asset, that requires a PP of its own.

Even if you succeed at a test that wasn't specifically called out to be an asset-creating test, the Narrator may decide that you can create a temporary asset as a benefit. Think of it as creating a fun advantage on your next test, contest, or challenge.

Contests: The Struggle

In *Tales of Xadia* you may find yourself in conflict with a major Narrator character—a catalyst—over something important. You may even find yourself at odds with another player character—how dare they! In these situations, a test isn't enough. What's needed is a **contest**. Examples of contests include:

- dueling a skilled fencer across a battlement
- putting your case before the king's court while his advisor argues against it
- struggling over a prize that your rival also wants
- convincing a powerful merchant to sell you a priceless item

Contests go back and forth between you and another character, and start when you say what you want from them. Although winning a contest doesn't mean you automatically get what you want, it does mean you put **stress** on your opponent, and they may decide to give you what you want to avoid taking more stress. They might even **give in** before the contest is over, in which case you do get what you want but they get a say in how that happens.

Starting the Contest

For most contests, you're the one initiating them, so you pick up the dice and roll first, adding together two results for a total. Set aside a die for the effect die, also, just in case. If your opposition decides against opposing you after seeing what you rolled, you automatically win the contest. If your opposition decides to stop you, they assemble a dice pool and try to beat the difficulty you just set.

The Narrator may initiate a contest when an NC chooses to do a thing; the Narrator is essentially asking you, "What are you going to do about it?" As the player opposition, you don't have to rise to this call-out. You can just respond, "Nothing, take it!" and there's no contest, and no stress. *(See Example: The Struggle.)*

Contest Outcomes

If your opposition doesn't beat your difficulty, you've won the contest and you put stress on your opposition equal to the last effect die you set aside. If they do beat your difficulty, it goes back over to you; you can choose to give in, in which case you define the failure on your own terms, and you get a PP. Otherwise, your opposition's total becomes the new difficulty, and you must roll again to try to beat it. Failing to beat your opposition means your opponent gets to define how they stopped you and can put stress on you, instead.

Contests go back and forth until one side gives in or fails to beat the difficulty. The losing side takes stress, and the winning side comes out with the advantage. It returns to a conversation—is the loser going to back down, or is the winner going to press their advantage? If the winner isn't given what they want from the loser, another contest might be necessary.

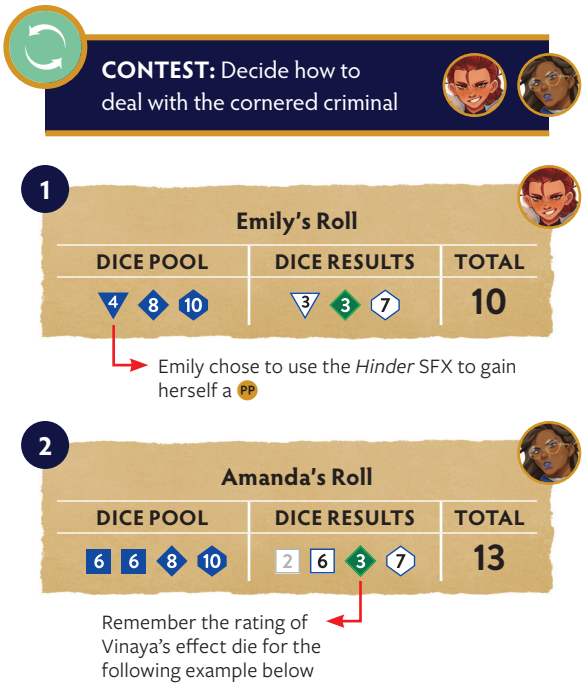
Because of how contests work, you can't really get a heroic success in the same way as you can with a test—your opponent always gets a chance to roll and beat what you just rolled. Instead, if your opponent rolls to beat your total and fails by 5 or more, that counts as a heroic success for you. This means you step up your effect die by one step. *(See Example: Contest Outcomes.)*

Example: The Struggle

Joe, the Narrator, has set a scene in which Winda, played by Emily, and Vinaya, played by Amanda, have cornered their quarry: a mysterious, cloaked criminal NC! Emily decides that Winda wants to threaten the NC into coming with them, and begins to gather her dice. Amanda speaks up first, saying that Vinaya doesn't want to resort to threats. When Winda balks at this, the two begin a contest!

1. Winda, whose action is being contested, goes first. Emily narrates Winda's argument with Vinaya, choosing to use her **Intellect** 8 attribute, and **Liberty** 10 value, then deciding to activate the *Hinder* SFX on Winda's **Foolhardy Friend** 8 distinction to give herself a PP. Emily rolls to start the contest. **Total**: **10**.
2. Amanda must decide if Vinaya responds to the contest—if she doesn't, there's no penalty for Vinaya and Winda gets what she wants. Amanda chooses to engage in the contest and gathers Vinaya's dice. She picks the **Influence** 10 attribute, **Glory** 6 value, and her **Herald of the Queen** 8 distinction. Amanda also includes Vinaya's **Diplomacy** 6 specialty. **Total**: **13**.

Beating the difficulty that Winda set, the contest moves in Vinaya's favor, but it's not over yet...



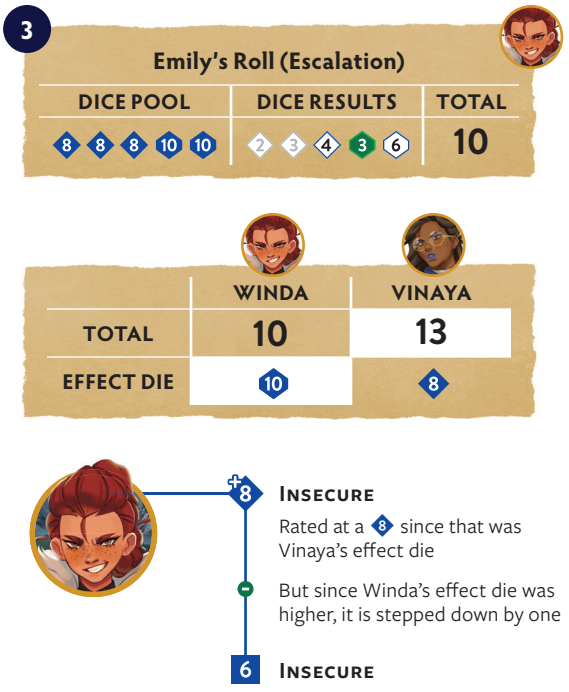
Example: Contest Outcomes

Amanda, playing Vinaya, succeeded on her turn. Joe, the Narrator, turns to Emily: Will her character Winda give in or try to escalate the contest?

3. Emily decides that Winda is stubborn, and picks up some dice. Winda draws her crossbow and aims it at a weak-point in the craggy wall behind the suspect. Emily switches Winda's attribute to **Awareness** 10, using the landscape to her advantage, and trades her **Foolhardy Friend** 8 distinction for her **Del Barian Hinterlander** 8 distinction. She adds her **Light Crossbow** 8 asset. She doesn't change her value. **Total**: **10**.

A failed roll! Even if she spends a PP to add another die to her total, Emily can only tie. Emily loses the contest, and Amanda can give Winda some stress. The two compare their effect dice. Winda's 10 is higher than Vinaya's 8; Amanda steps down her effect die and gives Winda **Insecure** 6 stress. Amanda describes Vinaya's tone turning strict as she refuses to give in to Winda's stubborn tactics. She steps between Winda and the NC, reaching out a hand to lower Winda's crossbow.

Emily could start another contest, but she decides that Winda won't push her friendship with Vinaya further.





Contests and Catalysts

A **catalyst** is an important Narrator character who could be an ally or an enemy, depending on how the story unfolds. If you get involved with a catalyst, you try to bring them to your side, or oppose them and what they want to do. This involves contests.

When you win a contest against a catalyst, you give them stress and can change your choice of one of their values. Step it down to reduce how much the catalyst is invested in that value. Step it up to make the catalyst care more about one of their values. After resolving the contest's outcomes, the Narrator changes another value to balance out the catalyst's value die ratings.

If you lose a contest against a catalyst, not only do you take stress, the Narrator can step up one of the catalyst's values. After resolving the contest's outcomes, one of the other values gets stepped down to balance out. At the end of the session, the Narrator can step up the catalyst's **catalyst die** if they engaged in any contests. This makes them stronger the next time the PCs interact with them. *(See Example: Contests and Catalysts.)*

Example: Contests and Catalysts

Following the contest between Vinaya and Winda, Joe, the Narrator, describes the NC thanking Vinaya as they lower their hood, revealing a notorious masked vigilante wanted for questioning in Duren... and a catalyst. Amanda says that Vinaya wants the NC to take off their mask and reveal their face. The catalyst doesn't want to. This calls for another contest, and Vinaya goes first.

1 Amanda chooses Vinaya's dice carefully, deciding on the **Influence** 10 attribute, **Truth** 10 value, and **Herald of the Queen** 8 distinction. She adds the **Diplomacy** 6 specialty, which seems fitting. Amanda spends a PP to activate Vinaya's *Orate* SFX, doubling her **Influence** 10 attribute. **Total: 16**.

Joe says the catalyst won't let the roll go uncontested. He gathers dice, describing the catalyst's attempt to scale the wall using their **Agility** 10 attribute, **Truth** 10 value, and **Secret Identity** 8 distinction. This NC has a 8 catalyst die, so he adds that to the pool. **Total: 10**.

2 It isn't enough, so Joe spends one of his Narrator PP to add the extra 8 to his total, preventing a heroic success that would give the catalyst 12 stress. **Total: 14**.

Still, Amanda won the contest. The effect dice are the same size, so Vinaya's 10 remains at its original rating. Amanda makes this **Exhausted** 10 stress, describing how the catalyst's adrenaline wears off, making it more difficult for them to escape.

Amanda can step one of the catalyst's values up or down. She steps down the catalyst's **Truth** value, hoping they'll put less weight on their secrets in the next interaction.

CONTEST: Convince the vigilante to unmask themselves

1

	DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
Amanda	6 8 10 10 10	4 4 3 6 10	16
Joe	8 8 10 10	4 6 2 4	10

-1 PP
To prevent a heroic success, Joe spends a PP to add another die to the total

2

Joe's Adjusted Results	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
	4 6 2 4	14

+10 **Exhausted**
Rated at a 10 since that was Vinaya's effect die

EFFECT

The catalyst's **Truth** value gets stepped down by one due to Vinaya's success.



About Giving In

Giving in during a contest may seem counterintuitive. After all, you're choosing to lose and give your opponent what they want. However, you get a PP when you do this, and you get to describe how you lost. You also don't take any stress, which keeps you in the scene. Perhaps you're just narrowing your eyes or biting your tongue—you lost, but you haven't lost your cool! Slick.

It's possible that your opponent's goal is to knock you out, or trap you, or seize you, or worse. You should never be forced to hand over control of your character as a result of giving in. That's what makes it different from being stressed out—you have a say in how that outcome plays out. Even if you're captured or kidnapped, for example, you can say that your friends know where you are, you left a clue behind, or that you have something that might help you escape during the next scene. This allows you to keep some agency of your character's story, which is kinda the whole reason this is fun—y'know? *(See Example: About Giving In.)*

THUNDER: Leave. Today, of all days, I will spare you. But you must turn around and leave Xadia. Now.

HARROW: No.

THUNDER: Today is a special day, a day of life. Do not force me to make it a day of death. This is your last chance. Leave or die!

Book 3: Sun, Chapter 6: Thunderfall

Example: About Giving In

Later in the same session, Emily and Amanda's characters, Winda and Vinaya, have captured the masked catalyst. As they decide to remove the catalyst's mask, the NC whistles loudly, and Joe asks Ani to introduce her character, Pyrda, to the scene. After Ani narrates how Pyrda swoops down from a rocky perch to grab her captured friend, Emily declares that Winda wants to stop her. It's time for another contest, and Pyrda goes first.

1. Ani gathers her dice and describes how Pyrda uses her **Strength** 8 attribute, **Devotion** 8 value, and **Skywing Elf** 8 distinction. Emily points out that Winda has **Insecure** 6 stress, allowing Ani to add that to her pool. **Total**: **11**.

2. Emily builds Winda's dice pool, using her **Awareness** 10 attribute, **Mastery** 8 value, and **Trailblazing Hunter** 8 distinction, reasoning that while Vinaya took charge of the prisoner, Winda didn't drop her guard. She spends a PP to activate the *Keen Eye* SFX, doubling her **Awareness** 10 die. Winda fires her **Light Crossbow** 8 asset, not to injure, just to force Pyrda to change her flight plans. Hopefully she gets some miles or a free beverage for her trouble! **Total**: **16**.

Joe gives Ani a choice: does she give in and let Winda stop her rescue attempt, or does she roll again? Ani decides to give in, taking a PP, and getting the right to describe the failure in her own terms. She narrates how Winda's bolt flew exactly as the Del Barian Hinterlander intended, keeping Pyrda from using her momentum to swoop in, grab her friend, and fly back out. Pyrda changes direction and lands several feet away, raising her hands peacefully, and telling the other two PCs that they don't understand what they're doing. Emily and Amanda are intrigued.

CONTEST: Stop Pyrda from whisking the vigilante away

1 Ani's Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
6 8 8 8	4 4 5 6	11

2 Emily's Roll Against Ani's Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
8 8 8 10 10	2 2 7 3 9	16

+1 PP for choosing to give in instead of continuing the contest

Interfering in a Contest

If there's a contest underway in the same scene as you and you want to join in or bring it to a halt, you can attempt to interfere. Usually this means you want something neither of the other two characters wants, or maybe you want the same thing as one of them but on your own terms. To interfere, spend a PP to jump in and roll your dice before the outcome is resolved, but only after both original contestants have had a chance to roll. If your interference fails, the contest may continue. If you beat the highest roll of the other two characters, you bring the contest to an immediate halt. Nobody wins, nobody is stressed out... yet.

If both sides are really keen on continuing their contest, they may hand you a PP each to continue. That's PP PP!

At this point, the original characters reroll their dice, just like they were starting a new contest, and neither side in the contest may give in. The combatants should describe how they're fighting around, over, or at the cost of your interference. Compare the two original contestants to see who wins the contest; the winner inflicts a stress die on the loser. In addition, if either or both of the original contestants roll higher than you, you also take stress dice—possibly from both contestants if your total is lowest.

Using Interference as a Group Contest

The rules for interference can be used for all-out scrambles for some kind of object, goal, or prize. The highest roller is the successful character; everyone else takes their lumps.

Nobody needs to spend PP to join in, but everyone faces the risk of taking stress if they aren't the winner.

If you lose in such a contest, describe how things went badly for you. The winner chooses their effect die and gives it to *all of the other contestants* as stress, but they can decide to make it a different type of stress in each case if they like, though it still uses the same effect die to determine the size of the stress die.

If you want to assist a character who's in a group contest like this, but don't want to actually join the contest, refer to the rules for Helping Others on page 101—create an asset before the contest starts, spend a PP to create a 6 asset, or step down a value to step up a contestant's value.

> "Are we gonna fight,
> or is this a talent show?"
>
> RAYLA
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 2: Half Moon Lies*

Challenges: Overcoming Extended Obstacles

Sometimes, a simple test or even a back-and-forth contest doesn't represent the effort required to overcome a problem. Some problems are many-faceted, presenting different, smaller problems to tackle before being fully resolved. Other problems are just so big or take so much time that a different approach is needed. That's where the Narrator brings in the **challenge**.

Examples of challenges include:

- sneaking past a camp filled with dangerous guards
- confronting a group of hungry beasts
- negotiating a truce among troubled kingdoms
- overcoming an intricate series of magical traps
- undoing an ancient enchantment guarding a door
- laying siege to a fortified castle

Challenges take place over several **rounds**. Each round represents some passage of time; it could be a few seconds, or it could be hours or even days. Fighting your way out of a water-logged tunnel filled with rats might use rounds of only a few seconds each, but trying to transcribe a complex spell from a wall carving might take rounds of several hours to achieve.

The challenge doesn't sit back and wait for the players to resolve it. It gets to act, almost like it was a character itself, and can either get worse or create problems for the PCs in response.

The Narrator may declare that something happens after a certain number of rounds, such as guards arriving, a cave collapsing, or the sun going down over the horizon. If this happens, the challenge may be a failure. If there's no such time-sensitive element to the challenge, then it becomes a matter of how long it takes you to overcome the challenge without getting stressed out.

Starting the Challenge

The Narrator sets out a challenge pool based on how difficult the challenge is and how long it will take to overcome it.

The base difficulty dice are the same as those for a test:

4 4	VERY EASY
6 6	EASY
8 8	CHALLENGING (default)
10 10	HARD
12 12	VERY HARD

Added to the difficulty dice are a number of extra dice that varies based on how long the challenge is expected to take, or the scale of the challenge itself. You can use the following as a guide:

+1 dice	SHORT
+2 dice	MEDIUM
+3 dice	LONG

There's more on setting up challenges in the Narrator's Guide on page 190, including adjusting the base difficulty and bonus dice for the number of players.

> Joe, the Narrator, sets a scene that includes a challenge for Tressal, played by Jason, and Hestia, played by Sally, in which the two must overcome a gauntlet of magical traps to reach their goal. He decides this is a challenging (8 8) and short 8 challenge—there aren't many traps, but there's certainly enough—making the challenge 8 8 8.

Taking Turns in a Challenge

In a challenge, every PC in the scene takes their **turn** to do something, one turn per player per round. A challenge is usually too much for a single PC.

When it's your turn, the Narrator rolls the challenge pool to set the difficulty for you, just like a test. One of your stress dice, if any, is included in the Narrator's dice roll, along with the challenge dice. They announce the total and the effect die. Then you roll your own dice pool and try to beat the difficulty.

The Narrator decides which PC goes first, but once a PC has had their turn, that player chooses which remaining PC goes next. On each player's turn, the Narrator rolls the challenge pool to set the difficulty for the active player's turn. In other words, players don't share the same difficulty. The player who went before you might have knocked out a challenge die, reducing the size of the challenge pool. Also, your PC may have stress to be included in the opposition that other PCs do not.

On your turn, you may choose not to attempt to reduce the challenge, instead doing something like creating an asset using a test, or trying to recover your or somebody else's stress. Tests in these cases still use the challenge pool as the opposition base difficulty because the scene is dominated by the problem at hand. Additional dice may be added to the opposition pool like any other test. *(See Example: Taking Turns in a Challenge.)*

Example: Taking Turns in a Challenge

1. Jason, playing Tressal, volunteers to go first in the short, challenging challenge set by the Narrator, Joe, who describes the trap that Tressal first encounters: a cavern with three bridges extended over a dangerous, rocky fall. Joe rolls the challenge dice to set a difficulty. **Total**: **9**.

2. Jason assembles Tressal's dice pool, describing how he calmly uses dark magic to reveal the secrets of the bridges (much to the chagrin of Hestia, played by Sally). Jason selects Tressal's **Intellect** 10 attribute, **Mastery** 8 value, **Dark Acolyte** 8 distinction, and of course includes his **Dark Magic** 6 specialty and **Dark Magic Spells** 8 asset. Since he's using dark magic, Jason needs to use a magical creature asset, which he doesn't have on his sheet. He spends a PP to create one rated at 6, and adds it to Tressal's dice pool. **Total**: **14**.

   That's a heroic success! Jason steps up Tressal's effect die of 8 to a 10, and compares that effect die to the challenge pool. Since the effect die is of a greater size, Tressal gets to remove a die from the pool, leaving 8 8 remaining for Hestia's turn. Joe describes how Tressal's spell reveals the illusory nature of two of the bridges, leaving only one option remaining.

CHALLENGE: Overcome the traps (CHALLENGING 8 8, SHORT 8)

1 **Joe's Difficulty Roll**

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
8 8 8	2 4 5	9

2 **Jason's Roll Against Joe's Roll**

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
6 6 8 8 8 10	3 4 5 5 6 8	14

Asset created by a PP — 5 > 2

EFFECT

Tressal's larger effect die knocks a die out of the pool, reducing it from 8 8 8 to 8 8.

The Challenge's Turn

Once all players have taken their turn, the Narrator gets a turn for the challenge pool as if it were a character. The Narrator chooses a PC to test against, describes what perilous moment confronts the PC, and *that player sets the difficulty with their dice*.

Instead of acting against a PC, the Narrator may have the challenge strengthen itself. They pick one of the challenge dice—the smallest, the largest, it's up to them—and step it up by one. If the Narrator chooses a 12 already in the challenge pool, it stays as a 12 and a new 6 is added to the challenge pool. The Narrator describes this new wrinkle and how the problem appears to get worse or more complex.

Once the Narrator has had their turn, it's back to the players. *The player who went last in the previous round gets to choose who goes first* (it could be themselves!), and play continues like it did the first round, with each player choosing a player to go after their turn. *(See Example: The Challenge's Turn.)*

Challenge Outcomes

If you beat the challenge difficulty, you make progress, and compare your effect die to one of the dice in the challenge pool. If it's bigger, the challenge die is removed from the challenge pool. If it's equal to or smaller, the challenge die is stepped down by one step. If a challenge die would be reduced below 4, it's taken out of the pool. You or the Narrator may choose to describe what that success looks like and how your actions contributed to reducing the problem.

If you don't beat the difficulty, you fail to progress the challenge, and you take stress equal to the Narrator's effect die. The Narrator chooses which type of stress this is. You should feel free to describe your own setback, here—how did you misstep? Was the task overwhelming? Did you have a moment of insecurity or doubt?

Example: The Challenge's Turn

Hestia, played by Sally, takes her turn against the challenge pool and steps down one of the remaining two dice (leaving a 6 and 8 remaining). It's the challenge pool's turn. Joe describes how Hestia, who has **Afraid** stress from a previous hitch, feels a sense of danger behind her. She turns to see Tressal attacking her! Both Sally and Jason, who plays Tressal, know this is an illusion, but will Hestia realize?

1. Sally sets the difficulty for Joe, using Hestia's **Awareness** 6 attribute and **Mastery** 8 value. She activates the *Hinder* SFX on the **Cloistered Mage** 8 distinction, noting that Hestia isn't used to traveling with others, and the fear has her on edge. She takes a PP and rolls Hestia's dice. **Total: 11**.
2. With a difficulty established, Joe rolls the challenge pool, adding Hestia's **Afraid** 6 stress. **Total: 12**.

   A success, but with an opportunity for Sally! Sally spends a PP to buy Joe's opportunity, choosing to spotlight her **Earth Magic Spells** 6 asset for the scene by stepping it up to 8. The challenge pool beat Hestia's difficulty, so Joe describes Hestia gripped by fear as the illusory Tressal whispers fearsome dark magic at her, stepping her **Afraid** stress up to a 8.

   The next round begins. Since Sally went last in the previous round, she decides if Hestia or Tressal goes first this time. She chooses herself so she can act against this terrifying illusion.



A **heroic success** in a challenge lets you overcome it faster. Each heroic success lets you step up your effect die by one step, or keep an additional effect die from your remaining dice; with the latter, you can compare this added effect die to another die in the challenge pool and either eliminate it or step it down, as well.

Once the challenge pool is reduced to zero dice, the challenge is over, and you've won! *(See Example: Challenge Outcomes.)*

Effect Die vs. a 10 10 Challenge Pool

EFFECT DIE	POOL RATING
12	10
10	10 8
4	10 8



Example: Challenge Outcomes

1 It's Hestia's turn. Sally, who plays her, describes Hestia using Earth magic to slow the threatening Tressal, an illusion of her companion played by Jason. Joe warns that the magic might have no effect, but that's exactly what Sally hopes for: she wants Hestia to see that this can't possibly be her ally. Joe agrees this is reasonable and sets a difficulty with the remaining dice in the challenge pool and Hestia's **Afraid** 8 stress. **Total**: **6**.

Preparing her dice pool, Sally chooses Hestia's **Spirit** 8 attribute, **Devotion** 8 value, and **Wisened Wanderer** 8 distinction. She describes how Hestia is backed into a corner of the cavern by the illusory Tressal, and her hand finds purchase on crystal embedded in the wall! She uses her **Earth Magic** 6 specialty, her previously spotlighted **Earth Magic Spells** 6 asset, and spends a PP to activate her *Earth Focus* SFX. This allows her to step up two dice with the same rating in her pool, so she steps two of her 8s up to 10s. **Total**: **14**.

2 A heroic success! Joe explains that Sally can step up her 10 effect die to a 12, or add another effect die from her remaining dice. She adds one of her remaining 8s, giving her two effect dice, and compares them to the remaining challenge pool.

Her 10 is higher than the 8, and her 8 is higher than the 6. She can remove both dice and resolve the challenge! Sally describes her magic passing harmlessly through the illusory Tressal, hitting the real Tressal behind it. The illusion dissipates and she's left to guffaw at a slowed down Tressal who, Jason adds, is complaining in garbled, slow-motion gestures.

CHALLENGE: Overcome the traps (CHALLENGING 6 ~~8~~, SHORT 8 + **Afraid** 8)

1

	DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
Joe	6 8 8	3 2 3	6
Sally	6 8 8 10 10	6 2 4 4 8	14

Stepped up from 8 due to using a PP to activate the *Earth Focus* SFX

Heroic Success!

2

Adjusted Results	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
	6 2 4 4 8	14

Due to the heroic success, Sally can add another effect die

	POOL	HESTIA	EFFECT
DIE #1	8	4	*Eliminated!*
DIE #2	6	2	*Eliminated!*

EFFECT

Challenge pool has been conquered!

More About Outcomes

When you win a test, contest, or challenge, the odds turn in your favor, and you can narrate the **outcome**. What this means usually depends on what you said you were trying to do.

Was your PC trying to dispel the magical effect? It's gone. Knock out the bad guy? You did that. You describe it and then the story moves on. If you can't think of what might happen if your PC succeeds, the Narrator can do the honors. Helpful tip: it's always a good idea to think about what the consequences of success or failure are before you roll the dice.

When you fail your dice rolls, however, you should try to be entertaining in how you describe your failure. The only lasting effect is the story heading in a different direction than you wanted, unless you picked up stress or you rolled all hitches and came up with a total botch. See Taking Stress on page 79 to see how botches affect the outcome of a roll.

Some Narrators may default to describing these outcomes, but we encourage every *Tales of Xadia* group to have the players narrate the outcomes when it makes sense to do so. You can try a neat technique we call "telegraphing," where you describe everything until a Narrator character, important Narrator reveal, or detail that only the Narrator knows comes into play, and the Narrator picks it up from there. This can help players who are fine with describing what their PC says, does, and thinks, but aren't comfortable putting words into the mouths of NCs.

Outcomes Change the Status Quo

When your PC fails, it doesn't necessarily mean the scene ends and their goals are thwarted permanently. A scene can have many tests and contests in it, involving many characters, sometimes even several tests or contests going on at the same time. Failure means that the situation has changed in some way.

Consequences should always come from failure, even if it's as simple as "You dropped it; now what do you do?" It might be stress, or something happening right there in the story.



Losing a test or contest or rolling badly in a challenge can result in your PC being taken out of the scene. (See Taking Stress: Stressed Out on page 79 for more on this.) In most cases, your PC only needs to revisit their new circumstances and take a different course of action, perhaps with a stress die making their lives a little trickier.

Questioning Value Statements

During any test, contest, or challenge, you may wish for more dice or some way to tilt the odds in your favor. This is an ideal time to **question your value statement**.

When you question your value statement, your PC has a moment of introspection under crisis. This can be re-thinking something they've always felt to be true, opening their mind to something new or different, or coming to terms with something they've believed right up until that moment... and now aren't sure of.

> CALLUM: Really? So, that's it? Just, "Goodbye"? You're going to stay here and die out of pride?
>
> RAYLA: It's not pride, Callum! It's more than that. It goes deeper.
>
> CALLUM: Oh? Do you have a nicer word for it? Honor? Redemption? It's just pride!
>
> *Book 3: Sun, Chapter 8: Dragonguard*

To question your value statement, you must describe how your PC is acting contrary to the statement. Once that's established, triple the value's die rating for the dice roll.

Once a value statement is questioned, the trait it's attached to steps down by one. At the end of the session or whenever their character growth is resolved, that player must either:

> Rewrite the value statement to reflect a new belief or truth and return the die to its original rating, or
>
> Keep the value statement the same and the die rating remains stepped down. This means stepping up another value to balance it out.

When you question your value statement, you're also growing as an individual, someone who isn't static in their approach or beliefs. For this reason, any time you question a value statement, you also put a die into your growth pool equal to the size of the value's original die rating. *(See Example 1: Questioning Value Statements.)* For more on values and growth, see page 106.

You can question a value statement for a value that's a d4, although it's perilous! You're greatly increasing your chances of rolling hitches for not a lot of benefit. If you do question a value statement for a d4 value, the die rating can't step down. Instead, you shut down that value entirely, and it can't be used until you step it up at the end of the session. It must always return to a d4 die rating... which means you must always rewrite the value statement. *(See Example 2: Questioning Value Statements.)*

Example 1: Questioning Value Statements

1. Joe, the Narrator, sets a scene in which Dan's character Easgann is apprehended by a troop of human guards; his friend, Pyrda, played by Ani, watches from safety. Easgann calls to Pyrda for help, and Ani tells Joe that she wants to interfere to save her friend. She describes how Pyrda intends to cast a spell to summon a powerful blast of wind to stop the soldiers, and shift their attention from Easgann to her. Joe agrees this seems reasonable, and calls for a challenging test of 8 8. However, he adds, the guards are under **Strict Orders** 8, making the situation more difficult. Joe sets a difficulty for Ani. **Total**: **14**.

2. That's a high roll! Knowing how difficult this will be, Ani builds Pyrda's dice pool by choosing her **Spirit** 10 attribute and her **Mage of the Wind** 8 distinction. Looking to Pyrda's values next, Ani tells Joe how Pyrda is beginning to question what she thinks about **Justice**—this action is going against her statement, which is *Judgment seeks us out; we will all be beholden to it one day.* With Pyrda questioning this value, Ani triples the **Justice** 8 die in the dice pool. To finish her dice pool, she adds Pyrda's **Sky Magic** 8 specialty and **Sky Magic Spells** 6 asset. With her dice gathered, Ani rolls. **Total**: **15**.

   A success! Joe lets Ani describe how Pyrda stops the guards in their tracks, and catches their attention with a gust of wind. Afterwards, Ani adds a 8 to Pyrda's growth pool, then steps her **Justice** 8 value down to a 6. Knowing that getting the attention of the soldiers is just the beginning, Ani and Dan prepare themselves for the next test...

TEST: Distract the guards from Easgann (CHALLENGING 8 8 + **Strict Orders** 8)

1 Joe's Difficulty Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
8 8 8	5 6 8	14

2 Ani's Roll Against Joe's Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
6 8 8 8 8 10	2 3 4 6 7 8	15

Questioning **Justice** 8 allows Ani to triple the die in her dice pool



+1 8 Growth die for questioning her **Justice** value

8 **Justice** — Temporarily stepped down after tripling it in a dice pool

6 **Justice**

Later, when the session ends, Ani is reminded that she questioned Pyrda's **Justice** statement. Joe explains that she needs to decide if she wants to keep the same statement and step up a different one of her values, or if she wants to change the value statement and return the value to its original 8 rating. Ani considers her options, and eventually decides to keep the original statement, which was not entirely changed by the events of the session. However, those events did impact her **Truth** 6 value, which has the statement *I search for my own truth, rather than the truth others feed me.* By leaving her **Justice** stepped down, Ani can step Pyrda's **Truth** up to a 8.

Dan also questioned one of Easgann's statements this session, leaving his **Devotion** 6 stepped down to a 4. Unlike Ani, he decides to rewrite the original value statement, which was *I know my heart, and it rarely interrupts me on my path.* After stepping Easgann's **Devotion** back up to a 6, Dan tells the group that Easgann's new value statement says *I'm beginning to realize the value of having a trusted friend at my side.*





6 **Justice** — *Judgment seeks us out; we will all be beholden to it one day.*

6 **Truth**

8 **Truth** — *I search for my own truth, rather than the truth others feed me.*

EFFECT

Ani chose to keep **Justice** stepped down and step up her **Truth** instead.

4 **Devotion** — *I know my heart, and it rarely interrupts me on my path.*

6 **Devotion** — *I'm beginning to realize the value of having a trusted friend at my side.*

EFFECT

Dan bought his **Devotion** back to its original value and revised his statement.

Example 2: Questioning Value Statements

In the game Joe narrates with Ti, who plays Ponmalar, he sets a scene in an underground lair. After being stressed out earlier, Ponmalar has been captured and doesn't have their bow on hand as they engage in a contest with a dark mage catalyst, who has just revealed a disturbing secret about Ponmalar's past!

1. Joe overcame Ponmalar's first roll of the contest, which means there is a new difficulty Ponmalar must overcome. Joe's roll used the catalyst's **Justice** d8 value, **Dark Scholar** d8 distinction, and their **Catalyst** d10. Joe gets to use Ponmalar's **Injured** d6 trauma that they'd gained from the previous scene. **Total**: **12**.

2. Ti reviews their dice pool from the last roll of the contest, and decides to make a change. They still use Ponmalar's **Spirit** d8 attribute and **Watchful Expatriate** d8 distinction, but they want to seize this opportunity to question Ponmalar's **Glory** d4 value, which says *I'd rather just use an arrow to defuse a fight if I can.* Not only is that not an option for Ponmalar now, but Ti describes how Ponmalar sees this catalyst as a danger—they have no interest in defusing the fight, only ending it. Though Ti knows it may cause them more problems, they triple the value's d4 and roll the dice. **Total**: **15**.

A success! While the contest isn't over yet, Ponmalar has definitely escalated the situation. Ti adds a d4 to Ponmalar's growth pool, and then shuts down their **Glory** d4 value for the rest of the session.

Later, when the session comes to an end, Ti must review their challenged statements. They make Ponmalar's **Glory** d4 value available again, and change the statement to read: *I will fight when I must. Just keep my name out of it.*

CONTEST: Ponmalar tries to escape the catalyst

1

Catalyst's Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
6 d8 d8 d10	4 6 6 2	12

2

Ti's Roll Against the Catalyst's Roll

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
d4 d4 d4 d8 d8	2 3 4 7 8	15

+1 d4 Growth die for questioning their **Glory** value

~~d4~~ **Glory**
Shut down for the rest of the session

d4 **Glory**
Statement changed to:
I will fight when I must.
Just keep my name out of it.



Helping Others

When a friendly PC makes a test or takes part in a contest or challenge, you can contribute to their success in several ways:

> When it's your turn, you can make a test (difficulty based on the situation—usually 6 6 or 8 8) and give the friendly PC your effect die as a temporary asset for their next roll. See page 90 for more on test-created assets.
>
> When it's not your turn, you can spend a PP to give the other player a 6 asset. See page 77 or more on creating and sharing assets.
>
> On the other player's turn, or when they're in a contest, you can step down one of your value die ratings by one in order to step up that same value in their own dice pool for that roll. See page 66 for more on stepping down your value.
>
> In a challenge, you can take your own turn against the challenge pool. See page 94 for more on challenges.

If you choose to step down a value, you don't recover the value until the end of the session. It's polite to ask if they need help, of course—and be sure to describe what this help looks like: spirited encouragement, linking of hands, distracting the opposition, and so on. *(See Example: Helping Others.)*

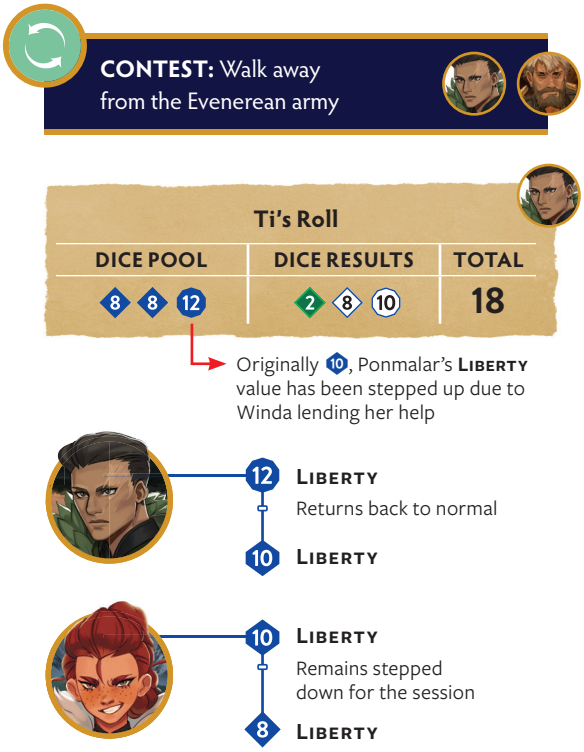


Example: Helping Others

Joe, the Narrator, has set a scene in which Ponmalar, played by Ti, and Winda, played by Emily, are facing an Evenerean army. One of the soldiers is a catalyst, a general who wants Ponmalar to help Evenere by rejoining their ranks. Ponmalar doesn't want anything to do with them, and tries to leave. The catalyst wants to stop them, and Joe calls for a contest! Ponmalar rolls first to set the difficulty.

Ti grabs Ponmalar's **Spirit** 8 attribute, **Liberty** 10 value, and **Watchful Expatriate** 8 distinction. Before they can roll, Emily asks if she can help. She suggests that Winda is devoted to her friend Ponmalar, and isn't going to just stand idly by as this catalyst bullies them. Emily wants to step down Winda's **Liberty** 10 value to step up Ponmalar's in exchange. Ti accepts, and Emily narrates a snarky speech from Winda about fighting for freedom before Ponmalar rolls. **Total**: **18**.

Seeing that difficulty, Joe decides that the catalyst is going to back down and not engage in the contest. He describes the tense stand-off that follows between Winda, Ponmalar, and the army, before the general tells their troops to stand down and let the pair pass. With the roll resolved, Ti steps Ponmalar's **Liberty** value back down. Emily, however, leaves Winda's value stepped down for the rest of the session.



Making Good Stories: Scenes, Sessions, and Tales

Tales of Xadia is played out a lot like many television shows, using some terms you might be familiar with. Taken as a whole, a story set in the world of Xadia is called a **tale**; it has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and once it's done the player characters may have overcome great obstacles, fought mighty battles, or won a victory against overwhelming odds. Stakes are resolved, victory meals are devoured. Mmm—victory meals.

Tales usually take place over multiple **sessions**, which might be a little like an episode of the show, but are really more about getting together, playing the game, and then wrapping up at a good stopping point.

Sessions are themselves divided up into **scenes**, which helps the story to progress at a natural pace and feel as if something is always being done, even if it's just a conversation between two friends, or a break in the action to reflect upon what's happened.

Scenes

A scene is just like a scene in the TV show: it has a **location**, where things happen; it has **characters**, who interact in the scene in various ways; and it has a **situation**, which is the answer to "what is this scene about?" The Narrator sets up a scene—who's there, where it takes place, what time of the day it is—which is called **scene framing**. More on this in the Narrator's Guide, page 182.

Imagine a scene in Lux Aurea, where Amaya and Janai are looking at the devastation caused by the corruption of the Sunforge. This scene is about Amaya and Janai at odds with each other about what to do next. Therefore, Lux Aurea is the location, Janai and Amaya are the characters, and the situation is the conflict between the two friends.

The Narrator frames this scene, and then we see what happens: can Amaya convince her friend to abandon the city? Will Janai get Amaya to agree to help her set things right? This sounds like a contest!

Often, a scene involves an antagonist or danger of some kind. These scenes involve challenges. An example might be a scene where Callum and Ezran have to sneak out of the castle without attracting the attention of the Guard Captain, who's been told to find them both. The location is the castle grounds, and the situation is "Can the boys sneak out without being seen? What happens if they're discovered?" The Narrator then sets up the dice for the challenge and the scene plays out.

Scene framing can be as simple as, "Okay, you've arrived at the camp and the young High Mage of Neolandia is there, waiting for you. He looks worried, maybe even scared. What do you do?" The Narrator might even invite you and the other players to suggest where the next scene starts, or which of you is present in the scene. Even though you might get some input on this, framing the scene is the Narrator's job. It might even be set days after the previous scene, with time having moved along! This is part of the responsibility of running the game. It's then your responsibility as a player to decide how the scene plays out once it starts.

During a scene, you might usually resolve one or two tests, or perhaps a contest or a challenge. If there's more to the scene than that, the Narrator might switch over to another scene with some different characters who aren't involved in the current one, returning later to your group to continue the story with a new scene, possibly in the same place and with the same characters as before.

When it matters what order things happen in a scene, the Narrator uses something called **dramatic order**. That is, if there's a test or a contest, the Narrator lets those play out in the order which makes sense for the unfolding story. Sometimes, a contest might start but pause briefly for another character to make a test, then switch back to the contest again. In between tests and contests, you and your fellow players act out the roles of your characters, the Narrator continues to describe what happens, and then the scene ends.

Challenges are something of an exception to the dramatic order rule. In a challenge, each PC involved in the challenge gets a **turn** to act against the challenge, and then once everyone's had a turn, the challenge pool itself gets to act against one of the PCs. Then it starts over with whoever ended the last round getting to choose who goes first in the next. Even then, the character who goes first in a challenge is determined by the Narrator based on what makes dramatic sense.

A scene is over when the Narrator decides that the situation or question in that scene has been resolved satisfactorily or that there's a great point to switch focus to another group. That usually means any contest is over and settled, or the characters have moved on from the location they were in, or a challenge has been overcome—but it can also mean there's a big decision to make and it's being left as a cliffhanger to resolve later. It's time to switch to the next scene and see what happens next.

Scenes can come in different flavors, depending on what they're for. Most scenes during play are **adventure scenes**, as they include action elements and are played out using tests, contests, and challenges. But there are also: **opening scenes**, which establish the session and set the stage; **discovery scenes**, for periods of exploration, study, research, or problem-solving;

intrigue scenes, for critical interactions between PCs, NCs, and catalysts; **recovery scenes**, which represent quieter periods for regrouping or recovering stress; **flashback scenes**, which allow the Narrator and players to reveal what has happened in the past, especially after some new information or truth has been revealed; and **tag scenes**, which come at the end of the session and are used to reflect on what's happened and set things up for next session.

Sessions

A **session** is the length of play from when you sit down at your table (or at your computer desks) with your character and the other players to play the game, to when you wrap up. Most sessions last anywhere from two to four hours, sometimes longer! It depends on the group, and the time of day, or even how much you get done. Sometimes it's good to end a session after a big climactic scene, or it might end with a cliffhanger or shock reveal that leaves everyone excited for next time.

Every session starts with the players getting a **plot point** (PP), in addition to keeping any PP they had left from last time. The Narrator gets a fresh pool of PP equal to the number of players. If any character ended the last session with stress, it all steps down by one (except **Corrupted**), unless the Narrator specifically says that this has to wait for a recovery scene to recover. Trauma does *not* step down at the start of a session, however!

Somebody does a quick recap of what happened last time and where the story left off. It's great if this is a player, because it frees the Narrator up to review their notes and do last minute prep, while you and the other players remind yourselves of what happened previously. The Narrator may then frame one or two opening scenes to set things up, based on that recap.

It's good to think of a session as covering about the same amount of story content and scenes as a TV episode. After the opening scenes (which you can imagine might take place before the opening credits roll on!), a series of adventure, discovery, and intrigue scenes, and possibly a flashback make up the majority of the session.

Finally, the tag scenes come at the end, which is when you and the other players get a chance to reflect on any values that were changed during the game, rewrite any that don't fit any more, and possibly establish some assets before the next session.

Tales

Some roleplaying games call one or more sessions strung together an adventure, a module, or a story. We call it a **tale**, not just because the name of the game is *Tales of Xadia*, but because we feel that there are so many fun tales to be told in the world of Xadia that it makes sense to embrace that. We plan on releasing pre-written tales for you to play, but your Narrator may very well create all-original tales for you to take part in, which is a big part of what's fun about being a Narrator!

A tale is not a predetermined story. The ending is not decided. Even in the tales we publish ourselves, we haven't told you how the story ends, although we do provide some ideas and some outcomes. Instead, a tale is a set of situations, one or more pivotal **catalyst** characters whom you and the other players interact with and potentially make more important, and a number of locations in which to tell the tale.

Tales might include some example **goals** for you to add to your character journal. Your Narrator can share those if you have a hard time coming up with some yourself. Take a look on page 104 for more on goals and achieving them to grow your character. You don't have to pursue any of those goals if you don't want to, but it can help you feel invested more in what's going on in the tale if you do.

At the beginning of every new tale, all stress is set to zero—nobody has any stress. If you ended the last tale with trauma of any kind, step it down by one before the tale begins. If it was a 6, it goes away entirely. All players start out a new tale with a PP just like the beginning of a new session.



Keeping Your Journal

Your character journal is more than just a place to store vital information about your traits, assets, and SFX. It's a record of what you've learned, what you've done, and who your character is. It's a place to set goals for yourself and grow from your experiences. Managing all of this is called **journal-keeping**.

This section covers how to set **goals** for your character based on their values; how to turn moments of drama and uncertainty into experience and **growth**; and how to introduce important **relationships** to friends, family, foes, and places that your characters have spent time in.



Setting Your Goals

Goal-setting is a fun way to plan ahead for what you think your character might want to do in the game, session by session. The Narrator can work with you to set up your goals, which also allows them to take note of those goals when preparing the next session. You can have up to three goals at any one time. To add a new goal, first complete or surrender one of your goals and choose a new goal to replace it.

Goals are important not just for helping you guide the story as a player, but because completing (or **achieving**) a goal contributes to your **growth pool** (page 106).

Defining a Goal

A goal is a specific, measurable, and achievable activity or event that you want to pursue in play. It can be as simple as *Explore the hidden library* or as challenging as *Recover the stolen magical boots from the cloud dragon's lair*. It can even be something social or cerebral, like *Solve Vinaya's equation* or *Get to know the niece of the Queen of Evenere*.

Try not to accidentally make your goal several goals in one. If you can break the goal down into several standalone achievements, it's possible you really want to establish multiple goals.

> Cam, playing Babukar, wants to establish a goal. In the previous session Joe, the Narrator, introduced a new NC—Kori, a disgraced Sunfire mage. Cam suggests that Babukar establish a goal: *Restore the honor of Kori*. Joe says this sounds like a good long-term goal but suggests *Uncover Kori's secret shame*, before Babukar sets out to right this wrong. Cam agrees, and writes it down in his journal.

Rating the Goal

Goals are rated from 6 to 12, and they're linked to one of your six values. To determine which value a goal is linked to, consider the overall theme or motivation behind the goal, and then choose the value that most strongly aligns with that. You can ask the Narrator or the other players for suggestions, if you're unsure.

> **Note**: The goal doesn't have to be connected to your value statement! In fact, it can be fun if it's contrary to your value, so it forces you to question your value as you pursue it.

The goal's die rating should be based on how difficult the goal is to achieve. You can't assign the same die rating to more than one goal, and the value's die rating is the maximum die rating you can set your goal to. This means that for the things you're most driven by, small goals don't make as much of an impact as bigger ones. However, goals aligned with your lower rated values can be easier to achieve—a quick way to add to your growth pool!

Use the following as a guideline for your goal's die rating.

6	Simple to achieve; can probably do it in one session without much effort.
8	Challenging to achieve, but can probably do it in one session with some work.
10	Hard to achieve; most likely requires at least two sessions and a lot of work.
12	Very hard to achieve; could take many sessions and considerable cost.

> Cam looks at the values on his character journal to decide which one best suits Babukar's new goal. **Mastery** covers learning and knowledge, but Cam notes that this goal is more about **Truth**.
>
> Babukar's **Truth** value is rated at 8, and since it's a goal that Babukar could probably achieve in one session with some work, 8 is also a good die rating for it. If the goal was linked to **Mastery**, Babukar could set a 6 goal; but *Uncover Kori's secret* isn't simple to do, so he'd need an easier goal.

Achieving the Goal

Achieving a goal in play is entirely up to the flow of the story, but we encourage the Narrator to prepare sessions with players' goals in mind. Most goals require an amount of risk or effort to achieve, usually in the form of dice rolls. Your 10 and 12 goals may require several tests, contests, and challenges before you can achieve them. For 6 goals, making choices in the session through roleplaying is often enough.

> During the next session, Joe presents Cam with an opportunity to achieve Babukar's goal to *Uncover Kori's secret shame*. Joe sets a scene in which Babukar and Kori share a moment of magical discovery together, and he describes how Kori's enthusiasm seems dampened by something unspoken. Cam attempts a challenging test to uncover the truth, and succeeds! Joe narrates Kori revealing their hidden shame: they stole a treasured magical artifact from their people, which they broke during their experiments.

Marking Off Your Goal

During a session, if you manage to do what you set out to do, mark your goal achieved and check it off. If you don't, save the goal for the next session.

At the end of the session, look at your character journal for completed goals. For each one you've completed, put a die into your growth pool equal to the size of the goal's die rating. Choose a new goal, based on what just happened, so the Narrator has the opportunity to prepare for the next session.

> After Joe reveals Kori's secret shame, he tells Cam that Babukar's goal has been completed. Cam marks the goal as achieved on Babukar's journal, and continues playing.
>
> At the end of the session, Cam revisits Babukar's goals and notes that he achieved his goal to *Uncover Kori's secret shame*. He takes the 8 from that goal and adds it to his growth pool.
>
> He chooses a new goal based on what he learned during this session. He decides on a new goal to *Find a way to fix the Sun primal artifact*. Cam reasons that, for Babukar, accomplishing this goal is a path to incredible glory. Babukar's **Glory** value is rated at 10, and Joe agrees that 10 represents how difficult this goal is to achieve.

Surrendering Your Goal

You can use a goal in play as a short-term asset, but you have to stop pursuing it. Maybe you changed your mind, or due to a change in the situation, achieving the goal seems impossible. This is a bit like questioning your value statements (page 98).

At any time, you can **surrender your goal** to assist you in doing something in denial of, contrast with, or opposition to your goal. This allows you to put the goal die in your dice pool like an asset; it lasts until you use it in a test, contest, or challenge, just as if you acquired it using a test or spent a PP to create it.

When you surrender your goal, cross it off your character journal; it won't contribute to growth or otherwise play a role in the game. If you do something that would have achieved the goal, it no longer matters.

> A few sessions later, Babukar, played by Cam, and Bineta, played by Mellie, are undertaking an extremely difficult challenge set by the Narrator, Joe. They must save a human village from a corrupted magma titan that threatens to destroy the town and continue a path of destruction deep into the human kingdoms.
>
> With the dire situation and his sister in trouble, Cam describes Babukar considering the artifact from Kori, the disgraced Sunfire mage. Cam asks Joe if the primal Sun magic in the broken artifact is still strong, and Joe confirms that it is. Seeing few options, Cam surrenders Babukar's goal to *Find a way to fix the Sun primal artifact* and uses the artifact to heal the corruption and save his sister.
>
> After Joe sets the difficulty, Cam crosses out the goal and adds it as a 10 asset on Babukar's character journal. Using the powerful asset, Babukar succeeds! The challenge continues, but the tide has turned in favor of the siblings—and Cam gets to use that 10 asset for the rest of the challenge.

Building the Growth Pool

As you play, your PC takes and recovers stress, questions their values, and achieves goals. This builds your **growth pool**, which in turn is used to make changes to your character journal. Traits can be added or stepped up, and SFX can be unlocked.

Growth is checked at the end of the current tale rather than the end of every session, although there are several changes you can make to your character journal before the tale's end.

Growth from Recovery

When an ally or a friend helps you recover your stress (page 79), you can add a die to your growth pool equal to the size of the stress die recovered. Mark this off in your character journal during play. Each type of stress can only contribute one die to your growth pool per session. If you later take and recover that same type of stress, it isn't added to your growth pool unless it's a larger die, which replaces the smaller one. **Corrupted** stress isn't added to your growth pool.

If your stress is stepped down or recovered without any assistance by spending time in a recovery scene or between sessions, it isn't added to growth. This underscores how important it is for characters to have the help of others in learning from their mistakes and misfortunes. *(See Example: Growth from Recovery.)*

Growth from Questioning Values

When you question a value statement (page 98), in addition to gaining three value dice for your dice pool rather than one, you add a die to your growth pool equal to the size of the value die.

You can only add dice to growth from any given value once per session. If you question your **Devotion** statement three times, only the first time counts toward growth. At most, you can add six dice from questioning values to your growth pool per session.

If you step down your value die rating to help or assist another PC (page 101), you don't gain growth dice because you didn't question your value statement. You can still rewrite your value statement at the end of the session, just as if you'd questioned it. *(See Example: Growth from Questioning Values.)*

Growth from Achieving Goals

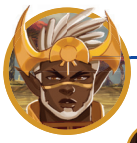
Whenever your character achieves a goal during play, they can add their goal die rating to their growth pool. You can do this at most three times a session, because you can only hold three goals at a time. Some goals require more than one session to achieve, so you should expect to only add one or perhaps two dice to growth per session this way.

At the end of the session, if you've achieved or surrendered a goal, talk with your Narrator about adding a new one for the next session. At the end of the tale, decide whether you want to carry remaining goals over to the next tale, or start fresh with three new ones. *(See Example: Growth from Achieving Goals.)*

Example: Growth from Recovery

Babukar, played by Cam, overextended himself in the last challenge and is now coping with **Exhausted** 8 stress. Joe, the Narrator, sets a scene with Babukar and Tressal, played by Jason. They've been butting heads and must work together.

Jason suggests that Tressal wants to help Babukar recover to improve their chances of success, and adds that Tressal is also trying to prove a point about his own skills. Cam agrees, and Joe sets the difficulty by rolling a pool of dice. Jason succeeds on the test with an effect die of 8, which isn't enough to get rid of Babukar's stress. However, he got a heroic success by beating the difficulty by 5! This steps up his effect die to a 10, which means that Babukar is fully recovered from his **Exhausted** stress. Cam thanks Jason and fully recovers Babukar's **Exhausted** stress, adding the 8 to his growth pool.




8 **Exhausted**

10 While Tressal's original effect die was only a 8 it was stepped up to 10 due to the heroic success

No Stress



+1 8 Growth die from fully recovered **Exhausted** stress

Example: Growth from Questioning Values

Babukar, played by Cam, is in the midst of a contest with Tressal, played by Jason. The two are supposed to be working together, but Tressal has begun to doubt that everything is as it seems, and wants Babukar to stop and think. Babukar, on the other hand, is ready to act.

On Babukar's turn, Cam begins to build his dice pool, and decides that Babukar is questioning his **Truth** 8 value statement, *I have seen so many truths that I hardly know my own*. Cam explains that in this situation, Babukar is rejecting Tressal's perception of the truth in favor of his own, which he feels certain of. Cam adds 8 8 8 to his dice pool instead of 8 for his **Truth** value. After he adds those dice to Babukar's dice pool, Cam steps down Babukar's **Truth** value to 6, and adds the 8 to Babukar's growth pool.



8 **Truth**

To add 8 8 8 to his dice pool, Babukar questions his **Truth** value and steps it down for the remainder of the session

6 **Truth**



+1 8 Growth die from stepping down his **Truth** value, originally a 8

Example: Growth from Achieving Goals

At the end of their most recent session, Cam, who plays Babukar, is reviewing Babukar's character journal and notes that his goal to *Escort Tressal to Lux Aurea* has been achieved. This goal was tied to Babukar's **Justice** value rated at 8, and so Cam adds a 8 to Babukar's growth pool. He also completed his **Devotion** goal rated at 6, *Earn an invitation to the secret society*, so Cam also adds a 6 to Babukar's growth pool. He then discusses with Joe, the Narrator, about what he wants his new goals to be, so that he begins the next session with three goals.



+1 8 Growth die for completing *Escort Tressal to Lux Aurea* (tied to **Justice** 8)

+1 6 Growth die for completing *Earn an invitation to the secret society* (tied to **Devotion** 6)

Using Growth

Once you have dice in your growth pool, there are several ways to "spend" the dice to improve your character and update your character journal. Some can be done session to session; others take place at the end of the current tale. Also, while it doesn't necessarily use the growth pool directly, you can change and update your character's values and value statements.

Updating Your Values

At the end of every session, perhaps in a tag scene designed for reflection, look at the values and value statements you questioned in play and decide if they should change.

This form of growth doesn't use the growth pool, although the growth pool does increase when you question your value statements. It's important to remember that intentionally stepping down your value to aid a friend during a test, contest, or challenge doesn't contribute to growth, but the value might need to be considered before stepping it back up again.

If you have a value that was stepped down because you questioned it or you helped someone, ask yourself the following question for each value: has my character's view on this value changed? *(See Example: Updating Your Values.)*

If the answer is no, the value statement doesn't change, but the value stays stepped down. You may now step up another value in response, so that your total steps in all of your values stays the same. No value can be raised above 12 as a result of this.

If the answer is yes, the value steps back up to its original die rating, but you must rewrite your value statement to reflect your new views on this value. It should be a clear and obvious difference, not simply a rewritten version of the same statement.

RAYLA: I'm an assassin.

CAPTAIN VILLADS: Ho ho! You're not jokin'.

RAYLA: Well, I'm *supposed* to be an assassin, but I've never actually, ya know, killed anyone.

CAPTAIN VILLADS: Oh. Well, maybe someday. Never give up on your dreams.

RAYLA: Thanks for the encouragement. But the truth is, I'm not sure being an assassin is my dream after all.

Book 2: Sky, Chapter 6: Heart of a Titan

Example: Updating your Values

At the end of a session, Joe, the Narrator, turns to Cam and asks if his character, Babukar, stepped down any values. Cam checks Babukar's character journal and confirms that two values were stepped down: one from questioning the value, and the other from helping someone else. Joe gives Cam an opportunity to have a tag scene to consider the two values.

The first value, **Truth** 8, was questioned once and stepped down to 6, and currently has a statement of *I have seen so many truths that I hardly know my own*. Cam describes how Babukar chose his truth in the face of the session's challenges, even though he's still learning what that means. He keeps that value rated at 6, and chooses to step up his **Justice** value from 8 to 10.

The second value, **Devotion**, was stepped down from 6 to 4 to help Babukar's sister, Bineta. Cam considers its value statement of *Privately I am preoccupied with my greater purpose* and decides that this has changed. He rewrites the statement to become *The few I choose to trust can rely upon my staff* and steps the value back up to 6.



6 **Truth**
Originally a 8, Cam keeps this stepped down so he can step up his **Justice**

8 **Justice**

10 **Justice**

4 **Devotion**
Privately I am preoccupied with my greater purpose.

Cam chooses to rewrite its statement and bring it back up to its original value after stepping it down earlier in the session.

6 **Devotion**
The few I choose to trust can rely upon my staff.

Adding Relationship Assets

A relationship asset is a one-use asset similar to the kind you create with a test or by spending a plot point. See page 70 for more on temporary assets. Relationship assets are created by spending growth dice out of the growth pool at the end of the session, which creates an asset with a die rating equal to the growth die you spent to create it. The growth pool is reduced as a result, but you gain an asset that you can use in the next session of play.

Relationship assets should represent your character's new connection to either another character (including a Narrator character, a catalyst, or a PC) or a location in the world that you've either visited in the session, or learned something about.

There's no limit to how many relationship assets you can bank in this manner for the next session, other than the number of growth dice you have in your growth pool. Because the size of the asset is equal to the size of the growth die used to create it, relationship assets can be quite strong.

Relationship assets can be kept until used in a subsequent session of play. You don't have to use them if you don't want to. If you do, you get to use it for a whole scene, in any tests, contests, or challenges, but at the end of the scene the relationship asset goes away. You may still care about the person or place, but you no longer have a specific asset to represent that in the game.

Relationship assets are great because they don't cost PP to create, don't require a test, and can be larger than 6 by default. However, they can only be created at the end of a session.

> At the end of a session, the players review their character journals. Cam, Babukar's player, considers the dice in his character's growth pool and decides he wants to spend one to create a relationship. Cam chooses a 8 from his growth pool, which came from his **Exhausted** stress, and uses that to define a 8 relationship asset with Jason's PC, Tressal.
>
> A few sessions later, Tressal is in trouble, and Cam wants Babukar to help. While building Babukar's dice pool, Cam tells Joe that he wants to use the **Tressal** 8 asset he created earlier. He adds the die to Babukar's pool for his action, and uses it three more times over the course of the scene.
>
> When the scene ends, Joe reminds Cam to remove the asset from Babukar's journal. The **Tressal** 8 is gone. The relationship between Babukar and Tressal? Joe will leave that up to Cam and Jason.

Improving Your Traits

At the end of a tale, when the story reaches its climax and there's a period of denouement or downtime afterward, your PC might grow in other ways from the experiences they went through. This is where the growth pool actually gets rolled, and where your character journal can change in ways other than shifting values or rewriting value statements.

Choose a type of trait to change or affect from the following.

- **Distinctions**: You can step up a distinction, change a distinction, add a new locked SFX to your character journal, or unlock an existing SFX.
- **Specialties**: You can add a new specialty or step up an existing specialty.
- **Assets**: You can add a new asset or step up an existing asset, including adding spells.
- **Attributes**: You can step up an attribute.

Doing any of these things requires a test against a difficulty set by the Narrator based on the type of trait being changed, and the die rating you want the trait to become (or what it currently is, if you're not planning to step it up). For your dice pool, you use your current growth pool. For this test, hitches can't be activated but still can't be used for your total. You don't need to choose an effect die for this test; it's a simple pass or fail, so use your two best results. You can't use PP to affect the outcome of these tests.



Growth Difficulty by Trait	
Add Asset	6 6
Add Locked SFX	8 8
Add Specialty	8 8
Step Up Asset	6 6
Step Up Specialty	8 8
Step Up Distinction	10 10
Step Up Attribute	12 12
Swap Out Locked SFX	6 6
Swap Out Distinction	8 8
Unlock SFX	8 8

- **Unlock**: Make this trait available to use for your character.
- **Step Up**: Increase the trait's die rating by one step. Can't step up a 12 die rating.
- **Swap Out**: Replace the current trait with a different trait.
- **Add**: Gain a new trait of the trait type. New specialties and assets always start as 6. SFX always start out locked.

In addition to the two dice for the appropriate growth difficulty, the difficulty also includes a die equal to the die rating you want the new trait to be (no more than one step higher). If you are instead swapping out a distinction, adding an SFX, or unlocking an SFX, use the trait's current die rating. In the case of SFX, use the die rating of the distinction that the SFX is linked to. New assets always start at 6. For a list of available SFX, see page 268; for guidance on creating new ones, see page 130.

If you want to step up or change multiple traits at the end of the tale, you must divide your growth pool between tests, with each test requiring a minimum of two dice in the dice pool. Having six dice in your growth pool could allow you to try three different growth tests, each with two dice, or two growth tests at three dice each, and so on.

> **If you succeed** at a growth test, the trait steps up, or is changed, added, or unlocked. The growth dice are spent and removed from your growth pool.
>
> **If you fail**, you don't change or affect the trait, but you keep the growth dice and they roll over to the next tale.

(See Example 1: Improving Your Traits and Example 2: Improving Your Traits.)

Even if you don't succeed at any of these growth tests at the end of the tale, you're always allowed to rewrite one or more value statements, spend growth dice to create relationship assets for the next session (and the beginning of the next tale), and keep remaining growth dice for use later.

Example 1: Improving Your Traits

Joe's players have reached the end of *The Tale of the Corrupted Core*, and they can now use their growth pool to improve their traits. Cam, who plays Babukar, reviews the options and decides that he wants to try and step up Babukar's **Hotheaded Sun Mage** distinction, which is currently rated a 8.

Joe, as the Narrator, builds a pool of dice to set the difficulty for Babukar's test, taking two dice from the growth difficulty by trait chart, and adding an additional die of the rating Cam is targeting, which gives him 10 10 10.

Knowing that he'll need some very high dice, Cam looks at Babukar's growth pool and decides to commit four of the dice from that pool to try and succeed.

Babukar succeeds! Cam removes all four of those dice from Babukar's growth pool, and permanently steps up his **Hotheaded Sun Mage** distinction to a 10.

TEST: Upgrade a distinction (HARD 10 10 + **Hotheaded Sun Mage** 10)



	DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
Joe	10 10 10	6 8	14
Cam	8 10 10 12	7 2 8	15



8 **Hotheaded Sun Mage**

10 **Hotheaded Sun Mage**

Example 2: Improving Your Traits

Instead of just stepping up one of Babukar's traits, Cam wants to try to improve several of them. His growth pool has seven dice in it: 12, 10 10 10, 8 8, and 6. Since improving a trait requires at least two dice, Cam can attempt up to three improvements to Babukar's traits.

1. For his first improvement, Cam tells Joe that he would like to step up Babukar's **Sun Magic** specialty, currently rated at 8. Joe, the Narrator, agrees and rolls to set the difficulty for Babukar. **Total**: **11**. After seeing the difficulty, Cam decides which of his growth dice to use in his dice pool, and then rolls. **Total**: **12**.

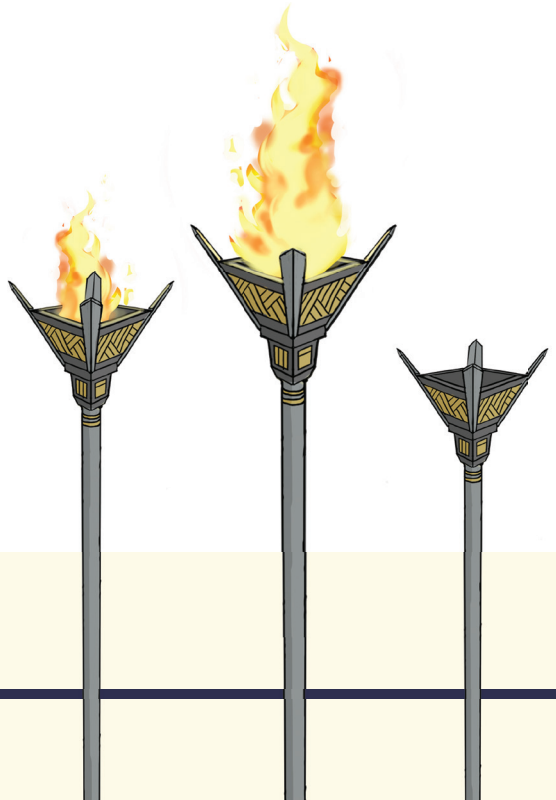
   Babukar succeeds, and Cam steps up the **Sun Magic** specialty to a 10. All three dice that Cam rolled are removed from Babukar's growth pool, while Joe helps Mellie with Bineta's growth.

2. When it comes back to Babukar's turn, Cam decides he wants to step up the **Sun Magic Spells** asset to a 10, to match his new specialty. Joe sets the new difficulty. **Total**: **14**. Cam chooses two dice from his remaining growth pool of 12, 10 10, and 8, hoping to save the last two for a third improvement. **Total**: **14**.

   Unfortunately for Cam, his total doesn't beat the difficulty set by Joe's roll. However, the dice he rolled stay in his growth pool for after the next tale.

3. For his final improvement, Cam has two dice that he hasn't yet rolled from Babukar's growth pool. He tells Joe that he wants to create a new **Sun Staff** asset, and Joe sets the difficulty. **Total**: **8**. Cam rolls his final two dice, 10 and 8. **Total**: **10**.

   The roll is a success! Cam adds the new 6 asset to Babukar's character journal and removes the two dice from his growth pool. Though his rolling for this tale is over, Cam will bring the 12 and 10 from his failed improvement roll with him into the next tale.



TEST: Upgrade **Sun Magic** 8 (CHALLENGING 8 8)

1

	DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
Joe	8 8 10	7 4	11
Cam	6 8 10	6 6	12



Growth Dice

~~6~~ ~~8~~ 8 ~~10~~ 10 10 10 12

8 → 10 **Sun Magic**

TEST: Upgrade **Sun Magic Spells** 8 (EASY 6 6)

2

	DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
Joe	6 6 10	6 8	14
Cam	10 12	5 9	14



Growth Dice

~~6~~ ~~8~~ 8 ~~10~~ ~~10~~ 10 ~~12~~

TEST: Create a **Sun Staff** 6 (EASY 6 6)

3

	DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
Joe	6 6 6	3 5	8
Cam	8 10	4 6	10



6 **Sun Staff**



Creating Your Own Character

If you're keen to jump right in, it's time to create a character of your own!

This section has an easy-to-follow guide to creating your own character journal, followed by an alternative method if you're ready to take off the guard rails. Regardless of how you approach it, the end result is a fully formed PC with all of the same dice steps, trait options, and choices on display as the sample characters. You aren't missing out on anything; if somebody else at the table is playing Easgann or Routhna and you're playing someone new, nobody's at a disadvantage in your tales.

If you're considering playing a mage, take a moment to read So You Want to Play a Mage on page 129.

Here's a quick summary of the guided character creation process.

- **Who Are Your People?** Choose your kindred distinction.
- **What Do You Do?** Choose your vocation distinction.
- **What Makes You Different?** Choose your quirk distinction.
- **What Are You Capable Of?** Choose your attributes.
- **What Do You Believe?** Choose your values.
- **What Helps You?** Choose your specialties and assets.
- **What Makes You Special?** Unlock your SFX.
- **Who Are You?** Choose your name and pronouns.

If you use our digital tools, much of this process is automated. Or, grab a copy of a blank character journal and a pencil. You don't need dice unless you want to randomly generate some aspects of your character.

The examples that follow show how the pregenerated character, Routhna, might have been created using this system.

Original Character Considerations

There are a few things to consider before making an all-new character using the step-by-step rules. Here's a short rundown of the most important points.

Game Traits and Dice

Many players think about their characters in terms of what die ratings they have in various traits. You might want to try a character with a high **Awareness** and **Influence**, for example, hoping to do well in social and intrigue scenes. Or perhaps you want to try out the magic rules, so you're looking at being a rune mage and adding a **Spells** asset and magic specialty.

It can be tempting to "max out" your character, making optimal choices. With Cortex, however, there really isn't a maxed out PC. Yes, with action and adventure, a good die rating in **Agility** or **Strength** might seem prudent, as well as **Swordplay** and **Archery** specialties. But a battle is not just fighting. You can distract, convince, insult, or find something else that suits your character. There are many ways to approach any problem.

Remember, the game won't penalize you for trying something new. Interesting combinations of values, attributes, or specialties can be exciting, and the rules make almost any choice workable.

Character Concepts

Fans of *The Dragon Prince* might be keen to play something or someone they think is cool on the show. Moonshadow assassins, Katolian princes, and Sunfire elf knights? Sure, we love Rayla, Ezran, and Janai. But what about a dark mage from Del Bar? Or a Skywing elf who loves political schemes?

It's good to talk with your fellow players and the Narrator about everyone's character concept and how they fit with the chronicle you're playing. What sounds like a really good concept to you might not work for every tale. We encourage Narrators to listen to their players' ideas and wishes, of course. Nobody wants to play a character they're not excited about!

Potentially problematic character concepts include wanting to play a brooding loner, a hostile or otherwise belligerent character, or someone whose vocation attracts a lot of danger. That said, this world is filled with dramatic moments and conflict, so there's a place for characters who create friction. Just be sure that your character doesn't make other players uncomfortable or create more problems for you as a player.

Who Are Your People?

The first question is: who are your people? This is your **kindred distinction**. Decide if you're going to play a human or an elf by choosing which community your PC comes from and was raised in. Choosing your kindred distinction affects your values, but has no effect on your attributes or specialties: those are separate from how you were raised and remain your choice.

Your kindred distinction is made up of two parts; the first is geographical or community-oriented. If you're human, this is which of the five Human Kingdoms you come from. If you're an elf, this is which elven community you belong to.

If you're an elf, the second part of the distinction is simply **Elf**. If you're human, the second part represents what kind of family you were raised in, from the lap of luxury to the hard work of the free peoples. You might also choose to draw upon how much you hold true to your homeland's laws: were your family traditionalists, or isolationists? Or are you an exile from your people?

Community

Choose one of these nine **communities**. Five are human (Del Barian, Durenian, Evenerean, Katolian, and Neolandian) and four are elven (Earthblood, Moonshadow, Skywing, and Sunfire). Two elven communities are missing from this book: **Tidebound** and **Startouch**. Rules for these two elf groups may appear in future products as events unfold on *The Dragon Prince*.

Your choice becomes half of your kindred distinction. You get the associated SFX as **locked SFX** (page 125) and the unlocked *Hinder* SFX all distinctions have. Note the value associated with each of these; it contributes to your final set of value die ratings. You can find the full breakdown of community distinctions and their SFX on page 252.

TYPE	COMMUNITY	VALUE	PAGE	DICE
Human	Del Barian	+1 Liberty	252	1
Human	Durenian	+1 Devotion	252	2
Human	Evenerean	+1 Justice	252	3
Human	Katolian	+1 Mastery	253	4
Human	Neolandian	+1 Glory	253	5
Elven	Earthblood	+1 Truth	252	6
Elven	Moonshadow	+1 Devotion	253	7
Elven	Skywing	+1 Liberty	253	8
Elven	Sunfire	+1 Mastery	253	9

WHAT'S WITH THE DICE RESULTS?

Each chart has a dice column if you want to randomize your PC. Roll the die type indicated and find the option it matches. If your result isn't represented in the chart, roll again!

Family

Digging a little deeper, who was your family within that community? If you're an elf, your only option is **Elf**. For a human PC, choose one of the remaining options.

Your choice becomes the second half of your kindred distinction, and you get the associated SFX as **locked SFX** (page 125). Each choice includes a value that's associated with that family, for use later in determining your value die ratings. You can find the full breakdown of family distinctions and their SFX on page 254.

FAMILY	VALUE	PAGE	DICE
Cityfolk	+1 Mastery	254	1
Freefolk	+1 Devotion	254	2
Noble	+1 Glory	255	3
Elf	+1 Devotion	254	n/a*
Hinterlander	+1 Liberty	254	4
Traditionalist	+1 Justice	255	5
Exile	+1 Truth	254	6
Isolationist	+1 Liberty	254	7

*If you rolled an elven community, your family is **Elf**

Becky is creating her character for Joe's upcoming chronicle. She's decided to connect her character to Jason's, a Neolandian dark mage named Tressal.

Her first decision is easy; Becky chooses the community of **Neolandia**. She knows that Tressal is a **Isolationist**, and decides that a **Traditionalist** would align well. This makes her new character, who Becky names Routhna, a **Neolandian Traditionalist**.

Becky notes that Routhna's **Glory** and **Justice** values will both step up once, and adds the three special effects (SFX) from each of her choices to Routhna's pool of SFX. Unlocking SFX is a later step.

What Do You Do?

The second question is: what do you do? This is your **vocation distinction**. This is what you do with your life, whether it's a job, an identity within your community, or how you make a living. You don't need to pursue your vocation in the game; it provides you with more of your core values and two of your locked SFX.

Vocation distinctions are made up of two parts. The first is the vocation itself, like **Guard** or **Merchant**. The second is an adjective that describes you, whether it's **Headstrong** or **Inquisitive**, **Mysterious** or **Stylish**.

If you want to play a mage, you need to choose one of the magical vocations (page 264), either as a magical vocation paired with a common adjective, or a magical adjective paired with a common vocation.

If you want to identify your character with a specific location or type of terrain, you should choose a location-based adjective to pair with your common vocation.

Put together, these two parts create a single vocation distinction with two locked SFX and two associated values.

Common Vocations

There's a list of 40 jobs and professions on page 256. You can rename them to be more specific; alternatives are suggested in the full breakdown. Each one comes with locked SFX and a value it's associated with.

WAIT, WHAT DO I ROLL?

Bigger tables work differently. Roll the top die to find the column. Roll the left die to find the row. Where they meet is your random option. If your result isn't there, reroll.

Common Adjectives

Adjectives give some context to your vocation. They describe your most notable quality within your vocation, setting you apart from others who share it. Adjectives provide many more opportunities to use your vocation distinction in dice pools.

We provide 60 adjectives here for you to choose from. Each has its own locked SFX and associated value. You can find the full breakdown of common adjectives and their SFX on page 259.

Vocations

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Advisor +1 Truth (page 256)	Animal Keeper +1 Devotion (page 256)	Archer +1 Mastery (page 256)	Artisan +1 Mastery (page 256)	Assassin +1 Justice (page 256)	Athlete +1 Glory (page 256)
2	Botanist +1 Devotion (page 256)	Child +1 Devotion (page 256)	Competitor +1 Mastery (page 256)	Cook +1 Devotion (page 256)	Counselor +1 Devotion (page 257)	Disciple +1 Mastery (page 257)
3	Elder +1 Mastery (page 257)	Enthusiast +1 Mastery (page 257)	Fortune Teller +1 Truth (page 257)	Gambler +1 Truth (page 257)	Guard +1 Justice (page 257)	Healer +1 Devotion (page 257)
4	Herald +1 Truth (page 257)	Investigator +1 Truth (page 257)	Knight +1 Glory (page 257)	Laborer +1 Mastery (page 257)	Leader +1 Justice (page 258)	Merchant +1 Mastery (page 258)
5	Messenger +1 Truth (page 258)	Mystic +1 Devotion (page 258)	Performer +1 Glory (page 258)	Ranger +1 Liberty (page 258)	Rider +1 Liberty (page 258)	Sailor +1 Liberty (page 258)
6	Scavenger +1 Mastery (page 258)	Scholar +1 Mastery (page 258)	Scout +1 Devotion (page 258)	Servant +1 Devotion (page 258)	Socialite +1 Glory (page 259)	Soldier +1 Justice (page 259)
7	Student +1 Mastery (page 259)	Teacher +1 Truth (page 259)	Thief +1 Liberty (page 259)	Tracker +1 Mastery (page 259)	n/a	n/a

Adjectives

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Adaptable +1 Liberty (page 259)	Ambitious +1 Mastery (page 259)	Aspiring +1 Mastery (page 259)	Begrudging +1 Justice (page 259)	Brazen +1 Glory (page 259)	Brooding +1 Truth (page 259)
2	Cheerful +1 Devotion (page 260)	Clever +1 Mastery (page 260)	Cloistered +1 Mastery (page 260)	Conflicted +1 Truth (page 260)	Considerate +1 Devotion (page 260)	Creative +1 Truth (page 260)
3	Cunning +1 Truth (page 260)	Decisive +1 Justice (page260)	Dedicated +1 Devotion (page 260)	Fearless +1 Glory (page 260)	Gentle +1 Devotion (page 260)	Graceful +1 Liberty (page 260)
4	Haughty +1 Glory (page 261)	Headstrong +1 Glory (page 261)	Homesick +1 Devotion (page 261)	Hotheaded +1 Glory (page 261)	Humbled +1 Truth (page 261)	Idealistic +1 Devotion (page 261)
5	Inquisitive +1 Truth (page 261)	Insightful +1 Truth (page 261)	Intimidating +1 Glory (page 261)	Jaded +1 Liberty (page 261)	Meticulous +1 Justice (page 261)	Mighty +1 Glory (page 261)
6	Mysterious +1 Truth (page 261)	Nervous +1 Mastery (page 261)	Nurturing +1 Devotion (page 262)	Open-Minded +1 Liberty (page 262)	Opinionated +1 Liberty (page 262)	Opportunistic +1 Glory (page 262)
7	Passionate +1 Devotion (page 262)	Patient +1 Justice (page 262)	Pragmatic +1 Mastery (page 262)	Profound +1 Mastery (page 262)	Redeemed +1 Justice (page 262)	Refined +1 Mastery (page 262)
8	Reluctant +1 Liberty (page 262)	Reserved +1 Justice (page 262)	Responsible +1 Justice (page 262)	Restless +1 Liberty (page 262)	Revered +1 Glory (page 263)	Royal +1 Glory (page 263)
9	Ruthless +1 Justice (page 263)	Sarcastic +1 Liberty (page 263)	Silent +1 Liberty (page 263)	Stern +1 Glory (page 263)	Stylish +1 Liberty (page 263)	Trusting +1 Justice (page 263)
10	Unyielding +1 Mastery (page 263)	Valiant +1 Devotion (page 263)	Vengeful +1 Justice (page 263)	Vigilant +1 Liberty (page 263)	Wayward +1 Liberty (page 263)	Worldly +1 Truth (page 263)

Magical Vocations

If you want to play a magic-using character such as a rune mage or a dark mage, you need a **magical vocation** distinction. Magical vocations are special; they can be paired up either with a common adjective or a common vocation. With the former, pair the type of mage (such as **Sky Mage** or **Dark Mage**) with an adjective, such as **Hot-Headed**. With the latter, add the primal to the vocation as an adjective, such as **Sun Acolyte** or **Dark Counselor**. This widens your options while ensuring that you have access to the SFX that accompanies a magic vocation—and also meet the requirements for using magic. You can find the full breakdown of magical vocations and their SFX on page 264.

> **Note**: This list doesn't include Ocean magic or Star magic, as they aren't options for mages in this book. But there may be expanded options in future books.

VOCATION	VALUE
Dark Mage*	+1 Mastery
Earth Mage	+1 Devotion
Moon Mage	+1 Truth
Sky Mage	+1 Liberty
Sun Mage	+1 Glory

*Only humans can be dark mages, and elves rune mages

Details for magical vocations are found on page 264



Location-Based Adjectives

These adjectives allow you to create vocation distinctions tied to specific sorts of terrain, such as marshes or forests, or to specific places in the world of Xadia, such as Lux Aurea or Berylgarten. You can pair a terrain adjective up with a vocation to create distinctions like **Marsh Ranger** or **River Pirate**, or pair a specific place to a vocation using "of"—such as **Knight of Lux Aurea** or **Scout of the Midnight Desert**. A few options are listed below; feel free to come up with something different. See page 264 for more.

PEOPLE	LOCATION
Human	Katolis (Katolian)
Human	The Garden (Durenian)
Human	Eboreus (Neolandian)
Human	Evenere (Evenerean)
Human	Hinterpeak (Del Barian)
Elven	Lux Aurea
Elven	Silvergrove
Elven	The Storm Spire
Elven	The Border
Elven	The Frozen Sea
Either	Marsh
Either	River
Either	Mountain
Either	Desert
Either	Forest

Becky, whose character Routhna is connected to Jason's character, Tressal, chooses an adjective for her vocation: **Royal**.

She then reviews the list of vocations, seeing a few that stand out as good choices for the character she's creating. She could be a **Champion** (a variation on **Competitor**), a **Knight**, a **Soldier**... But the one she keeps returning to is **Guard**, liking the idea of being a protector. With her new distinction **Royal Guard** decided, Becky notes that her **Glory** and **Justice** values both step up once, and adds two more SFX to her pool of locked SFX.

What Makes You Different?

Quirks set you apart from anyone else who shares the same kindred and vocation distinctions as you. Quirk distinctions can be extremely open-ended, peculiar, or prosaic; this is where you inject more of your PC's personality, their favorite sayings or phrases, or just something fun that stands out about them.

Remember, your quirks should be at least capable of making things difficult for you from time to time. You want to be able to activate your *Hinder* SFX, after all.

Quirks

On page 265, there's a chart of quirk distinctions; each comes with two values and a single locked SFX. If you don't see anything you like, pick one and rename it. Try to keep it simple, punchy, and fun.

> As Becky creates her character, Routhna, by choosing her distinctions, she starts to uncover how this character acts and what she values. When she reaches her third distinction, the quirk, she knows that Routhna has a certain amount of pride to her, and that she's not one to mince words. Looking through the options in the book, **Blunt Braggart** immediately catches her eye. Joe, the Narrator, reminds her that she could rename or flavor it another way if she wanted to, but Becky thinks it's perfect as-is. She notes that Routhna's **Glory** and **Mastery** each step up, and adds one last SFX to her pool.

What Are You Capable Of?

Now you discover what your player character's attribute die ratings are. Every PC begins with the same total number of die steps in their attributes, where d4 is one step, and d12 is five steps. To make this simple, we've created two distinct arrangements of these steps, which you can assign to your attributes as you wish. Note that neither of these arrangements has a die rating of d12. See page 65 for a refresher on the six attributes: **Agility**, **Awareness**, **Influence**, **Intellect**, **Spirit**, and **Strength**.

The Focused Arrangement

A character with the focused arrangement of attributes favors two attributes more than the others, at the cost of having one attribute that's very low.

The focused arrangement is: d10 d10 d8 d8 d6 d4

Choose the focused arrangement if you:

- Want to be really strong in two attributes
- Enjoy a character with a noticeable disadvantage
- Can't decide on one attribute to be your highest

The Versatile Arrangement

A character with the versatile arrangement might only have one attribute in which they are strongest, but they have a wider spread of good attributes at the d8 rating.

The versatile arrangement is: d10 d8 d8 d8 d6 d6

Choose the versatile arrangement if you:

- Really want to excel in one attribute
- Want to be pretty good at more than just one or two others
- Don't want any significant weak areas



QUIRKS				
	1	2	3	4
1	**A Song for All Occasions** +1 Glory, +1 Devotion (page 265)	**Act First, Think Later** +1 Liberty, +1 Glory (page 265)	**Ahead of the Pack** +1 Glory, +1 Mastery (page 265)	**Anything for My Fans** +1 Glory, +1 Devotion (page 265)
2	**Blunt Braggart** +1 Glory, +1 Mastery (page 265)	**Chronically Underestimated** +1 Mastery, +1 Justice (page 265)	**Conquest Has Consequences** +1 Glory, +1 Justice (page 265)	**Courageous Combatant** +1 Justice, +1 Devotion (page 265)
3	**Dark Secrets** +1 Truth, +1 Liberty (page 265)	**Dashing Do-Gooder** +1 Justice, +1 Glory (page 265)	**Destiny: A Book I Write Myself** +1 Liberty, +1 Truth (page 265)	**Earnest Enforcer** +1 Justice, +1 Liberty (page 265)
4	**Fickle Luck** +1 Liberty, +1 Mastery (page 265)	**Focused Resolve** +1 Mastery, +1 Glory (page 265)	**Foolhardy Friend** +1 Devotion, +1 Truth (page 266)	**Friend Indeed** +1 Devotion, +1 Mastery (page 266)
5	**Friend of the Forest** +1 Devotion, +1 Liberty (page 266)	**Heavy Weighs My Shame** +1 Truth, +1 Justice (page 266)	**High and Mighty** +1 Glory, +1 Justice (page 266)	**I Tried, and I Failed** +1 Mastery, +1 Truth (page 266)
6	**Ironic, Don't You Think** +1 Truth, +1 Mastery (page 266)	**Life Is Precious** +1 Justice, +1 Devotion (page 266)	**Mournful Loner** +1 Truth, +1 Liberty (page 266)	**My Promise Is My Bond** +1 Truth, +1 Devotion (page 266)
7	**My Scars Are My Armor** +1 Glory, +1 Truth (page 266)	**My Time to Shine** +1 Glory, +1 Mastery (page 266)	**Never Back Down** +1 Devotion, +1 Truth (page 266)	**No Rest for the Wicked** +1 Liberty, +1 Devotion (page 266)
8	**No Time to Cry** +1 Justice, +1 Truth (page 266)	**Occasional Pacifist** +1 Devotion, +1 Justice (page 267)	**Simplicity Is the Best Solution** +1 Truth, +1 Mastery (page 267)	**Single Mindedly Acute** +1 Mastery, +1 Truth (page 267)
9	**Tell It to the Trees** +1 Truth, +1 Liberty (page 267)	**There's Always a Way** +1 Liberty, +1 Mastery (page 267)	**Thoughtful Mediator** +1 Justice, +1 Devotion (page 267)	**Two Left Feet** +1 Liberty, +1 Devotion (page 267)
10	**Watchful Expatriate** +1 Liberty, +1 Justice (page 267)	**The Wallflower's Perks** +1 Truth, +1 Justice (page 267)	**Wisened Wanderer** +1 Truth, +1 Liberty (page 267)	**You Don't Have to Remind Me** +1 Truth, +1 Mastery (page 267)

	ATTRIBUTES						
	ARCHETYPE	AGILITY	AWARENESS	INFLUENCE	INTELLECT	SPIRIT	STRENGTH
1	Awkward Academic	6	4	8	10	10	8
2	Brawn, Not Brains	6	8	10	4	8	10
3	Charming Klutz	4	8	10	8	10	6
4	Confident Combatant	6	8	8	6	8	10
5	Distractedly Determined	8	6	4	8	10	10
6	Empathetic Pushover	8	10	6	10	4	8
7	Glass-Jawed	8	8	10	6	10	4
8	Hardened Hero	10	10	6	8	4	8
9	Keen Wit	8	10	8	8	6	6
10	Nimble Philosopher	10	6	8	8	8	6
11	Observant Introvert	8	10	4	8	10	6
12	Smartest Person in the Room	8	6	8	10	8	6

This chart is by no means is a comprehensive list of all possible combinations. Experiment and see what combinations you can come up with!

Assigning Attribute Ratings

In Understanding Your Character on page 65, we break down what each die rating means for specific attributes.

As a rough guide, think about it like this.

- A 10 attribute is **significant**. You use this almost all the time, and your character is definitely known for this attribute. If you have two at 10, they complement each other and form a picture of your character in the minds of others.
- A 8 attribute is **notable**. You use this often; whether you have two of them or three, they form the basis for most of the activity you undertake.
- A 6 attribute is **average**. You use this from time to time; nobody is going to really think about you in these terms, and neither will you.
- A 4 attribute is **underdeveloped**. You don't think about this much; in fact, you may be well known for your lack of ability or performance.

After choosing her distinctions, Becky must decide whether Routhna is focused or versatile. She thinks about what she knows about her character already: she's physically capable, she's a dedicated protector, and she can come across as having a bit of an ego. Knowing this, she wants Routhna's **Strength** to be her best attribute, and thinks that maybe **Influence** is less important. However, Becky doesn't want Routhna to be truly bad at influencing others, which helps her decide to make her character versatile.

She sets her **Strength** as her 10 attribute, and chooses **Agility** and **Spirit** as two of her 8 attributes. After deciding her **Influence** is a 6, she's left with **Awareness** and **Intellect**. Becky likes the idea of Routhna, the "blunt braggart" she is, lacking in awareness, and decides to make **Intellect** a 8, and **Awareness** a 6.

What Do You Believe?

Your values are a central part of your character and, like your attributes, they form the core of your dice pool. Your choices along the way so far have given you a number of dice steps in your values already! At this stage in the process, let's review and see what you have. For a refresher on the six values (**Devotion**, **Glory**, **Justice**, **Liberty**, **Mastery**, **Truth**), flip to page 66.

Steps from Distinctions

- Your values all begin at a base of d4. If you do nothing else, your value is at the d4 die rating and that value doesn't matter to your character at all.
- You get two steps in values from your **kindred distinction**. This reflects the influence your community and your family have over the way you see the world.
- You get two steps in values from your **vocation distinction**. This shows that your choice in profession and the way you have approached it in the past help shape your moral perspective.
- You get two steps from your **quirk distinction**. The thing that makes you different from everyone else with the same background or experience contributes to your understanding of what matters.

Bonus Steps

That's a total of six steps in your values, on top of the six steps you already have from each value starting at d4. Now, you may place three additional steps in any values you like. You can step up a d4 to a d10, or step up three d6s to d8s.

> As Becky begins to decide on Routhna's values, she reviews the bonuses she received from her distinction choices: three steps for **Glory**, bringing it to a d10; two steps for **Justice**, bringing it to a d8; and one step for **Mastery**, bringing it to a d6. She has three more steps to use, and decides to put one each into **Devotion**, **Liberty**, and **Mastery**, bringing them to a d6, d6, and d8 respectively. She decides to leave her **Truth** value at a d4, in stark contrast to the d10 her friend Jason chooses for his character, Tressal.
>
> Looking at her values, Becky realizes that she wishes she could make an adjustment. Joe, the Narrator, tells her that she can step down one of her values to step another up. After giving it some thought, Becky decides to step down her **Glory** value to step up her **Mastery** value... Routhna wants to be the best, Becky tells them, but she doesn't necessarily need the credit for it!

Nothing Higher Than d12

At no stage in this process can you step up a value past d12. If you have a d12 in a value and for some reason a choice of distinction has stepped it up past d12, bank that extra step and use it in the last part of the process, adding it to the three bonus steps you have. Assign it somewhere else so that you don't exceed a d12 in any one value.

Your total number of steps should be fifteen. Check your value die ratings and reassign a step where necessary.

Write Your Value Statements

Now that you have all six values assigned with die ratings, it's time to write up your **value statements**. If you want, you can leave this until your first session, when you start playing your character with the other PCs; it's possible you don't really know your character that well yet, and you'd like some more time to "get used to them."

Value statements are designed to be questioned. At some point, you are going to put your character into a situation where they might not be sure if they believe what they've always thought to be true. This in turn gives you a brief moment of clarity and extra dice, but it also steps that value down until the end of the session! See page 98 for more on questioning your value statements.

Our best advice is to think of a single, possibly controversial or bold statement about that value that you think your character believes. Don't get too attached to it; you may rewrite it later. But for now, let it help shape your initial "first impression" of your PC.

> CLAUDIA: Go on. Do it. What are you waiting for? She's a Moonshadow elf and she kidnapped the princes. You just have to...
>
> SOREN: I know! I've just never attacked someone who's sleeping before. It doesn't seem... sporting.
>
> *Book 2: Sky Chapter 2: Half Moon Lies*

Becky isn't sure what to write for Routhna's value statements. Some are easy, like her **Justice** value, which gets *If the cause is right, it has my blade*; for **Mastery**, she writes *I'll sharpen my sword and do crunches all day if it means victory*; and for **Devotion**, she puts *I know how to be sweet, but I prefer not to be almost all the time.*

Joe, the Narrator, tells Becky and the group that they can complete their value statements during the first session when they use the value in a roll.

During the first session, she comes up with her other three value statements. After getting into some questionable situations, she sets her **Liberty** statement to *I've seen good and bad causes in my day and I prefer to stay flexible.*

Later, when someone tries to come between her and Tressal's goals, she decides that Routhna's **Glory** value is *It's better to get out of my way than it is to distract me* as she charges into battle. When the other character asks why she's charging them, Becky cracks a joke that soon becomes her new **Truth** value: *What did you say? Who am I? Why am I charging you? I don't know, really!* She knows she can change it. For right now, it's the perfect fit!

What Helps You?

Beyond your distinctions, attributes, and values, your PC is aided in their adventures by two important types of traits: their **specialties** and **assets**. The die ratings for these two types of traits come from the same pool of total dice. Every character starts with one specialty and one asset. One starts out as a d8, and one starts out as a d6. Next, you can either:

- Assign one more specialty and one more asset, each at d6
- Assign two more specialties at d6
- Assign two more assets at d6
- Assign one specialty at d6 and step up an existing d6 asset or specialty to d8
- Assign one asset at d6 and step up an existing d6 asset or specialty to d8

That may seem like a lot, but at the end of this process you should have a combined total of either three or four assets and specialties. If the latter, only one of them's going to be a d8.



Specialties

You can start with as many as three **specialties**. They're rated either as a 6 or a 8. Here's a reminder what that means:

> 6 You're **trained**. You know more than most people do, enough to do this as your job.
>
> 8 You're an **expert**. You've got a lot of experience or understanding of this, more than most who have training in it.

Specialties cover a wide range of skilled areas. Here's a list that covers most options. They are also on a table on page 124 if you prefer to leave things to chance. Talk to your Narrator and your group about adding anything new or different. New specialties should be the same degree of specificity—**Adoraburr Care** is too specific; **Fighting** isn't specific enough.

- **Agriculture**: The raising of crops and livestock.
- **Animal Training**: The care and handling of animals. May be renamed Animal Ally if it's less about training and more about just getting along with them.
- **Archery**: Using bows and arrows.
- **Caregiving**: Looking after people when they need help.
- **Climbing**: Scaling or clambering up walls and other surfaces.
- **Cooking**: Making meals for yourself and others.
- **Crafting**: Making useful or artistic objects from various materials.
- **Dancing**: Using movement to express stories and songs.
- **Diplomacy**: Making people get along together through bargains, deals, or agreements.
- **Gossip**: Finding out what people in a community think, believe, and talk about.
- **History**: Understanding what has come before and why things happened.
- **Instruments**: Using musical instruments to create pleasing sounds and songs.
- **Knifefighting**: Engaging in battle with short blades, like knives and daggers.
- **Literature**: Understanding stories and tales written in books.
- **Mathematics**: Understanding numbers, calculations, and formulas.
- **Medicine**: Treating others who are sick.
- **Poetry**: Understanding verse and rhyme when used to express ideas.
- **Polefighting**: Engaging in battle with long sticks, pole arms, or staffs.
- **Politics**: Making communities work together using laws and government.
- **Singing**: Using your voice to express songs and stories.
- **Slinging**: Using catapults and slings.
- **Sneaking**: Getting around quietly and without making noise or attracting attention.
- **Spearfighting**: Engaging in battle with pointed spears, javelins, or pikes.
- **Stewardship**: Taking care of castles, houses, or communities and their various needs.
- **Strategy**: Planning battles, organizing people for war, and understanding defense.
- **Swordplay**: Using swords and long blades.
- **Teaching**: Instructing and educating people in various subjects that you know.
- **Thievery**: Picking pockets, opening locks, and removing things from places they were supposed to stay.
- **Tracking**: Finding and following the trails left by animals and people.
- **Unarmed Combat**: Using your bare hands, feet, and other body parts.

> When writing her value statements, Becky determined that Routhna has a sword. She chooses her first specialty: **Swordplay**. As a guard and protector, Routhna's **Swordplay** starts at 8.
>
> Thinking about the potential of other specialties, Becky can't get the picture of Routhna being a champion of unarmed combat out of her mind. It's an easy sell to add **Unarmed Combat** as a second specialty at a 6.
>
> With that choice made, Joe, the Narrator, reminds her that she'll either be able to have two 6 assets, or one asset at 8. With this in mind, Becky reviews the options for assets.

Magical Specialties

If you're playing a mage character, you need to choose one of the following specialties associated with the type of mage you are. The type of mage you are, in turn, probably depends on your kindred distinction. If you're a human, you're a dark mage. If you're an elf, you're either an Earth, Moon, Sky, or Sun mage.

Use this specialty when you're doing anything that involves your magic directly. You can still use your magic to help flavor a test, contest, or challenge while using another more significant specialty, but you should at least have the right specialty on your character journal in any case.

- **Dark Magic**: You're trained in the use of dark magic, for a variety of effects.
- **Earth Magic**: You're trained in the magic of the Earth primal, to affect rocks, plants, and minerals.
- **Moon Magic**: You're trained in the magic of the Moon primal, to spin illusions, dreams, and phantasms.
- **Sky Magic**: You're trained in the magic of the Sky primal, to move winds, grow wings, and freeze things.
- **Sun Magic**: You're trained in the magic of the Sun primal, to set things on fire, illuminate the darkness, and heal the wounded.



Assets

You can start with up to three **assets**. These are things that are important to you, and which help you in your adventures. They don't even have to be physical things, but it's often much easier to think about objects or helpful items than abstract concepts, so we favor those as PC assets most of the time.

If you remember from what's said in Understanding Your Character, your choice of assets comes from broad categories: helpful tools, friendly creatures, and weapons and armor. It also includes magical assets, but that's discussed in the next section.

Although you can add SFX to assets in play, your assets won't start with any. They're assigned a die rating and that's it for now.

Here's a list of assets we used in the sample PCs and earlier in this book. Many of these and more are on a table on page 124, if you wish to leave your assets to chance. And undoubtedly you have many of your own ideas.

- Adoraburr
- Artist's Kit
- Beehive
- Book of Secrets
- Chronicles of Elarion
- Climbing Rig
- Coat of Mail
- Durenian Spear
- Elven Sword Staff
- Friendly Villager
- Gleaming Breastplate
- Glow Toad
- Herbalism Pouch
- Knight's Sword
- Knobby Club
- Light Crossbow
- Massive Broadsword
- My Horse, Alphonse
- Trusty Compass

When choosing what asset Routhna might have, Becky knows that she needs to have a sword of some kind. As she discusses ideas with the table, the idea of a sword nearly the same size as the Neolandian teen she protects (Jason's character, Tressal) sticks, and Becky decides to call it a **Massive Broadsword**. Since she already has a specialty at ◆8, the sword starts with a rating of 6. Though she could add a second 6 asset, Becky wants this sword to be an important part of Routhna's character, and uses her last step to make the **Massive Broadsword** a ◆8.

SPECIALTIES

	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	7 or 8	9 or 10
1	Agriculture	Animal Training	Archery	Caregiving	Climbing
2	Cooking	Crafting	Dancing	Diplomacy	Gossip
3	History	Instruments	Knifefighting	Literature	Mathematics
4	Medicine	Poetry	Polefighting	Politics	Singing
5	Slinging	Sneaking	Spearfighting	Stewardship	Strategy
6	Swordplay	Teaching	Thievery	Tracking	Unarmed Combat

ASSETS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Adhesive Gum	Adoraburr	Archangel Lunaris	Artist's Kit	Assassin's Twin Knives	Baking Supplies	Beehive	Book of Secrets
2	Boxing Helmet	Brass Knuckles	Bricklayer's Tools	Brightbell	Caltrops	Cascader Skink	Cavalry's Shield	Chicken
3	Chlormeleon	Chronicles of Elarion	Climbing Rig	Coat of Mail	Coffee and Tea Kit	Dancer's Costume	Defensive Wall Shield	Diary of Animal Prints
4	Dragons: A History	Duelist's Shortsword	Dune Horn	Elven Sword Staff	Emergency Medical Kit	Exotic Spices	Farmer's Pitchfork	Field Calipers
5	Fisticuff Claws	Friendly Villager	Gambler's Dice	Gladiator's Helmet	Gleaming Breastplate	Glow Toad	Grappling Hook	Guard's Spear
6	Hand and Foot Wraps	Heavy Bow	Heirloom Katana	Herbalism Pouch	Honey Collection Kit	Honorbound Friend	Illustrated Potion Guide	Iron Bracers
7	Jouster's Lance	Juicy Local Secrets	Knight's Sword	Knobby Club	Landmark Card Deck	Leather Cuirass	Light Crossbow	Local Bartender
8	Long Bow	Long Dagger	Loyal Dog	Mantigrade	Map of Xadian Wilds	Massive Broadsword	Mercenary Pauldrons	Messenger Crow
9	Miner's Gear	Monster Hunter's Axe	Nautical Spear	Occasionally Loyal Cat	Outlaw's Cutlass	Padded Traveler's Cloak	Poaching Dish	Poison Darts
10	Portable Bestiary	Protective Greaves	Puppeteer's Chest	Rhymes of Fallen Stars	Ringling	Royal Halberd	Sage's Abacus	Shadowy Contact
11	Siege Operator's Gear	Single-Handed Broadsword	Slowusk	Smoke Bomb	Snickery	Songbook of Xadia	Spiked Siege Gloves	Squire
12	Steel Gauntlets	Strategist's Map Set	Throwing Knives	Trusty Compass	Two-Handed Greatsword	Warhorse	Woodworking Blades	Wooly Pig

This chart doesn't begin to cover the breadth and variety of assets your character can have; use this chart as a list to pick from, a way to randomize your assets, or inspiration to create your own. Be sure that it's reasonable for your PC to have the assets you choose.

Magical Assets

A magical asset is one that's useful when trying to cast spells or wield the power of rune magic to do things. Magical assets also include objects such as **Sunforge Blades**, which are innately tied to one of the primal sources but aren't necessarily used for casting spells.

One important asset for any mage character is their **Spells** asset. This should match the character's magical specialty and magical distinction. Dark mages have **Dark Magic Spells**, Sky mages have **Sky Magic Spells**, and so forth. Unless you have a magical distinction, you shouldn't have any spells from a primal source or dark magic as an asset on your character journal.

If you assign a 6 to your **Spells** asset, you get two specific spells that are in your character's list of known and well-practiced spells. When you use those spells in a test, contest, or challenge, you can also use this asset.

If you assign a 8 to your **Spells** asset, you get three spells.

You can talk over with your Narrator and the rest of the group if you'd like to have a magical item asset that also has spells within it. See the Mage's Guide for more about magical item assets, spells, and SFX (page 152).

Asset Name	Dice
Beads of Focus	1
Belt of Brute Force	2
Bracelets of Fiery Fury	3
Cape of Silence	4
Choker of Protection	5
Gem of Light	6
Kid Gloves of Mischief	7
Quickstep Boots	8
Satchel of Brightworms	9
Staff of Thunders	10
Warhorn of Echoes	11
Whisper Cloak	12

What Makes You Special?

Now it's time to pick your **special effects (SFX)**. These are exceptions to the way the game works that you can invoke during tests, contests, and challenges, and some other times.

Every PC gets the *Hinder* SFX three times, once for each distinction. When you chose your three distinctions, you made a list of SFX that came with each. This breaks down as follows:

- **Kindred distinction**: Six locked SFX (three from community, three from family), plus *Hinder*
- **Vocation distinction**: Two locked SFX (one from vocation, one from adjective), plus *Hinder*
- **Quirk distinction**: One locked SFX, plus *Hinder*

You can find the full list of SFX associated with distinctions under Distinctions in Detail on page 252.

Unlocking SFX

Your three *Hinder* SFX are already unlocked. Of the remaining nine SFX that you picked, you may choose to unlock two of them. These unlocked SFX may be used in play. The rest must be unlocked by using growth (see Growth on page 109).

> Becky brings up the list of nine SFX she collected from her distinctions. She can choose two of them to start playing the game with; Joe also notes that Becky can swap her choices after the first session if she doesn't like the SFX she chose. Becky feels a little less stuck on making the "right" choice, and goes with her gut: she picks the *Resourceful* SFX from Routhna's **Neolandian** community distinction, and the *I Can Do Better* SFX from her **Blunt Braggart** distinction.

You can spend growth to add locked SFX to your list. New SFX start out locked and must be unlocked with growth to use them.

At the end of the first session with a new PC, the Narrator should ask you if you're happy with the SFX you unlocked. Did you use it at all in the session? Did you find yourself wishing you'd unlocked a different one? If you have "buyer's remorse," feel free to lock one or both of your SFX and unlock different ones from your list. You're stuck with the original ones as locked SFX but unlocking them with growth may be a good idea when you're more used to the PC.

Magical SFX

Magic distinctions count as vocations. Many PCs who use magic have a magical distinction, a magical asset, and a magical specialty. Each drives home what the magic they're using embodies. These SFX are limited in number, but they could be adapted at a later date, especially as part of magical assets.

- *Body of Earth:* When you take stress, spend a PP to step that stress down once. Then, gain an asset equal to the stress die's new rating.
- *Guiding Flare:* When you take or step up **Angry** stress, spend a PP to create a 6 asset for another character. If that character already has an asset from this SFX, step it up instead.
- *Mire the Mind:* When you use your **Moon Magic** specialty in a test, contest, or challenge in which your pool includes an opposing character's stress, spend a PP to step up or double that stress in your pool.
- *Price of Darkness:* When you use a magical creature asset in any dice pool with your **Dark Magic** specialty, step up or double **Dark Magic**. Convert that asset into **Corrupted** stress after the roll.
- *Share the Gift:* When you use your **Sky Magic** specialty in a test, contest, or challenge, you may keep an additional effect die and grant it to another character as an asset.

Asset SFX

When adding and then unlocking SFX for assets, you want to make the asset special—worth sinking growth into. When creating a character, nobody starts out with any asset SFX. It's only later, when the asset becomes more important, that cool SFX that improve the asset's performance would be the standard.

There's no big list of asset SFX—any of the other SFX listed under distinctions might suit your asset. Here's some limit-style SFX that make your asset interesting and generate PP.

- *Disarmed*: Shut down this asset and gain a PP. Test against a difficulty equal to twice the asset's die rating to recover.
- *Dread*: When you use this asset in a dice pool, both 1s and 2s count as hitches. You can still include 2s in your total unless they are activated by the Narrator to give you a PP.
- *Exclusive*: Shut down this asset to create a 8 asset. Shut down that asset to recover this asset.
- *Exhausted*: Shut down this asset and gain a PP. Activate an opportunity to recover this asset.
- *Uncontrollable*: Convert this asset into stress and gain a PP. When you recover that stress, you recover this asset.



Who Are You?

You have your distinctions, attributes, and values. You've chosen specialties and assets, and unlocked SFX. It's time to bring all of these together and present your PC to the rest of the group.

Name

Some Human Kingdoms have names that are similar to real world names. Elven names seem lyrical and different, perhaps based on names from worldwide folklore. We suggest choosing a name you'll be okay using a lot. If you go with a real world name, try changing one or two letters, to make it uniquely yours.

Most people in the world of Xadia only have one given name. If they want to differentiate themselves further, they use their place of origin, or perhaps a colorful nickname, or even something as simple as "the Bold" or "the Clever."

Pronouns

We feel that it's important that all characters in *Tales of Xadia* have pronouns that fit with how the player sees their character. You are under no obligation to have your PC fit a specific view of what masculine, feminine, or anything else is, and your choice of pronouns for your character is entirely up to you.

You can keep it simple: he/him, she/her, they/them. You might go with something mixed, because your PC answers to or accepts several: she/them, he/them, or "she, he, anything is fine." You might even use alternate pronouns like ze/zir, ne/ner, or ey/em.

If your group has any issues with pronouns, gender, or anything else, we encourage you to talk it over and make your own decisions on your comfort level. We note pronouns for all of our characters, and let the artwork and descriptions fill in the rest. We hope you feel empowered to do the same.

Introduction

Once everything is settled, it's time to introduce your character to the others! Here's where you can write up a short biography, or tell a brief story about how they came to be with the others in the group. We also like poems, even songs, if you're so inclined. However you want to do it, let everyone know your distinctions, describe your PC in as many words as you like, and then sit back and listen to the introductions of the others. It's time to start a new tale in the world of *The Dragon Prince*!

> As everyone at the table finishes creating their characters, Joe, the Narrator, asks each in turn to introduce them to the group.
>
> When Becky gets her turn, she dramatically slings her pencil over her shoulder as if holding a massive broadsword, and tells them about Routhna: a tall (very, very tall, Becky specifies) Neolandian human with she/her pronouns and muscles that could eclipse even the strongest of strongmen. Proud and loud, she's always bragging of her conquests on the battlefield. She wants to fight alongside friends she can trust, warriors she can respect, and she stands by Tressal (Jason's character), who she sees as a future leader. Becky grins, and the table turns to Jason to introduce this "future leader" Tressal...

Freeform Characters

After making several characters using the guided method presented here, you might feel like you're comfortable enough with the many choices and options and just want to put together something without walking through it all step by step.

If you choose this method, you don't need to worry about linked values, SFX, or anything else. You can pick and choose whatever you like, using the following key guidelines.

1. Pick three distinctions: one kindred, one vocation, and one quirk.
2. Assign seventeen steps between six attributes. Quick pick: 10 10 8 8 6 4, or 10 8 8 8 6 6.
3. Assign fifteen steps between values. No value may be greater than 10. Quick pick: 10, 8, 8, 6, 6, 4.
4. Assign five steps between assets and specialties. No value may be greater than 8. Assign at least one asset and one specialty. Quick pick: 8 6 6 6, or 8 8 6.
5. Choose nine locked SFX, assigning each of them to a distinction in addition to assigning *Hinder* to each of the three distinctions. Unlock all three *Hinder* SFX and two others.
6. Pick a name, your pronouns, and introduce your character to the other players.

Example: Freeform Characters

For Joe's latest tale, he's invited Mellie to the table. She's made a number of characters for the game already and has a specific idea in mind for her latest creation. She decides to build this new character using the freeform method.

1. First, she chooses her distinctions: **Sunfire Elf**, **Knight of Lux Aurea**, and **Fickle Luck**. This would usually give her specific bonuses to her values—three steps for **Mastery**, and one each for **Devotion**, **Glory**, and **Liberty**—but she ignores them.
2. Next, she assigns her attributes using seventeen steps, which includes a step for a 4. She uses the quick versatile option, deciding upon **Spirit** 10; **Agility**, **Intellect**, and **Strength** each at 8; and **Awareness** and **Intellect** each at 6.
3. Coming to her values, she ignores the bonuses offered by her distinctions and instead uses fifteen steps to give her character a **Justice** 10; **Devotion** and **Mastery** both at 8; **Liberty** and **Truth** both at 6; and **Glory** at 4.
4. After choosing her value statements, she decides on her specialties and assets. Since Bineta is a knight, she decides **Swordplay** is critical, and a Sunfire elf would obviously need a **Sunforge Blade**. She wants a broad range of skills, so she adds two more specialties: **Strategy** and **Animal Training**. She sets the **Sunforge Blade** to 8 and the rest to 6.
5. Then she looks to SFX. With the freeform option, she can choose any nine SFX, in addition to *Hinder*. She decides to make a pool using the following SFX: *Heat-Being* (Sunfire), *Relentless* (Sunfire), *Elf Might* (Elf), *Code of Conduct* (Traditionalist), *Stalwart* (Knight), *Graceful Warrior* (Soldier), *Sentinel* (Guard), *Sure of Might* (Valiant), and *Tag In* (Fearless). Mellie chooses to unlock *Heat-Being* and *Stalwart* first, leaving the other seven locked for now.

Mellie needs to finish her character for introductions! She names the character Bineta, and notes that Bineta uses she/her pronouns. When it's her turn to introduce her character, Mellie describes Bineta as the sister of Cam's character, the Sunfire mage Babukar, and a fierce and honorable knight of Lux Aurea. She can be careless at times, Mellie notes, but her heart is always in the right place.



BINETA
(she/her)

A Visual Diagram to Freeform Characters

1. Pick one of each type of distinction:

KINDRED	8 Sunfire Elf
VOCATION	8 Knight of Lux Aurea
QUIRK	8 Fickle Luck

2. Distribute 11 steps among the values:

4 Agility · 4 Awareness · 4 Influence · 4 Intellect · 4 Spirit · 4 Strength



8 Agility ••	6 Awareness •
6 Influence •	8 Intellect ••
10 Spirit •••	8 Strength ••

3. Distribute 9 steps among the below:

4 Devotion · 4 Glory · 4 Justice · 4 Liberty · 4 Mastery · 4 Truth



8 Devotion ••	4 Glory
10 Justice •••	6 Liberty •
8 Mastery ••	6 Truth •

4. Distribute 5 steps among assets and specialties.

6 Swordplay · 6 Strategy · 6 Animal Training · 8 Sunforge Blade

5. Add SFX to distinctions:



8 Sunfire Elf
- ● *Hinder*
- ● *Heat Being*
- ○ *Elf Might*
- ○ *Sure of Might*
- ○ *Code of Conduct*
- ○ *Relentless*

8 Knight of Lux Aurea
- ● *Hinder*
- ● *Stalwart*
- ○ *Sentinel*
- ○ *Graceful Warrior*

8 Fickle Luck
- ● *Hinder*
- ○ *Tag In*

So You Want to Play a Mage

Creating a mage PC is more or less the same as creating any other PC, but there are a few special rules. Magic distinctions count as vocations. Most mage PCs have a magical distinction with a connected SFX, a magical asset, and a magical specialty. Each of these drives home what the magic they're using embodies.

Kindred and Quirk Distinctions

Mages have some restrictions on their kindred distinction (page 113). If you're playing a rune mage, your family is **Elf**; if you're playing a dark mage, you're from a human kingdom . The process for choosing the third distinction, your quirk distinction (page 117), is the same for all characters.

Magical Vocation Distinction

If you want to play a magic-using character such as a rune mage or a dark mage, you need a **magical vocation distinction**. Magical vocations are special; they can be paired up either with a common adjective (page 114) or a common vocation (page 114). With the former, pair the type of mage (such as **Sky Mage** or **Dark Mage**) with an adjective, such as **Hot-Headed**. With the latter, add the primal to the vocation as an adjective, such as **Sun Acolyte** or **Dark Counselor**. This widens your options while ensuring that you have access to the SFX that accompanies a magic vocation—and also meet the requirements for using magic.

Here are the magical vocations, along with the value to be stepped up and the magical SFX for your type of magic.

Dark (Mage)

Value: **Mastery**

- *Price of Darkness:* When you use a magical creature asset in any dice pool with your **Dark Magic** specialty, step up or double **Dark Magic**. Convert that asset into **Corrupted** stress after the roll.

Earth (Mage)

Value: **Devotion**

- *Body of Earth:* When you take stress, spend a PP to step that stress down once. Then, gain an asset equal to the stress die's new rating.

Moon (Mage)

Value: **Truth**

- *Mire the Mind:* When you use your **Moon Magic** specialty in a test, contest, or challenge in which your pool includes an opposing character's stress, spend a PP to step up or double that stress in your pool.

Sky (Mage)

Value: **Liberty**

- *Share the Gift:* When you use your **Sky Magic** specialty in a test, contest, or challenge, you may keep an additional effect die and grant it to another character as an asset.

Sun (Mage)

Value: **Glory**

- *Guiding Flare:* When you take or step up **Angry** stress, spend a PP to create a 6 asset for another character. If that character already has an asset from this SFX, step it up instead.

Attributes and Values

Attributes are assigned the same way for all characters (page 117), although your highest rated attributes likely reflect your approach to magic.

Choose your values and value statements the same way as other characters. Note the steps in values from both parts of your magical vocation distinction, as these might inform how and when your character uses magic.



Magical Specialties and Assets

Every character starts with one specialty and one asset. For mages, the specialty is the type of mage you are and the asset is your spells. One starts as a d8 and the other starts as a d6.

- **Dark Magic** (Spells): You're trained in the use of dark magic, for a variety of effects.
- **Earth Magic** (Spells): You're trained in the magic of the Earth primal, to affect rocks, plants, and minerals.
- **Moon Magic** (Spells): You're trained in the magic of the Moon primal, to spin illusions, dreams, and phantasms.
- **Sky Magic** (Spells): You're trained in the magic of the Sky primal, to move winds, grow wings, and freeze things.
- **Sun Magic** (Spells): You're trained in the magic of the Sun primal, to set things on fire, illuminate the darkness, and heal the wounded.

If you assign a d6 to your **Spells** asset, you get two specific spells that are in your character's list of known and well-practiced spells. If you assign a d8 to your **Spells** asset, you get three spells. When you use those spells in a test, contest, or challenge, you can also use this asset.

You can talk over with your Narrator and the rest of the group if you'd like to have a magical item asset that also has spells within it. For lists of rune magic spells, see page 141. For dark magic spells, see page 150. For magical item assets, see page 125.

Almost Done

Choose the rest of your specialties and assets as normal, including potentially stepping up your d6 specialty or asset to a d8 (page 121) and continue with finalizing your character (page 127). For magical items, see page 152.

> LUJANNE: You see, to every truth, there is a dark shadowed side. Consider the half moon…
>
> RAYLA: You already did this.
>
> LUJANNE: Oh, have I? Hmmm. Well, that's really all I've got.
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 3: Smoke and Mirrors*

Creating SFX

This book has a lot of premade **special effects (SFX)**, but it's fun to write your own SFX when creating your PCs. Once you understand the general guidelines and structure of SFX, you can tailor your PC's distinctions and assets to your preferences.

This is especially true for Narrators—who may want to create asset SFX ahead of time—and for players who wish to add custom options to their SFX list to unlock with growth.

There are two primary ways to create the SFX you want:

> Re-flavor or modify one of the many existing SFX, or
>
> Combine a cost with a benefit and add a little context to make it work.

The first is relatively simple. There's a big list of SFX on page 268. Choose one you like, change a relevant trait or context to suit, then give it a cool name. Done!

For the second, we broke down the costs and benefits for you, with a little guidance for when these are good to use and when they're maybe less appropriate.

Remember: if an SFX is a no-brainer to choose and seems too good to be true, it's probably too powerful. If it's so limited or specific that nobody would choose it, it's probably too weak.

Costs

An SFX's cost is what it requires to activate. If you can't front up the cost for an SFX, you can't get the benefit it provides. Unless it specifically says so, you can use an SFX even if the distinction or asset linked to it isn't in the dice pool.

- replacing the die rating with a d4
- spending PP
- taking stress (usually d8)

Replacing the Die Rating

Hinder is the classic example of an SFX where using a d4 instead of the die rating is the cost. This is a good cost for something that is rarely if ever a d4 or d6, such as distinctions. This isn't a strong cost for a value or an asset starting with a low die rating.

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a d4.

Spending Plot Points

This is a common cost for SFX, and it's a great default. Note what PP can already be used for: creating a 6 asset, adding more results to your total, and keeping more effect dice. Make sure your SFX is an appealing alternative to those.

- *All-for-One:* Spend a PP to step up your **Devotion** or **Liberty** value in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge.

Taking Stress

This cost involves voluntarily taking a specific type of stress, usually a 8 because it's a dramatic amount and more than you get from a simple hitch. We like **Insecure**, **Afraid**, and **Angry** which create more roleplaying opportunities than **Exhausted** or **Injured**, but mechanically they're all equal.

- *Foretold:* Gain **Afraid** 8 or **Insecure** 8 stress to reroll your dice pool when your action relates directly to one of your goals. You must keep the result of this new roll.

Benefits

The SFX's benefit is the reason you have it. It's the special rule twist or tweak you may activate, at the cost of something potentially inconvenient or even harmful to your character. Here are examples of common SFX benefits.

- creating an asset (usually a 8)
- doubling a die for a roll
- gaining a PP
- including an extra die
- stepping up a die

Creating an Asset

You can already spend a PP and create a 6 temporary asset for your character, but how can you make that better? Normally when this benefit kicks in, it's at a 8. This is universally better than the 6 asset you can get from spending the PP you earned from *Hinder*. The nature of the asset should be defined by the SFX; e.g., a creature, a helpful tool, etc.

- *Instant Recall:* Spend a PP to remember a helpful fact or detail from something you once read, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.

Doubling a Die

This benefit lets you add another die to your dice pool of the same size as the one specified in the SFX. Take the die rating that's affected, double it, then add both dice to the pool.

You may sometimes choose to include both stepping up and doubling a die in the same SFX, but only as mutually exclusive benefits—you have to choose one or another.

- *Sea Legs:* When at sea or on a boat, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.

Gaining a PP

Hinder is by far the most common SFX, and the benefit of taking stress as a result of your hitches is that you can spend PP later on. Never give the option to take multiple PP, as you can quickly rack up those points and there are plenty of other ways to earn more. A single PP earned for enduring something inconvenient is enough.

- *Did You Know... :* Gain a PP after you reveal a dramatic secret.

Including an Extra Die

You can already include more results into your total with PP, so this benefit should be more beneficial. It refers to putting a second trait die, such as an attribute or a value, on top of the one already in the dice pool.

- *By the Book:* Spend a PP to add both your **Intellect** and **Spirit** dice to your dice pool in a test, contest, or challenge that deals with knowledge, research, or scholarship, instead of just one attribute.

Stepping Up a Die

This benefit means stepping up a trait die by one step, which is always beneficial. Some SFX give you a choice between two traits; others are specific and apply only to one. The die remains stepped up for the duration of the test, contest, or challenge, usually. If the die is already a 12, we generally allow the player to step up another trait instead, or simply add a base 6 to the dice pool that the stepped up die would be used in.

- *I Know This One:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Intellect** attribute in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.





V

CALLUM: Oh, really? I'm a mage! I'M A MAGE!

RAYLA: Shhhh. Nobody likes a loud mage.

Book 1: Moon, Chapter 3: Moonrise

Mage's Guide

This chapter covers the mysterious and occasionally perilous magic in the world of Xadia. From the primal sources themselves to casting rune or dark magic spells, mages can utilize this guide to tap into the energy around them throughout their adventure. Much of this information draws on topics covered in the *Player's Guide*, such as distinctions, assets, and specialties.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

The Primal Sources: A breakdown of the six primal sources and their respective magic influences.

Rune Magic: A description of how rune magic works to cast spells, and a list of those spells based on primal sources.

Dark Magic: A summary of the dark magic of humans and how it works, as well as a list of dark magic spells.

A Dozen Magical Items: A selection of magical items and how to use them in your *Tales of Xadia* game.



The Primal Sources

Magic is *everything* in Xadia. It exists not only in the land itself, but flows within living creatures, spirits, and even dreams. To truly know magic is to understand the six great **primal sources**: the Sun, the Moon, the Sky, the Earth, the Ocean, and the Stars. The primal sources are all-powerful and iconic, encompassing everything in the world around them.

But how does one cast a spell? First, a mage must have access to primal energy. This can come from either the spark of that primal source within them, known as an **arcanum**, or from a rare relic with primal magic trapped inside called a **primal stone**. Primal stones are incredibly rare, and only accomplished archmages know how to create them. To begin a spell, a mage must access the primal power source, then trace the rune of their chosen spell into the air, or mark it upon a surface. Finally, the spell is activated and fully cast once the correct **Draconic words** are spoken. If you are playing a rune mage, you cast spells with access to primal energy, a rune, and Draconic words.

Dark magic, of course, works differently. See page 145 for more.

In each of the following sections, we detail the six primal sources Each section includes basic notes about that primal's symbol, its arcanum and the creatures who possess it, and its primal stones. The specific runes for each spell are not covered; feel free to improvise when casting a spell, or take inspiration from the show.

> LUJANNE: In Xadia, all creatures are born connected to a primal source. They have a piece of it inside them. We call that piece an arcanum.
>
> CALLUM: Wait, what's an arcanum?
>
> LUJANNE: It's like, the secret of the primal, or its meaning.
>
> CALLUM: The secret of the primal?
>
> LUJANNE: Yes, that secret becomes a spark. The tiniest possible flicker of a primal source inside you, but enough to ignite the world with its magic.
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 1: A Secret and a Spark*

ARCANA AND PRIMAL STONES

An **arcanum** (plural: **arcana**) is a fragment of a primal source found within every magical creature, including elves and dragons. Notably, it's said that humans don't possess an arcanum, which explains why they cannot use rune magic without external power. Having an arcanum doesn't necessarily mean the creature can use magic, but it has a link to a primal source and may possess abilities that draw upon that primal.

Primal stones are one method of accessing that power. They are an empty vessel, like a battery that holds raw primal essence trapped within it. Primal stones are just as useful to elven rune mages, too, as they allow the use of magic even in places where the primal is weak. They can amplify a creature's arcanum, and even substitute for it—this is how Claudia and Viren were both able to use the Sky primal stone to cast Sky magic spells, despite being dark mages. Primal stones are incredibly rare. To possess one is to have a nearly unlimited connection to primal magic… if you can hold onto it.

The Moon

Between the Earth and the Sun is the Moon. This primal source is characterized by phases, a light that fades to darkness and then returns again anew. It is connected to spirits and the veils between life and death.

This magic is at its most powerful when the Moon is full, and weakest when it is new. It is cyclical, waxing and waning, thus those that draw upon it are also changeable by nature.

The line between shadow and light, truth and reality, beginning and end… that's where the Moon primal resides. This line does not disappear when the sun has risen; Moon magic is still possible even in daytime.

Symbol



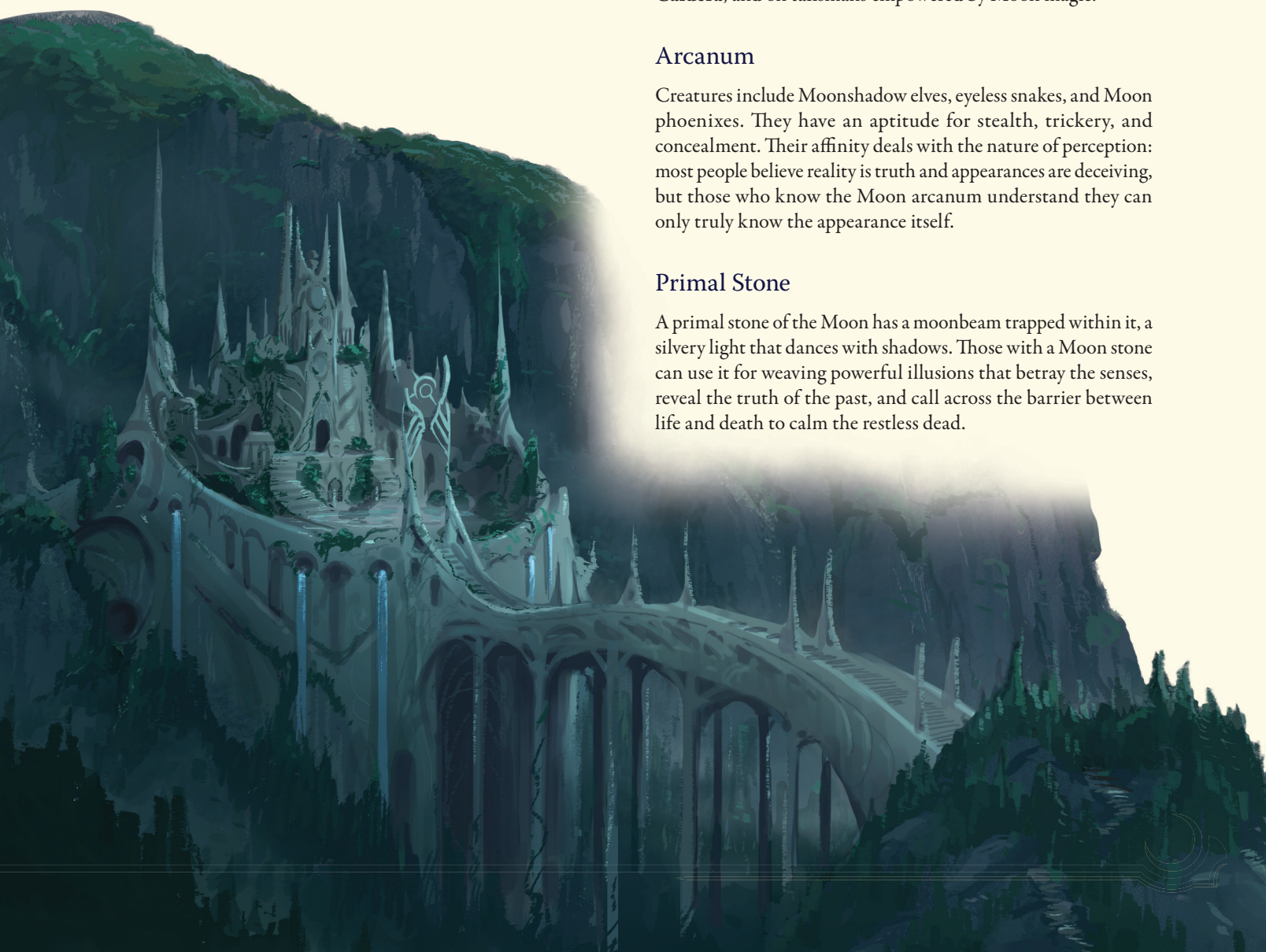
Moon magic is depicted by the Moon symbol. It's a circle, thicker on one side, and pierced by moonbeams. It can be found at places consecrated to the Moon, such as the **Cursed Caldera**, and on talismans empowered by Moon magic.

Arcanum

Creatures include Moonshadow elves, eyeless snakes, and Moon phoenixes. They have an aptitude for stealth, trickery, and concealment. Their affinity deals with the nature of perception: most people believe reality is truth and appearances are deceiving, but those who know the Moon arcanum understand they can only truly know the appearance itself.

Primal Stone

A primal stone of the Moon has a moonbeam trapped within it, a silvery light that dances with shadows. Those with a Moon stone can use it for weaving powerful illusions that betray the senses, reveal the truth of the past, and call across the barrier between life and death to calm the restless dead.



The Sky

With the Sun, Moon, and Stars above and the Earth and Ocean below, the wide expanse of the Sky is the source of wind and weather. The thunderous storms of Xadia and the whistling breezes of a summer's day both contain within them the power of the Sky primal. Much like the atmospheric phenomena it masters, the Sky primal source is also linked to speed, freedom, and clarity of vision.

Sky magic is at its strongest up in the air, within the clouds or at the top of mountains. It embodies the dynamism of free movement, unburdened by the chains of the earth. Sky mages feel most in tune with their primal source when the air is swift, the lightning cracks, and the tempest whirls around them.

Even though it is found in the powerful wind, rain, and other forms of weather, there is magic in even the barest breath or the weakest whisper. The mage relying on the sky needs only to look up.



Primal Stone

A scintillating glass-like sphere that has an entire thunderstorm or other natural weather phenomena trapped within it. Sky primal stones are powerful enough to provide the energy for countless spells. They're considered among the most dangerous primal stones to wield, because breaking one unleashes the treacherous storm inside.

> CLAUDIA: It's a primal stone. It uses magical energy from one of the six primal sources. Look!
>
> CALLUM: Wow. What's inside?
>
> CLAUDIA: It's a storm. A real storm captured from the top of Mount Kalik.
>
> *Book 1: Moon, Chapter 2: What is Done*

Symbol



Sky magic is represented by the Sky symbol. It can be found as a glowing carving outside a mountain top shrine, or flashing inside an artifact affixed with luminous aquamarine gemstones. It resembles three wisps of cloud or streaks of wind, one stacked on top of the other.

Arcanum

Creatures with the Sky arcanum include Skywing elves, griffons, and of course Sky dragons like **Zym**. The Sky primal confers not only rapid movement and grace, but quickness of thought, the ability to fly, and skill in escaping containment.



The Sun

Sun primal magic is best known for its devastating destructive potential; Sun mages can bend flames to their will, calling down raging infernos on their enemies. Fiery magic can grow quickly out of hand, engulfing everything in its path.

And yet, where this magic destroys, it can also heal. The lesser known side of the Sun primal revolves around restorative and illuminating qualities. Mages with strong control over their emotions can call upon Sun magic to illuminate the truth, heal sickness, and even purge dark magic corruption.

The primal is at its peak power at midday, when the sun is at its highest point. Wherever there is light, the Sun primal can be invoked. A single candle's flame in the dead of night is enough to call upon the arcanum and bring forth light and warmth.



Symbol

Sun magic is represented by the Sun symbol. It's found on magical artifacts or at locations dedicated to the Sun. It resembles a circle of three leaping flames.

Arcanum

Those creatures with the Sun arcanum include Sunfire elves, glow toads, and emberback spiders. Typically the Sun arcanum brings with it a furious, positive energy. It can consume everything it touches in a wave of fiery destruction, or it can imbue a creature with dazzling light, a constant warmth, or a scalding touch. The Sun arcanum often manifests in accordance with strong emotions like anger, fear, or grief.



Primal Stone

A primal stone of the Sun has captured a great fire within it—perhaps a raging firestorm, a tongue of the Sun's flame, or a blinding light. These objects can be used to start fires, summon forth a revelatory glow, and banish cold and darkness. Some say the first primal stone of the Sun contained the fiery breath of Sol Regem himself.

The Earth

The Earth is the foundation of the world and gives shape to what we call life in Xadia. From the deepest tunnels to the highest peaks, towering trees to miniscule mushrooms, Earth magic abounds. As such, it embodies the enduring strength of stone and the vibrant energy of new life.

Earth magic is at its strongest deep underground or in the heart of a lush forest. It can take the form of druidic influence over plants and animals, living in harmony with nature. Or it can manifest in shifting the earth itself, manipulating stones and crystals. Earth mages are as likely to be kind and patient gardeners as they are wild and feral wanderers, and their magic reflects that.

Earth magic draws strength and fortitude from the land and is somewhat weaker out at sea, but even the smallest pebble or tiniest sprout holds within it a link to the tremendous power of the Earth primal.



Symbol

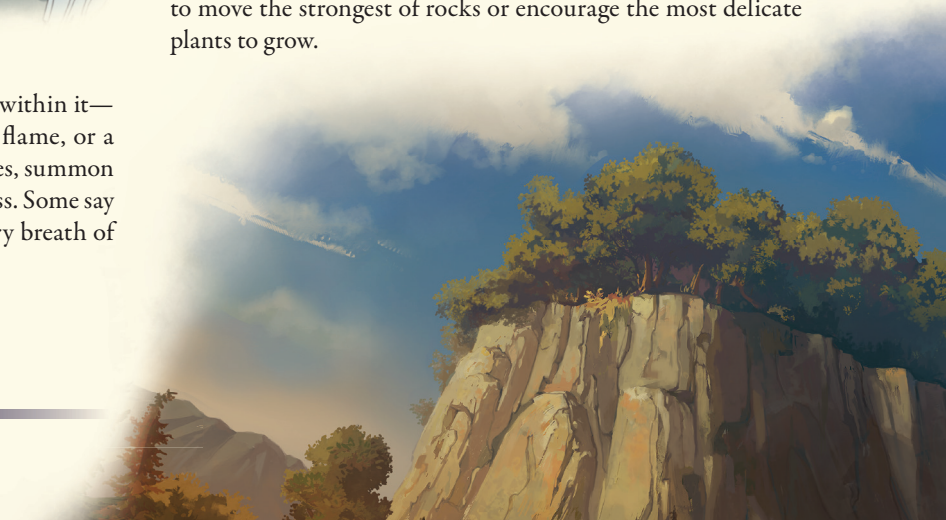
The Earth symbol can be found engraved in the sides of underground passages or in the notch of an ancient tree. If an item, artifact, or location draws upon Earth magic, you may find angular peaks of three mountains carved into it.

Arcanum

Creatures with the Earth arcanum include Earthblood elves, stone giants, and the colossal amblers, as well as many creatures thought to dwell underground. The Earth arcanum is centered around resilience, fortitude, patience, and harmony with nature.

Primal Stone

An Earth primal stone is literally a stone, often a multifaceted chunk of crystal or a smooth orb of petrified wood. Sealed within is the boundless potential of a mighty forest or a towering peak, reflected over and over as dendritic patterns, hairline fractures, and mica crystals. An Earth primal stone contains the power to control and change the world around you, should you wish to move the strongest of rocks or encourage the most delicate plants to grow.



The Ocean

The Ocean primal is felt in every body of water in Xadia, from the deepest ocean to the shallowest stream. Water is transformative by nature, capable of condensing from steam or freezing into ice. This is reflected in the magic that Ocean mages wield: dynamic, forceful, reaching everywhere and anywhere, within and without.

As might be expected, Ocean magic is strongest when on, in, or under water. It can also become surprisingly powerful in rain, giving this primal a powerful synergy with the Sky primal. Evoking the constant churn of the ocean, there is a constant flow of energy in Ocean magic. Like a riptide, Ocean magic can strike quickly and devastatingly to pull you under and overwhelm you. Ocean magic also includes ice magic, giving mages another powerful offensive and defensive tool.

Although arid deserts and deep underground caverns might be weaker places for the Ocean, it's rumored that the barest drop of moisture can carry this power if needed. You may need to discover for yourselves the extent to which spells can be worked under such conditions.



Symbol

Ocean magic is depicted by the Ocean symbol, resembling two swirling currents in a circle. It can be seen carved into the side of the ancient lighthouses that dot Xadia's coastline. Some sailors claim they've seen the symbol etched into rocky shores, indicating a hidden cove nearby.

Arcanum

Beyond the strange and unique Tidebound elves, other creatures with a connection to the Ocean arcanum include river monsters, sea leviathans, and bog hyenas. Connecting with the Ocean arcanum requires finding calm amongst constant change, understanding the innate qualities of water—transformation, fluidity, and adaptability.

Primal Stone

An Ocean primal stone contains a mighty whirlpool or the tremendous pressure of the ocean floor trapped within it. This fuels Ocean magic to command the tides, redirect rivers, or flood a room with water. Speaking with fish and granting the ability to breathe underwater are also common uses of an Ocean primal stone.

The Stars

The most powerful and rare of the primals, Star magic is a mystery to most mages and remains the topic of intense debate among scholars. It has been centuries since the last living Startouch elf roamed Xadia, and as such, much of what we know about the primal is based on legends. Ancient texts hint at powers far beyond the scope of the other primals, including the manipulation of time and space. As far away as the Stars are, however, they're ever-present to the inhabitants of Xadia, a haunting reminder of their smallness, their mortality, their grand insignificance in the face of the cosmos.



Symbol

The Star symbol takes the form of a four-pointed star within a circle, but is extremely rare in modern Xadia. They've occasionally been found in seemingly random ancient ruins across Xadia, perhaps hinting at some connection long forgotten.

Arcanum

Creatures with a connection to the Star arcanum are scarce, even in Xadia. The last Startouch elves and unicorns were seen over a century ago. Today, the arcanum lives on in some of Xadia's smaller critters, notably starweaver spiders and cuddlemonkeys. Legends suggest that those with a Star arcanum resonate with the beat of the cosmic heart within the stars, a celestial quality that crosses time and space.

Primal Stone

While no Star primal stone has been recorded in the ancient texts, scholars theorize such a powerful artifact might allow the bearer to bend and warp time and space around them.





Rune Magic

Rune magic involves casting spells to produce miraculous effects. Drawn from the six primal sources, spells can help or hinder others, alter the environment, or shed light on lost knowledge. Only powerful mages have the training and talent to cast spells effectively and successfully. Other than dark magic, a cheap and dirty method, all spells require a connection to a primal source.

When you create a rune mage character, a small number of spells are known to you as part of your **Magic Spells** asset. You can also cast minor flourishes of magic related to your primal source, simple spells that any mage knows by heart. This applies to dark mages, too, though they need some level of **Corrupted** stress to use them. These spells can't do anything more than what simple basic equipment might accomplish.

Casting Spells

To cast a rune magic spell, you require access to a primal source, knowledge of the correct runes and spoken incantation, and a visible line of sight to whatever target or location into which you desire to manifest the spell. If you are an elf, it is enough that you are near the primal source of your arcanum: winds or breath for a Sky mage, or water or moisture for an Ocean mage. If you carry a primal stone, or expend an item charged with the primal magic, you don't even need proximity.

Once cast, a spell is immediate. Training and practice make it easier to direct the channeled power through the rune and into the target location. Inexperience, haste, or other distractions can create problems, from the spell failing to unexpected consequences. There isn't any way to hide that you've cast a spell; you speak the words, usually in Ancient Draconic, and draw the rune in the air, and the effects are usually fairly obvious.

Rules for Casting Spells

In game terms, casting spells is generally part of a test, contest, or challenge. It's a means of achieving what you want to do, not something that you have to roll dice to do on its own. For a dice pool involving magic, include the following:

- your magical distinction (usually your vocation distinction)
- your magical specialty (such as **Sky Magic** or **Sun Magic**)
- your magical asset (spells or an item)

Describe how you're using your spell, but also describe what you're trying to do in general. Are you fighting a monster? Your spell helps to fend it off. Are you searching for clues? Your spell highlights footsteps or uncovers lingering memories. Always think of what your test, contest, or challenge is about, and then decide how your spell helps you to do what you're doing. *(See Example: Rules for Casting Spells.)*

The Effects of Spells

Many spells create longer lasting effects. In *Tales of Xadia*, we have two readymade rules to represent this: temporary assets and stress. When a test, contest, or challenge includes your PC's magic traits, you can flavor the results with magical flourishes.

The kinds of temporary assets produced by spells vary by primal source, but look to the spell descriptions for suggestions. The Sun magic spell *Vires Ardens* is all about drawing upon the Sun primal to increase a target's strength. Does this step up their **Strength** attribute? No, but it could mean handing over a **Sun-Fueled Might** asset to another player for their PC to use in dice rolls for the duration of the current scene.

A spell like *Fremitus Resonans*, which draws from the Sky primal to create a terrifying roar, might be used in a contest to deal **Afraid** stress to the PC's opponent, should they lose their roll.

Contests are a little tricky because of the back and forth aspect, but when they end in stress for the loser, flavoring this outcome with magic is a cool effect.

This can also be used in recovery tests when helping others get rid of their stress. The Sky magic spell *Pax Partans* calms the recipient, so it's likely being used as part of a recovery test; the effect die is compared to the stress being recovered. However, as far as the narrative goes, it's the Sky primal mage conjuring up a gentle wind to ease the pain and suffering of a friend.

When Magic Goes Wrong

Even if you fail at your test, contest, or challenge, this doesn't mean the spell itself failed; it means it wasn't able to help you do what you wanted to do with the sort of effectiveness you had hoped. For this reason, we don't tend to encourage Narrators to describe terrible blunders with magic if dice rolls don't turn out well.

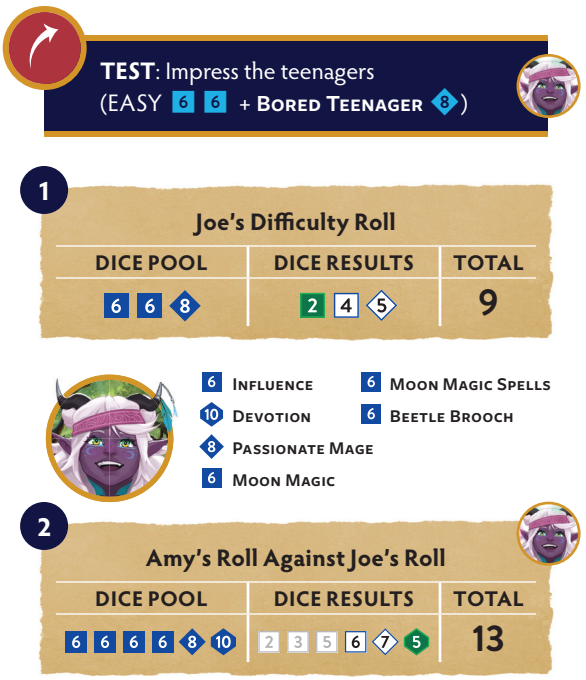
On the other hand, hitches do indicate problems! Any dice roll that includes magical traits and is part of an attempt to cast spells to achieve an outcome is liable to hitches. When activated, the Narrator should choose a type of stress to step up: **Afraid**, **Angry**, **Exhausted**, and **Insecure** are all great choices. Use **Injured** stress sparingly, unless the spell that's cast invokes particularly dangerous or perilous magic. It's usually a lot better to have the consequences of magic be emotional states.

Example: Rules for Casting Spells

Draylenn, played by Amy, is trying to impress a group of unenthused Moonshadow elf youths in a scene set by the Narrator, Joe, to keep them busy long enough to help her friends. After trying and failing to keep their attention with animal facts, Amy decides to cast a spell to delight them.

1. Joe decides that this will be an easy test, but he adds that the kids have a **Bored Teenager** 8 trait that will make it more difficult. **Total**: **9**.
2. Amy chooses to use Draylenn's **Influence** 6 attribute, **Devotion** 10 value, and **Passionate Mage** 8 distinction. She then adds her **Moon Magic** 6 specialty, as well as her **Moon Magic Spells** 6 asset. Amy describes how Draylenn casts *Lumen Saltans* (Dazzling Lights) using her **Beetle Brooch** 6 asset to make the effect even more beautiful, adding that asset to her pool as well. **Total**: **13**.

She succeeds! Joe tells Amy that Draylenn's spell finally breaks through the disinterest of the teenagers, and lets Amy describe what happens next.



It can be fun to have players narrate how their own spells go awry. It's best to have such an outcome factor in the actual success or failure of the test, contest, or challenge, of course. Failed the test and rolled some hitches? The spell backfires, catches something in its area of effect it shouldn't have, or has some other effect that leads to failure. Succeeded the test and rolled some hitches? Despite losing control of the spell, you get what you want... but must deal with what happens when the magic delivers more than you expected. *(See Example: When Magic Goes Wrong.)*

Dark magic has its own costs and consequences. See Dark Magic on page 145 for more details.

> "Why kill them when you can break their brains with insane illusions?"
>
> LUJANNE
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 1: A Secret and a Spark*

Book of Spells

These are only a selection of spells from each type of magic from the primal sources. Dark magic spells are given in the next section. Many more exist, and some are harder to cast than others, so Narrators should consider such things before letting a player add a spell to their character as an asset. We shall not be including Star magic, as more research needs to be done on such spells.

As a reminder, when you have a particular spell listed in your character journal as part of a magical asset, it means you've learned, practiced, and cast this spell with some familiarity. You may cast other spells if you hear about them or read up about them, but you won't get the use of the magical asset to do so (so, if you cast *Fulminis*, a Sky spell, without it being on your character journal, you can't use the **Sky Magic Spells** asset in your dice pool).

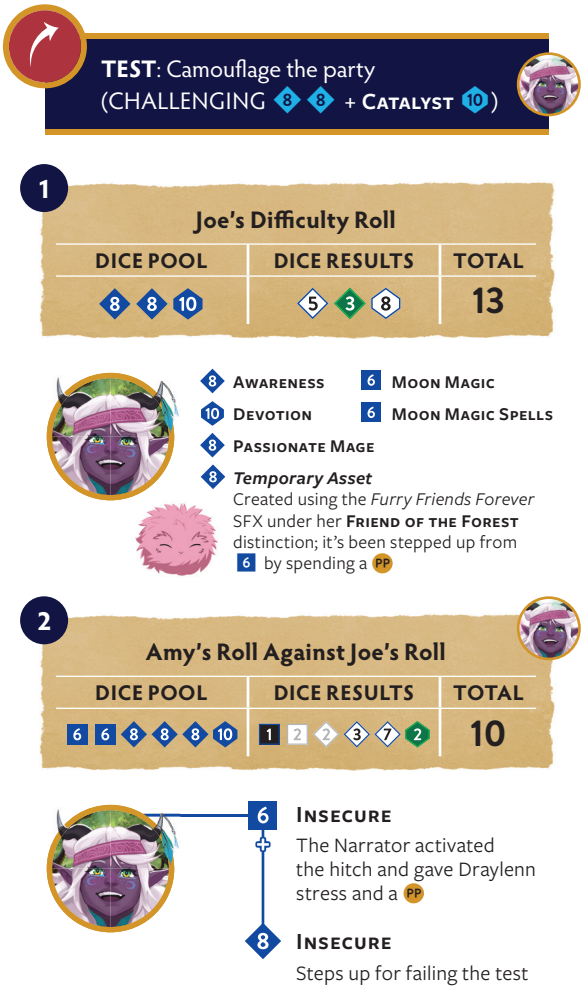
Example: When Magic Goes Wrong

Later in the same tale, Joe has set a scene where Draylenn, played by Amy, and her friends are attempting to escape a pursuing catalyst created by Joe, the Narrator. Joe describes the area the group has come to, a glade inhabited by piles upon piles of adoraburrs. Draylenn suggests that she can hide the group by making them look like trees at the edge of the glade, keeping them from needing to run by casting a spell.

1. The group agrees, and Joe decides that this will be a challenging test, to which he also adds the catalyst's current catalyst die, a d10. **Total**: **13**.

2. Amy decides to use Draylenn's **Awareness** d8 attribute, **Devotion** d10 value, and **Passionate Mage** d8 distinction. She then adds her **Moon Magic** 6 specialty and her **Moon Magic Spells** 6 asset, describing the spell Draylenn is casting: *Mystica Arbora* (Group Invisibility). She also asks Joe if she can use her *Furry Friends Forever* SFX, which allows her to gain a free friendly asset rated at 6 when she meets new animals, due to meeting the adoraburrs. Joe agrees, and Amy spends a PP to step it up to a d8, adding it to her pool by describing how she gives all of her friends armfuls of adoraburrs to help with the illusion. **Total**: **10**.

The spell has gone wrong! First, Joe activates Amy's hitch by giving Draylenn a PP. He decides to give her **Insecure** stress for the hitch she rolled, and then steps it up once for failing the roll. Amy describes how through all of the quick spellcasting and creative uses of adoraburrs, Draylenn forgot one important piece of the illusion: changing the shadows. When the catalyst arrives and inspects the scene, Draylenn realizes her mistake, and shouts for everyone to run!





Earth

Earth spells affect rock, plants, crystals, and qualities like solidity, dependability, and strength. They need an Earth source, or a primal stone or similar conduit for the Earth primal, to be cast.

- ***Calculo Iacto*** (Pebble Flick): *A small bit of rock flies up and hurls itself away, or against a nearby surface, with only the slightest visible gesture.*
- ***Creatura Lenta*** (Slowed Creature): *Nearby dirt, dust, or muck grasps at a creature's feet and slows their movement.*
- ***Crystallum Mordo*** (Crystal Rations): *Creates small edible crystals that can be chomped on for restorative purposes.*
- ***Glarea Creo*** (Create Gravel): *A stone surface crumbles into gravel.*
- ***Globus Pulvis*** (Dust Cloud): *A cloud of dust swirls up and covers the mage, a friend, a thing, a creature, or a small area.*
- ***Medito Ad Crystallo*** (Meditation Crystal): *Creates a crystal that the mage—or a friend—can meditate on to increase their focus.*
- ***Rumpus Magnus*** (Loud Crackle): *The mage causes a loud wooden crack to sound somewhere nearby.*
- ***Silva Lamentans*** (Wailing Forest): *Nearby living trees are asked to breathe, creating deep, spooky, haunting moans.*
- ***Spinae Crystallae*** (Crystal Spines): *A person or creature briefly grows short crystal spines on a spot of their body the mage chooses.*
- ***Terram Agito*** (Churning Soil): *A deep patch of soil churns like water for a limited time, causing heavy objects to sink.*
- ***Vestigium Tacitum*** (Silent Footfalls): *The mage asks Earth magic to lift someone up imperceptibly so that their footfalls never make audible contact.*
- ***Vitrum Elicio*** (Conjure Glass): *A thin shard or wall of clear glass rises up from nearby sand, or clear crystal from rock.*

Moon

Moon spells focus on illusions, deceit, shadows, and the veil between life and death. They need the moon's light, or a primal stone or similar conduit for the Moon primal, to be cast.

- ***Creatura Ficta*** (False Life): *The mage animates a temporary creature that is an illusion, but appears to be lifelike and have a mind of its own, based on a nearby physical object.*
- ***Curso Perpendiculum*** (Wall Run): *The mage or the mage's friend can easily run on a wall at a 90° degree angle for a short distance.*
- ***Fit Invisibilia*** (Fade from Sight): *The mage uses bright moonlight to shimmer, then become temporarily invisible.*
- ***Historia Viventem*** (Animate Past): *This spell conjures visual representations of occurrences in the past.*
- ***Lumen Saltans*** (Dazzling Lights): *Moonbeam lights shimmer, pop, and dance forth from the mage's hand.*
- ***Manifestum Corpus*** (Manifest Form): *A being that is not entirely corporeal temporarily becomes completely solid and tangible.*
- ***Manifestum Incorpus*** (Blur Form): *An object is made incorporeal for a brief amount of time. However, the spell does not work well on people.*



- ***Mors Aperta*** (Create Portal): *Casting this spell opens a mysterious and dangerous window between life and death.*
- ***Mystica Arbora*** (Group Invisibility): *This allows the mage to disguise themselves, another person, or an object as a tree.*
- ***Partum Mysterium*** (Weave Illusion): *Harnessing moonlight, multiple people, places, and things begin to appear that aren't really there, creating a complex visual distraction.*
- ***Vis Mendacis*** (Liar's Face): *For a limited time, the mage can appear to maintain an extremely convincing expression of their choosing on their face, regardless of their actual mood or motive.*
- ***Vis Verus*** (True Face): *The mage selects a person whose face expresses their true emotions and intentions, regardless of what they may be trying to portray, for a limited time.*

Ocean

Ocean spells affect water, moisture, liquids, ice, and the raging sea, as well as thematic aspects of the Ocean such as fluidity and awareness. Spells require a nearby source of Ocean, a primal stone or similar conduit for the Ocean primal. While there are no known Ocean rune mages, some rare objects have been found that can cast these spells.

- ***Aqua Dulcis*** (Refreshing Water): *The mage summons a handful of clean, fresh water.*
- ***Aqua Protegens*** (Pillar of Protection): *For a moment, the mage is encased in a pillar of swirling water to deflect a blow or protect from another danger, the pillar then disappearing.*
- ***Bracchia Alga*** (Kelp Tentacles): *Tendrils made of kelp burst forth from the hands of the mage.*
- ***Cauda Pistris*** (Shark's Tail): *The mage's lower form takes on the shape of a shark's tail, enabling them to speed through water.*
- ***Corpus Liquidus*** (Liquid Body): *The mage can briefly give their body water-like permeability, allowing projectiles or harmful objects to pass completely through them without harm.*
- ***Faucem Sicco*** (Painful Drought): *The mage harshly dries out the voice, throat, and skin of someone, causing deeply uncomfortable raspy dryness as well as stress.*
- ***Lutum Facio*** (Instant Mud): *Trace amounts of Ocean magic takes its place in the soil or sand, creating a pool of mud where there was once little or no moisture.*
- ***Pressio Profundorum*** (Pressure of the Deep): *The mage harnesses magic in the surrounding water or residual water magic in the air to squeeze a fragile object until it breaks or hold a moving object in place for a limited time.*
- ***Umidae Audior*** (Amplified Sound): *A sound that would normally not carry far rides the moisture in the air, reaching the ears of the mage.*
- ***Umida Palma Ferio*** (Wet Slap): *Moisture in the air suddenly forms a small flat surface of water that slaps someone or something that the mage chooses, the water then dissipating instantly.*
- ***Undae Prosterno*** (Knock Flat): *A tiny wave of water measuring up to a foot high rushes beneath the feet of someone the mage chooses, attempting to knock them down.*
- ***Ungulae Corallae*** (Claws of Coral): *The mage briefly grows claws made of sharp coral on their fingertips, which can be used as protection or to dig into tough surfaces.*

Sky

Sky magic spells capture the power of the winds, rain, and lightning, as well as thematic aspects of Sky such as the mind, clarity, and speed. Without a nearby source of Sky, or a primal stone or similar conduit for the Sky primal, these spells can't be cast.

- ***Arcanum Antiquis*** (Ancient Secret): *The mage can leave a whispered secret hidden in the air that only another Sky mage can hear.*
- ***Arcanum Recolligo*** (Gather Secret): *The mage feels out the nearby air to see if another Sky mage has left a whispered secret there.*
- ***Aspiro*** (Forceful Gust): *Summons a gust of wind, its direction determined by the mage.*
- ***Aspiro Frigis*** (Freezing Gust): *A powerful gust becomes transformed into a blast of ice that can trap or encase the targeted creature or object.*
- ***Fremitus Resonans*** (Booming Roar): *A powerful and intimidating howl rockets forth from the mage.*
- ***Fulminis*** (Lightning Bolt): *Creates a charge of electricity that can then be discharged as a lightning bolt.*
- ***Manus. Pluma. Volantus.*** (Magical Wings): *Allows the mage to temporarily transform their arms into wings.*
- ***Nebula Invito*** (Summon Fog): *A dense grey fog fills a small visible area of the mage's choosing.*
- ***Omnia Pervideo*** (Surveying Sweep): *The mage is able to sense all visible exits, passages, and airways to freedom in their surrounding area.*
- ***Pax Partans*** (Shared Peace): *The mage enters a deep and peaceful meditative state that brings clarity of thought, and brings another person or creature along for the mindfulness ride.*
- ***Susurrus Distans*** (Long Distance Whisper): *The mage carries a quiet whisper through the wind to a destination or person that is otherwise too far away.*
- ***Ventus Spiralis*** (Spiral Gust): *A spiraling whip of wind brings breathable air to a place where it is otherwise too thin to breathe.*

Sun

Sun magic spells harness the light and heat of the Sun, including fire magic and the power of healing and destruction. Without a nearby source of Sun, or a primal stone or similar conduit for the Sun, these spells can't be cast.

- ***Calor Obscurans*** (Blinding Heat): *White light gleams from the mage that pulsates with intense heat and blinding light.*
- ***Circulus Luminis*** (Ring of Light): *A ring of bright light is magically summoned to illuminate a person or darkened area.*
- ***Digitus Illustris*** (Finger Candle): *A dim, harmless light emits from the mage's finger, enough to illuminate a darkened room.*
- ***Flammae Circumeans*** (Floating Motes): *The mage summons floating motes of flame that either orbit them for protection or slowly move towards an attacker as a means of creating protective distance.*
- ***Ignis Iacto*** (Bolt of Fire): *A swirling orb of flame rockets towards a target of the mage's choice.*
- ***Ignis Volitans*** (Flame Motes): *The mage summons a floating flame orb that can be guided more slowly than a bolt and therefore used more defensively.*
- ***Lingua Fraxinus*** (Language of Ash): *The mage chooses someone whose words will suddenly spill forth as mouthfuls of ash that crumble out of their mouths and onto the ground.*
- ***Pila Ardens*** (Burning Ball): *An orb of flames bounces towards a target, then bops it up to three times before dissipating.*
- ***Pumex Irae*** (Rock of Anger): *Anger is drawn from a target, making them calm, and summoning a hot steaming lava rock into the hand of the mage.*
- ***Superficies Calidus*** (Hot Surface): *An object gains a painfully hot surface for just a moment.*
- ***Verum Animo*** (Sense Truth of the Heart): *Creates a magic sensitivity to whether a person's body is showing telltale signs of dishonesty through an increase in body temperature.*
- ***Vires Ardens*** (Enhance Strength): *A fiery strength fills the individual of the mage's choice.*



Dark Magic

Dark mages have chosen an easy path to power, but they must use the arcanum of magical creatures, sacrificing the creature in the process. To reflect that in *Tales of Xadia*, the rules for assets and stress are modified for dark spellcasting. Like regular spellcasting, failing a test, contest, or challenge doesn't necessarily mean the spell failed. For more information, review When Magic Goes Wrong on page 140.

Casting Dark Magic Spells

To cast a dark magic spell, you require all or part of a magical creature that contains within it the arcanum necessary to fuel the dark magic. You need knowledge of the correct spoken incantation, which in every case manifests as a phrase spoken backwards. You also need a visible line of sight to whatever target or location into which you desire to manifest the spell. As the magical creature itself provides the arcanum for the spell, it is the only magic that humans can use without a primal stone, but requires a great deal of patience, and practice.

> VIREN: Harrow, don't give up just yet. Claudia and I are still searching for a creative solution.
>
> HARROW: Call it what it is: dark magic.
>
> *Book 1: Moon, Chapter 2: What Is Done*

Once cast, a spell is immediate. The magical creature is consumed in the violet light of the casting process. As with rune magic, a mage's inexperience, haste, or other distractions can create problems, and the corruption that it causes is immediately obvious with eyes turning black and even lines of purple or black on the mage's skin. There isn't really any way to hide the fact that you've cast a spell; you have to speak the words and sacrifice the creature, and the effects are usually clear.

Dark mages require a dark magic distinction, a **Dark Magic** specialty, and at least a **Magical Creature** asset of some kind in addition to any **Dark Magic Spells** asset. The asset must be tied to the nature of the spell, and in some cases might be worth an entire session of play to locate.

For Joe's chronicle, Jason has decided to play the dark mage, Tressal. When creating this character, Jason makes sure that Tressal's character journal includes the necessary traits for using dark magic. First, for Tressal's vocation distinction, Jason chooses **Dark Acolyte** 8 to represent Tressal's experience with dark magic. After defining Tressal's attributes and values, Jason then moves on to specialties, picking **Dark Magic** 6 as one of several he chooses to add. Finally, he decides to add the **Dark Magic Spells** asset rated at 8. This lets him choose three spells that Tressal knows well: ***Semalf Gnippiks Gnipael*** (Dancing Flames), ***Cigam Rouy Laever*** (Reveal), and ***Eciov Eht Laets*** (Silence).

Though Tressal now has a distinction, specialty, and **Dark Magic Spells** 8 asset to use, Jason will still need a **Magical Creature** asset of some kind to cast Tressal's spells, which he'll have an opportunity to secure throughout the tales in Joe's chronicle.

Cost of Dark Magic

Dark magic amplifies the values and emotions of the mage who uses it; unfortunately, the ease of its use and its consumption of some or all of a magic creature to cast spells means that dark mages frequently have questionable moral views.

Over time, dark magic twists, corrupts, and changes the dark mage, so they need more magic to conceal the signs of it: hair turns white or bleached of color, skin becomes pallid or sickly, nails lengthen, eyes turn black. Mages such as Viren can hide this corruption, but it's always there.

> "Humans weren't born with magic. We were born with nothing. But we still found a way to do amazing things. That's what dark magic is really all about."
>
> CLAUDIA
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 2: Half Moon Lies*

Corruption

Dark magic leaves traces of itself behind in any dark mage who uses it for any length of time. Even small traces of it can be detected by those with the knowledge of how to look for it, such as Sunfire elf high priests, or other practiced dark mages. In this game, this is represented by **Corrupted** stress.

Getting **Corrupted** Stress

As a dark mage, you may get **Corrupted** stress when:

- the Narrator activates one of your hitches
- you fail a roll using dark magic
- one of your SFX gives it to you.

Corrupted Stress Works for You

As a dark mage, you may include your **Corrupted** stress in your dice pool when using dark magic; no PP is required, but you must declare it ahead of time. The opposition pool then cannot use it in their roll against you. Unlike pushing stress (see page 80), **Corrupted** stress used this way is only stepped up by one if you fail.

If you have **Corrupted** trauma, you can use it the same way as you use **Corrupted** stress, as well as potentially unlocking other dangerous powers, described under Corruption Abilities. *(See Example:* **Corrupted** *Stress Works for You.)*

Recovering **Corrupted** Stress

Corrupted stress can't be recovered normally. You can cast a spell to recover your **Corrupted** stress, using a **Magical Creature** asset as you would for any dark magic spell. The difficulty is 8 8 plus your **Corrupted** stress.

On a successful roll, compare the effect die to the **Corrupted** stress (remember that the size of the dice is all that matters).

If the effect die is greater, remove the stress entirely; if it's equal to or smaller, step it down. On a failed roll, step up the **Corrupted** stress by one.

This spell can't be repeated until the dark mage's **Corrupted** stress increases again. If you're stressed out by **Corrupted** stress, you gain **Corrupted** trauma, which is much harder to recover. *(See Example: Recovering* **Corrupted** *Stress.)*

Corruption Abilities

If you have any degree of **Corrupted** trauma, you are considered to be somewhat permanently marked by dark magic. This has the effect of granting you some abilities that neophyte dark mages don't have. Note that dark magic SFX also exist as part of dark magic distinctions; for examples, see Magical SFX on page 126.

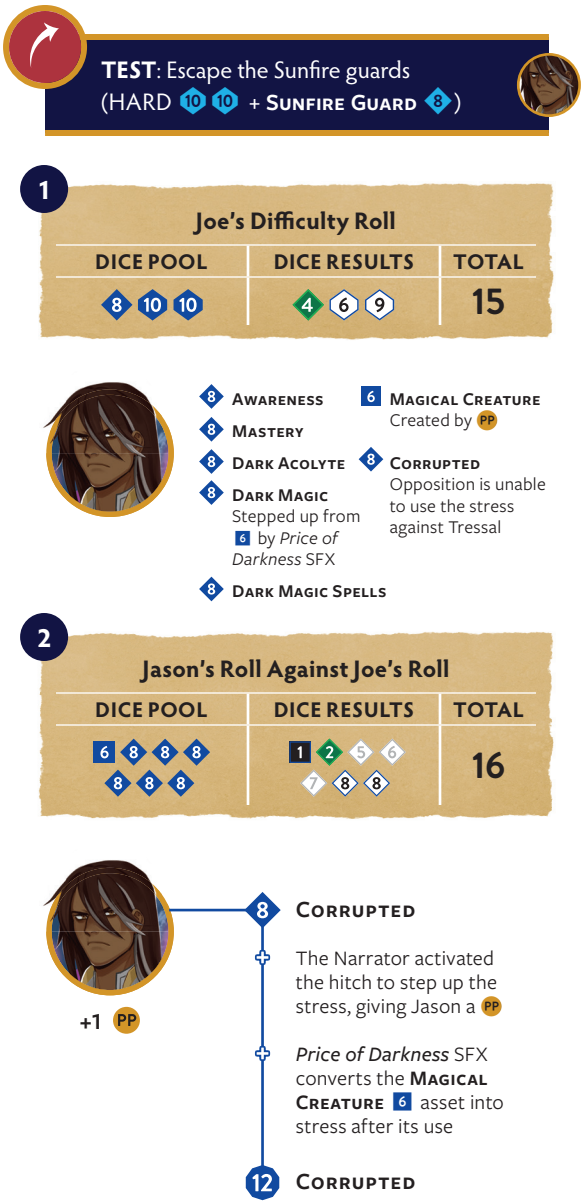
Example: **Corrupted** Stress Works for You

Joe, the Narrator, sets a scene in which Jason's character, Tressal, has been backed into a corner by a band of elven soldiers, intent on apprehending him. Jason decides that Tressal wants to fight back using dark magic.

1. Joe agrees, and declares that this will be a hard test (10 10), with the addition of the soldiers' **Sunfire Guard** 8 trait. He then asks Jason if Tressal wants to use the **Corrupted** 8 stress he gained earlier for his own benefit. If he does, Joe warns, failure becomes riskier, but the opposition's dice pool can't include it. Jason is all-in on this escape, and chooses to use Tressal's **Corruption** stress. Joe rolls the difficulty. **Total**: **15**.

2. Jason describes how Tressal is using his **Awareness** 8 attribute and his **Mastery** 8 value because Tressal thinks these elves have underestimated him, and he's glad to prove them wrong. He then chooses his **Dark Acolyte** 8 distinction, along with his **Dark Magic** 6 specialty, and **Dark Magic Spells** 8 asset. He then spends a PP to create a temporary **Magical Creature** asset rated at 6. Jason knows he'll need a great roll to overcome Joe's 15, and decides to activate Tressal's *Price of Darkness* SFX, which allows him to step up or double his specialty. He chooses to step it up, bringing it to a 8. Finally, he adds his **Corrupted** 8 stress, and describes the way Tressal summons gouts of dark, dancing flames to envelop the elves. **Total**: **16**.

A success! However, Jason also rolled a hitch. Joe decides to give Tressal a PP, and steps up his **Corrupted** stress from a 8 to a 10, describing how the corruption worsens before letting Jason narrate what happens. Jason tells the table how the dark flames burst forth and blind the elves, forcing them back out of fear and shock. Tressal, he tells them, slinks through them in the confusion, successfully escaping. However, he also remembers that Tressal's *Price of Darkness* SFX requires him to turn the temporary asset he created into stress after the roll, which means his **Corrupted** stress is going to step up a second time, from a 10 to a 12. No one said dark magic was safe, but at least he's free and clear for the moment.



Innate Magic

Dark mages with **Corrupted** trauma can perform simple parlor tricks, such as lighting a candle, without requiring dice rolls; these don't run the risk of getting additional **Corrupted** stress. This sort of magic is a lot like the simple, day-to-day basic spells of rune mages, although some degree of **Corrupted** stress or trauma is required for this ability.

Dark Magic Resistance

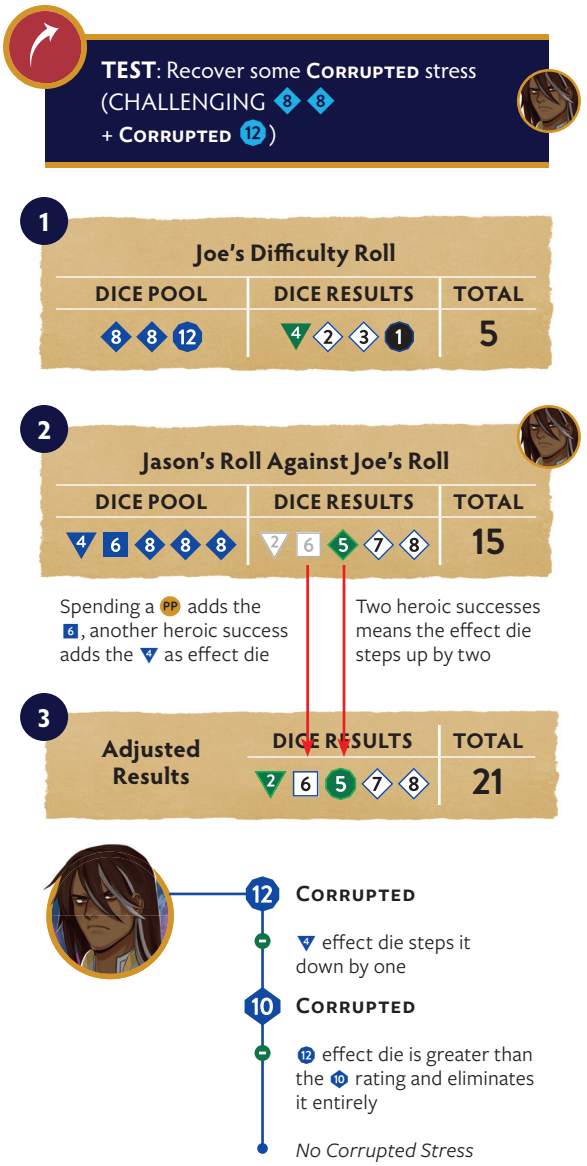
Once a dark mage has gained **Corrupted** trauma, they become somewhat immune to minor corruption. Any time a dark mage gains **Corrupted** stress, compare the die rating of the stress they gain with their current trauma die rating. If the trauma is larger than the new **Corrupted** stress, the dark mage can divert it to another type of stress by spending a PP. They can't avoid taking stress, but they don't have to experience it in the same way. *(See Example: Dark Magic Resistance.)*

Example: Recovering **Corrupted** Stress

Later during the same session, the Narrator, Joe, sets a scene where Tressal is no longer on the run from Sunfire elf guards, giving Jason the opportunity to try and recover some of his character's **Corrupted** 12 stress. Jason immediately spends a PP to create a new **Magical Creature** temporary asset rated at 6, and describes how Tressal shakingly pulls a glass jar that holds small magical bugs from his side.

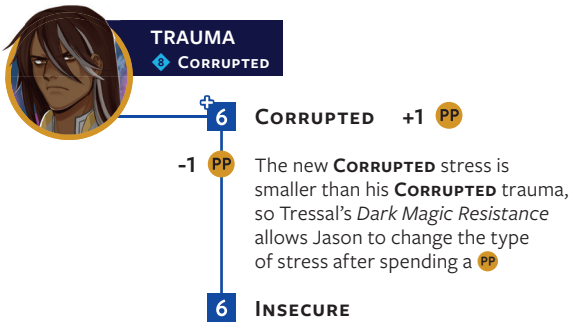
1. Joe rolls to set a difficulty for this recovery. **Total**: **5**.
2. Looks like a lucky break for Tressal! Jason decides to spend his last PP to buy the Narrator's opportunity, allowing him to step up the new **Magical Creature** asset he just created. Then, he builds Tressal's dice pool. He chooses Tressal's **Spirit** 8 attribute, **Liberty** 8 value, **Dark Acolyte** 8 distinction (which he decides to hinder, because he wants a PP to spend), and **Dark Magic** 6 specialty. None of his three spells relate to recovering **Corrupted** stress, so he doesn't add his **Dark Magic Spells** 8 asset. However, he does add the new **Magical Creature** 8 asset to his pool. **Total**: **15**.
3. That isn't just a success, it's a heroic success! Tressal's effect die is stepped up twice, once for every 5 points Tressal succeeded by. This would step up his effect die from a 8 to a 12, but with a 12 stress Jason knows that isn't enough. Good thing he has PP to spend, thanks to using the *Hinder* SFX for his distinction! Jason spends that PP to add the 6 to his total, bringing it to a 21. This steps up his effect die a third time, bringing it above a 12 and letting him add a second effect die. He adds the remaining 4.

Jason starts by comparing his 4 effect die to his **Corrupted** stress, which is a 12. As his effect die is lower, this steps the stress down to a 10. Next, he compares the 12 effect die to Tressal's remaining 10 stress, which is higher! This means that Tressal can fully recover his **Corrupted** stress. Joe congratulates Jason, but warns him he might not be as lucky next time...



Example: Dark Magic Resistance

Despite his **Corrupted** 8 trauma, Jason's character Tressal succeeded in a test! However, he rolled a hitch. Joe, the Narrator, chooses to give Tressal a PP in order to activate the hitch, giving Tressal a **Corrupted** stress of 6. Jason reminds Joe that Tressal has *Dark Magic Resistance* and compares the stress to Tressal's **Corrupted** trauma of a 8. Since the new stress isn't higher than Tressal's trauma, Jason can spend a PP to redirect it, which he does, using a PP he had before Joe activated the hitch. He decides to make the new stress **Insecure** instead.



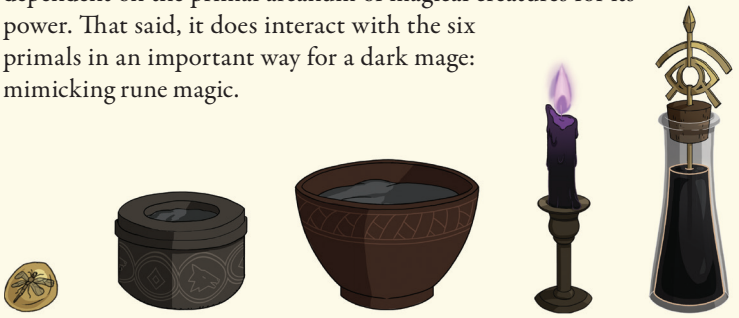
Dark Magic Senses

A dark mage can use their **Corrupted** trauma to sense, analyze, or otherwise detect magic around them--primal magic as well as dark magic. The **Corrupted** trauma works as an asset in any test to detect magic. By itself, this doesn't step up the dark mage's trauma. But failing the test might!

The Narrator may also decide that other hidden, mystical, or concealed effects can also be seen or sensed by the dark mage. This leads to such things as Viren's connection to the Startouch elf Aaravos, or Ziard's understanding of the magic of archdragons and other powerful beasts. *(See Example: Dark Magic Senses.)*

Dark Magic and the Primal Sources

Some dark mages refer to dark magic as "the seventh primal source." While it's capable of great and mighty effects, it remains dependent on the primal arcanum of magical creatures for its power. That said, it does interact with the six primals in an important way for a dark mage: mimicking rune magic.



Mimicking Rune Magic

Dark magic can be used to mimic spells that draw on primal magic. To do this, a magical creature with a connection to the primal source in question is required to be consumed or destroyed in the process. For example, crushing an emberback spider provides the Sun magic needed for *Semalf Gnippiks Gnipael*, the dancing flames spell.

Although this is most often used for specific dark magic spells that require only the backward-pronunciation incantations typical of dark mages, you may as a Narrator allow a dark mage who learns a rune magic spell to use magical creatures (and thus, dark magic) to provide the necessary primal source link needed. A primal stone can easily sub in for this sacrifice, which means dark mages can use primal stones to cast rune magic if they also learn those spells.

There's no real difference however in how the spells are cast. Dark mages still run the risk of corruption if they roll hitches, although if they're deliberately trying to mimic rune mages in this way, they can't amplify their magic by using **Corrupted** stress or trauma as an asset. In other words, if a dark mage PC learns a Sky magic spell, they won't be adding their **Corrupted** stress or trauma to the dice pool when using the spell to achieve something.

It's important to emphasize that in all cases, the dark mage is *not* a rune mage, has no arcanum of their own, and can't escape the consequences of dark magic if they go this route. *(See Example: Mimicking Rune Magic.)*



Example: Dark Magic Senses

1. Joe, the Narrator, has set a scene where the group searches for a pin infused with primal magic across miles of razed farmland. The task seems hopeless, but Jason suggests that his character Tressal should have no problem with it, explaining that Tressal has *Dark Magic Senses*, which allows him to use his **Corrupted** trauma, currently rated at a 8, to accomplish the task. Joe agrees this seems reasonable, and declares it will be a hard test. **Total**: **14**.
2. Jason builds a dice pool using Tressal's **Awareness** 8 attribute, **Truth** 10 value, and **Dark Acolyte** 8 distinction. He decides not to use any spells for this, banking on getting to use his **Corrupted** 8 trauma as an asset to secure a success. **Total**: **15**.

Tressal succeeds! Jason gets to narrate how Tressal makes the search look easy. Of course, Joe tells them, finding the pin was just the beginning.

TEST: Locate the magical pin (HARD 10 10)

1 **Joe's Difficulty Roll**

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
10 10	4 7 7	14

2 **Jason's Test Against Joe's Roll**

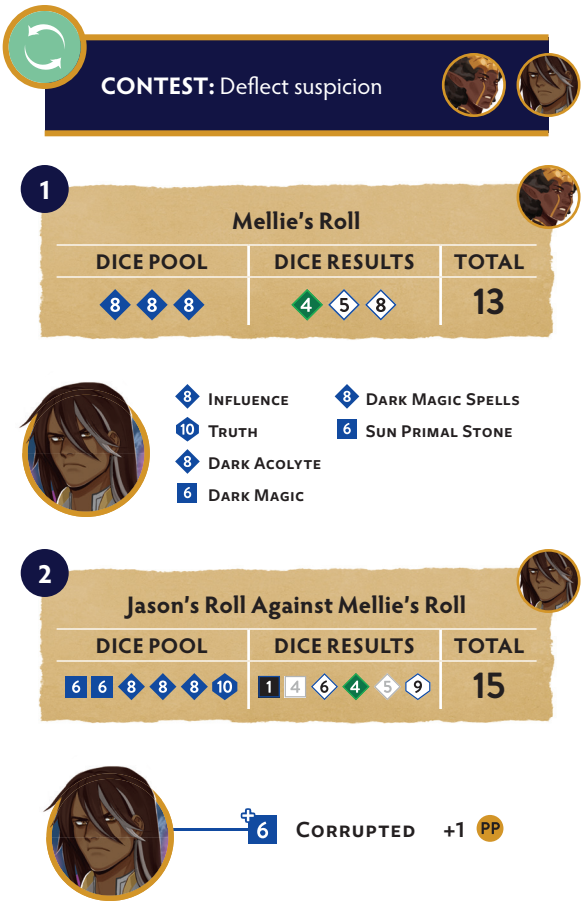
DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
8 8 8 10	2 4 6 9	15

Example: Mimicking Rune Magic

1. In a scene set by Joe, the Narrator, Jason's character Tressal is disguised while attempting to infiltrate a secure library controlled by Sunfire elves. Joe narrates how Tressal's behavior has caught the eye of the Sunfire knight Bineta, Mellie's character, who wants to examine his disguise. Jason describes how Tressal wants to deflect suspicion by using the Sun primal stone he stole earlier in the scene to cast a Sun magic spell. Joe declares a contest, and Bineta makes an impressive starting roll. **Total**: **13**.

2. Jason chooses to use Tressal's **Influence** 8 attribute, **Truth** 10 value, and **Dark Acolyte** 8 distinction. He then adds his **Dark Magic** 6 specialty and **Dark Magic Spells** 8 asset, explaining how he plans to cast a *Semalf Gnippiks Gnipael* (Dancing Flames) spell using the stolen **Sun Primal Stone** 6 temporary asset. **Total**: **15**.

   Tressal overcomes Bineta's difficulty, but Jason rolled a hitch! Mellie decides she wants to activate it to step up Tressal's **Corrupted** stress, giving one of her PP to Jason. She suggests that the spell is convincing, but Bineta feels unsettled by something she can't quite see. As it becomes Bineta's turn, Mellie decides to give in, deciding that Tressal has proven himself enough to make her second-guess her suspicion. But she's probably going to mention the "strange elf" she met in the hallway to her brother, Cam's character Babukar, in the next scene!



Dark Magic Spells

Dark magic is faster, cheaper, and needs less mastery than rune magic, but consumes the essence of a magical creature in the process... and leaves traces of dark magic behind as **Corrupted** stress. Dark magic spells can draw on other primal sources, but are also varied and flexible and much broader in potential scope.

- ***Cigam Rouy Laever*** (Revealing Spell): *Casting this reveals the magical meaning behind a magical object.*
- ***Dnibnu Leets Gnirehtils*** (Snake Transformation Spell): *Causes a lengthy, snake-like object to suddenly transform into a living snake.*
- ***Eciov Eht Laets*** (Silence Spell): *The mage robs someone of their voice.*
- ***Ecnesse Ruoy Esuf*** (Fusing Spell): *A spell that can infuse wisps with a magical essence.*
- ***Em Rof Dneb Ytsenoh*** (Reflection Changing): *When used with certain rare magical objects, the spell changes the nature of a reflection in a reflective surface.*
- ***Erusaert Ym Si Luos Ruoy*** (Soul Trapping Spell): *When chanted, a mage can trap someone's soul into an object. This spell is incredibly difficult for most mages to complete.*
- ***Etah Fo Nopaew A Htiw Efil Niard Ot, Ssol Dna Evol Fo Tonk Delgnat A Tsiwt*** (Stone Death Spell): *An incredibly complex spell that can be used to kill someone by turning them into stone. Requires very specific and rare materials.*
- ***Htap Eht Laever Dna Em Erofeb Trap*** (Path Clearing Spell): *Removes obstacles from the mage's path.*



- ***Kram Ruoy Dnif, Tlob Rekeestraeh*** (Homing Spell): *This spell ensures that a projectile never misses its target, no matter the circumstances. It uses the eye of a griffon.*
- ***Latem Eht Taeh, Hcuot Gninrub*** (Heat Metal): *Causes metal to heat to extraordinary temperatures.*
- ***Meht Dnib Leets Gnirehtils*** (Chain Snake Spell): *The spell causes a nearby object to become snakes that tighten around someone, then transform into chains.*
- ***Htaerb Eht Laets*** (Suffocation Spell): *The mage pulls the breath from someone, causing them to suffocate.*
- ***Neddih Si Tahw Laever Eye Gniees Eurt*** (Secrets Spell): *The mage now unveils the magical nature or secrets behind an object.*
- ***Niaga Esir, Nellaf Fo Hsa*** (Shadow Minions): *Brings back shadowy forms of fallen beings, who then do the mage's bidding.*
- ***Nekorb Eht Laeh Dna Wolf, Evila Dna Gnuoy Eliga Tserof Fo Doolbefil*** (Lifeblood Healing): *Using the sacrifice of a large animal, a great physical trauma is healed.*
- ***Nrub Tonnac Rednic Fo Straeh*** (Hearts of Cinder): *Imbues a human with corrupted Sun magic that dulls their ability to communicate, but doubles their strength; immune to fire, they instead draw strength from any blaze.*
- ***Nwod Meht Gard, Psarg Gnihtirw*** (Grasping Spell): *Ghostly octopus tentacles grasp at and grip tight a person or thing of the mage's choice.*
- ***Rewop Rouy Swollaws Eh, Dnim Rouy Swollaws Eh, Traeh Rouy Swollaws Eh*** (Power Absorption): *Allows a mage to drain the power of another being into themselves.*
- ***Semalf Gnippiks Gnipael*** (Dancing Flames): *This spell allows a mage to conjure a small flame that leaps between multiple targets before disappearing. Uses an emberback spider or other small creature connected to the Sun primal.*
- ***Sbmil Eseht Ot Efil Gnirb*** (Healing Spell): *This spell can heal serious injuries. It requires flower petals and a tad of grasshopper goop.*



A Dozen Magical Items

There are magical items and artifacts hidden all over Xadia, some deep below ground in triple-locked chests, others in plain sight in the staff of a mage. While you can of course create your own, here are a dozen magical items and where you might find them.

How to Use Magical Items

Magical items are quite rare! You won't have any of the items on this list on your character journal when you start the game, although you absolutely can start with a minor magical item as an asset. *Each of these items is rated as a* 10 *asset by default*; the Narrator can include them as the focus of a tale, and you might pursue one as a goal (see Setting Your Goals on page 104).

> "I've hidden an unusual cube with rune symbols on each side."
>
> HARROW
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 6: Heart of a Titan*

Magical Items as Assets

If you acquire a magical item during play (i.e., the Narrator says you've found it and you pick it up), it's treated as a temporary asset at the full die rating. Once it's used during a scene, the asset die rating goes away, even if the item is still there! Either spend a PP to re-acquire it as an asset with a 6 die rating, or undertake a Challenging test (8 8) to attune to it once more. If you succeed, assign your effect die to the asset as its new die rating. If you're really attached, use your growth pool at the end of the tale to gain it permanently as an asset (see Improving Your Traits on page 109).

If someone else wants to use the magical item after it's already been discovered and used at its initial 10 die rating, they must spend PP or make a test of their own to gain it as an asset. Multiple people can have an asset die rating in a single magical item; it comes down to which PC currently has it in their possession—only they can use it in their dice pool.

As always, you can transfer "ownership" of an asset to another character. Spend the PP and hand it over at its current die rating.

You lose it as an asset after that, of course.

> Joe, the Narrator, sets a scene in which Ani's character, Pyrda, is exploring an ancient, abandoned library. A delicate glass quill catches her eye. After asking Joe some questions, it is determined that Pyrda can recognize that the quill is a magical item infused with Sky magic, called the **Hollowhush Quill**. Ani decides to take it, and adds it to her journal as a temporary asset rated as a 10.
>
> Later in the session, Pyrda finds herself stumped by a doorway puzzle that seems to be missing vital information. Joe says this will be a hard (10 10) test. Ani wonders if the **Hollowhush Quill** might have a stored message to help her, and Joe agrees this seems reasonable. She builds Pyrda's dice pool, including the 10 from the magical item asset. After completing the test, Joe reminds Ani to remove the rating of the **Hollowhush Quill**, telling her that while she still has the item, she'll need to spend PP to use it again this session—and invest some growth if she wants to make it a permanent fixture of her character journal!

Magical Item SFX

The magical items in this section each have two SFX. One is a "problem" SFX that can earn the player PP—or something else—if they accept the troublesome cost; the other is something cool the player can spend PP on—or something else—in order to do something really magical with the item, on top of including it in their dice pool.

These items do what they do whether you use their SFX or not; their magic is a part of the story you create when you use them in a test, contest, or challenge. The SFX are there to add a little more fun to their use in the game, not as a required rule.

Anyone who acquires the magical item initially at 10 can use both SFX. If you later acquire it at a lower die rating, a 8 allows you to unlock one of the two SFX, while a 6 won't make either of them available to you.

Once the asset is yours (it's on your character journal because you used growth to keep it), you can unlock more SFX with growth, just as you would unlock SFX on distinctions. See Growth on page 109 for more details on adding and unlocking SFX. *(See Example: Magical Item SFX.)*

Magical Item Spells

In place of unlocking an SFX, you can acquire knowledge of a spell. Magical items can grant up to four spells depending on the die rating. Beginning at 6, you can gain use (but not permanent knowledge) of one spell of the item's associated primal source. Your Narrator can advise you as to which spell might be appropriate (they're not listed with the items).

If you have the asset at a 8, you can either unlock one of the item's SFX, or gain a second spell. Again at 10, you can unlock the second SFX, or gain a third spell (or a second if you didn't gain it at 8).

Unlocking more spells can be managed with growth pools just like anything else, up to the maximum of the item's die rating, once you have the item as a permanent asset. If you have the asset on your character journal, any spells you learn from it are known to you permanently. For the purposes of growth, a spell counts as unlocking an SFX.

Temporarily stepping up the magic item asset in play, such as when you spend a PP to activate a Narrator's opportunity, does not unlock spells. Only permanently stepping up your asset gives you this option. *(See Example: Magical Item Spells.)*



Example: Magical Item SFX

At the end of his latest tale, Joe, the Narrator, asks his players if they would like to grow their characters. Ani, who plays Pyrda, volunteers first. Ani reminds the group how Pyrda picked up the **Hollowhush Quill** in an earlier session of the tale, and tells Joe that she plans to make it a permanent asset for her character.

1. She gathers dice to roll, and succeeds, gaining the asset as a 6 on her character journal. Ani then spends more of her remaining growth dice to try and step up Pyrda's new asset once, to a 8. After succeeding in the roll, she adds the new 8 asset to her sheet. Joe reminds her that, as a magic item, it has two SFX. With a 8 rating, Ani will get to unlock one of those two SFX. Ani decides to unlock the *Whispers Remembered* SFX, noting it on Pyrda's character journal.
2. In a future session, Joe sets a scene where Pyrda uncovers information that Amanda's character, Vinaya, has been searching for. During a test where Pyrda is trying to sneak away, Joe rolls two opportunities when setting a difficulty for Ani. Ani chooses to spend PP to buy both, choosing to spotlight Pyrda's **Hollowhush Quill** for the rest of the scene. The asset steps up twice from a 8 to a 12 and Joe notes that this unlocks the second SFX of the magic item, *Whispers Forgotten*.
3. As the scene ends, Ani takes advantage of this SFX, describing how Pyrda whispers the information Vinaya needs into the pen, hoping it will help her remember, not realizing it may be forgotten, instead! For the trouble this causes, Pyrda gains a PP. Then, as the scene ends, the **Hollowhush Quill** returns to a 8 rating, and the second SFX becomes locked again.



6 **Hollowhush Quill**

Ani succeeds at making this a permanent asset

1 Using growth dice, this asset is stepped up once, which unlocks one SFX at 8

8 **Hollowhush Quill**

- *Whispers Remembered SFX*

2 The Narrator rolls 2 hitches, which Ani purchases to step the asset up twice for the scene, unlocking the last SFX

12 **Hollowhush Quill**

- *Whispers Remembered SFX*
- *Whispers Forgotten SFX*

3 Ani activates the second SFX for better or worse, gaining a PP in the process

8 **Hollowhush Quill**

- *Whispers Remembered SFX*

At the conclusion of the scene, the asset steps down to its original rating, locking the second SFX once again

Example: Magical Item Spells

During the final session of Joe's newest tale, Pyrda realized that her **Hollowhush Quill** held more secrets than she realized: it can help her cast new Sky magic spells! At the end of the session, Ani decides to spend some of the growth dice she collected to unlock these spells. As the **Hollowhush Quill** is currently rated as a 8, Joe collects 8 8 8 to set a difficulty for Ani: two for the standard difficulty of unlocking an SFX or adding a spell, and one for the current rating of the asset. **Total**: **11**.

Knowing the difficulty she needs to overcome, Ani decides to commit three dice from Pyrda's growth pool. **Total**: **13**.

She succeeds! Ani decides to unlock the *Secretum Colligentes* (Gather Secret) spell for the **Hollowhush Quill**, one of the spells that Joe agreed could be held in the item. She then prepares to roll more of her growth dice, in the hopes of adding a second spell, *Arcanum Antiquis* (Ancient Secret).

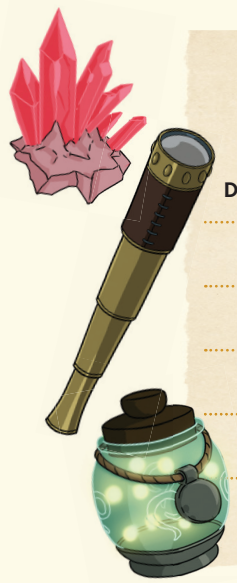
TEST: Unlock spells in the asset (CHALLENGING 8 8 + **Hollowhush Quill** 8)

	DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	TOTAL
Joe	8 8 8	4 4 7	11
Ani	8 10 10	3 2 10	13



8 **Hollowhush Quill**

- *Whispers Remembered SFX*
- ***Secretum Colligentes*** (Gather Secret Spell)



ASSET SFX REMINDER

Magical assets with SFX require a certain die rating for them to be unlocked and usable by anyone who has the asset. Here's that information again for you.

DIE RATING	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3
4	No SFX, no spells	---	---
6	No SFX, one spell	---	---
8	One SFX, one spell	Two spells	---
10	Two SFX, one spell	One SFX, two spells	Three spells
12	Two SFX, two spells	One SFX, three spells	Four spells



Abyssal Incense 10

Incense sticks made from the fur of a shadowpaw. Breathing the dark magic smoke of this incense temporarily gives someone a perfect recollection of the last moon cycle's worth of their life, allowing them to remember details even the most thoughtful person might have missed.

- *Dark Memories:* Gain a PP and take 6 **Angry**, **Afraid**, or **Insecure** stress as painful memories flood back into your mind. Step up this new stress to step down one other type of stress you already have.
- *Clarity of Mind:* Spend a PP to step up your **Intellect** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that draws upon your recovered memories.

Andesite Pauldrons 10

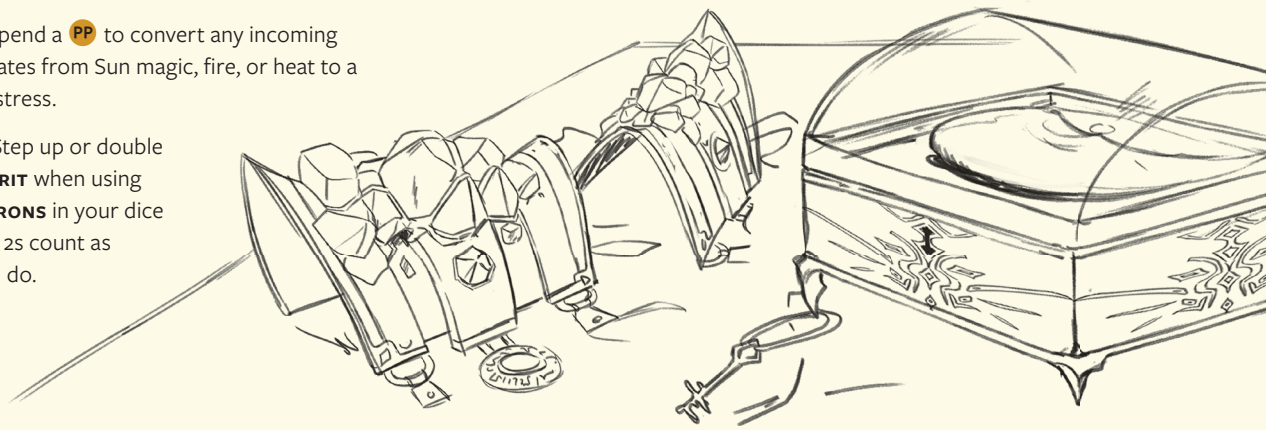
Shoulder armor welded with volcanic rock infused with light from the Sunforge and inscribed with runes, giving the wearer partial protection against heat, flames, lava, and Sun magic.

- *Aegis Moment:* Spend a PP to convert any incoming stress that originates from Sun magic, fire, or heat to a different kind of stress.
- *Titan's Lament:* Step up or double **Strength** or **Spirit** when using **Andesite Pauldrons** in your dice pool. Both 1s and 2s count as hitches when you do.

Claw of Initium Et Finis 10

Is it a claw, or just a strange claw-shaped artifact the size of an oven? Nobody really knows. Nearly weightless, it sits in a glass box and looks oddly not-there, like a dark rift in the air. Whispers weave a story wherein this claw belongs to an ancient Void dragon. But was there ever a dragon? Did it lose a claw somewhere in Xadia? No one is sure, but the magic in it does seem to corrode its cases eventually. Passed between elf mages in secret so that no human can find it and use it for dark magic, it doesn't stay in one place for long. Perhaps one day, someone might stumble upon it in transit, by accident.

- *Incipimus Iterim:* Spend a PP to reroll a dice pool that includes **Claw of Initium Et Finis**.
- *Non In Finem:* Gain a PP when you switch out your effect die of 8 or greater with a 4 so long as your dice pool includes **Claw of Initium Et Finis**.



Curlcoral Cutlass 10



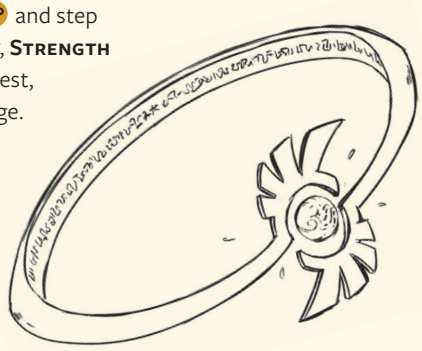
The hilt of this cutlass is made from light clay, the curved blade from an arm of curlcoral full of Ocean magic. Almost impossible to find, curlcoral is as tough as steel, has razor-sharp nodes bubbling up out of it like warts, and, if shattered, can regrow to its previous shape in only a few moments. Its toughness and regenerative properties make it especially useful against things a normal sword can't manage. It does, however, need to be submerged in water occasionally—like when it has recently been shattered. If shattered twice in a row without being submerged, it will take several days to regrow. Rumored to have washed up on the shores of Neolandia, it may currently be in a merchant's trunk or already in the hands of a wealthy collector.

- *Shattered:* Gain a PP and shut down **Curlcoral Cutlass** after using it in a test, contest, or challenge. Submerge it in water during a subsequent scene to recover it.
- *Razor-Sharp:* Step up or double **Curlcoral Cutlass** in a test, contest, or challenge. Both 1s and 2s count as hitches when you do.

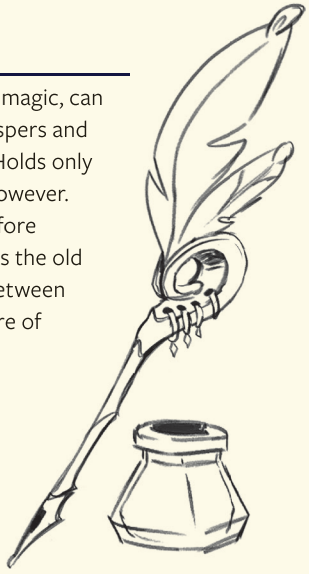
Flexxenboom Bracelet 10

A solid bracelet whose shape seems to shift to conform to its wearer as if it is made of vapor, it collects Sky energy as the wearer walks about and on occasion it can discharge a large electric lightning blast. The blast is loud and bright, but not particularly destructive. Formerly held by a Skywing mage named Flexxen, it has since been lost and could be on a mountain path they traveled or possibly even in (or on) a traveler's hands.

- *Thunderclap:* Spend a PP to discharge the energy in **Flexxenboom Bracelet** after you succeed in a contest that includes the asset. Your opponent immediately takes an additional 6 **Afraid** or **Injured** stress.
- *Build-Up:* Gain a PP and step down your **Agility**, **Strength** or **Influence** in a test, contest, or challenge.



Hollowhush Quill 10



A delicate glass quill that, using Sky magic, can retain up to an hour's worth of whispers and play them aloud into anyone's ear. Holds only one segment of speech at a time, however. To whisper into it a second time before freeing the previous whisper washes the old one away. It is sometimes passed between traveling Skywing mages as a gesture of goodwill and friendship.

- *Whispers Remembered:* Spend a PP to gain a 8 **Useful Whispers** asset as speech thought long forgotten emerges once again from the quill.
- *Whispers Forgotten:* Gain a PP when you speak something vital into the quill rather than share it with somebody who really needs to know it.

Hopclog Stompers 10

Rubbery clogs woven together from tree roots full of Earth magic, the roots forming the shape of the spell's rune, they look clunky and heavy but are surprisingly light and comfortable. They allow the wearer to have a literal spring in their step when moving on soil, rock, or natural ground, making them extraordinarily fast. Lost by a forgetful Earthblood elf gardener in the woods, they could be hidden in the open anywhere beautiful flowers grow.

- *Swiftfooted:* Spend a PP to step up or double **Agility** or **Awareness** when moving swiftly and surely as part of a test, contest, or challenge.
- *Awkwardness:* Gain a PP when you keep only one die for your total in any test, contest, or challenge roll that includes **Hopclog Stompers**, as your surprising speed makes you unexpectedly clumsy.



Mirror of Anti-Vanity 10

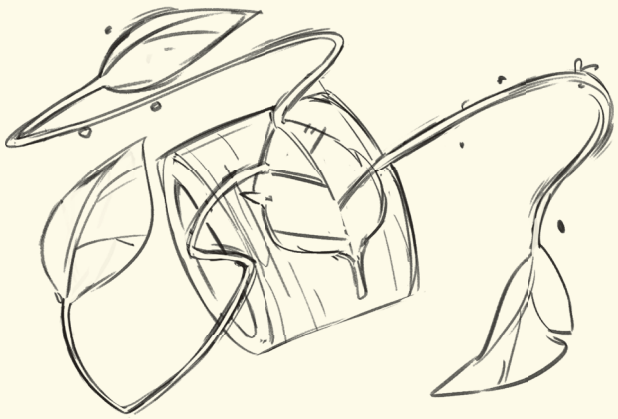
This hand mirror has a case carved from the beak of a kookaburrow, and is imbued with dark magic. If the carrier of the mirror casts ***Em Rof Dneb Ytsenoh***, the next person to look in the mirror will see a warped version of themselves, in the form of the mage's desire. Created by a now-deceased dark mage of Del Bar, it is likely to be in the possession of a different one now.

- *Dysmorphic Reflection:* Add a 6 to your dice pool and remove the highest rolling die when you turn the mirror's reflection onto your opponent. Then step up your effect die.
- *Warped Countenance:* Gain a PP and take 6 **Afraid** or **Insecure** stress when you look into the mirror.

Queen Pothos Ring 10

This wooden ring, with a carving of a curled-up pothos leaf on it, looks pretty innocuous. But it is imbued with Earth magic, and lets the wearer briefly sprout several tiny leaves from their fingertips, allowing them to breathe through their hands for a limited period of time.

- *Green Thumb:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Influence**, **Intellect**, or **Spirit** die in a test, contest, or challenge involving plants or being submerged in water.
- *Queen's Folly:* Gain an additional PP when you give in to a contest involving royalty, nobility, or those in power.



Satchel of Sprinklebit Suspension 10

A satchel full of tiny specks of dust, only a few needed at a time, that suspend in the air and pop into bright colorful lights. It is harvested from pollen filled with Sun magic from a flower of unknown origin. They can be flung a short distance depending on how hard they're thrown, but they stop in the air rather quickly. Hard to see when floating, they make a handy alarm trap or distraction. Perhaps someone might locate this satchel if they explore a mysterious forest, as if it were dropped by an herbalist? Or find a brightly colored version of it when they sneak into an eccentric mage's inner sanctum?

- *Sack of Sprinkles:* Step down **Satchel of Sprinklebit Suspension** to create a 8 **Sparkle Trap** asset for yourself or another character. This asset lasts for one test, contest, or challenge. Recover **Satchel of Sprinklebit Suspension** at the end of the session.
- *Dazed:* Gain a PP and take 6 **Afraid**, **Exhausted**, or **Insecure** stress when the sparkles blow back into your face.

Silken Slinkstockings 10

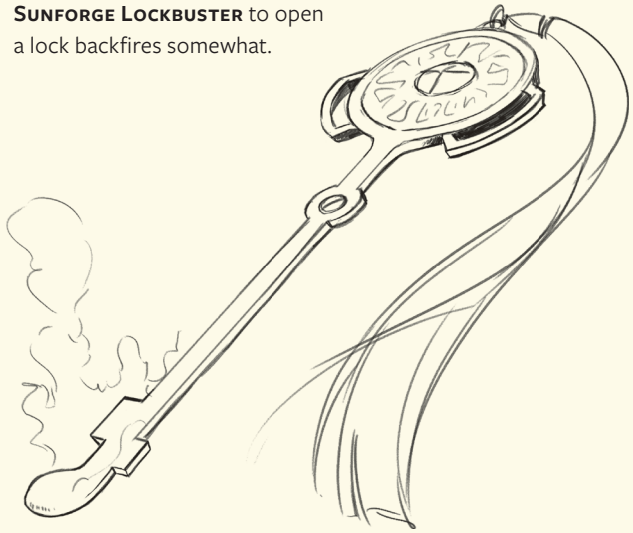
Woven from the silk of the rare crescentpillar worm, the wearer's footfalls are greatly muted by way of Moon magic.

- *Lunar Quiet:* Spend a PP to step up or double **Agility**, **Awareness**, or **Spirit** when you are outdoors at night during anything but a new moon.
- *Darn It:* Gain a PP and shut down **Silken Slinkstockings** when you accidentally tear a hole in them. Recover **Silken Slinkstockings** with a challenging 8 8 test during a recovery scene.

Sunforge Lockbuster 10

Queen Khessa commissioned the creation of this artifact with the magic of the Sunforge. A thin steel key with a golden top; when inserted into any keyhole, the steel portion radiates with intense magic that heats the inner workings of a lock so fast that they turn to ash. When used by a novice, it causes the keyhole (and some of the lock or doorknob) to pop in a small, heat-based explosion. Given to a royal spy, it has since been lost in the Xadian wilderness after the evacuation of Lux Aurea.

- *Hot Lock:* Spend a PP to reroll your dice pool when using **Sunforge Lockbuster** to open a lock of any kind.
- *Small Boom:* Gain a PP and take 6 **Afraid**, **Angry** or **Injured** stress when using the **Sunforge Lockbuster** to open a lock backfires somewhat.







VI

"This morning, I thought we were doomed.
Then the dragons came, and I thought we would win!
But then things got doomed again. But now we're okay!"

CALLUM
Book 3: Sun, Chapter 9: The Final Battle

Narrator's Guide

This chapter includes everything you need to know to play the role of the Narrator in *Tales of Xadia*. To guide you on your way, it's packed with example characters, catalysts, and advice. It may seem daunting at first, but once you start narrating your own games and playing the role of all the supporting characters who help to flesh out the world, it should all fall into place. Trust in your own instincts and jump right in!

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

Becoming the Narrator: On choosing the role of Narrator and what it entails.

Narrator Characters: How to create and narrate the characters who populate the world. Includes a dozen example Narrator characters to sprinkle into your sessions.

Catalysts: How to create and narrate the pivotal characters the PCs interact with. Includes a dozen example catalysts to use in your own tales.

Narrating the Game: A guide to coming up with situations, framing scenes, handling rules, and managing game sessions, as well as preparing your own tales and chronicles.

Featured Catalysts: A selection of your favorite characters from the show set up as catalysts.



Becoming the Narrator

You've decided to become the Narrator; so what does that mean? First and foremost it means there's a whole section of this book that's intended for you. Throughout this chapter, "you" refers to the Narrator. If you're a player, this chapter isn't off-limits or filled with secret information. There are some example Narrator characters (NCs) and catalysts that Narrators might want to surprise you with, but otherwise nothing in here is a spoiler.

Reminder: As the Narrator, you are responsible for the following:

- Preparing and presenting the tale to the players.
- Acting out the parts of NCs and deciding how they react to the PCs.
- Asking leading questions of the players to lead them into further adventure.
- Revealing the important details of the world to the players.
- Watching over the game rules at the table and managing the pace of the session.
- In general, bringing the world of Xadia to life.

Getting Prepared

Preparation varies from Narrator to Narrator, and depends a lot on how much you like to spend time in advance of the session writing up new scene ideas, situations, and NCs. Your first session, especially, might be somewhat nerve-wracking so here are some suggestions on how to get ready.

Be Well Rested

Like any other social activity where you're expected to be "on," being the Narrator works much better if you've had sleep and you're not worn out or fatigued. Don't try to cram in all of your prep when your eyes are closing and you're drifting off. And really don't try to guide your friends through a tale of your own devising when you can't focus. Take a nap and come to the table ready to go.

Know the Rules

You don't need to memorize this book, but we recommend you read it all the way through before your first session. Bookmark some sections; re-read important rules like how tests, contests, and challenges work; note how stress and plot points work; and keep some reference sheets nearby as you play.

Session Zero

Many tabletop roleplaying games refer to a **session zero**. This involves getting all of your group together for a session before the game actually starts. Use this time to guide the players through choosing their PCs, explain the basic rules, and talk about what sorts of tales might interest the group.

Some Narrators love to surprise their players with a tale they've created in advance (see page 192 for some advice on doing this), while others poll their players and ask them what sorts of stories would be fun to try out. Either way, it's a really good idea for you to know the PCs and their various backgrounds:

1. Write down each PC's name
2. Take a note of everyone's value die ratings
3. Keep a list of their distinctions
4. Add their assets or specialties

Use these notes to acquaint yourself with the PCs so that when you start the next session, you know what sort of situations they're ready for, what skills and abilities they possess, and what sort of challenges might bring out the best in them.

Read Corrupted Core

We've got an entire tale in this book, starting on page 207. *The Tale of the Corrupted Core* takes place after the end of Season Three of *The Dragon Prince* and it's designed as an ideal kickoff to your *Tales of Xadia* game.

If you're *really* keen to make use of our prepared tales, grab *The Tale of the Lost Oasis* and *The Tale of the Gloaming Glade* from our website. These two tales come before *The Tale of the Corrupted Core* and together they form a trilogy that sets up our *Sunfire Chronicle*, which bridges the gap between Season Three and Season Four of the show.

Even if you don't play through the *Corrupted Core* or its prequel tales, they serve as an informative model for how to prepare your own scenes, present NCs, and introduce catalysts.

Acting the Part

As the Narrator, it's your job to play the part of all of the other characters who interact with the PCs, whether they're human, elf, or even dragons. We talk more about **Narrator characters (NCs)** later, but the important thing about this responsibility is that you're called to step into dozens of character roles every session. That's a huge ask of anybody, but it doesn't have to be as difficult as it sounds.

Who Are They?

The key to playing an NC is understanding who they are, where they've come from, and what they want. Some NCs are very important and we call them **catalysts** because the story tends to form around them and their interaction with the PCs. An NC who shows up for just one scene, like a baker or a town guard or a curious young dragon, has their moment in the spotlight, and deserves a little attention from you as Narrator.

Often the best way to achieve this is simply to give every NC, no matter how fleeting, a name. If you get stuck, keep a big list of spare names handy—online baby name generators are a great place to start.

Bringing Them to Life

You can adopt a specific voice or manner of speaking when you play an NC, or you can simply describe what they look like and what they're doing; it's really all up to you. Some Narrators are more comfortable at acting out these characters than others. In general, so long as you provide something that allows the players to picture who this individual is in their mind's eye, some distinguishing characteristic, you've done what you need to do.

In game terms, most NCs have two or more **traits** that perform this function and give you some idea of what they're like so you can play them. More on that on page 165.

> "Later you can call me a jerkface, and I'll do the crazy jerkface dance for you. It is a dance of stupidtude and sorryness."
>
> CALLUM
>
> *Book 1: Moon, Chapter 2: What Is Done*

Reacting vs Acting

Most of the time, as you play the parts of NCs and catalysts, you're reacting to the PCs. This helps center the world around the choices players are making, making the PCs the stars of the story. If an NC is present, they're mostly scenery, and respond to the inquiries, activities, and presence of the PCs—regardless of their own personal life story and dreams and goals.

Other times, you may want to use NCs to spur action. This happens when the NC has something the PCs want and is introduced for that reason, or when the PCs do something that attracts their attention. Even with their own motivations, NCs serve to bring the story alive around the PCs.

Asking Questions

Asking questions is one of the best tricks in the Narrator's toolbox and is recommended for anyone who wants to guide players through the world of Xadia. What's a good question? It's a question that helps keep the tale moving along, and prompts the players when there are too many courses of action. It's one that gives the players agency over their part in the unfolding tale.

What Do You Do?

This is one of the most common questions a Narrator asks that doesn't lead the players along. Let's call it the bare minimum question in the conversation you're having with your players. "What do you do?" comes after you've described something, whether it's a mysterious underground cave beneath an abandoned farmhouse, or the chilly slopes of a mountain, or a busy village square. It comes after you've revealed the actions of an NC, or introduced a dangerous-looking magical creature. "What do you do?" prompts the players to decide how their characters respond to the world you have placed before them.

Why Are You Here?

This question, when it comes in the form of "Why are you in this place?" or "Why are you here with this person?" is the next step up. You've just announced, as Narrator, that the PC is somewhere or with somebody. Now you're asking the player to come up with the reason why! You might think that this is up to you to decide, but a clever way to really invest players in what's going on is to ask them to answer this themselves. If you've provided the where or the who, it can be fun for players to come up with the why.

What Happens Next?

You've described something happening to the players, or revealed something surprising. The temptation is to keep talking about what happens next, but consider stopping there and turning that over to the players. This can come as a revelation to players who expect you to know everything about the world and what the outcomes are to dice rolls. This asks the players to think about how to wrap up this moment with a bow and deliver on what's been promised.

A good example of when to use "What happens next?" is when a player wins a contest, or succeeds at a test. You have already provided most of the information the players need to decide this. Do they spare the life of the villain? Do they open the satchel and reveal a package of letters or a smooth, glowing stone? We play to find out what happens, and sometimes it's surprising what players come up with when you haven't pre-planned the outcome.

Leading Questions

This trick is more advanced, but it's amazing what it does in the game. A leading question establishes a fact about the situation the PCs are in and then prompts the player to come up with a response. Here are some examples:

> "You walk into the room. What's the baron doing in there and why does he look shocked to see you enter?"
>
> "You brush past a servant in the hallway. What object does the servant slip into your pocket as he passes?"
>
> "The dragon passes overhead and the forest falls silent. Which of your accompanying group breaks the moment with a gasp?"
>
> "You tumble out of the haystack on the cart with a thump. The guards are about to spot you, but what distracts them?"

Leading questions are good as follow-ups to a test. You already know if a player has succeeded, so ask a leading question that includes the outcome and let them fill in the details!

Often, players feel as if the Narrator is the one who's supposed to answer all of these questions themselves. We've found that nothing makes the players more invested in the world and the characters and events within it than when they have some small part in describing the outcomes. With leading questions, you can keep those outcomes within the bounds of the success and failure of the PC's actions, while giving the players agency and the freedom to describe how their character might react.

Revealing Details

You're called to step in as the five senses of the PCs, because they're fictional people in a fictional world of shared imagination. Players can imagine quite a bit if you reveal, piece by piece, moment by moment, the characters and locations and events that appear in the world of Xadia. The trick here is to reveal details that inspire them.

Just the Highlights

Most people have good imaginations, but everyone needs the seed of an idea to get them going. Be prepared to sketch out the most important, crucial, or otherwise significant details of any person, place, or object. As a rule, *three notable details* are enough to go on. Pick three senses and give an example of each: how a place smells, how a person sounds, how an object feels. Give the players the highlights and let them fill in the gaps.

Narrator as Encyclopedia

The players are relying on you to know the world of Xadia well enough to set a tale in it. You don't need to be a living database of all things *The Dragon Prince*, or an expert on the television series and every book, game, or creator interview that's ever happened. It means that you're the one who reveals useful background information: the things their characters might know if they grew up in a kingdom or spent their childhood with someone.

Sometimes you know the answers to the players' questions, and sometimes you have to make things up on the spot. Either way, revealing facts is often your responsibility, if you're not otherwise asking them to come up with those facts themselves.

Meta-Knowledge

Sometimes it's fun to give the players information that *they* know but their *characters* do not. Why do this? It lets them step back for a moment and center themselves on the story as a whole, not just on their character, and they can dive back in with this "set direction" in their minds if they're otherwise unsure what to do.

Say you've introduced a catalyst who you've created to be a foil to the PCs. You might say, "You won't learn this until much later, but they've just had a long conversation with the Sunfire high mage, and they're nervous." Or, "After you leave, she retires to her room, muttering and fuming at your lack of vision."

Managing the Rules

Finally, one of the most important responsibilities of the Narrator is to know the rules of the game. It's your job to facilitate, which means giving the players the rules information they need to roll dice, use their traits, and make rules choices of their own.

Know the Characters

Be aware of the PCs that your players have created. Keep notes about their values, attributes, distinctions, and assets. Know the difference between one SFX and another. Be ready to make judgment calls about which values or attributes or other traits seem to be the most likely for a dice pool. And above all, remember that a *character journal is a player's wish list*—the traits and die ratings they chose tell you what sorts of things they want to be good at or challenged by. Refer to Understanding Your Character on page 65 for more information on character journals and everything on it.

Know the Systems

Get familiar with the differences between tests, contests, and challenges. Spend some time getting up to speed on what players can spend PP on, or what stress is and how it works. You need to be ready to decide during the game when something needs dice to be put together, and when you can just roleplay with the players to move the tale along.

Don't feel you're alone in this. It's great to discuss the game rules with your players, with other Narrators, and online forums. It's worth raising your thoughts on the rules so you can decide whether to tweak a few.

Know the Game

There's more to *Tales of Xadia* than just character journals and rules. This is a storytelling game of discovery, intrigue, and adventure that draws you into a fantasy world based on a television series, and so it's up to you to manage how everything fits together. Become familiar with the feel of the world, the highs and the lows. Go back and watch the show, and relive those favorite moments. Then think about how the game handles those moments, and what choices Callum, Rayla, and Ezran might have made had they been PCs in a game.



Narrator Characters

Everyone the player characters meet, engage with, conspire against, or share adventures with that isn't another PC is a **Narrator character (NC)**. In this section, everything you need to know about NCs is provided, from understanding what their roles are in the game to creating them yourself.

Catalysts are also NCs, but they have some very special rules and traits to worry about, so they get a section all to themselves starting on page 168.

The Supporting Cast

If the PCs are the stars of the show, the NCs are the supporting cast, the characters who provide context to all of the discovery, intrigue, and adventure that the PCs find themselves embroiled in. To be useful, the supporting cast cannot overshadow or outshine the stars, and for this reason we talk mostly about NCs being tools for the Narrator to weave the tale around the choices and decisions made by the players.

When in doubt, take a step back and think to yourself, "Why is this NC in this tale?" The answer should almost always be framed in relation to the PCs. It's true that the world of Xadia has many diverse and fascinating individuals in it, from kings and queens to cuddly furry creatures and terrifying monsters. All of them have their own hopes and dreams. But they can best be described as either allies of the PCs or antagonists of them.

NCs as Allies

An NC who helps the player characters is an ally. This could be a family member, a close friend, or someone the PCs have met who shares their goals. NC allies can provide useful information to the PCs in scenes just in conversation. You don't need to roll dice to have them be convinced, persuaded, or cajoled into helping the PCs most of the time.

If the PCs have allies with them during a test, contest, or challenge, an NC can lend one of their traits to a PC's dice pool as if they were an asset.

This is entirely up to you as the Narrator. Because these NC dice are not actually assets, players can't activate Narrator opportunities to step them up, but on the other hand they don't have to spend PP to get their help.

> SOREN: We're gonna have to walk across the bridge without anyone seeing you.
>
> EZRAN: How are we gonna do that?
>
> SOREN: Don't worry. I brought a disguise.
>
> EZRAN: There's no clothes in here.
>
> SOREN: Yeah! You climb in, and you'll be disguised as 'stuff in a sack'!
>
> *Book 3: Sun, Chapter 5: Heroes and Masterminds*

One thing you might consider if you're having an NC help a PC in a test or contest is whether or not the NC suffers the consequences of the PC failing their dice rolls. It can be a dramatic twist to the story if the stress isn't applied to the PC but to the helping NC instead when the PC loses a test. There's certainly precedent for friends and family rushing to the defense of a main character in a story and sacrificing themselves for them. Of course, this doesn't have to always mean a tragic end! It could just mean the NC is too afraid, angry, or insecure after the test to be any help later.

Your players may already have established some NCs as allies when they created their characters—in the form of assets. Yes, assets can represent NCs, but they're linked to the PC via a die rating and this die rating represents the strength of that connection and the usefulness of the NC to that PC. If this NC is present in the scene as a character in their own right, which may be the case if you've given them their own traits, then the player might benefit not only from the asset die rating but also one or more of the NC's traits, if they are helpful. We go into more detail about assets in Understanding Your Character on page 68.

NCs as Antagonists

Any NC who works against the interests of the PCs is an antagonist. Their role in the tale is to get in the PC's way, to challenge or otherwise block them. As an antagonist, the NC's traits are applied to the Narrator's difficulty pool when a PC makes a test, or included in the challenge pool as bonus dice when a challenge might be made more difficult by the NC's involvement in it.

Antagonist NCs shouldn't replace a strong catalyst presence in the tale. However, you may frequently experience periods during play where the scene doesn't call for a catalyst to be present. Because you can come up with a NC on the spot, you can frame a scene including one or more antagonist NCs and make the tests and challenges in that scene more personal to the PCs by having these antagonists throw their own traits into the mix.

Even if you're not using their dice in tests or challenges, an antagonist NC might just be an obstacle to the players through roleplaying. An obnoxious merchant, a stubborn town guard, or a sly Skywing elf can all be antagonists without any dice being involved! Just remember you can move things to a test or a challenge if it becomes necessary.

Creating Narrator Characters

You have a potentially unlimited number of NCs at your disposal, and you don't even have to spend time before the session creating them. NCs are the simplest tool in your Narrator toolkit and dropping them into a session couldn't be easier.

Name and Pronouns

Choose a name for the NC and note their pronouns. Don't leave this until the end, because it's the hardest part for some people! You'd be amazed at how much forms in your mind's eye when you know somebody's name and pronouns.

If you're stuck with names, and you don't think the character really is that important to the tale beyond this scene, it's okay to call them Henry the Guide or Sally the Blacksmith. We're not going to judge you.

Narrator Character Traits

All NCs have from a minimum of one to as many as three traits. These aren't values or attributes or even distinctions, necessarily, but are instead specific qualities that belong to the NC. Each trait has a die rating from 4 to 12, like any trait.

NC traits can be literally anything that helps to identify or distinguish the NC from others, or even provide some common ground with other NCs already in play. **Clumsy** and **Suspicious** are great because they say something about the NC. But, likewise, **Inspector** and **Knight** are also great because they summarize a lot about the NC's own skills and talents.

Assigning Traits

How many traits should you assign? That all depends on the circumstances. A good rule of thumb is to think up two traits for most NCs, but stick with one if the NC is unlikely to show up again in the session, and three if you think they might stick around longer than one session. You can add more later if you want—you can even change traits from session to session, no problem at all.

For die ratings, here's a good guide for what each die rating represents in terms of story importance:

> d4 Underdeveloped. This gets the NC into trouble.
>
> 6 Average. This gets the NC a little attention, but not much.
>
> d8 Notable. This is something the NC is known for.
>
> d10 Significant. This is something the NC is famous for.
>
> d12 Superlative. This is something the NC is legendary for.

Final Touches

If you're preparing the NC in advance of a session, go ahead and write up a single paragraph blurb or something about them—a biography, a description, or some history that is relevant to the tale you're running.

If you're making the NC up on the spot, at least make some notes about what the NC looks like, sounds like, or does. Mannerisms and funny accents are perfectly acceptable.

A Dozen Narrator Characters

Want some inspiration or ideas? Here's twelve NCs readymade to be dropped into your own tales. For more NCs, look ahead into *The Tale of the Corrupted Core*, or review the bonus tales we provide on our website such as *The Tale of the Lost Oasis* or *The Tale of the Gloaming Glade*.

You can rename, re-use, or re-flavor any of these characters for your own use in your sessions. Go ahead and mix 'em up!



Bedunkle, a Traveling Food Connoisseur (he/him)

Traveling from human kingdom to human kingdom, Bedunkle spreads news of his favorite delicacies for profit. But he doesn't think himself too good for a pie-eating contest.

Competitive d8
Consumer 6



Bentler, a Katolian Soldier (he/him)

A polearm-carrying member of the Katolis infantry, Bentler tends to value his own morals over those of his superiors. He has a way of finding trouble.

Independent d8
Infantry 6



Bettina, an Evenerean Scientist (she/her)

Eager to chronicle Evenerean sea life, Bettina has begun to crave adventure beyond her land's swampy waters.

Ambitious d8
Aquarist 6



Blayne, a Durenian Beekeeper (she/her)

Blayne thinks she sees all of Xadian history through the pollination habits of her bees. She's a little, but not entirely, wrong. Her honey is amazing.

Obsessive 6
Apiarist d8



Dynecta, a Sunfire Elf Artisan (he/him)

Dynecta is bound by oath to create ceremonial clothing for the royalty of Lux Aurea, but such trappings have become a non-priority since the city fell. He now tries to find meaning helping the less fortunate.

Loyal 8
Tailor 6



Karlyn, a Katolian Puppeteer (she/her)

Ever the challenger of authority, Karlyn believes in upending the arts scene as well as local politics with her elaborate political puppet street theater.

Agitprop 8
Puppeteer 6



Laaner, a Moonshadow Elf Scout (he/him)

Connecting communication between areas of the Silvergrove in a way that message spells can't, Laaner has a knack for keeping even the most dire news lighthearted.

Rollicking 6
Messenger 8



Pabbak, a Sunfire Elf Artist (she/her)

Pabbak found her calling far from Lux Aurean military society. She always sees the big picture; her art reflects on Xadia's strife instead.

Haughty 6
Painter 8



Polizi, a Skywing Elf Storyteller (they/them)

For years Polizi has tracked the various laws of Xadia, and has even traveled in secret to the west, hoping to find greater meaning through the laws of humans and elves.

Inquisitive 8
Barrister 6



Perris, a Moonshadow Elf Carpenter (he/him)

After his career of crafting luxury furniture for the upper class started to lag, Perris took on a side gig as town carpenter, and he hates it. Best to focus on his artistic side!

Artistic 8
Upholsterer 6



Trenda, a Skywing Elf Scholar (she/her)

Adventurers may stumble across this wise sage as she slowly travels across Xadia. Trenda has to take it slow, as she tends to trip all over herself.

Clumsy 6
Guru 8



Vankan, a Moonshadow Elf Ore Miner (she/her)

Vankan heads many of the Silvergrove's dirty jobs, including mercenary work. But her main gig is vegetable farming near the mountains. It's made her wise and hearty, and a bit awkward.

Veteran 8
Miner 6



Catalysts

Every story has major characters who change and alter the story significantly through their interactions with the heroes, rather than just helping or hindering them along the way. In *Tales of Xadia* we call these NCs **catalysts**. Examples of *The Dragon Prince* characters that could be called catalysts include Lord Viren of Katolis, the archdragons, and Khessa, Queen of the Sunfire Elves.

A catalyst starts out somewhat indifferent to the PCs. They have their own motives, goals, and plots that might only become a significant part of the unfolding tale when the PCs meet them, seek them out, or get in their way.

Every tale has at least one catalyst, and most should have two or more. Spend some time and attention on them before the session starts, even if they're less prominent than other NCs over the course of the game.

Catalyst Traits

All catalysts are defined by the same sets of traits: the catalyst die, values, distinctions, and specialties and assets.

The Catalyst Die

In place of attributes, a catalyst has a **catalyst die**. This die is always included in any dice pool you roll for that catalyst. It begins as either a 6 or a 8, depending on how many other catalysts you expect to use in the tale:

NUMBER OF CATALYSTS	CATALYST DIE
1 or 2 Catalysts	8
3+ Catalysts	6

After every session in which the PCs engage with the catalyst—usually with one or more contests—the catalyst die is stepped up. If the PCs engage with multiple contests in a session, the catalyst die still only steps up by one.

In tales where catalysts are in competition with one another (such as in *The Tale of the Corrupted Core*), you may decide to step up one catalyst's die and step another's down. A catalyst die of 12 can't be stepped up, nor can a 4 be stepped down.

A catalyst die can never be higher than the catalyst's highest value die rating. A catalyst without a 10 value die rating (it doesn't matter which value) can't have a 10 catalyst die. Without a 12 value die rating, they can't have a 12 catalyst die.

Once a catalyst's die steps up to 12, they are fully realized as a major ally or major antagonist of the PCs. This unlocks the following SFX, which the Narrator can use at any time in a scene where the catalyst is present or where their influence (via their agents, lieutenants, or other Narrator characters) is felt strongly.

- *Twist:* Step down the catalyst die to end the current scene in the catalyst's favor. Award each PC in the scene PP.

This can be used for the catalyst to escape, defeat a number of foes, undergo some kind of mysterious transformation, rescue an important PC, or any other outcome that the Narrator chooses to exploit. However, it can't stress a PC out of the scene, nor can it change the outcome of a test, contest, or challenge that's already been completed. Once used, the catalyst die steps down to 10. The *Twist* SFX is unavailable for that catalyst until the catalyst die steps up again to 12.

Catalyst Values

Just like PCs, catalysts have values and value statements. Unlike PCs, their values all start out a little more even, with the intent that they may swing wildly over time; this, in turn, shapes who they are and what role they play in the tale. For a refresher on values and value statements, check out the Values section of Understanding Your Character on page 66.

Catalysts have the same fifteen steps in their value die ratings, but they usually don't start with any value rated higher than 8. This means most have the following die ratings assigned to their values: one at 4, one at 6, and the rest at 8. A catalyst's value die ratings are a constraint on the size of their catalyst die. A catalyst die rating can't be higher than the highest value. A 10 value is required for a 10 catalyst die, a 12 value for a 12 catalyst die.

Catalysts should have value statements as a way for you as a Narrator to note what the catalyst thinks about each of the six values and why. Catalysts rarely question their value statements like PCs (page 98), but if you want a catalyst to question their value in a scene to get three dice instead of one, remember to step down the value and recover it at the end of the session and rewrite the statement if needed.

For more on catalyst values and how PCs can interact with them to influence a catalyst, see Influencing Catalysts on page 171.

Catalyst Distinctions

Each catalyst has three distinctions, just like a PC. These are rated at 8, and by default have only the *Hinder* SFX, which works just like a PC's *Hinder* SFX. Any PP earned via this SFX goes to your supply of PP that you may spend on NCs.

Catalysts usually have the same types of distinctions as PCs: kindred, vocation, and quirk. For more details on these, see page 68. Sometimes you can blur the lines a little between these. Generally, the kindred distinction should reflect the catalyst's background, with the other two further shaping the catalyst's nature and qualities.

You can add additional SFX to a catalyst, but it's not required. If you do, a good rule of thumb is to include no more than two additional unlocked SFX for a 8 catalyst, four for a 10 catalyst, and six for a 12 catalyst. If the catalyst die is stepped down, the catalyst only has access to the number of SFX appropriate for that rating.

Like PCs, catalysts can have distinctions with 10 or even 12 die ratings, as long as their catalyst die is 10 or 12. It's a good idea to wait to introduce such a catalyst until the majority of your PCs have a higher rated distinction, unless you're specifically trying to present a more dangerous or challenging catalyst to your game. If a catalyst die steps down during the course of play, any higher rated distinctions must be rolled at the lower die rating, as well.

CATALYST DIE	ADDED SFX	MAX DISTINCTION DIE RATING
6	0	8
8	2	8
10	4	10
12	6	12

Catalyst Assets and Specialties

You can give a catalyst one or more assets or specialties, if you want. In general, pick an asset that best represents the sort of activity you think the catalyst might engage with, something that might make them stand out. Viren's staff, for example, is a fairly recognizable part of his overall look.

Catalysts don't need specialties to be successful at what they do, but you can include some if you want them to be especially proficient or notable. For the most part, choose specialties that highlight their abilities—**Swordplay** for a knight, for example.

Unlike PCs, a mage catalyst doesn't need a magical asset or specialty to be a mage. However, it's probably a good idea to include those, especially if they'll be working alongside or against mage PCs.

Narrating Catalysts

Catalysts are "tent pole" characters around which the progress of a tale is wound, tugged, pushed, and otherwise engaged with by the PCs. In many cases the first part of a tale involves introducing the catalysts and their particular goals or motivations. The rest of the tale comes from dealing with the fallout from the PCs' interactions with the catalysts.

Be Memorable

Your guide to playing a memorable catalyst is much like that of any NC. Rely on their traits first and foremost: distinctions, values, and any assets or specialties. Use their value statements to inform how they behave around the PCs and use their description and distinctions as springboards for ideas.

Likewise, the goals and plans and dreams of a catalyst should stick in the minds of the players after the tale is done. You won't know at the start of the tale what or how these moments come together, but that's the joy of tabletop storytelling. Together, you and the players reveal more of the catalyst's nature in play.

Be Heroic

Some catalysts are predisposed toward being larger than life heroes or allies of the PCs, from stoic queens and valiant knights to fearless orphans and daring runaways. If the PCs embrace such a catalyst, recognizing the good in them, then play up those strong values and positive qualities.

Don't forget to include flaws and foibles. Nobody's perfect, and frequently a diamond in the rough proves to be a much more heroic character. Players often enjoy knowing that their heroic allies have overcome something to get to where they are.

Be Villainous

Other catalysts seem to lean in the other direction, as antagonists and opposition to everything the PCs stand for. Many catalysts can be driven in that direction if the PCs push them to get what they want, causing resentment, bitterness, or fury. This is something that comes out through roleplaying—changing value die ratings doesn't push a catalyst towards villainy.

Villains don't think that they're villains, however. Nobody is purely evil or wicked. Some of the best villains have real, understandable reasons for doing what they do, as twisted as that can sometimes seem. Try to keep something relatable in your antagonistic catalysts, either as a spark to ignite for redemption or a tragic motivator for the catalyst's further fall from grace.

> "You think I'm being an opportunist, but I couldn't be more selfless in my motivation. I am a servant of Katolis!"
>
> VIREN
>
> *Book 1: Moon, Chapter 5: An Empty Throne*

Be Fair

A catalyst is a powerful NC—on the same level as the PCs—with your own Narrator power behind them. Because you get to frame the scenes in the game how you like (see page 182 for more on Set-Up and Scene Framing), you could easily set the PCs up in a compromised situation with the catalyst at an advantage.

Playing fair with your catalysts means being as interested as your players are in finding out what happens, and letting the catalyst's own traits and value statements guide your choices. Don't be afraid to let the PCs know what the catalysts think and feel through roleplaying. Highlight their highest values by having the catalysts express them when the PCs interact with them; showcase the catalyst's weaknesses the same way.

Because you don't hide dice rolls in this game, and no outcomes are hidden, you're free to let the tests, contests, and challenges play out as they should. Use your PP to give the catalysts the same edge the PCs enjoy, but don't worry if your catalysts lose contests all the time. The tale is revealed just as much when you describe how the catalysts respond to these failures.

Influencing Catalysts

PCs can sway or alter catalysts from their course of action through the use of contests. There are many reasons why they might want to do this:

- The PCs want the catalyst's help
- The PCs want to stop the catalyst from pursuing a goal or activity
- The PCs want to change the catalyst's behavior
- The PCs want the catalyst to get out of the way of their own goals
- The PCs want something the catalyst has

Contests with Catalysts

Influencing a catalyst means engaging with them in a contest with the declared intent of wanting something from them that they otherwise wouldn't give up. If the PCs ask a catalyst to do something and it's entirely within the catalyst's own goals to do so, then there's no reason for a contest. However, often the PCs need to persuade or even threaten the catalyst, or act in opposition to them, and that's when the dice come out.

Have the player define what they want and how they plan to get it, and then have them initiate the contest. Depending on the outcome, either the catalyst or the PC may take stress. You should then roleplay the outcome and what it means for the PC to have won or lost that particular contest. See Narrating Contests on page 189 for more.

> RUNAAN: You're just trying to stall me.
>
> RAYLA: Interesting theory. Care to discuss?
>
> *Book 1: Moon, Chapter 3: Moonrise*

Changing Catalyst Values

Catalysts are unique because their value die ratings may change during play based on the outcomes of contests with the PCs.

Use the following as a guide to how this can play out. Remember: stepping up a value means it's more significant or important to the catalyst. Stepping down a value means it matters less to the catalyst.

- If a catalyst wins a contest against a PC, you may step up the value they used in the contest by one step. If that value is already 12, you can step up another value that complements it.
- If a catalyst loses a contest against a PC, the player of that PC may choose one of the catalyst's values to either step up or step down. If it's already a 12 or a 4, another value must be chosen.
- You must then step up or step down another value's die rating to keep the same number of steps in total (fifteen).

When the players win a contest against a catalyst and change a value, this should impact the catalyst's future actions. This is a way you can show the players that their choices have meaning.



Catalysts and Growth

A catalyst's values step up and down during play, and there's no need to change the ratings again during the session's growth. Consider rewriting their value statements if their perspective changed significantly during play.

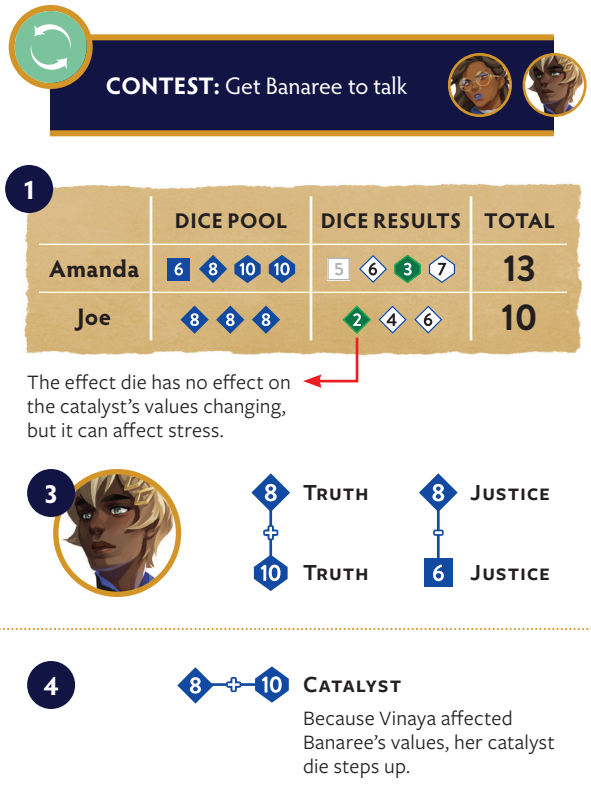
If the catalyst was involved in a contest with one or more PCs, step up their catalyst die at the end of the session. A bigger catalyst die rating lets you unlock more SFX or step up distinction die ratings (see Catalyst Distinctions on page 169). A catalyst die can only be stepped up to equal the catalyst's highest value die rating. Without a d10 value die rating, a d8 catalyst die can't be stepped up. Without a d12, a d10 catalyst die can't be stepped up.

You may step down a catalyst die if the PCs didn't interact with the catalyst in the session, to show the PCs' lack of investment in the catalyst's story. Give players fair warning: if each player spends a PP, the catalyst can remain at the current die rating. If the catalyst has SFX, check the table on page 169 to see if they lose access to any when the catalyst die steps down. *(See Example: Catalysts and Growth.* More examples of catalysts and growth are found in *The Tale of the Corrupted Core.)*

Example: Catalysts and Growth

Joe, the Narrator, sets a scene where Amanda's character, Vinaya, investigates the robbery of an artifact from a Durenian library. Vinaya encounters the catalyst who keeps the library, Banaree, and suspects she knows more than she lets on. Vinaya wants answers, and Joe calls for a contest.

1. Amanda decides to use Vinaya's **Influence** d10 attribute, **Truth** d10 value, and **Durenian Noble** d8 distinction. She adds Vinaya's **Diplomacy** d6 specialty. **Total**: **13**.
2. Joe describes how Banaree bristles and denies knowing anything at all. He gathers Banaree's **Catalyst** d8 die, her **Justice** d8 value, and **Durenian Scholar** d8 distinction. **Total**: **10**.
3. Banaree loses the contest. Amanda gives Banaree stress, and Joe asks if she wants Banaree's values to change. She asks to step up Banaree's **Truth** value, bringing it to a d10. Joe has to step down another value and chooses **Justice**, reducing it to a d6. Joe narrates how the weight on Banaree's mind is heavy, and with Vinaya's influence, she admits a secret...
4. During the session's growth, Joe reviews his catalyst characters to see if any of their catalyst dice change. Banaree, with a **Truth** value of d10 after her contest with Vinaya, is more significant to the story, allowing Joe to step up her catalyst die to a d10.



A Dozen Catalysts

Wondering what a catalyst might look like written out in game terms? Here are a dozen of them, ready to feature in your own tales. Look for additional examples in our published tales, beginning with *The Tale of the Corrupted Core* in this very book.

Customizing the Catalysts

These catalysts all possess the *Hinder* SFX by default, but do not have added SFX, or any assets or specialties. If you use them, feel free to add those as needed, and tweak the value die ratings if you prefer a slightly different assortment.

> "Callum, you are free. You are free from both the past and the future. Nothing is written in stone. Fate is a lie. You are free!"
>
> HARROW
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 8: The Book of Destiny*

BANAREE, a Durenian Librarian (she/her)

A weaver of tapestries and keeper of an ancient library, Banaree has found an artifact worthy of royal study. Eager to discuss it, she may have shared it with a questionable stranger.



Catalyst d8

Values

Devotion d8

If hugging books were normal, I'd do it more!

Glory 6

I enjoy a good argument, but I'm otherwise laid back.

Justice d8

I've observed enough to know what's right.

Liberty d4

If destiny calls, my ego takes a backseat.

Mastery d8

Having a vocation keeps you needed!

Truth d8

The history books will correct us all.

Distinctions

Durenian Scholar d8

Genial Librarian d8

Friend Indeed d8

BETHDA, a Sunfire Elf Mercenary (she/her)

Bethda searches for a new home for her people. Sadly she's been forced to take some morally questionable gigs to make her way, and gossip has gotten out about some of them.



Catalyst d8

Values

Devotion d4

It's better not to think of things loved and lost.

Glory d8

Falling doesn't mean never recovering.

Justice d8

I have visions of righteousness every day.

Liberty d8

I spent too much time allowing others' power to control me.

Mastery 6

I've worked hard to become strong, and now must also serve.

Truth d8

I've seen too much corruption to stay silent any longer.

Distinctions

Sunfire Elf d8

Mindful Mercenary d8

Heavy Weighs My Shame d8

DESKA, a Skywing Elf Apothecary (she/her)

Assembling magic ingredients in the far reaches of Xadia has given Deska time to think. She's realized her collection of serums and knowledge could instigate a subtle but worldwide change.



Catalyst 8

Values

Devotion 6

I'm industrious, isn't that enough?

Glory 8

Why settle for serving only others?

Justice 8

I feel the weight of the world's balance in my hands.

Liberty 8

Great creators like myself need elbow room to work.

Mastery 6

I keep my nose to the grindstone, always.

Truth 4

Questioning my motives only distracts and frustrates me.

Distinctions

Skywing Elf 8

Brooding Apothecary 8

Mournful Loner 8

FAYLN, a Moonshadow Elf Assassin (she/her)

Once a celebrated assassin, she was bloodied in a recent mission where she lost a beloved comrade and a fingertip on her left hand. She seeks revenge on the humans who set her up.



Catalyst 8

Values

Devotion 6

Loss has made me wary of others.

Glory 8

I'm not too shy to use brutality.

Justice 8

I will mend all wrongs I've witnessed.

Liberty 4

I make easy alliances as long as they're valuable.

Mastery 8

Skills are for honing, not simply for using.

Truth 8

I must keep my honor, if nothing else.

Distinctions

Moonshadow Elf 8

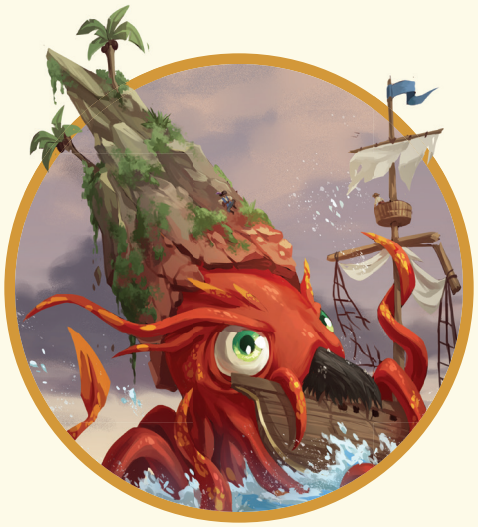
Nervous Duelist 8

No Time to Cry 8


BANAREE
DESKA
BETHDA
FAYLN

GLUGGIS, a Giant Squid (he/him)

Lurking beneath the Frozen Sea, this magical creature has been using messengers and mysterious influence from many miles away to garner a reputation for himself. He hopes to have a say in world politics someday soon.



CATALYST 8

VALUES

DEVOTION 4

Emotions are at odds with strength, and I prefer being strong.

GLORY 8

Consolidating resources is the point of being alive.

JUSTICE 6

I'll undo someone completely, if it suits me that day.

LIBERTY 8

I'd rather leave my life behind than be pinned down even slightly.

MASTERY 8

What good is a mind if it isn't always sharp?

TRUTH 8

Manipulation is inevitable, why pretend otherwise?

DISTINCTIONS

MAGICAL MONSTER 8

SCHEMING LEVIATHAN 8

BROODING BLOWHARD 8

HEMALI, a Katolian Socialite (she/her)

A lover of travel and trophies, funded in part by her family's wealth, Hemali has started realizing of late that she's stumbled upon enough accidental riches that her hoard of treasures could give her power beyond her homeland.



CATALYST 8

VALUES

DEVOTION 6

People can be less trustworthy than things.

GLORY 4

I'm more concerned with survival than achievement.

JUSTICE 8

I know what history does to villains.

LIBERTY 8

I won't be a victim to anyone else's morals.

MASTERY 8

One must create as well as collect.

TRUTH 8

No lie goes unnoticed, and I don't take risks.

DISTINCTIONS

KATOLIAN NOBLE 8

NERVOUS SOCIALITE 8

OBSESSIVE COLLECTOR 8

JOFFRAN, a Del Barian Satirist (he/him)

Joffran has been an infamous town crier, a famous playwright, and a well-known but unusual and quirky poet. Since his written work was recently destroyed in a fire he's become ambitious, and he's considering using his wits to get himself into Del Bar's political inner circle.



Catalyst 8

Values

Devotion 8

My words aren't valuable if they don't speak to the heart.

Glory 8

Art is nothing if it doesn't endure.

Justice 6

I assume my compatriots will make their own peace.

Liberty 4

If people enjoy my works, I'll take any employer.

Mastery 8

Keeping your nose to the grindstone fosters true meaning.

Truth 8

Language is both valuable and malleable.

Distinctions

Del Barian Noble 8

Snarky Satirist 8

I Worry About the Written Word 8

KHALEN, a Neolandian Advisor (she/her)

Ever the people pleaser, Khalen used to keep King Ahling focused. However, in the current power struggle, she is gathering support for herself as a leader.



Catalyst 8

Values

Devotion 8

Feelings are an integral part of any person.

Glory 8

I possess strengths, so sure, I deserve power.

Justice 8

The meek and the mighty must defend each other.

Liberty 6

I belong to my country and ask little of it.

Mastery 8

Talking your way through life requires constant adaptation.

Truth 4

If we obsess over honesty, nothing gets done.

Distinctions

Neolandian Noble 8

Quick-Witted Negotiator 8

My Time to Shine 8

HEMALI



JOFFRAN



KHALEN



GLUGGIS



NEEDA, a Katolian Map Maker (they/them)

Needa has spent too many nights near nothing but a candle and an inkwell, trying to appease sailors with maps of improved trade routes. They now long to make a conquest of their own, through a pirate in their network or a merchant who owes them a favor.



Catalyst 8

Values

Devotion 8	**Liberty** 6
I pour my heart into the details.	*I'm eager for someone new to serve.*
Glory 8	**Mastery** 8
Knowledge is power, and I'm sitting on a lot!	*My flourishes have staggering value.*
Justice 8	**Truth** 4
I've watched the world fail; now it needs help.	*Artistic license is essential for survival.*

Distinctions

- **Katolian Artisan** 8
- **Ambitious Cartographer** 8
- **Heartbroken Introvert** 8

PLOTICE, a Skywing Elf Oracle (he/him)

A winged Skywing elf, Plotice has found magic and innovative ways of exploring high-altitude lands that would make even a high-flying dragon jealous. His most recently discovered spell is the most rare and powerful yet.



Catalyst 8

Values

Devotion 6	**Liberty** 8
My aspirations earn most of my attention.	*Landing on the ground feels like prison.*
Glory 8	**Mastery** 8
A mere elf can become as powerful as any creature.	*Complacency will always lead to regret.*
Justice 4	**Truth** 8
Let's stop worrying about the burden of accountability.	*I might be stuffy, but I'll prove to you why I'm right.*

Distinctions

- **Skywing Elf** 8
- **Luminous Oracle** 8
- **High and Mighty** 8

POMPLYM, a Sunfire Elf Bodyguard (he/him)

A life of service has led to disappointments, as Pomplym has witnessed too many of his charges suffer an unkind fate. He now thinks he sees doom everywhere, perhaps in too many places.



Catalyst 8

Values

Devotion 8
I care deeply for those I serve.

Glory 4
Winning is for the cruel at heart.

Justice 8
Staying quiet means spreading suffering.

Liberty 8
No one should be a slave to their station.

Mastery 6
My job is not as important as my heart.

Truth 8
Selfish manipulation only creates peril.

Distinctions

Sunfire Elf 8
Concerned Bodyguard 8
Conquest Has Consequences 8

SOMMA, a Moonshadow Elf Botanist (she/her)

Having bumped into many a monster in her time, Somma is beginning to wonder if there's a better way to protect the Silvergrove than just collecting its flora. Maybe it's time for action.



Catalyst 8

Values

Devotion 8
I adore every living thing, sometimes to a fault.

Glory 4
Pacifism is more important than conquest.

Justice 8
We fix things best by setting examples.

Liberty 6
I am a sister to all living things.

Mastery 8
I try to discover something new more than once a day.

Truth 8
Nature keeps the greatest honesty; we must try to match it.

Distinctions

Moonshadow Elf 8
Sympathetic Botanist 8
Obsessive Collector 8

PLOTICE
NEEDA
POMPLYM
SOMMA



Narrating the Game

You've got your NCs, you've got the basics of what it means to be the Narrator. But what exactly do you do? What rules do you have at your disposal to make each session a lot of fun for yourself and for the players?

In this section are all of the essential tools you need to manage a session of *Tales of Xadia*. Before you read this, brush up on everything in the Player's Guide chapter with an emphasis on how tests, contests, and challenges work. These rules build on that information and everything that was laid out in Welcome to Cortex.

Here's a quick checklist of a session before we get to the details.

- Hand out plot points, check on PC stress
- Narrate one or more opening scenes for each PC, alone or in groups
- Frame scenes of various types: adventure, discovery, intrigue, flashback, and recovery
- Play each scene to find out what happens—tests, contests, and challenges!
- Wrap up with tag scenes for all PCs alone or in groups
- Check on growth pool, values, catalyst dice
- Great game everyone!

Set-Up and Scene Framing

Every session of the game is broken out into **scenes**. The time between each scene is entirely up to you as Narrator. You can run them one after the other, in chronological order, or you can even jump around a little with flashbacks. One scene might be an hour after the last one, or a week.

Your responsibility as Narrator is to set up each scene for the players, describing who's present in the scene (PCs, NCs, and catalysts), where it takes place, what's going on when the scene starts, and what the scene's about. This is called **scene framing**.

CALLUM: No, it's up to us now. We have to return this egg. We have to keep it safe and carry it to Xadia.

EZRAN: And find its mother.

RAYLA: We could change things. We could make a difference.

CALLUM: Just the three of us. [Bait grunts.] Uh, four of us.

Book 1: Moon,
Chapter 3: Moonrise





Who's There?

Decide which of the PCs is in the scene. This isn't always the whole group. A scene that's about one PC talking to a prominent local official isn't going to need everyone. Players might suggest or offer or ask you to put them into a scene, but it's up to you as Narrator to make that call.

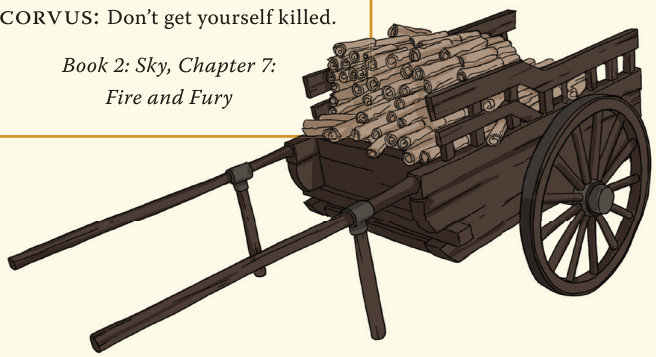
Figure out who else is there. You might have prepared some NCs in advance, and want to include some of them, or you may create a new NC right on the spot! At the very least you choose who else is present and involved in the scene, and if the PCs are aware of them or not.

You can introduce more characters later in the scene, and some PCs might have SFX that let them join a scene already in progress. For an example of this, take a look at the *Wind-Whisper* SFX on page 274 in the Appendix.

SOREN: These people need help. Get as many as you can to safety.

CORVUS: Don't get yourself killed.

Book 2: Sky, Chapter 7: Fire and Fury



Where Is It?

The next thing that's important to scene framing is deciding where the scene takes place. A forest clearing, the courtyard outside the palace, the gates to Lux Aurea, or in the grotto of the Queen of Dragons are all locations in which scenes take place. This doesn't require you to write up a whole lot of notes about a place. You just need to know enough about this location to briefly introduce it, paint a sketch in the minds of the players, and then see what happens.

If the players decide to switch locations in a scene, such as running into a castle from outside, this is often a good time to switch scenes entirely. Location changes almost always lead to scene changes. Minor location shifts, on the other hand, like moving from one stall in a marketplace to another, don't always merit a scene change.

If you feel really clever during a game, you can even add one or more **distinctions** to a scene. This might be something like **Blustery Woods** or **Tangling Thorns** or even **Romantic Lighting**. Players can use these scene distinctions in place of their own in a dice pool—even *Hinder* them, and so can you. This makes setting a scene in a location with notable features complementary to any NCs that are present—not only can an NC add their trait dice to an opposition dice pool in a test, they can draw on a scene distinction as well. Be sure to let players know when scene distinctions are available for them to use—they aren't part of the players' usual dice pools.

What's Going On?

This is exactly what it sounds like—deciding what activity is underway when the scene begins, and what time the scene is set. We call this the **situation**.

> Is it raining, and people are huddled around an evening fire stirring up a big pot of soup?
>
> Is it a hot, fragrant afternoon in a Neolandian town, right as an elephant festival is about to begin?
>
> Is it a dark, clammy passageway underneath an old mossy bridge, where scoundrels and thieves are measuring up each other before a potential fight?

We often use a technique called *in medias res* to describe starting a scene "in the middle of things." The situation is already underway and we're joining the activity some time into the scene itself.

> Perhaps the group around the campfire have been sharing stories and now it's time for a PC to share one of theirs.
>
> Maybe the elephant festival planning has taken all day and it's now in full swing.
>
> Maybe the rogues are already fighting and the PCs are caught in the middle.

You get to decide what's going on as you frame the scene, but you can defer to the players by asking leading questions.

> "It's been a long evening full of stories. Winda, what story do you share as the scene begins?"
>
> "A number of Neolandian officials are speaking to visiting delegates from the other Human Kingdoms during the elephant festival. Easgann, where are you hiding out of the sight of the humans present?"
>
> "Cutthroats and brigands clash blades in a fury as their feet slip and slide in the moss underfoot. Routhna, who did you just knock to the ground with the flat of your mighty blade?"

RAYLA: There's a little thing called irony, where just as you say one thing like you're really sure about it, that's when the opposite happens.

CALLUM: Nah, maybe that's how things work in stories, but in the real world...

[monster attacks]

Book 1: Moon, Chapter 8: Cursed Caldera

What's It About?

In storytelling, especially in movies and television and books, a scene isn't just a series of activities revolving around a couple of characters or their environment. It's also *about something*. This means there is some central idea that everything in the scene pays at least some service to—vengeance, family, love, betrayal, mystery, and so on.

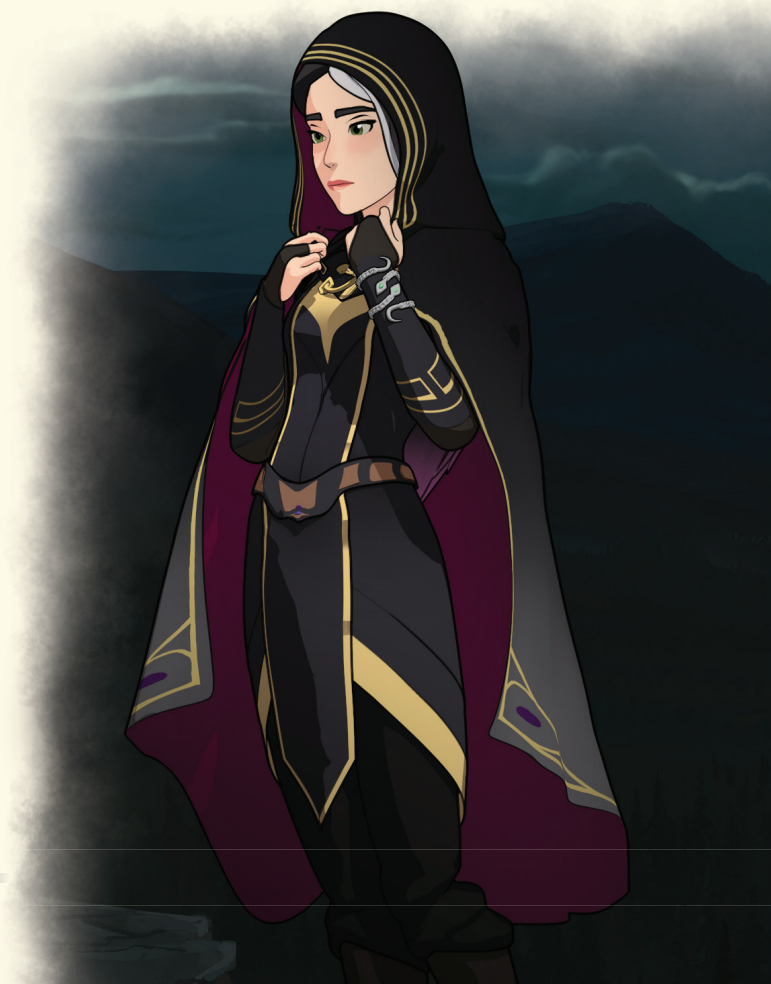
You don't need to spend all that much time planning this, but think about the scene's situation and then consider whether what's happening in the scene has a thematic purpose or reason for existing in the story. *Tales of Xadia* has two very helpful ways to think about this: the principal themes of *The Dragon Prince* (adventure, discovery, and intrigue) and the six values that every character holds true (**Devotion**, **Glory**, **Justice**, **Liberty**, **Mastery**, and **Truth**).

Using one of these core thematic elements to inform what the scene is about for you helps you decide what sort of tests, contests, or challenges to include, but above all, helps direct how the NCs and catalysts in the scene react to the PCs.

"What are we going to do? We betrayed our friends and it was all for nothing."

CLAUDIA

Book 2: Sky, Chapter 3: Smoke and Mirrors



Types of Scenes

Scenes are the building blocks of *Tales of Xadia* sessions. String them together and you have a story, created with your players. But just as there are different things that can happen in a scene, there are different types of scenes at your disposal.

Use the following as your guide. In practice, the lines around these scene types are going to blur. But it's always useful to start from some clear guidelines before you mix things up.

Opening Scenes

Opening scenes set up the core situation of the whole session. Frame as many opening scenes as you need in order to set up what the PCs are doing when the session starts and what they've been doing since the previous session. Make sure everyone has their plot points and double-check stress die ratings since last session, too. An opening scene is also a good place to introduce a catalyst that you plan to feature in the session, or an NC that works for or against one.

Adventure Scenes

Adventure scenes, also known as action scenes, involve high stakes, cinematic action, and characters in conflict. They almost always have one or more tests, contests, or challenges as a central element. Adventure scenes often make up the bulk of the scenes in a session. Frame an adventure scene when the pace seems to be slowing and you want something exciting to happen.

> RAYLA: Give me your scarf. If I wear it, I'll smell like you and I'll draw his fire. Once he uses his blast, you and Zym make a run for it while I keep him busy.
>
> CALLUM: This is the worst idea you've ever had. He's gonna burn you to a crisp.
>
> RAYLA: No, he won't! I'm faster than him.
>
> *Book 3: Sun, Chapter 1: Sol Regem*

Discovery Scenes

Discovery scenes may feature tests against the environment or even traps and puzzles, but the focus is less on action and more on learning, researching, or getting answers to questions. Discovery scenes can include a lot of exploration, which in turn means you describe an area to the players so that they can make decisions about what they'd like to do there. You might call for a test, but you don't need to make your players roll to "find clues" or "sense danger." Instead, go ahead and present clues and secrets to them and find out what they do about this knowledge.

Intrigue Scenes

Intrigue scenes involve the PCs scheming, convincing, pleading, or otherwise influencing the NCs, catalysts, even each other. Intrigue is all about moving people around on the story track. For that reason, a lot of contests happen in intrigue scenes as PCs confront a catalyst and try to get something from them, whether it's their help or their surrender.

Flashback Scenes

Flashback scenes can fill in some backstory that you or the players want to bring up in the current scene. A flashback scene can interrupt another type of scene, but it shouldn't be drawn out, since flashback scenes often involve only one or two PCs and the NCs. Flashback scenes can be used to explain a test-created asset, usually in the form of knowledge or secrets.

Recovery Scenes

Recovery scenes represent downtime between the other types of scenes. Use recovery scenes when the PCs are regrouping, checking in on allies, or making plans. There won't be a lot of dice rolling in recovery scenes, although tests to recover stress are common.

Tag Scenes

Tag scenes are the last scenes in any session and represent the "here's what we learned" scenes between characters. Characters only get better through growth and tag scenes give you a chance to let the players roleplay out using the growth pool. See Ending the Session on page 187 for more on navigating tag scenes and Keeping Your Journal on page 104 for more on growth.

A tag scene is short and summarizes or ties up loose ends; each PC may be in several tag scenes at the end of a session depending on how many loose ends there are.

Play to Find Out What Happens

This may seem like an obvious thing to many people, but tabletop roleplaying games don't usually come with a pre-determined ending. We don't know what the players are going to do with their characters and that's part of the fun. We also don't know how the dice are going to roll, whether luck is on the side of the players or the Narrator, and we don't even always know how long the session is going to last!

Game designer Vincent Baker has a phrase for letting go of a pre-written ending: *playing to find out what happens*. Once you frame the scene, which is one of the most powerful tools you have in your Narrator toolbelt, you have to let things happen. You can call for tests, the players can initiate contests, and you can set up a challenge. But you don't have any control over how the scene is going to end, so let it happen how it happens.

It can be tempting to have some ideas of what to do when the session ends. In fact, even in our premade tales, such as *The Tale of the Corrupted Core* in this book, we include numerous ending scenes—possible finales that arise from the potential choices made by players. But none of these scenes are set in stone nor are any of them guaranteed. The only way you and your players are going to know how the story ends is to play it.

Getting in Trouble

Conflict is at the heart of many scenes, and this doesn't just mean one character rushing another character with fists flying or yelling insults and threats. Conflict means that what one character wants is opposed by another character. When characters can't get along, have different goals, or even operate in challenging environments, we call these **charged situations** and they can be resolved with dice.

When we say that PCs should be getting in trouble, we mean that there should never be a situation where a PC has an unhindered, unchallenged line directly to what they want. If there was, there wouldn't really be much of a story. Players are capable of making all sorts of trouble for themselves, especially when using the *Hinder* SFX. But providing them with suitable opposition in the form of catalysts and NCs makes trouble happen.

There's another kind of trouble we should talk about, too—the kind where the players aren't having a great time, or there's something wrong, or there's any number of issues arising at the table that would pay to resolve. You can't use the game rules to fix problems between players or yourself; safety tools can ensure that the game is a fun experience for everyone.

SAFETY TOOLS

Every group playing *Tales of Xadia* brings their unique ideas and experiences to the table, which is one of the reasons why tabletop roleplaying can be so full of excitement and surprise. While one goal of the game is to create a story together, an equal part is to create a fun experience for everyone involved. Safety tools can help ensure that your table stays a safe, welcoming, and enjoyable space for you and your players.

As the Narrator, consider introducing a safety tool before beginning your first tale. There are many tools to choose from, so work with your group to discover which tools they would find most empowering to use. Safety tools can also be mixed and matched to best serve your group of friends! Not sure where to start? Try Beau Jágr Sheldon's **Script Change** safety toolkit.

Ending Scenes

A scene is over when what's happening in the scene is resolved. That is, the situation has changed, the conflict is over, the opposition has won or lost, or the story just seems to be ready to move on.

Have Things Changed?

Just as you, the Narrator, are in charge of framing the scene, you're also in charge of ending it. However, you shouldn't end the scene until the situation it's about has actually been resolved. A good rule of thumb is, "Have things changed one way or another since the scene started as a result of what's been happening?" If your answer is no, keep playing a little until that's true. If yes, end the scene, and move on to the next.

By the Rules?

In game mechanic terms, it's a good idea to end a scene when a challenge has been completed and the PCs have either prevailed or failed; when a catalyst has been engaged with a contest and has either won or lost; or one or more of the PCs in the scene have been taken out as a result of stress or losing contests.

What a Twist!

You can also use the catalyst's *Twist* SFX (see Catalyst Traits on page 169 for more on this SFX) to end a scene however you like. This does require a 12 catalyst die (stepping it down to 10) and giving every player in the scene PP, but it also means you don't have to worry about whether anything was resolved through dice or even roleplay—you can drop the ending with a cliffhanger and move to the next scene.

JUMPING AROUND BETWEEN SCENES

One last note about ending scenes. Sometimes, to manage everyone at the table, you might try having multiple scenes take place all at the same time, with you just jumping from one group of PCs to another, back and forth, until their scenes are resolved. This is fine, but also consider that perhaps the scenes in question could be much shorter or punchier and that the real problem is that they're running too long.

When in doubt, resolve a test or contest or challenge, then end the scene and move to a new one. It can even be a scene about what happens right after the last one, but there's a new situation, a new status quo, and something new to play and find out what happens.

Ending the Session

Once you've played through enough scenes, you should have a good sense that one of two things is about to happen.

We Did the Thing

The first is the main situation for the whole session has been taken care of, and it's time for something different. If that's the case, it could be a good time to wrap things up for the time being. Move right to growth pool stuff and a tag scene for everyone.

We're Out of Time

The second is that your game time has run out, or is coming close. You can lose track of time when you're having fun! You should agree as a group about how long the game session should last, and stick to that. This way, you can frame some tag scenes when the time is coming up and end the session afterward.



Cliffhanger Endings

Don't be afraid of ending your session on a cliffhanger! To make this work, all the various story threads—or most of them, at least—should remain unresolved. The only tag scene you need to frame is the one in which the PCs are literally not sure how things are going to go next, usually with the stakes very high, a powerful catalyst about to achieve what they want, or the PCs discovered by the guards... and oh dear, time's up, we have to end the session.

Don't Forget Growth

Even with a cliffhanger, let the players resolve all of their growth and value adjustments and so on. Take note of all of their stress die ratings, though. They probably start the next session in an opening scene that picks up right after this ending left off, and just as stressed as they were in that previous session.

> "I'm not going with you to Xadia.
> I have to face my responsibility. Now that
> I'm king, I have to go home. Maybe I can
> help the world better from a throne.
> I can do whatever I can to stop the war."
>
> EZRAN
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 9: Breathe*

Ending a Tale

The session might also be the end of the current tale you're weaving together with your players. Not every group actually needs tales to be explicitly set up like they are with our pre-written examples, but what we're really talking about here is allowing players to resolve their major growth pool advancement, wrapping up the current storyline, and allowing for some downtime between this tale and the next.

Narrating Tests

Tests are the easiest tool in your Narrator's toolbelt. They're a simple difficulty pool plus any extra dice (stress, NC traits, and so on), with the players trying to beat your total. Succeed, and they get past whatever obstacle it is you've set before them. Fail, and they take stress.

When it's time to run a test, be upfront with the players about what the test's stakes are. What does it mean to succeed or fail with this test? How difficult is it going to be? There's no reason to hide those dice, so summarize the test and roll the dice.

Players often get carried away and start assembling their dice pools before they even know what they're up against. Gently remind them that you're the one who rolls first in tests, roll your dice, then assist them if they need the help in putting together their dice pool from attributes, values, distinctions, specialties, and assets.

Here's three tests by way of example. You can find more in *The Tale of the Corrupted Core* and in other published tales. Use them as a guide to making up your own, either in advance (lonely fun!) or on the spot.



TEST: Get past the tired guard (EASY 6 6)

The PCs want to get inside of the longhouse, but a guard stands ready at the doorway. Lucky for them, it's been a long night and the guard is nearing the end of her shift.

Here are some attributes the players might want to use for this test:

- **Agility**: Sneak past quietly and try to go unnoticed.
- **Awareness**: Use your observation skills to choose the best moment to make your move.
- **Strength**: Engage the guard physically to scare her or knock her unconscious.

You can make this test more difficult by giving the guard unique traits, such as **Light Sleeper** 8.

If a PC **succeeds**, they're able to make it past the guard without arousing any undue suspicion. If a PC **fails**, they might face one of these consequences:

- The guard is suspicious, and raises an alert, giving the PC **Insecure** stress.
- The guard thinks she's noticed something, and gives chase! Give the PC **Exhausted** stress.
- The PC barely makes it past the guard, and gives themselves a minor injury in their haste, giving them **Injured** stress.



TEST: Handle the protective banther (CHALLENGING 8 8)

The PC saw an adorable banther cub, and just couldn't resist. Now the banther's parent is angry!

Here are some attributes the players might want to use for this test:

- **Agility**: Make a quick escape. You can outpace a banther, right?
- **Influence**: Try to calm the banther and show you're not a threat.
- **Spirit**: Stand fearless against the banther. You know it will see your heart.

You can make this test more difficult by representing the banther with an additional 8.

If a PC **succeeds**, they've handled the situation! Whether they calmed the banther, escaped, or did something else, it's no longer a threat. If a PC **fails**, they might face one of these consequences:

- The banther swipes defensively, giving the PC **Injured** stress.
- The banther roars at the PC: a definite threat. But that's all it is for now. Give the PC **Afraid** stress.
- The PC manages to escape, but they feel like they're being watched... Did the banther follow them? Give the PC **Insecure** stress.



TEST: Decipher the mysterious inscription (HARD 10 10)

The PC has gotten their hands on an ancient tablet with an inscription. This could be the clue they've been searching for... But it will be hard to understand!

Here are some attributes the players might want to use for this test:

- **Awareness**: Sometimes all you need is context.
- **Influence**: Use your connections with the scholarly people you know.
- **Intellect**: Tap into your well of knowledge and the research you have on hand.

If a PC **succeeds**, they successfully decipher the inscription. Their effect die may influence how much they were able to translate—or if they uncovered something extraordinary!

If a PC **fails**, they might face one of these consequences:

- It takes the PC all night to finish deciphering the tablet, and they take **Exhausted** stress.
- Why doesn't this make sense? ARGH! The PC takes **Angry** stress.
- The PC solved it. They think. Wait, maybe this is all wrong. Give the PC **Insecure** stress.

Narrating Contests

Contests are trickier. They're always between PCs or between PCs and a catalyst. Usually, in fact, they're between one catalyst and one PC who's trying to get something from the catalyst or trying to keep the catalyst from getting what they want.

A contest always ends with one character prevailing for the time being and the other taking stress or giving in. It's important to note that simply taking stress does not mean the character is taken out. What matters is that you have to roleplay a little before you decide whether there's another contest to play out, or if the two sides have reached some sort of agreement about the outcome.

You could, if you wanted, string a half dozen contests together, one after the other, waiting until one side gives in or is stressed out. However, the whole point of taking stress is that you don't want to take more of it. You should feel the burden of that stress as you decide how badly you want to keep going. Many catalysts aren't going to want to become stressed out, and instead surrender the conflict on their own terms. This includes simply saying, "Fine. Have it your way," and then leaving the scene with only a little stress to show for it.

Players are notoriously stubborn, of course, and might never give in or give up, especially if their PCs have been wronged or have very high values or major goals they want to achieve. That's fine. It's possible for them to be stressed out in one contest simply with a 12 effect die and a heroic success on the catalyst's part!



Here's three contests, using catalysts we've provided on page 172. Use them as an example of how to write up a potential contest in your game prep or, at the very least, what to keep in mind when you're handling a contest.

CONTEST: Convince Somma to rethink her plan

Somma, a Moonshadow Elf Botanist, decides to try and magically modify plants to defend the Silvergrove. She reveals her plan to the PCs, and there's a few holes in it.

Here are some examples of values the PCs use:

- **Devotion:** This puts the Silvergrove in danger if it goes wrong.
- **Justice:** This isn't Somma's decision alone. What do the elders think?
- **Liberty:** Nature doesn't belong to us.
- **Mastery:** We can come up with a better solution.

If the PC wins or convinces Somma to give in, she challenges them to come up with a better idea—perhaps even with a time limit.

If the PC loses or gives in, Somma doubles down on her idea. She needs reassurance from the PCs that they aren't going to be a problem. If the PC lost, Somma gives them **Exhausted** or **Insecure** stress. Step up the value Somma used in the contest.

CONTEST: Get Deska to give you the potion

Deska, a Skywing Elf Apothecary, created a potion that the PCs believe could help them. She isn't ready to just give it away, but the PCs could convince her.

Here are some examples of values the PCs might use:

- **Devotion:** Think of the good we could achieve by using this potion.
- **Glory:** By letting us help, we can get your name out to the world.
- **Justice:** The world needs our help; we need yours.
- **Mastery:** Don't you want to see your work in action? Think of what you could discover.

If the PC wins or convinces Deska to give in, she agrees to trade the potion. If she lost and didn't give in, she might look for some compensation in return: what can the PCs offer?

If the PC loses or gives in, Deska continues to refuse them the potion. She might even suspect their intentions! Step up the value Deska used in the contest, and give the PC either **Angry** or **Insecure** stress.

CONTEST: Resist Gluggis' influence

Gluggis, a giant squid, wants to use the PCs to extend his reputation by offering a magical relic for them to carry on his behalf. Suspicious PCs might want to engage in a contest to reveal his true intentions.

Here are some examples of values the PCs might use:

- **Glory:** This isn't how to make a name for yourself; I've got better, and bigger, ideas.
- **Liberty:** My mind is my own. Don't use your magic on me.
- **Mastery:** We're equals; why don't we learn from each other?
- **Truth:** You can't trick me. What's going on here?

If the PC wins or convinces Gluggis to give in, he stops trying to control them (at least for now), and opens up about his dreams of political fame.

If the PC loses, Gluggis uses their weakness as proof of his superiority, insists they follow his commands, and gives them **Afraid** or **Insecure** stress. Step up the value Gluggis used in the contest. Remember that Gluggis doesn't get what he wants unless the PC gives in; don't take away a player's agency if they lose the contest.

If the PC gives in, Gluggis is pleased as they accept the relic. The relic will help him communicate to them, and subtly sway their actions over a distance. He compliments them and is extremely gracious, and allows them to do as they see fit... for now. Step up the value Gluggis used in the contest.

Narrating Challenges

In a challenge, each player gets a chance to roll and beat a difficulty that's determined by a challenge pool. The players take turns against the challenge pool until all the challenge dice are removed and the challenge is over.

A challenge is a centerpiece of any session. You can prepare a really big or difficult challenge and base the whole session around what's leading up to it and its fallout, whether the PCs win or lose. A lot depends on the size of the dice you're using in the challenge pool, and how many of them you're throwing together.

As the players take their turns, let them decide how they want to resolve the challenge. Just because there's a magma titan rampaging through a small town doesn't mean that the PCs all have to use swords or magic and fight it.

Resolving the challenge can include rescuing townsfolk, learning why the magma titan is angry, tricking the magma titan into following a PC away from town, and so on.

Things to remember about narrating challenges include:

> You roll and add together a new total for every PC on their turn
>
> You decide which player goes first in the challenge, and then each player decides who goes next
>
> After all the players have taken a turn, you choose one PC to direct the challenge's dice against
>
> When you're acting against the PCs with the challenge pool, *the player rolls to set the difficulty* for the challenge pool to beat with its own dice.

Here are three premade challenges for you to look at. Each is designed for a group of four PCs, and has suggestions about what the PCs might do to remove challenge dice and succeed at the challenge. There are also suggestions for the challenge's turn.

CHALLENGE: Locate the thief
(EASY, LONG 6 6 6 6 6)

A valuable book was stolen from the local library. The PCs need to figure out where it is and who stole it. Here are some examples of the dice players might want to assemble:

- **Agility:** Follow a suspect through the city without being seen.
- **Awareness:** Look for clues at the crime scene.
- **Influence:** Ask around for witness statements.
- **Intellect:** Make a deduction based on the information you have.
- **Strength:** Intimidate a suspect until they tell the truth.

On the challenge pool's turn, here are some examples of what you might do to give the PCs stress:

- **Afraid:** The PC receives an intimidating threat to stop investigating.
- **Angry:** The PC hits a dead end! All of that work seems to go to waste.
- **Exhausted:** The PC has to burn the midnight oil in their search for answers.
- **Insecure:** Someone the PC respects expresses doubt about their ideas.

CHALLENGE: Escape the crumbling tomb (CHALLENGING, MEDIUM 8 8 8 8)

The PCs have found the hidden artifact, but upon retrieving it the tomb begins to crumble! They need to escape, or else they might end up trapped. Here are some examples of the dice players might want to assemble:

- **Agility:** Balance while hopping across stalagmites.
- **Awareness:** Notice a secret pathway.
- **Influence:** Calm everyone down to make sure the group stays focused.
- **Intellect:** Remember the old maps you read to find the fastest path out.
- **Spirit:** Make a leap of faith across a gaping chasm.
- **Strength:** Hold a crumbling column to buy your allies time.

On the challenge pool's turn, here are some examples of what you might do to give the PCs stress:

- **Afraid:** The magic of the cave brings a terrifying illusion to life: can the PC see through it?
- **Angry:** The path the PCs were trying to take is blocked. Where do they go now?!
- **Exhausted:** A PC begins to tire from the exertion of escaping.
- **Injured:** A column falls on a PC!
- **Insecure:** A PC gets lost or separated from the group.

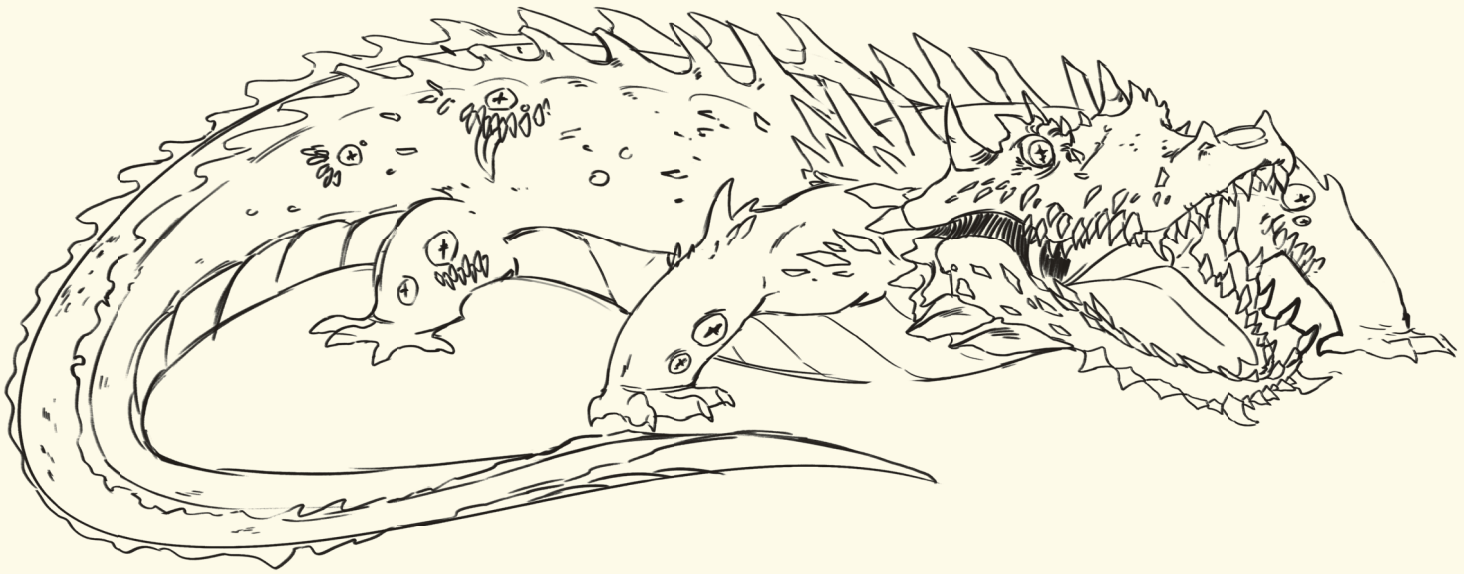
CHALLENGE: Handle the eon-mawed megagator (HARD, SHORT 10 10 10)

An angry eon-mawed megagator is out of control and making the marshland near the city too dangerous for supplies to reach the town. It seems to be acting strangely. It's up to the PCs to solve the problem! Here are some examples of the dice players might want to assemble:

- **Agility:** Set a trap undetected.
- **Awareness:** See what's making the beast so angry.
- **Influence:** Get the civilians to safety.
- **Intellect:** Use your knowledge of eon-mawed megagator behavior.
- **Spirit:** Create a distraction to attract the beast's attention.
- **Strength:** Face the beast head-on using your brute strength.

On the challenge pool's turn, here are some examples of what you might do to give the PCs stress:

- **Afraid:** The beast roars, exposing its endless layers of teeth! How old is this thing?!
- **Corrupted:** The beast goes for a bite, and siphons some of the dark magic infecting it into the PC.
- **Exhausted:** The beast breaks away from the PCs, or pushes the limits of their traps.
- **Injured:** The beast throws out its tail, knocking a PC away with powerful force.
- **Insecure:** The beast crashes into a bridge, weakening the supports as civilians rush across.





The Tale Unfolding

A tale can unfold in countless ways, but there's always room for a springboard! Hopefully you're having fun brainstorming the kind of story that awaits your players, but what every story needs is a tone.

The Heart of the Tale

It's important to sit down with your players and talk with them one-on-one before playing, so you can gauge what they're most interested in. You're going to be surprised! Some people want to play the kind of game they're best at, some want a challenge, some want a respite from a stressful reality, some people just want to beat up a monster. The varieties are endless.

Don't be intimidated by what your players say. Your original idea or premade tale need not always be adjusted to fit their expectations. Perhaps it's a matter of tone rather than setting. Either way, we will talk you through some of the biggest and broadest genres of story, which we hope helps you prepare the best possible tale for your circle of friends.

Three genres of tale you could pursue include those of **discovery**, **intrigue**, and **adventure**. Discovery involves wonder and surprise, intrigue revolves around secrets and interaction, and adventure includes a lot of good old-fashioned action sequences. Some questions for your players might include:

- Does your PC like to travel, and if so, what kind of places would they like to see?
- Is there some kind of treasure your PC has always wanted?
- Who would your PC love to meet, for good or ill?
- Is there a great mystery to Xadia that your PC has always wondered about?
- Are there any wrongs your PC wishes to right?

This isn't just about character or goal generation. We're talking about the creation of the tale—and the execution of its narration—as two big layers to your upcoming game. The better you know your players, the more thrilling the tale will be! Now, on to our three types of typical tales.

> "If wisdom is what you seek, I shall do my best to fake it."
>
> LUJANNE
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 2: Half Moon Lies*

Tales of Discovery

Here we try to conjure the wonder someone experiences as they turn over a glowing artifact in their hands, or explore a cave that no one has set foot in for thousands of years. Goals in a tale of discovery might involve identifying a new type of magical creature or acquiring a magical sword. Mind you, those goals can work in many types of tales, but if a player seems keen to achieve these sorts of things, this may be the kind of tale you'd like to pursue.

We recommend starting with a familiar setting—a cafe, a market, a beloved reading spot—and have your story suddenly leap into increasingly alien places. Places the PCs have dreamt about, but never thought they would take in with eyes wide open.

Remember, discovery can be a person, place, idea, concept, or tchotchke—keep an open mind! If it means a lot to a PC, it could change the shape of Xadia no matter how small it might seem. Even if things go awry, make sure your PCs walk away with something new. If not something majestic in their backpack, perhaps a new lease on life or a new recipe for their kitchen.

Tales of Intrigue

If a tale is less about a grand reveal and more about the mists of mystery, there may be a tale of intrigue in your future. Intrigues are plots, schemes, and the secrets we all keep to further our own goals or protect those we care about. Your catalysts are the heart of intrigue in these tales, their values driving them along.

Stakes are as important here as a more action- or goal-oriented tale, but they can be more internal. Think about the values that the PCs hold most dear—those they have the highest die ratings in. What could they stand to lose if a catalyst forces them to question these values? Is somebody pulling their strings, or are they scheming in plain sight?

It will of course be helpful to spend a lot of time on scenery here, too. Bustling cities create a kind of white noise that can be as thick as any creeping fog. And remember, a palace can be as perilous as any ancient ruin or trackless forest.

Tales of Adventure

Hark! A monster wails! A mountain crumbles! Adventure is now afoot!

If more than one player is keen to defeat a lumbering beast or sprint across a thread-thin bridge, it's likely you should pursue a tale of adventure.

Each scene deserves its own stunt spectacular, and even if the PCs aren't the athletic type, the puzzles should be as large and looming as possible.

Perhaps an everyday location can be outfitted with ancient traps that all need springing. Or maybe there's a hidden city that can only be discovered by relying on lightning fast wits and reflexes. You get the idea—it's a fun tale for the inclusion of some explosions, teeth, and ominous heights to fall from.

Of course, it's good to have a little mystery and achievement here to spice things up—but consider thinking of tension more than intrigue, or treasure more than discovery. Nothing wrong with trying to achieve all three types of tales at once, of course, but hey, if you're feeling stressed out, why not go easy on yourself and save that for your next big story instead?

We've got you covered; try alternating between these three!

> "Advisors and scholars will tell you that history is a narrative of strength. They will recount stories of the rise and fall of nations and empires. There will be stories of armies, battles, and decisive victories. But this isn't true strength—it's merely power. I now believe true strength is found in vulnerability. In forgiveness. In love. There is a beautiful, upside-down truth, which is that these moments of purest strength appear as weakness to those who don't know better. For a long time, I didn't know better. I ask you and your brother to reject history as a narrative of strength, and instead, have faith that it can be a narrative of love."
>
> HARROW
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 6: Heart of a Titan*





Developing a Chronicle

You've done it! You've planned the great building block known as a tale. But you and your players want more.

It's time to get a little creatively selfish. What kind of long game would you like to play? Because that tale you've just created can be the opening gambit of a chronicle, or series of tales that create an even larger, more epic story.

You've done the hard part and set the scene. But there's hanging threads, missed connections, and misbegotten catalysts. So let's talk about the major building blocks of a multi-tale journey, which we're calling a chronicle from here on out.

Arcs and Themes

An arc is the larger direction that a narrative is taking, one that will eventually bring grand closure to the momentum. What's handy about Xadia is there is always more tension to borrow from the world if you found a lot of closure in that first tale. Everyone happily nestled under a blanket by the fire? Why, there's always a distempered dark mage or disrespected dragon around the corner! Sample arcs could include:

- Saving a geographical location from a recurring and persistent force of chaos.
- Recovering, protecting, and then returning or destroying lost artifacts.
- Supporting a person or people during difficult trials so they can eventually thrive with autonomy.

You get the idea, right? If PCs found powerful treasure, they now could play hot potato with it until it lands where it was destined to. If an NC experienced great change in your first tale, let's follow their journey until they become a fully formed person with agency, secure in their being. If something got knocked down, build it up.

If you've already written a tale, you've already got some themes cooking in the hopper. Discovery, intrigue, and adventure could be considered themes. But you could also look at PC and NC themes that emerged, or layer on thematic elements from your favorite genre of film.

Sample themes might be:

- We can choose friends who become our family.
- By taking care of ourselves, we better take care of each other.
- Warm NCs will invite PCs in for respite during a particularly dangerous time.
- That Skywing elf PC Easgann got a new sword, but it comes with a guardian NC.
- A cocktail of dreary fog, silent threats, and ominous prophecies.

Try blending some of those with the sample arcs we offered, and remember to sprinkle in NCs and catalysts. Include as many of your own ideas as you like and you've quickly got a robust pot of chronicle stew. Now let's look at the benefits of when the chronicle can be staged.



Chronicles in the Present

There's an obvious bonus here—it takes place when you'd expect! It can also be incredibly advantageous to include locations, NCs, and catalysts everyone is familiar with from the central plot of *The Dragon Prince*. If you and your players are watching the show, it's easy to say "Hey, let's jump right in at the end of Season Three!" That's where the show is chronologically when this handbook is being published.

It can be a little tricky, though—you might be playing right before a new season of *The Dragon Prince* comes out, for instance. What if Callum's favorite color is revealed to be periwinkle in Season Four, but you had a whole tale about how it's taupe? Don't worry too much about that; you'll do your best. Your timeline might stray a little bit, but it's more important that you and your players had a say in what felt like an authentic, meaningful story.

Take advantage of the obvious things. The tone can be easily matched; there's so many episodes of the show to lean on.

Chronicles in the Past

The past is as infinitely fertile as the present and future.

Epic dynasties have risen and fallen. Characters on the show (and in your original tales) have backstories, as well as ancestors. A chronicle can take place over a few days, and we're talking about thousands of years across a huge world. Let your imagination run wild. This is where all the show's rich lore could have come from, and yet at the same time it can be completely new!

And lest we forget... flashbacks. Sure, it's not an entire chronicle, it's a scene or even a tale. But it can be seamless for just part of a chronicle to flash back. Players will love portraying their PCs at an earlier time. You ought to sit with them ahead of time if you're planning this—not to tip your hand on what the scenes might be, but to get a sense of who their PCs might have dealt with, and where.

Chronicles in the Future

Here's where things get the most complicated. This can include specific events of the show, or can advance things to set the story even farther away from it.

It can be a bit worrisome to imply some people and things haven't "lasted" into the future—if that stresses you out, we suggest focusing on characters and events entirely of your own creation.

But think of the possibilities, too. A new great city is established. Elves and humans feel differently about each other. A new dragon reigns supreme. All of Xadia is born anew.

> "Humans cut down the King of the Dragons and destroyed his only egg, the Dragon Prince! Justice will not be denied."
>
> RAYLA
>
> *Book 1: Moon, Chapter 2: What Is Done*

Narrating Elves

Elves have a unique culture from humans, so narrating them requires a point of view with a slightly different lens.

For instance, their default attitude towards humans is, at the very least, skeptical because of the humans' history with dark magic. They've been divided by the Border for generations, so humans are almost entirely unknown to them beyond that.

Amplify this even slightly due to life experience or other circumstances, and you've got an elf that probably doesn't like humans a whole lot. The rule of skepticism is quite prevalent in Xadia, but there are of course exceptions that can be made, particularly between PCs.

The other side of this coin is their affinity with the primal sources; even generally hostile elves are still nonetheless bound to a primal magic. Elves usually care deeply for nature, magic, and their home community. This means something different for each type of elf. Exceptions are made here too, as all personality types have representation in each elf culture.

Moonshadow Elves

More subtle with their aggression than the Sunfire elves, Moonshadow elves are masters at keeping a low profile. Perhaps that's why their assassins are feared across all of Xadia and the Human Kingdoms combined. Through the Moon primal they have a strong, if slightly spooky, connection with death, illusions, and spirits. Consider adding them to the tale that takes place to the west. They can be found supporting other types of elves, their stealthy, oath-bound nature making them strong allies.

Skywing Elves

Skywing elves are rarely seen, as they tend to travel alone. Though it's unlikely that a randomly met Skywing NC has wings, they will still have a connection to Sky magic and the powers it holds. Consider creating them to be nomads, merchants, guardians, explorers, or even thieves.

> "So, uh, again, thanks for not killing me, ya know, for conning you and then betraying you, stealing your dragon and leaving you stranded in the desert."
>
> NYX
>
> *Book 3: Sun, Chapter 6: Thunderfall*

Sunfire Elves

This is a pivotal time in Sunfire culture, when they are stripped of the vast city they call home and forced to reckon with their normally fierce dispositions. It might make a lot of sense to include Sunfire elves in a tale that takes place in the current timeline of *The Dragon Prince*, as they are scattered and looking for purpose. Be sure to take a look at *The Corrupted Core* starting on page 207 for plenty of examples!

Earthblood Elves

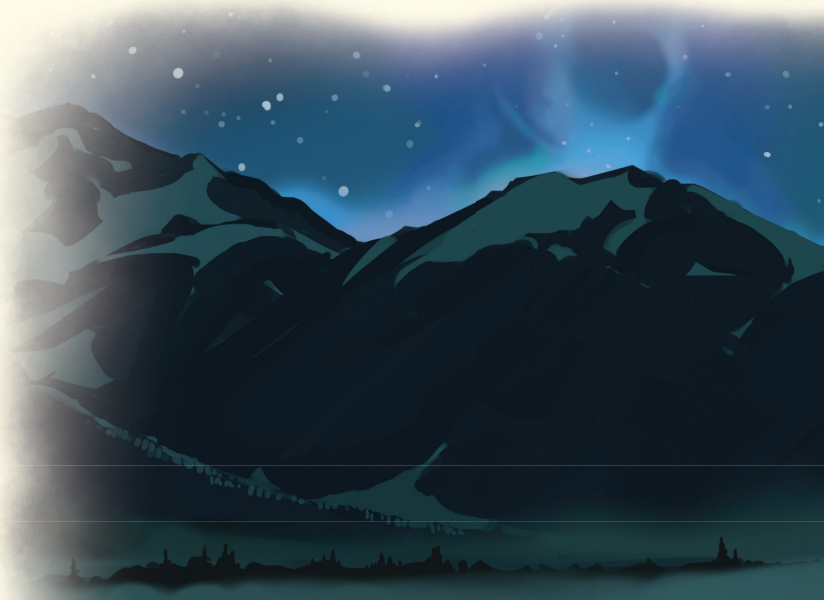
When creating an Earthblood NC it is important to remember that they are also connected to all the things that grow from the earth, and their appearance and attitudes may vary wildly because of it. Some are as soft in temperament as flower petals, others as tough and stubborn as stone. Start with what aspect of Earth magic they feel most connected to, and how they are personally motivated.

Tidebound Elves

Little is known about the elves who dwell beneath the sea, so it is recommended that Narrators keep their ear to the proverbial ground. Suffice to say that, no matter how many there are in number, they are not commonly found wandering the lands above the sea's surface.

Startouch Elves

Most PCs might be skeptical of whether or not Startouch elves even exist. There are stories about them, sure, but are they legends or are they real? Before creating a Startouch elf NC, first consider creating a mysterious relic that hints at one instead. After all, they are more myth than reality.



Narrating Dragons

It's safe to say that every player is hoping their character will get to behold a dragon at some point, and in Xadia meeting a dragon is often an awe-inspiring, once-in-a-lifetime experience. Let's talk a little bit about how to deal with such a momentous occasion, and how it can unfold in *Tales of Xadia* in quite an exciting way.

Dragons in Xadian Context

When we say meeting a dragon is something of a once-in-a-lifetime experience, we don't mean it literally. Of course, there is the precedent of Callum and Ezran meeting several of them. Yet, as you may know from watching and learning about the world of *The Dragon Prince*, these Katolian princes are special that way.

As we mention in more detail in the Gazetteer (page 46), dragons usually let archdragons deal with the world stage, and the rest avoid contact with people—especially humans. As for slaying dragons, that's even more rare. Dragons aren't stubborn obstacles. If attacked, they would rather make a point, and then live to make a more embittered point another day.

Dragons as Narrator Characters

When creating a dragon character, think of it scenically. This is a character who will need trait dice for tests, contests, and challenges. Don't just give them a die that represents their attack.

Give their claw attack die a narrative name. Mention that name if the dragon chooses to use it in a scene. And there, you have a trait. But don't forget they can have a distinction that also represents their personality.

For examples, take a look ahead at the tale we've included in this book, *The Corrupted Core* on page 207. In that chapter, you can find an NC named Orta that has trait dice for **Fire Dragon** d10 and **Frenzied** d10. These dice are a little higher in rating than you might find in an elf or a human NC because dragons are narratively heavy. Particularly a big one like Orta.

But let's say you really want them to be a narrative heavyweight and influence your entire tale. You want a dragon catalyst. For an example of this, take a look at one of the free tales we've provided on our website, *talesofxadia.com*. In *The Gloaming Glade*, there is a dragon named Os Lumina who has values, distinctions, assets, and specialty dice, as well as a short biographical story to help outline her motivations. That biography is important because this isn't going to be all combat; it's about the dragon's point of view in a scene and how they'd use dice in a contest or challenge.

Dragons in a Test

Dragons are more likely to engage in a challenge. But if you'd like to involve them in a test, it can be done!

A dragon isn't using their own dice in a test. You need to assemble the dice based on the difficulty, just like a regular test. So think of it like this—perhaps the dragon has set forth an obstacle, riddle, or puzzle for players in this scene. Select the difficulty dice to represent this puzzle rather than dice specific to the dragon, and PCs will assemble dice to roll against it.

Dragons in a Contest

Is your dragon a catalyst? Well here's where a contest might come into play. When a PC and a dragon have conflicting interests, and the dragon has been fleshed out enough for the story that their motivations are involved, this can occasionally happen. It is worth noting, however, that talking dragons are usually both very old and very rare.

Before hastily assembling one, we recommend taking a look at the dragon types mentioned in the Gazetteer on page 46 so that you may create a dragon with a sufficient amount of worldliness and wisdom.

If you'd like to see a dragon contest in practice, take a look at Os Lumina in *The Gloaming Glade* on our website *talesofxadia.com*. A brilliant trickster, her powerful dice pool allows her to engage in a battle—or rather, a contest—of wits. But there's also an optional combat contest with Os that you might find to be a useful example.

Dragons in a Challenge

Most likely a PC's interaction with a dragon is going to be an action-packed, wildly tricky ordeal. We expect PCs to most likely engage with a dragon in a challenge.

Also, even if they are highly intelligent and can understand speech, most dragons do not speak. If you're looking for a scene containing a mysterious search through a dense and misty forest to find an elusive dragon, or a scene with lots of toppling and exploding scenery, it's all about a challenge.

Again, like a test, all you need to do is to assemble the difficulty dice. So a catalyst dragon is not needed for a challenge scene involving a dragon.

For examples of a dragon in a challenge, look no further than the tale in this book, *The Corrupted Core*. Orta can engage players in more than one fiery challenge.

Narrating Magical Creatures

Though some animals such as horses and cats are quite common in Xadia, it's important to remember that they are often uniquely magical and complex. Squirrels needn't have only one tail, and eels might go for a stroll through the swamp. And any one of them could become a lifelong friend for a PC. They can populate the scenery, or drive a scene itself and become fully fleshed out NCs. You can even find a magical creature catalyst on page 176.

Try to make sure any original creatures you create have a fun narrative hook to them that makes them interesting for your tale, and consider how each of the primal sources might inspire their existence. But if you're at a loss, just take a look at our Xadian Creatures on page 56. You might find some fun critter surprises there you haven't heard of before.



Moon Creatures

Moon creatures live most happily in a nocturnal cycle. They needn't embody every element of the moon, and can be either lugubrious and hidden or elegant and sparkling. Their coloring is often shades of purples and blues—hues more often found in the twilight hours. Details like these should help get players excited to discover them!

Sky Creatures

Sky magic doesn't just mean flight! Think of the electricity in the air before rain, low lying clouds, and gusty breezes as defining traits in an animal. Perhaps they glide, perhaps they crackle. These can be especially fun to bring to a mountainous, valley, or coastal scene where the wind could be so powerful it feels like an NC in and of itself.

Sun Creatures

You probably already know at least one creature full of Sun magic—Bait, the glow toad. Note how he isn't necessarily radiating flame magic like an inferno-toothed tiger or magma titan; his ability to glow and flash light is comparably subtle. Feel free to bring heat, luster, and brilliance to your Sun creatures, but also consider lots of types of beings candidates, so long as they can reach the rays of the sun in their natural habitat.

Earth Creatures

Plants, fungus, crystals, stone—these all make for fun Earth magic elements to blend into a magical creature of Xadia. Think of being connected to the regenerative qualities of the soil, sand, and stone as being just the very base of their magic, and let that thematic inspiration continue to flow outwards to more specific ideas like flowers, phosphorescent toadstools, and rose quartz.

Ocean Creatures

Just fish, right? Nope! Think of the plants beneath the sea as being inexorably tied to ocean magic. Consider a creature covered entirely with coral and clams that can walk on land and live underwater. That means their adventures would be boundless, traveling far from home and even being able to explore landlocked locations. Although you might want to encourage PCs to describe splashing some canteen water on them from time to time.

Star Creatures

Unicorns were the most recognizable creature tied to this magic, but, sadly, they have all but vanished from Xadia, as humans hunted and poached them to harvest for dark magic. Rumors suggest the existence of smaller creatures tied to this arcanum; perhaps one day an adventurer will tell us more.

What's Next?

Tales of Xadia is a world rich in lore, and we hope we've prepared you in terms of how to be an effective Narrator, how to manage the game rules, how to create new NCs and catalysts, and more. Now it's time to jump into your first full-length tale, *The Tale of the Corrupted Core*, in the next chapter. But here's some advice in advance about improvising the game "by the seat of your pants," as it were.

Best Laid Plans

Despite reading the next chapter one or more times in advance, even taking notes or preparing some of your own twists, you may notice rather quickly that your players are trying to do things not covered in the tale. In particular, the urgency of the dark, pulsating Sunforge may beckon to them, but they may find some additional high stakes elsewhere in a blacksmith's shop in Lux Aurea, or in the pleading face of a wounded glow toad trapped underneath some rubble.

Rather than insisting things move "back on the rails," consider these deviations to be valuable, and start going over in your mind the basics of tests, contests, and challenges. Can one of these gameplay elements apply? And if not, perhaps there is something about this blacksmith shop or glow toad that can lead your PCs back to the main event.

This world is meant to feel malleable and dynamic, not segmented and scripted. So while we are providing you with enough scenes to play the tale from beginning to end, we recommend listening to players and responding before referring to our pre-written scenes as any sort of destiny for players. Improvising as a Narrator is key, rather than reading what we have prepared for you aloud.

Tricks of Improv

In improvisation for the stage, instructors and performers refer to creations by one's scene partners as a "gift," and you are encouraged to strengthen these gifts by affirming them and building off of them, or using a "yes, and" philosophy.

- Saying *yes* is the affirmation that yes, the player's idea is real and has value.
- Saying *and* is doing your own improvisational creation, spinning off of their brand new idea.

Using this as a golden rule for improvising, and remembering the original stakes of the Sunforge and the serum, you and your players should have a great time, and you don't have to worry about using every prepared scene we offer you.

We still recommend Narrators read all the following scenes and consider them as relatively important beats to hit. At some point players will have to decide what to do about Klors, Ekkers will clash with Vaake, and the Sunforge must be addressed.

What Ending?

The finale is the trickiest. The entire city is at stake and it is entirely possible that PCs want to get creative with their solution. We try to address what we see as some of the most likely scenarios, which you can have either catalyst suggest to players (in their own way, of course) if PCs are stymied.

If you are narrating *The Tale of the Corrupted Core* for the second time, you may have your own ideas about what scenery, tools, and people are around, particularly during the climactic scenes. Don't be afraid to try your idea out. Just keep in mind that your players want to feel in control of their destiny, so the difficulty should neither be insurmountable nor a walk in the park.

You've Got This!

Feel free to create on the fly, and that includes everything from creatures to scenes to challenges. We recommend reading on and using this entire tale as a toolkit, but if you enjoy the idea of fashioning a lot from scratch don't be afraid to get artistic and follow your heart!

There's a chance some ideas could feel world-breaking, more than can fit into one scene, or step on the interests of other players. Just use these moments as a time to remind everyone that the action is proceeding in a scene structure, and size up how Cortex gameplay can address the wants of the players.

We recommend keeping notes about what your players seem to like. If it doesn't come to fruition during the tale, it might at least be a fun springboard that will launch you into a tale of your own creation at the conclusion of *The Corrupted Core*. Now, before the tale, here are some familiar characters you might like to visit in the future.



Featured Catalysts

Fans of *The Dragon Prince* will recognize these key players in the show! We have assigned all of these die ratings, values, and so forth to reflect where we believe the characters would be at the end of Season Three. This way, should you encounter them in your tales and chronicles, you will feel it reflects the natural place where they are in the story. And though Zym is important, we haven't included him as a catalyst, as he is still a baby dragon and only Ezran knows what his true die ratings are.

Feel free to adjust these aspects for your own playing group, including (but not limited to) when the show's story advances into future seasons.



EZRAN (he/him)



Catalyst d8

It's been difficult for Ezran, one of the youngest to ascend to a human throne. Fleeing dangers from humans and elves alike, Ezran remains unflappably kind. He understands the intentions of any creature he encounters, from his glow toad friend, Bait, to mighty dragons like Pyrrah and cute baby ones, like Zym.

Values

Devotion d8
All creatures—regardless of origin—deserve love and appreciation.

Liberty d8
I value the liberty of everyone, sometimes even more than my own.

Glory d4
I value peace over how others see me as an individual.

Mastery d6
Power may surround me, yet I will never crave it for myself.

Justice d10
I expect the best of people and try not to become an agent of cruelty.

Truth d6
I am only beginning to see the harsh realities truth brings with it.

Distinctions

King of Katolis d8
Lighthearted Child d8
Companion to All Creatures d8

Specialties

Animal Influence d10

Assets

Glow Toad d8
Ezran's pet glow toad, Bait, is an amphibious magical creature connected to the Sun primal. Glow toads can emit a light so powerful that it can blind anyone who sees it with their naked eye.

CALLUM (he/him)



CATALYST 8

Goofy and good-hearted, Callum is young but has seen much. From the loss of his parents, to the rise of his brother to the role of King of Katolis, it's… been a *lot*. Callum possesses a natural gift for staying on task and accomplishing great things, including being the first known human to master rune magic without a primal source.

VALUES

DEVOTION 8
I value those close to me more than anyone or anything.

GLORY 4
Making a mark matters, but it doesn't need my signature on it.

JUSTICE 6
Doing what's right will require some tough choices.

LIBERTY 10
I'm beholden to my inner circle, not some silly kingdom.

MASTERY 8
I aspire to know the great wonders of every primal magic.

TRUTH 6
I use humor to deflect the truth, and sometimes I hide it to protect others.

DISTINCTIONS

PRINCE OF KATOLIS 8
ASPIRING RUNE MAGE 8
FOCUSED RESOLVE 8

SPECIALTIES

SKETCHING 8 **SKY MAGIC** 8

ASSETS

KEY OF AARAVOS 8

A cube that displays a sigil corresponding to one of the six primal sources of magic on each side. The corresponding sigil glows when the Key detects a magical source.

SKY MAGIC SPELLS 8

- ***Aspiro*** (Gust of Wind): *Summons a gust of wind, its direction determined by Callum.*
- ***Fulminis*** (Lightning Bolt): *Creates a charge of electricity that can then be discharged as a lightning bolt.*
- ***Manus. Pluma. Volantus.*** (Magical Wings): *Allows Callum to temporarily transform his arms into wings.*

RAYLA (she/her)



CATALYST 8

Rayla's had enough of Xadia's lies. After being forced into an impossible pact to assassinate an innocent prince, she has made the princes her best friends and gone on a journey to free every elf and human from such terrible fates. Though exiled from her own people, she is determined not to look back in grief.

VALUES

DEVOTION 10
Love and devotion compel and define me.

GLORY 4
If those I care about really get to know me, that is all the legacy I want.

JUSTICE 8
At great personal cost I will strive for what's right.

LIBERTY 8
My only allegiance is to my heart and those who know it.

MASTERY 6
I'm naturally talented—so quit bugging me to practice!

TRUTH 6
I search for my own truth, rather than the truth others feed me.

DISTINCTIONS

MOONSHADOW ELF 8
REDEEMED ASSASSIN 8
ACT FIRST, THINK LATER 8

SPECIALTIES

SNEAKING 6 **SWORDPLAY** 6 **TRACKING** 6

ASSETS

ELVEN BUTTERFLY BLADES 8

Rayla's twin weapons are both deadly and versatile, capable of transforming between lethal blades and curved hooks. While a sharp blade is always useful in a fight, a surprise hook to the legs can catch an opponent off-guard.

CLAUDIA (she/her)



Catalyst 8

As the snarky daughter of Viren, Claudia has had to wince through some rough choices lately. Many she doubts, but not if it means protecting or trusting her dad. Even then Claudia knows that kingdoms and customs aren't everything, and sometimes you have to think outside the box. She still cares for her friend, Callum, and her brother, Soren, despite Viren drawing her further and further away.

VALUES

Devotion 8

I sometimes support those I care about over more rational choices.

Glory 6

I make pancakes fluffier, does that count? Also, magic dark tentacles.

Justice 4

Rather than obsess, I assume the ends justify the means.

Liberty 8

I make independent choices, but am unquestionably loyal to my father.

Mastery 10

The depths of dark magic are too valuable for humans to ignore.

Truth 6

Eh, truth depends on your point of view, really. And lately, things got weird.

DISTINCTIONS

Katolian Noble 8

Conflicted Dark Mage 8

There's Always a Way 8

SPECIALTIES

Dark Magic 10

ASSETS

Dark Magic Spells 8

- ***Semalf Gnippiks Gnipael*** *(Dancing Flames): This spell allows a mage to conjure a small flame that leaps between multiple targets before disappearing. This spell has been cast by Claudia using an emberback spider.*
- ***Kram Ruoy Dnif, Tlob Rekeestraeh*** *(Homing Spell): This spell ensures that a projectile never misses its target, no matter the circumstances. It uses the eye of a griffon.*
- ***Sbmil Eseht Ot Efil Gnirb*** *(Healing Spell): This spell can heal serious injuries. It requires flower petals and a tad of grasshopper goop.*

SOREN (he/him)



Catalyst 8

Soren has taken his lumps, as it were, from going toe-to-toe with a dragon to defecting from his father's army. The former taught him humility, and the latter gave him a chance to prove he'd found it. Even cockier than his sister, he's only just realized where his true loyalties lie. As hard a journey as it was, he is just as confident it was the right one.

VALUES

Devotion 8

Sometimes the best tactic is to abandon tactics for what really matters.

Glory 10

There's nobody I can't beat. Yes, even that person you think just beat me.

Justice 4

I want to do the right thing—just tell me what it is, huh?

Liberty 6

Being independent from my king and father is new to me; I'm still a proud crownguard.

Mastery 8

Staying at the top of my game defines much of my life.

Truth 6

I used to let advisors worry about truth, but I'm all-in on knowing it now!

DISTINCTIONS

Katolian Noble 8

Crownguard Captain 8

Bullheaded Soldier 8

SPECIALTIES

Strategy 6

Swordplay 10

ASSETS

Longsword 8

Soren is almost always armed with a sword, which he typically wields with two hands.

VIREN (he/him)



Viren has gone from having a lot of power, to having almost all the power, to having very little left—all in a very short amount of time. As High Mage of Katolis he advised King Harrow, then took the throne himself, then lost it to Harrow's heir Ezran. He suffered an even mightier blow at the Battle of the Storm Spire. As of now his fate is unknown.

CATALYST 8

VALUES

DEVOTION 4

I once spent energy on matters of the heart; it only brought sorrow.

GLORY 8

My actions will save all of Xadia; if I amass power along the way, so be it.

JUSTICE 6

It's not that I ignore fairness, it's that I see it more clearly, above all others.

LIBERTY 8

I'm a servant to humankind first and foremost.

MASTERY 10

Powerful mages came before me, and I shall eclipse them all.

TRUTH 6

I love to learn the secrets of others, but I may have too many of my own.

DISTINCTIONS

KATOLIAN NOBLE 8

DARK DISCIPLE 8

FALLEN USURPER 8

SPECIALTIES

DARK MAGIC 12

ASSETS

DARK MAGIC SPELLS 10

- ***Nrub Tonnac Rednic Fo Straeh*** *(Hearts of Cinder): Imbues a human with corrupted Sun magic that dulls their ability to communicate, but doubles their strength; immune to fire, they instead draw strength from any blaze.*
- ***Rewop Rouy Swollaws Eh, Dnim Rouy Swollaws Eh, Traeh Rouy Swollaws Eh*** *(Power Absorption): Allows a mage to drain the power of another being into themselves.*
- ***Niaga Esir, Nellaf Fo Hsa*** *(Shadow Minions): Brings back shadowy forms of fallen beings, who then do the caster's bidding.*

AMAYA (she/her)



General Amaya has known no strife greater than losing her sister, Queen Sarai. The heat of magma rivers and the folly of conquerors won't even make her flinch. While leading the Standing Battalion for Katolis, she fought bravely against the Sunfire elf forces, but in the end was captured. Yet, despite never letting her kingdom down, she still learned that an enemy can become an ally in the blink of an eye.

CATALYST 8

VALUES

DEVOTION 8

I've known love, lost it, and know that I can find it once again.

GLORY 4

Of all the things to achieve in life, prideful accomplishments bore me most.

JUSTICE 10

I'm fiercely loyal, but above kingdoms; I'm most loyal to the kind-hearted.

LIBERTY 8

Prisons? Torture? Ha. Better to suffer and die with a clear conscience.

MASTERY 6

My morning training is more important than any indulgence.

TRUTH 6

I try to keep an eye on who is most honest, but I'd rather be in combat.

DISTINCTIONS

KATOLIAN NOBLE 8

GRITTY GENERAL 8

EARNEST ENFORCER 8

SPECIALTIES

SHIELD FIGHTING 8

SWORDPLAY 8

ASSETS

HUGE NOTCHED SHIELD 8

Though usually armed with a sword, as well, Amaya goes nowhere without her large shield, which can also be used as a battering ram or to pin enemies against a wall.

JANAI (she/her)



CATALYST 8

Nothing brings Janai more joy than serving her family well as a military leader. It was only through tragedy that she was put in charge of Lux Aurea, having witnessed the horrible disintegration of her sister and queen, Khessa. Though she was able to best Viren's forces in battle, she is still reeling with the loss. And she is also coping with a newfound respect for humans, General Amaya in particular.

VALUES

DEVOTION 8

I contain, if nothing else, a pure love for my people.

GLORY 6

Should I fall, I will fall with my blade raised high and my eyes wide open.

JUSTICE 8

If an evil deed is committed, an evil deed is punished. By me or by fate.

LIBERTY 4

If Lux Aurea asked me to give my life, there would be no question.

MASTERY 10

If there is one more skilled in combat than I, well, it's time to practice.

TRUTH 6

I may yet have something to learn about trust, and sincerity in others.

DISTINCTIONS

SUNFIRE ELF 8

GOLDEN KNIGHT OF LUX AUREA 8

COURAGEOUS COMBATANT 8

SPECIALTIES

SWORDPLAY 10

ASSETS

SUNFORGE BLADE 8

A rune-covered sword that glows with red-hot Sun magic, and can cut through steel mid-combat.

LUJANNE (she/her)



CATALYST 8

Long ago Lujanne went to the top of the Cursed Caldera to become the Guardian of the Moon Nexus, a powerful source of magic for her people and all the Moon primal creatures of Xadia. In her isolation, she has not only developed wisdom but a keen sense of ironic humor. She has also found love in a human, and raised a Moon phoenix named Phoe-Phoe.

VALUES

DEVOTION 8

There is no magic like sharing love with others.

GLORY 4

I only need a little pride in my life and I find it in the simple acts.

JUSTICE 6

Destiny wields an even greater power than I.

LIBERTY 6

I stay apart from others I care for so that I might do the most meaningful of work.

MASTERY 8

I know the moon as well as it knows me.

TRUTH 10

Real truth is like a coin—it has three sides, and everyone forgets the hidden one.

DISTINCTIONS

MOONSHADOW ELF 8

GUARDIAN OF THE MOON NEXUS 8

IRONIC, DON'T YOU THINK? 8

SPECIALTIES

MOON MAGIC 10

ASSETS

MOON MAGIC SPELLS 10

- ***Historia Viventem*** *(Animate Past): Conjures visual representations of occurrences in the past.*

QUEEN AANYA (she/her)

Though highly sensitive to the cost of war and conflict, Queen Aanya is virtually immune to cheap passive aggression and guilt trips. So keen is her eye for deception that she has stood up to Viren twice, once with words and again with action, changing the course of his conquest each time.



CATALYST 8

VALUES

DEVOTION 6

Though love is important, I will not let sappiness blind me.

GLORY 4

It is quite difficult to convince me that power is to be envied.

JUSTICE 8

People stumble into cruelty every day without even knowing it, but I shall not.

LIBERTY 10

My people and I cannot be dragged into meaningless conflict or peril.

MASTERY 8

I have dedicated myself to being wise beyond my years to honor my parents.

TRUTH 6

Remain skeptical always, and when you're wrong you will be pleasantly surprised.

DISTINCTIONS

QUEEN OF DUREN 8

SAGE YOUTH 8

LIFE IS PRECIOUS 8

SPECIALTIES

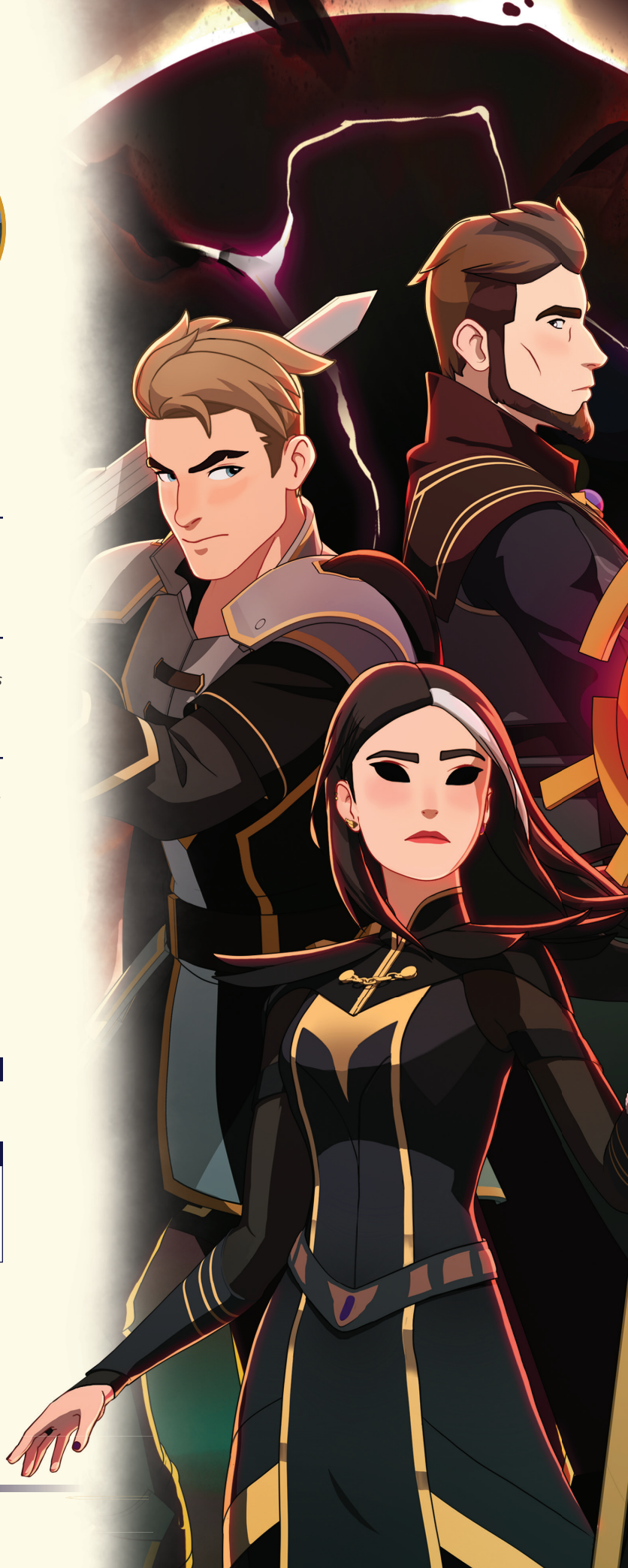
ARCHERY 8

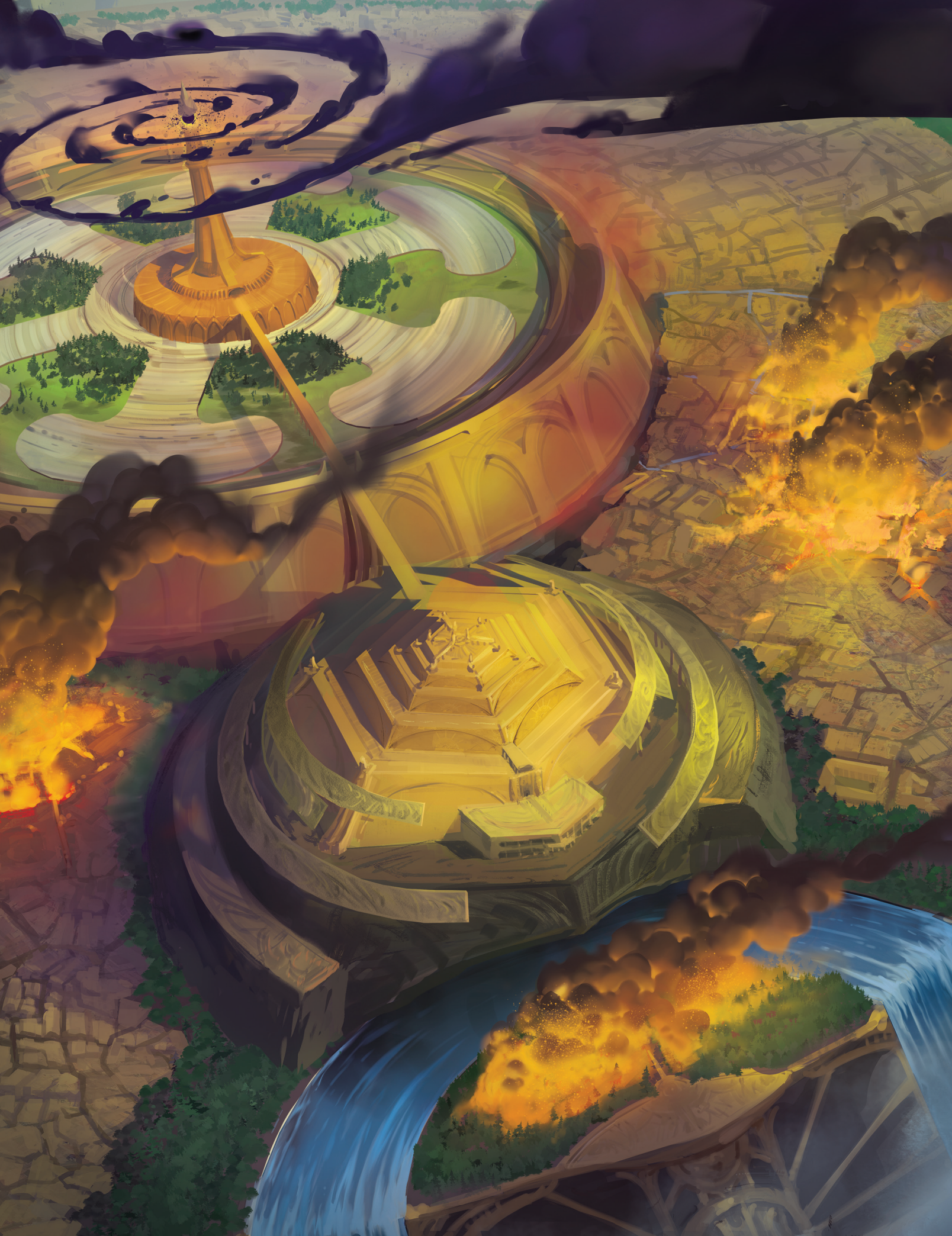
DIPLOMACY 10

ASSETS

ROYAL BOW 8

A powerful but light bow that Aanya is adept at using, even when riding horseback.







VII

"In journeys there are always surprises.
Things never go as you plan."

CALLUM
Book 2 Sky, Chapter 1: A Secret and a Spark

The Tale of the Corrupted Core

Viren and Aaravos have left the Sunforge in a precarious state, and the pulsing magic inside it may destroy all of Xadia! There's no time to waste; something must be done to limit the coming disaster's reach to the borders of Lux Aurea or else all is lost.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

Introduction: Contains a tale overview, a breakdown of the catalysts involved, and notes for the Narrator.

Act One: Vial of Hope: PCs meet the catalysts and learn of the imminent danger facing Xadia from the corrupted Sunforge.

Act Two: Echoes of Flame: PCs enter Lux Aurea proper, navigating refugee camps and hostile obstacles.

Act Three: Tower of Chaos: With the Sunforge tower in sight, PCs do some last minute preparation.

Final Conflicts: PCs face their biggest challenge yet: trying to heal the Sunforge.

Concluding the Tale: Options for various endings and story seeds for future tales.



Introduction

Welcome!

Here we are, in the lush green fields of northwestern Xadia. With the human lands to your west and a towering golden city to your east, you pause to consider the path before you. Soon you'll enter the heart of the dangerous ruin of Lux Aurea, where a magical ticking time bomb—the corrupted Sunforge atop the city's tower—threatens to destroy the entire continent of Xadia.

The city itself is lost, and nearly the entire populace has fled the area. Vaake, a Sunfire elf healer caring for animals, is still stationed just outside the city limits. Powerful mages fleeing the city have warned her that she should leave, for the devastation is likely to stretch far beyond the city unless something miraculous is done. Not only is the city full of draining, corruptive power, but soon the Sunforge will explode, possibly bringing an end to all life on Xadia. That is, unless someone intervenes.

This is a story of hope in the face of ruin. A city and its people are in chaos. It will take courage and creativity to see it through.

But first you must meet the key players in the story. And those key players are... you! One of you serves as the Narrator, and the others play characters you choose or create. We hope this is merely your first tale, and that when you conclude *The Corrupted Core*, you keep following adventure wherever it may take you.

Key to the tale is a vial of magical serum, invented by Vaake, the Sunfire elf veterinarian near the city limits. How your characters utilize it will determine their fate, and perhaps the fate of all of Xadia. Along the way you'll meet many characters, but their roles in the tale are completely up to the choices made by your player characters (PCs).

This story takes place a few days after the end of Season Three of *The Dragon Prince*, and we recommend getting caught up with the show before playing this tale. Both tales currently available on our website, *talesofxadia.com*, are set chronologically before this tale, so you may wish to try out your characters in one or both of those first.

Note: Events from this tale have been keenly aligned to work between Seasons Three and Four of *The Dragon Prince*, and you might even see elements of this tale in future seasons of the show! However, remember that there are many directions this story might take you, and only by watching the show will you be able to discern which parts of this tale will end up becoming part of the official story and which parts won't.

Note to Players

If you're playing a character in the tale, it's time to decide if you'd like to use one of the pregenerated characters we've prepared for you (page 238), or if you'd prefer to create your own and fill out a brand new character journal using the guidelines on page 112. Either way is a legitimate way to play! For more on coordinating with your Narrator, see page 113.

Remember, it's always okay to physically distance your PC from the other PCs. Gameplay isn't negatively affected if you split off; it only makes your game more unique! This is often referred to in tabletop roleplaying games as "splitting the party" and is usually seen as a classic mistake. Not so in Cortex games like *Tales of Xadia*! Immerse yourself in the story, and if you believe your PC would split off, there are no negative consequences for it.

Players, you should stop reading here, as going any further is spoiler territory for anyone other than your faithful Narrator.

Tale Overview

The job of Narrator isn't easy, so remember this page and flip back to it if you lose track of key players, key ideas, and the arc of the story. And players, we warned you, stop reading already!

- **Act One: Vial of Hope**: PCs approach the heart of the city and break through some improvised gates made by city guards.
- **Act Two: Echoes of Flame**: PCs race across the city, dealing with Orta and the refugees.
- **Act Three: Tower of Chaos**: PCs scale the Sunforge tower and deal with its corruption.
- **Ekkers**: A human catalyst, and former soldier in Viren's army. He's the default second catalyst, but if you prefer, you can introduce another catalyst who wants to use the serum to serve as a foil to Vaake.
- **Klors**: A twin-tailed inferno-toothed tiger that was injured and nursed back to health.
- **Minsa**: Klors' keeper and a member of the Lux Aurean royal guard who appears in Act Two.
- **Orta**: An orange-and-green fire dragon that touched the corrupted Sunforge and is now wild with its dark energy.
- **Serum**: A magical concoction that can heal corrupted beings and limit the Sunforge's destruction.
- **Shard**: A small, fist-sized piece of the Sunforge that broke off when it was corrupted.
- **Sunforge**: The former source of Lux Aurea's magical power, wracked with dark magic by Viren and about to explode and destroy all of Xadia.
- **Vaake**: A Sunfire elf catalyst and veterinarian who invented the serum.

Note to Narrators

First of all, check out those notes we gave players earlier.

Narrators, you're supposed to have fun, too. Most importantly, we hope you feel empowered. You're about to learn some storytelling secrets, but these aren't rails you must guide the story along. All scenes that lie ahead can and should be adapted to your unique group.

If any players seem unsure of how to approach this tale, feel free to offer the following goals, once you get through the opening scene with Vaake. They can choose to add any of them, or one of their own, to their character journal. See page 104 for more on goals.

- Save all of Xadia from the corrupted Sunforge.
- Get Lux Aurean refugees away from the coming disaster.
- Keep Klors safe on the journey.

You can play a dozen scenes of your own design and it's still a legitimate playthrough of *The Corrupted Core*. We do recommend you read this entire book at some point for context, and it helps to be caught up on the show *The Dragon Prince* itself, so you can help paint a vivid picture for everyone. Adoraburrs and all.

Did we say adoraburrs? Oh yeah, that brings us to gameplay features you should be ready for, even if you've played one of our tales before.

As you narrate this tale, PCs are likely to gain **Corrupted** stress. This type of stress is unique, and has special rules that set it apart from the other five types of stress.

> **Corrupted** stress from dark magic does not recover at the end of a session, tale, or recovery scene.
>
> **Corrupted** stress inflicted by magical items recovers at the end of a tale.
>
> **Corrupted** stress can only be recovered by activating Narrator opportunities, or by attempting a recovery test.
>
> **Corrupted** stress recovered through a test does not add any dice to the growth pool.
>
> Recovery tests for **Corrupted** stress caused by dark magic must use dark magic.
>
> Recovery tests for **Corrupted** stress caused by magical items may use Sun magic.

The unique challenges and costs for dark magic and **Corrupted** stress are described in detail in the Mage's Guide, Chapter 5. See page 146 for more.

Pet Creatures

Once inside Vaake's clinic, she confides to PCs that she's been treating creatures from Lux Aurea that appear weakened—irritable in a magical way that implies they've been corrupted by the radiation-like energy emanating from the Sunforge.

At the clinic, PCs can encounter a number of recuperating cute animals ready to be adventure companions. None offer a huge advantage, but have fun with players who try to utilize them during a story. There are several options:

- A **slowusk**, a six-eyed snail the size of a chihuahua that perches and moves almost imperceptibly.
- A **brightbell**, a raven-like bird that's bright blue and yellow and sings its favorite word.
- A **snickery**, a deeply mischievous chipmunk with chameleon-like camouflage
- A **ringling**, a creature that looks like a tiny horse or okapi with a curious lemur's face.

Should PCs choose to leave one or all of them to heal in the clinic, so be it. Clearly, it's their loss!

As PCs advance and gain the trust of these creatures, they have the option of adding them as a temporary or permanent asset. See page 68 for how this works.

Narrator Characters

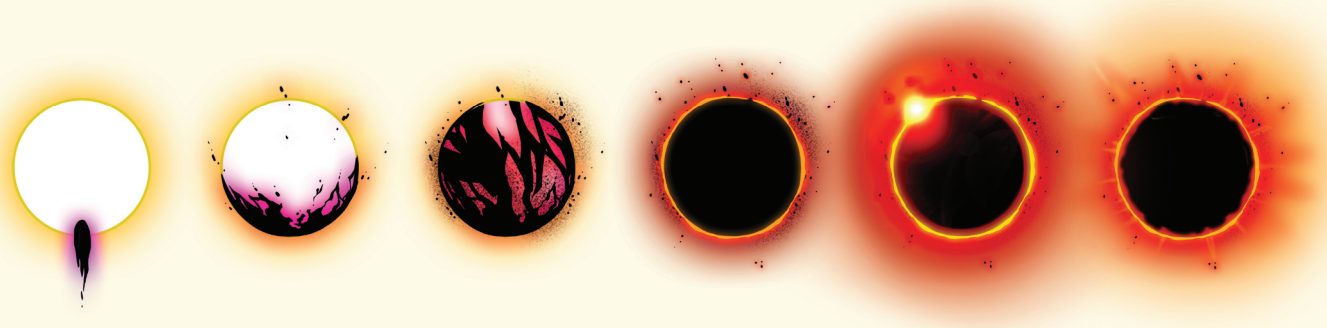
As the Narrator, there are a variety of NCs that you're asked to portray or at least describe. We recommend engaging with players on whatever level you're comfortable with. Your main responsibilities are the catalysts—Vaake and Ekkers—but you're also encouraged to make creature noises and give voice to all the humans and elves that PCs encounter.

With Vaake (page 212), you may wish to note how Sunfire elves carry themselves on *The Dragon Prince*, for she continues that tradition of power, honor, and pride despite her weaknesses. Queen Khessa's determination was particularly relevant to her. She loves to reminisce about her youth growing up in the city and is eager to share lighthearted stories that bolster her own spirits. But when it comes to preserving her serum, she relies on her steely determination.

Ekkers (page 213), an extroverted warrior, is something of a kindred spirit to a legendary member of the same army, Soren. Though a bit older, Ekkers is also a Katolian defector who knows right from wrong. Jolly and confident, he sticks by all kind-hearted characters. Though Ekkers and Vaake may clash, they're both veterans who have become pacifists at heart, so consider giving them both elements of patience.

Players are much more likely to immerse themselves in roleplay if you engage them in first-person point of view storytelling, so it's worth risking some initial awkwardness to get everyone into a shared imaginative space. While it's not necessary to put on an accent or use a distinctive voice for either character, think of ways to convey a point of view. This point of view should be fun to put on, and it gives you a chance to express these characters' motivations and their stakes in the tale.

The human soldiers and Sunfire elf refugees all experience great urgency, but they are dynamic and respond to player choices. Don't worry too much about players following a fixed narrative, or players might worry they're doing something wrong. NCs are there to interact with, not for forcing the tale along.



And lest we forget, the pulsating sounds of the Sunforge and the roar of a corrupted dragon are nearly constant in the background. If there's a pause in the action, these atmospheric elements help make the tale more exciting when they're described. The eerie shadows cast across the city from the Sunforge or a belch of dragonfire overhead can snap the PCs back to the matter at hand.

That's right, there's a fire dragon overhead! Her name is Orta, though as a fire dragon she can't speak to introduce herself, and she tried to push back Viren's forces at the battle of the Storm Spire. Veterans from the battle might recognize her unique green-and-orange scales. Consider introducing a Lux Aurean guard who saw what happened to her. After the battle, Orta was drawn to the corruption of the Sunforge; she made contact with it and is now frenzied by pain from the huge dose of corruption the dark magic inflicted on her. This corruption means that PCs feel her coming through a pulsing shard of the Sunforge that Vaake hands them at the beginning of the adventure.

Orta's ominous presence should cast a tense shadow over the story. Until recently, most denizens of the Human Kingdoms hadn't even seen a dragon; they'd only heard of them in legends. To see one in distress, fixated on their group of friends, circling like a monstrous orange-and-green vulture, should cause the PCs alarm, and your descriptions are key to conveying that.





Catalyst 8

Vaake (she/her)

Vaake is headstrong and unafraid of danger, interrupting PCs who attempt to use her serum on anything other than the Sunforge. She's focused on limiting the catastrophic damage the Sunforge will cause, so although she has reasonable **Devotion** derived from her veterinarian work, she's at odds with her strong sense of **Justice**.

She avoids physical confrontations because of the way her magic functions. When upset, her Fire magic inadvertently creates a 6 asset. This can make others stronger, but in turn it gives her **Exhausted** stress, weakening her and making it difficult for her to stand. Her power is a sacrifice she makes, and she doesn't enjoy providing this power to just anyone.

She can choose to let the power dissipate rather than give it to a PC, creating motes of black flame that pulsate from her—a barrier between her and hostility that burns a nearing attacker. Regardless, being upset weakens her and gives her **Exhausted** stress, so she dreads any type of face-to-face conflict. She was once a medic in the Lux Aurean army, but chose a life of service to animals so she could focus on healing.



Values

Devotion 6	**Liberty** 8
I'm generous of heart, but wary of those who would exploit it.	*I strive for a balance between my people and my freedom.*
Glory 4	**Mastery** 8
I don't care if my name goes down in history, as long as we preserve history.	*Nothing matters more than healing rifts, great and small.*
Justice 8	**Truth** 8
To ignore our problems is to invite chaos.	*Where there is weakness, we find the lies we tell ourselves.*

Distinctions

- **Sunfire Elf** 8
- **Valiant Veterinarian** 8
- **Pacifist Alchemist** 8

Specialties

Animal Medicine 8	**Sun Magic** 6

Assets

Sun Magic Spells 6

- ***Facti Fortior*** (Enhance Strength)
- ***Flammae Circumeans*** (Floating Motes)

The Catalysts of the Corrupted Core



Catalyst 8

Ekkers (he/him)

Ekkers defected from Viren's army outside of Lux Aurea, just in time to avoid being made into a magic Sunfire mutant; **Liberty** is one of his primary values and he'd like to help liberate humans and elves alike. PCs encounter him right after they leave Vaake's clinic, rushing the party with his renowned ability to disarm any weapons. Though he looks a bit feral as far as his general appearance, his soul is untarnished, and he's quite eager to join the PCs so that he may heal the soul of Lux Aurea.

Ekkers has always been an expert at hand-to-hand combat with a specialty in disarming enemies with the flick of a sword or an acrobatic grapple—he also has a high rating in **Mastery**—and after speaking to the PCs, he's eager to combine this skill with Vaake's serum. He's excited to collect forsaken creatures and offer said serum to them.



VALUES

Devotion 8
I'm more disarming than I'm armed, and I'm pretty well armed.

Liberty 8
Though I lack a commander, I'm loyal to all good-hearted folk.

Glory 4
I love a daunting challenge, but I do not fight for my ego.

Mastery 8
My moustache gets trimmed by my blade mid-duel.

Justice 8
Pain is part of life, and so is protecting against it.

Truth 6
I don't mind a little double-talk to keep things interesting.

DISTINCTIONS

Katolian Cityfolk 8
Debonair Swashbuckler 8
Extroverted Expatriate 8

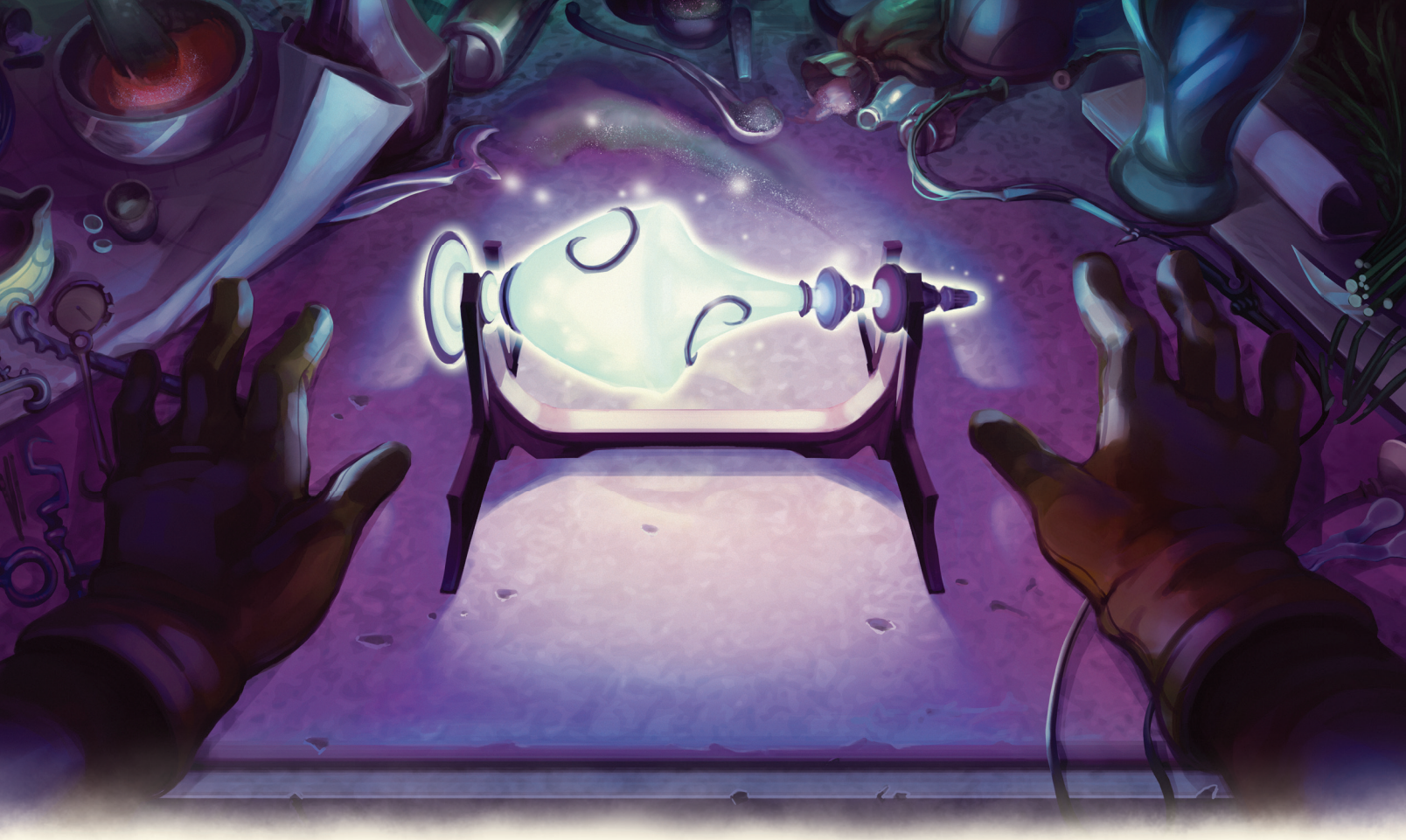
SPECIALTIES

Swordplay 6
Wrestling 6

ASSET



Mechanical Bird Lure 8
A shiny purple crow with simple gears on a basic timer and a snapping device that hurts as much as a mousetrap.



When Catalysts Collide

Ekkers' altruistic behavior goes against Vaake's wishes to save the serum for the Sunforge, putting them at odds. His complete lack of proximity to it his entire life makes him prioritize individual suffering over the rumor that a Xadia-wide apocalypse is brewing. He encourages PCs to share the serum on disarmed NCs, as well as starving and frightened NCs. Ekkers believes the serum is best used on the young dragon Orta, as she can fly a PC up to the Sunforge and is suffering like the Sunfire elf refugees. Vaake has a clearer understanding of how dire the situation is, and therefore most interactions between them are laden with frustration.

Always the debonair swashbuckler, Ekkers sees conflict as a means to an end, which is quite off-putting to Vaake. Though they're both selfless and hate to hurt others, their goals aren't compatible. It's difficult to work with them at the same time, and PCs may want to choose one as a primary ally to suit their own goals. Ekkers *always* apologizes for inevitably offending Vaake, as he carries great sorrow for the pain his former army caused.

Ekkers saw Orta join the great battle at the Storm Spire, but only from a distance. She appears to be corrupted by dark magic and is now following the PCs, circling overhead. Ekkers proposes at various points that the dragon be confronted and healed, a topic that causes Vaake to appear and protest passionately.

Vaake would rather PCs hide from the dragon and cast the serum directly into the Sunforge itself.

Most important is the serum. The more serum PCs have, the better job it does. It starts as a 12 asset, but after the first use, tell the players it's stepped down to a 10. Then a 8, 6, and 4 with each use. After being used as a 4, it's empty. There is only one opportunity, at most, to refill the serum or create a second asset during this tale. More on this later, depending on Vaake and whether she leads PCs to an Arboretum she is hesitant to spend valuable time visiting.

She tails the party to make sure they don't squander precious serum that she hopes might heal the Sunforge. She hides in shadows just within earshot, ducking behind rubble and underbrush, unafraid but avoiding being seen. She's more worried about losing the mission than about personal suffering, and she gives her power freely to the PCs if they earn her trust. If she's exposed to danger on the way to the Sunforge—especially the large open-air chamber where it floats—she can't move as fast as the PCs on her own, or hang on as tight to her serum. Though she appreciates when Ekkers gets the PCs closer to the Sunforge with her serum, she finds him incredibly grating.

Act One: Vial of Hope

Vaake brings the PCs in from the Xadian wilds nearby to her veterinarian clinic, explaining her mission. Don't tell players that she is a catalyst until she reappears in a later scene—for now let them believe she is simply here to get them started.

Opening Scene: Vaake's Clinic

All PCs take a tour and may pet the little creatures healing in nearby pens, creatures that PCs may find particularly charming. The clinic is a large, open-air structure with little insulation, so the various creatures do not feel caged. They are separated by pens with no ceiling to them, though there is netting if they are an agile or leap-prone sort of creature. Looming in the back is the largest creature, a twin-tailed inferno-toothed tiger that has seen better days. Too weak to fly, he mopes as he paces. Vaake walks PCs in the tiger's direction, explaining the predicament with the Sunforge as she passes the smaller critters. Here PCs also see Vaake's assistant Mal, attempting to feed Klors.



Mal (he/him)

A stable keeper who fled Lux Aurea, he now helps the more crisis-oriented Vaake manage the wildlife that has fled the city. Bright and calm, he is a soothing presence that counters Vaake's heady intensity.

Sunfire Elf 10
Friend to Fauna 10

Attempting to empower the group, Vaake offers PCs her serum once she has briefed them on the dangerous situation at hand. She hands it to whoever has spoken to her the most or made the best impression. It can be handed to other PCs, but let the PC who first holds it know that when you say "vial" what you mean is a large, canteen-sized glass dram with magenta fluid inside and a narrow top with a cork keeping it sealed. It has a noticeable weight to it, both literally and figuratively.

Vaake has spent years perfecting this serum to try and dampen the draining effects her arcanum has on her strength. She can tap into Sunfire magic like any Sunfire elf, but it causes her to get dizzy and flustered to the point of needing to lie down.

However, in the short days since the Sunforge's corruption, she has realized this serum cancels out the corruptive energy emanating from the Sunforge, and could be adapted to save lives.

Any cute critter that hobbled out of the Lux Aurean city limits has returned to its happy self after a drop of Vaake's serum and some rest. This group is the first to be heading into danger, rather than away from it, and Vaake seizes this opportunity.

Vaake tries her best to explain the corruption in the city. Though one can see from miles away the spiraling purple dark magic emanating from the Sunforge, the grounds of Lux Aurea are now plagued with sickly waves of orange. This seems to stick to people and creatures, weakening them over time. This can cause **Corrupted** stress at specific moments, which becomes unavoidable within the Sunforge tower itself.

Vaake hands her serum to the PCs as she reaches the tiger, as well as a mysterious shard that she found in the tiger's paw. She's not sure what it does, but she tells PCs that it pulses when a highly corrupted creature, or person, approaches. A handy warning device. She introduces the tiger as Klors, a mount belonging to a member of the royal guard. Though he is weak, he should be able to fly at least once, and Vaake thinks he should be able to carry one PC up into the air to drop the serum into the Sunforge.



Klors (he/him)

Separated from his person, this twin-tailed inferno-tooth tiger is wise and battle-hardened. He still has the heart of a kitten, though, and warms quickly to anyone who shows him kindness.

Twin-Tailed Inferno-Toothed Tiger 6
Loyal 6

Could some of the serum be used to heal Klors completely, so he can fly right now? This is a topic Vaake attempts to dodge by emphasizing the limited supply and the dangerous dragon flying overhead. Vaake prepares PCs for this difficult choice by imploring them directly:

> *Oh, we could use it on Klors and it might heal him fully. There are also weakened Sunfire elves in the city. But please don't! I developed this for myself, to combat the weakness I feel when I use magic, but I made a sacrifice and I ask you and those you may meet to make sacrifices as well.*

> *No matter what we do, the Sunforge will soon blast a dark energy outwards, and this serum can at least reduce that damage to the city limits rather than all of Xadia. Please, I am too weak to take this serum into the Sunforge myself. I need you to do it, to do it bravely, and shrewdly too.*

And to be clear, Lux Aurea cannot be saved. This is a mission to limit the destruction, not stop it altogether. Soon the Sunforge will explode deadly dark energies, but this serum can confine it to the diameter of Lux Aurea's city limits. There are not enough ingredients in all of Xadia to heal the Sunforge completely. It is lost, but the world is not.

You, the Narrator, should make it clear that Vaake is starting to urge the party out the door so all of Xadia isn't, you know, blown up by dark magic. If they'd like to make a big confrontation about it, or try to convince Vaake to come, feel free to improvise a test. But no dice roll is necessary. The priority is to consult with your players one by one on how their characters react.

If one of the creatures caught a PC's eye, you may now have the creature make pleading doe-eyes at the PC. Vaake, for her part, does not argue if PCs wish to take a creature as their ward, only imploring them not to go wild and try to nurse them to super strength with the serum.

> *They're all recovering from this horrible local corruption and making great progress towards being fully healed.*

Vaake will say in regards to any of the smaller beasts:

> *They just need a good night's sleep and maybe a nibble of a scorchberry scone.*

It is possible to bring a reluctant Vaake along from the start, but it will take a contest. The contest should vary in difficulty depending on how players approach the matter, as Vaake is about to decide to follow them in secret. She wouldn't mind keeping an eye on them, but she loathes feeling like she had no choice in the matter and is somehow indebted to PCs, with them keeping tabs on her.

As soon as the PCs leave her clinic, Vaake reverts to her nature as a natural worrier and secretly tails them, leaving her assistant Mal in charge.

Unless convinced to come with, Vaake trails PCs secretly in bushes, behind pillars, and amongst city scenery. Even when PCs meet her natural foil, Ekkers, she does not immediately jump out and reveal herself. As the Narrator, track her movements as the players declare their own; imagine her passively watching and worrying, only risking a reveal when PCs are about to actively offer their serum or use it. This would be a crisis for Vaake, but until then she remains hopeful and silent.

Players, having been shooed outside, can use the area outside the clinic as a place to stage their big plans, or they can hurry north to the city proper.

As of right now, the group is still a few miles away from the denser part of Lux Aurea that leads to the Sunforge. They are still near a small wooded area. If PCs try to scout the path ahead, have them do a test to try and get a more detailed lay of the land. If they simply head north, proceed to the first scene, where Ekkers introduces himself.

TEST: Devise a path to the Sunforge (HARD 10 10)

You may need to help players assemble their first dice pool, so these are just some suggestions on where to start.

- **Awareness**: I gaze towards the Sunforge from as many angles as I can manage from here.
- **Intellect**: I can spot danger and safety ahead as I am no fool.
- **Glory**: I am dreaming of my place in this legend, and it inspires me to find a heroic path.
- **Truth**: As a Sunfire elf I love this city, and I search my memories for the answer.

If players **succeed**, tell them their PCs create a hand-drawn map as an asset, with several key spots that look good for shelter at a distance.

They will note— either through word-of-mouth, sightlines, or intuition—that barriers were built during the city's evacuation, and there are only some improvised gates made by panicking guards that then open up to a series of paths to the Sunforge. Though the city is vast and contains many winding roads, the chaos of thousands of elves fleeing at once has left devastation in its wake, and these monitored gates made of magically fused scrap metal and spare parts are all that kept invading humans from ransacking it and attacking refugees.

Also note the dragon looming overhead, and consider telling PCs native to Eastern Xadia that they recognize it to be an orange-and-green fire dragon. It's worth noting that it is erratically weaving over the city's entire sprawl, but curiously closer to the area ahead of the PCs.

If players **fail**, tell them that their shard pulses, and Orta lets loose a mighty roar. She dives near them, inflicting **Afraid** or **Insecure** stress, discouraging them from staying out in the open and plotting their journey easily. This should be especially unnerving to any flying Skywing elves in your group, or a character already gloating about how excited they will be to ride Klors to easy victory.

With Lux Aurea in their sights, PCs make their way north along the edge of the woods, towards the gates that soldiers have made. Should they propose they take a long way around instead, a mindful Narrator should consider making use of Orta and initiating a scene with her engaging the group if this happens, or remind them that time is of the essence and that Xadia may be lost if they don't hurry. Though too powerful to be slain by a small group and too corrupted and confused to attack directly, Orta is more than capable of expressing unbridled rage.

Unbeknownst to PCs, and in addition to the warning pulse, their shard pulsates with an invisible magical aura, and moving around in the wide open attracts the attention of Orta. Later in the tale the shard's aura will become audible as PCs approach the Sunforge, which makes it impossible to avoid Orta.

Unless PCs would like an improvised scene such as one with Orta, proceed to Ekkers at Your Service.



Adventure Scene: Ekkers at Your Service

PCs only make it about a third of the way to the makeshift gates, still in the partially wooded outskirts of the city, when they hear a suspicious yet strange rustling in the trees. What happens next depends on how your players wish to proceed.

The noise is a lure, a small mechanical bird that is very distracting but relatively harmless. If PCs approach it or look at it for too long, they notice it is a shiny purple bird made from scrap metal. If someone appears hostile or is pulling out a threatening weapon, they are tackled by Ekkers, who attempts to disarm them. Unless your PCs are exceptionally cautious, this leads to an inevitable contest. However, if PCs have been staying sneaky in the underbrush, they might simply stumble upon a dozing Ekkers who will awaken with a startled "WOT WOT?"

Ekkers is still capable of defending himself and in no way means to be hostile. He set up the bird merely as an alarm, to make noises if someone came near him while he was napping, in case he was being stalked and ambushed. But PCs may spot him sleeping and awaken him gently from a distance. We can't guess, it's up to you how this possible confrontation informs your story!



CONTEST: Avoid being disarmed by Ekkers

As with the map-scribbling test last scene, players may need some suggestions on how to assemble their dice pool, and you might want some examples, too. Keep in mind none of these examples are "the right die" to include, and depending on how your story led up to the moment, the PC Ekkers targets might have more freedom of movement, be halfway up a tree, and so forth.

- **Agility**: I loosen my muscles and try to wriggle free of his grapple.
- **Strength**: I attempt to overpower him.
- **Justice**: This looks like one of Viren's soldiers, and they've done enough damage here.
- **Truth**: I'm not letting some crazy human get the better of me without explaining himself!

Ekkers' motivation can vary depending on how your party is made up, but the end result is always diplomacy.

If the player **succeeds**, Ekkers immediately kneels and apologizes, explaining the mechanical bird, if necessary. He only wanted to catch a nap, and thought PCs were remnant forces from the Storm Spire looking to capture him. The player can choose a value to step up or down. This is also the first time a catalyst's die rating is affected by player actions, so it is wise to explain to the players that this character is crucial to the plot as a catalyst.

If the player **fails**, they may take **Angry** or **Insecure** stress, but Ekkers is quite upbeat. Though he may flick a weapon aside with a flourish, he does not point the tip of his blade at anyone. Instead he introduces himself proudly as a former soldier, loyal to Katolis no more, and asks if he may be of service. Though already a high die rating, if Ekkers has a particularly resounding victory you may describe the flourish and how it means his **Mastery** die is increased, explaining to the players as it happens.

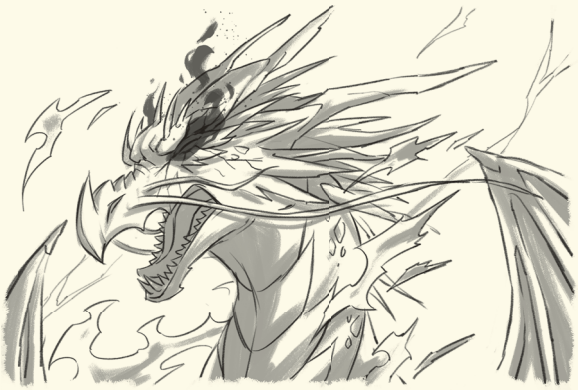
The potential disarming confrontation isn't the only conflict that might appear in this scene, however. Now that PCs have met both conflicting catalysts, it's only a matter of time before their incompatibility is brought to a head. Should Vaake appear, it's time to admit to players that she is indeed a catalyst too.

Having seen Fire magic mutate his comrades-in-arms, Ekkers wants nothing to do with Viren's mad plan. Instead he has been attempting to bring whatever peace he can to the area, and is eager to head to Lux Aurea with PCs if they will have him.

He had hoped to head into the city soon to try and save some lives, as the Sunforge appears to be getting more and more unstable and there are known to be small numbers of refugees still in the city. It hadn't ever really occurred to him that anyone outside the city was in trouble; the enormous power of the Sunforge wasn't something he was raised to revere. Ekkers is a man who believes in improvising solutions, in general; his optimism will keep him going even if he doesn't learn of the serum until later.

If PCs wish to make a break for the gates of Lux Aurea, proceed to Hostile Gates (page 220). In particular, make note that Ekkers looks skyward towards the circling Orta and says, "I believe that dragon was corrupted by the Sunforge within the city; I wonder if there is a way to heal it as well?" Even if the topic of damage outside the city has come up, he is unflappably optimistic that everyone will find a way, somehow. He is more than game to capture and heal Orta, but it is difficult in the wide open. Should PCs attempt to call out to, or grab the attention of, Orta in any way, proceed to Gates Aflame (page 221).

The PCs may get leery of the shard and chuck it aside. Orta is also like any large creature and is attracted to movement. She comes swooping in whenever you like, drawn by either the shard pulses or mischievous PC scurrying beneath her.



Orta (she/her)

A proud veteran of the battle against Viren at the Storm Spire, she afterwards flew to investigate the Sunforge's corruption and unfortunately touched it. She is wild with pain now, angry-looking orange and purple waves of energy appearing and disappearing in a haze around her, but a determined soul could bring out her noble nature again.

Fire Dragon 10 **Frenzied** 10

There are many deviations players may make, including a near impossible scaling of the city war barricades by the gates. Don't be afraid to improvise a scene if it feels right!

However, should the serum come up with Ekkers, first move to the scene Greater Good.

Intrigue Scene: Greater Good

Should PCs inform Ekkers of the special serum they carry, he enthusiastically suggests it be used on the Sunfire elves within the city. He has gotten glimpses of the remaining elves, and the corruption that weakened Klors has also affected a great many soldiers and civilians there. These sad sights have left him overflowing with empathy. He also served under Viren, someone he now regards as a monster, and the guilt continues to cast a heavy shadow over him.

Here, Vaake is likely watching the dialogue unfold, and if Ekkers is talking about using the serum for anything other than the Sunforge—which, if he learns about the serum, he will—Vaake emerges with vocal frustration and disagreement. She is deeply empathetic to the situation too, but believes salvation is on the edge of a knife. Giving in to spending portions of the serum upsets her deeply, and regardless of where this scene takes place geographically speaking, she loses her sense of careful self-preservation and approaches.

> *I knew something like this would happen! I knew I should keep tabs on you all! My people need heroes who can make difficult choices, and that includes conserving my serum for the Sunforge!*

She then insists PCs not trust Ekkers or take him along. Ekkers is very agreeable, but his heart continues to wander towards philanthropy. This personality conflict means it is virtually impossible to keep both catalysts on the PCs' side at the same time, though a scornful Vaake is happy to run off and keep shadowing the PCs if they won't listen to her warnings.

This is an intrigue scene, so it does not have to contain any element that puts a lot of stress on PCs. And it could happen now, or it could happen inside the city. Regardless of when, Vaake reveals herself the second Ekkers encourages PCs to disrupt her ideal plan. She stomps forward boldly, demanding Ekkers be ignored and the serum be preserved.

Players should know that these two catalysts are integral to the story, so highlight their value to them; it's important! They are now asked to decide whether they'd like to appeal to Ekkers to be frugal-minded, appeal to Vaake to be more generous of heart, or maybe even try to shoo them both away or get both to join their adventuring crew.

There are many directions things can go when it comes to the catalysts, but Vaake refuses to travel openly with Ekkers and the PCs at the same time. You may have caught on at this point, but there's two main ways this can work out: bring along one catalyst or the other.

For his part, Ekkers wants to make everyone happy, but Vaake is looking to take the lead, and they disagree passionately about the serum. It will take a three-way contest—with the odds not in a PC's favor—to get both catalysts to stay with the PCs at the same time. Player choices, like siding with one catalyst, letting them work it out amongst themselves, or simply appealing to their better nature, don't necessarily need a roll of the dice.

So let's take a look at three possible contests that could play out in this scene depending on how your players react, two likely and one unlikely. First, the more likely—and easier—of the three...

CONTEST: Get Ekkers to agree to Vaake's terms

This is a contest against Ekkers. The PC instigating this may want to assemble dice like these:

- **Influence**: Convince Ekkers that the group is his best shot at making a difference.
- **Intellect**: Reference a meaningful aspect of human or Katolian culture to drive home the point.
- **Mastery**: Vaake knows what she's doing; we have to trust her plan.
- **Justice**: Every living creature has a lot riding on this, and we have to make hard choices.

On a **success**, Ekkers agrees to be patient and assist the PCs. He doesn't argue and submits for the time being, but he isn't deterred from addressing the issue of the Sunforge either. He'd like to stay with the PCs, too, though not while Vaake is breathing down his neck, making him feel shame for wanting to help. PCs have to choose between the catalysts—only one will stay with them. Either way, at the end of the session, Ekkers' catalyst die rating steps down while Vaake's steps up. The player can choose one of Ekkers' values to step up or down.

Should the PC **fail** the contest, they take **Angry** or **Insecure** stress, while Ekkers makes a grand statement about empathy, and how every refugee affected by the magic malady matters: "I care about the people of Lux Aurea, too, and if we ignore their pain on the way to the Sunforge we will condemn them to suffering, and condemn ourselves to a lifetime of regret. We can't need THAT much serum to heal the Sunforge. And truly, shouldn't you be off making some more of it if that's such a crime? If you cannot abide by this, Vaake, I suggest you take leave at once." Vaake does indeed leave, grumbling and huffing, but also secretly continues to follow the PCs rather than retreat home. Ekkers steps up whichever value die he used. At the end of the session, Ekkers' catalyst die rating steps up while Vaake's steps down.

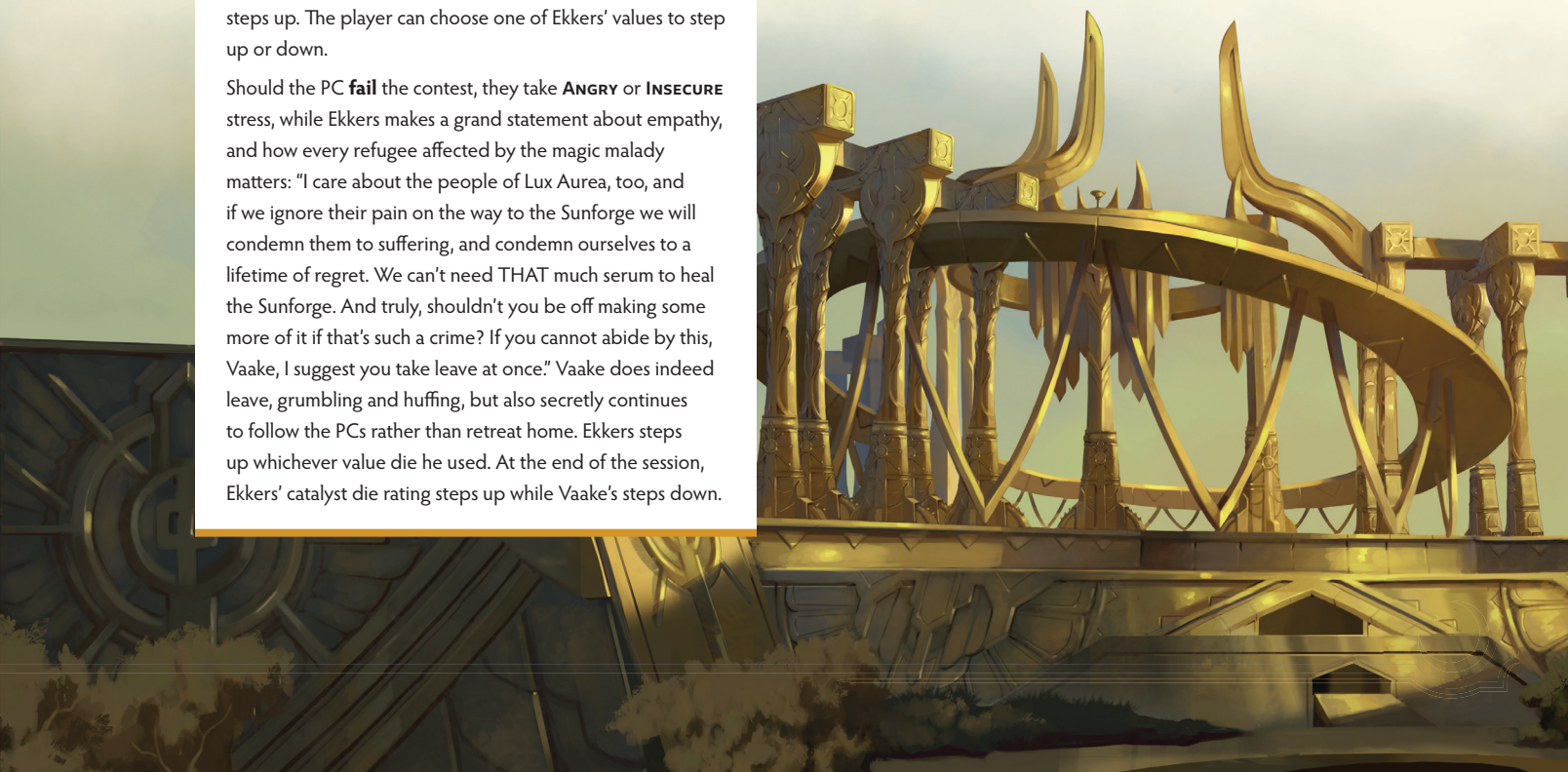
CONTEST: Get Vaake to hear Ekkers out

To win Vaake over in this battle of hard truths, you might want to suggest your players assemble dice such as...

- **Spirit**: As a medic, she must know the value in helping every soldier to their feet.
- **Awareness**: If this nigh-impossible goal can't be achieved, at least people could be helped.
- **Devotion**: To ignore suffering is to violate the ethics of any doctor.
- **Truth**: Surely another solution could present itself. Why not keep an open mind?

If the PC **succeeds**, Vaake takes the hint. But she's not going home or traveling with Ekkers, who utterly exhausts her with his optimism. She offers to join everyone if Ekkers will go on his merry way, or else she lies and claims to go home, instead trailing the party from a hidden distance. The player can choose one of Vaake's values to step up or down. PCs may still shoo Ekkers away and ask Vaake to stay, but he is emboldened by the contest. At the end of the session, Vaake's catalyst die rating steps down and Ekkers' steps up.

Should the PC **fail**, they take **Angry** or **Insecure** stress, but it's a huge victory for Vaake. She states as clearly and simply as she can that this is a longshot mission, and supplies are quite limited, "You have a single vial of serum. Look at the size of that Sunforge. I hope I made enough, but I think we can agree the only way I can make enough for all of Lux Aurea to share is if we fix that giant, pulsating orb with what we have." At the end of the session, her catalyst die steps up, while Ekkers' steps down.



CONTEST: Get Vaake and Ekkers to travel together

Though unlikely to succeed or seem like a good solution, let's talk about this contest! As Narrator, it helps to be able to whip up something like this on your own when your players surprise you with a risky choice that sets the odds against them. Having both catalysts in a three-way contest with a PC means the PC needs to beat both catalysts to get the result they're hoping for. Narratively speaking, at least. The catalysts may still resent them for it. See either series of suggestions for the last two scenarios in regards to which values PCs may want to use, and if they have any distinctions that allow them to pull off difficult negotiations, now is the time to include them.

Both catalysts need to give in, or at least agree if they both fail, for them to grudgingly stay together with the group. Both lose a bit of faith in the PC's plan, despite tagging along, and may have **Angry** or **Insecure** stress. They aren't agreeing to do what the PC wants forever; they're agreeing to a temporary travel alliance that is easily shattered. So even a success in this contest is tenuous at best, though the winning PC can step one of their values up or down.

In the more likely event that either Vaake or Ekkers wins, their respective value die steps up, and their catalyst die steps up at the end of the session. The PC takes **Angry** or **Insecure** stress, while Vaake, if she wins, sends Ekkers off to his own devices. Ekkers won't give up his quest to fix everything and attempts to capture Orta, ride her to the Sunforge, and do anything else that gets him a chance to destroy or disrupt the corruption emanating from the tower. And if he can't ride a dragon, he'd just as soon try to find some kind of war machine near the tower that could demolish the tower altogether. He assumes burying the Sunforge could just as easily solve everyone's problems.

If Ekkers wins, he irritates Vaake with his idealism, as he might in one of the other two-way contest examples above, and she stomps off and returns to silently shadowing the group.

It's also when PCs may wish to split up with different catalysts. If a player laments, for instance, that they wish a departing Ekkers had stuck around, then you ought to remind them that they're welcome to team up solo with him while everyone else sticks with Vaake.

Adventure Scene: Hostile Gates

Provided PCs make it to the gates mid-way into Lux Aurea without encountering Orta—skip past this scene to Gates Aflame (page 221) instead if Orta is involved—they see two Neolandians from Viren's army clashing with a small force of Lux Aurean soldiers. They are pulsing with magic after being enchanted outside of Lux Aurea before the Battle of the Storm Spire. They seem to have stayed behind to target Lux Aurea instead of heading to that battle.

From a distance the shard begins to hum, alerting unsure PCs that these people have been corrupted somehow. The city's defenses are clearly diminished, the guards weakened by the Sunforge's corrupting pulses, and despite the need to evacuate they are holding the scrappy gates against the invaders through a combination of pride, exhaustion, and a desire to protect remaining refugees who wish to exit the heart of the city safely.

The humans, in a rage fueled by Viren's magic, are hurling boulders and city debris at the gates in an attempt to collapse them. Even if PCs do not know of their transformation at the Battle of the Storm Spire, it is clear from a distance that they are hulking and huge, and cracks in their skin glow with what seems like Sun magic, dark magic, or both.

There isn't a lot of cover, the boarded up and locked buildings of the immediate area aren't something PCs can scale without flying, and there's a dragon circling overhead. So let players know what parts of the scene are actively useful.

The gates themselves are about to crash in. They are two massive golden panels made of brass, copper, steel, and whatever other scrap the Sunfire elves could manage to magically weld together to form a bottleneck against the hostile humans. Massive piles of debris and wreckage block off all other entries to the city for miles in either direction.

- The gates themselves stand several stories tall—the brutish humans are deep in their rage and are standing right under them. They seem to think it will take at least a few more minutes to cave in the doors, and boy they sure would be shocked if PCs somehow managed to make them fall outward right on top of them.
- PCs can look up and see hut-sized, thrown-together guard towers above either side of the gate, which have taken damage and could fall with only one or two solid blows. The plates of metal and junk that comprise these huts could land on the humans, or at least scare them away.



- There's the pile of boulders the Neolandian humans are pulling from, part of a wide but now-shattered road that once led through this major thoroughfare of the city. The gates were likely thrown together here because a typical Sunfire elf familiar with the city would converge with other refugees here, assuming it would not be barricaded. So the gates allow passage, but also has immediately become a military chokepoint.
- Between the PCs and the gate, there are also some huge city trees that have taken significant damage and look like they're about to collapse. Such destruction could create a distraction.
- There's only two of these strange, monstrous humans. They may be tougher than the weakened Sunfire elves inside, but with the PCs here they're even more outnumbered.
- More than one skirmish has occurred at the gates over the last few chaotic days, though most people on both sides have fled the area due to the insidious pulsing energy in the Sunforge. Discarded everywhere are broken weapons, a crushed wagon full of mangled supplies, and so forth.
- There seems to be movement inside the gates. Maybe if the humans were distracted, the guards would pop the gate open a crack and let a friendly group of folks through!
- Orta circles erratically overhead. PCs might want to trick her into helping them! If so, we recommend adapting the Gates Aflame challenge to accommodate their choices.
- It's important to also take an inventory of critters that may have joined the group. Do they cheerily chip in? Bravely clamp down on a PC's shoulder? Scurry into the shadows? Remind PCs that in a tense situation they could help, but might also be safer out of the way.

And don't forget that if a Sunfire elf is among your PCs this is likely a grim moment for them, and they may feel compelled to confront these minions of Viren.

Once players get a lay of the land, it's time for a challenge.

CHALLENGE: Clear the gates of Lux Aurea (CHALLENGING, MEDIUM 8 8 8 8)

Here are some dice players might want to assemble.

- **Strength**: Overpower the monstrous humans.
- **Agility**: Outmaneuver these strange humans.
- **Justice**: This is like kicking a city while it's down; better stop those things!
- **Liberty**: The Sunfire elves trapped on the other side of this gate deserve to be saved.

If they have magic that can alter the scenery and want to use that somehow, they should be encouraged to try!

If players **succeed**, tell them how their choices allow them through the gates, and potentially subdue or scare off the humans—at least for now. Proceed to Act Two (page 222) and the inside of the city, where some grateful Sunfire elves await. If you adapted this challenge to include elements of Gates Aflame then remember, there may have just been some flame damage to consider when portraying the Sunfire elves just inside Lux Aurea's gates.

Should they **fail**, the humans chase the PCs back to some nearby hiding places, with the PCs taking **Angry**, **Insecure** or **Injured** stress; they have to try again as these creeps go back to mindlessly hurling rocks.

If Orta intervenes while you're clearing the gates, give the next scene option, Gates Aflame, a try.

Adventure Scene: Gates Aflame

Orta would side with the PCs if she weren't so blind with magical agitation. But she flew too close to the Sunforge and now she roars her way through a hallucinatory fever dream as it courses through her body.

And now in her fury she has utterly destroyed these gates, making it a smoldering part of the miles-wide barricade of debris.

CHALLENGE: Clear the (completely torched) gates of Lux Aurea (CHALLENGING, MEDIUM 8 8 8 8)

As players assemble their dice, let them know the scenery that was there before is still there; it's all just a part of the giant burning pile now. The welded sheets of patchwork metal have bent inward, the doors lean on each other, and the guard towers are melted over the top of the heap, making it as hot as magma. It's a bit more challenging! However, at least Orta is flying away now, so a flying Skywing elf might finally be able to lift a PC over the rubble.

Here's how players might also want to assemble some dice to defeat yours...

- **Strength**: Haul rubble out of the way.
- **Agility**: Fly a friend over the gates while the dragon is distracted.
- **Glory**: Nothing makes for a good story like saying you stared down a dragon.
- **Liberty**: No way a burning trash wall like this can dictate how this tale ends.

On a **success**, help describe for players how their rolls got them through the obstacle of the crushed, mangled, melted gate.

On a **failure**, Orta circles closer again, and PCs can make another go—only now they have taken stress, and flying Skywing elves would know that Orta could easily swat them down or barbecue their butts. It may be inevitable that PCs wish to scale a barricade wall away from the conflict, but these walls were built to withstand a human army, and such an escape isn't in the cards for them today.



Act Two: Echoes of Flame

Wow, Narrator, you're finally in the vast, eerie abandoned inner city of Lux Aurea. Players may be in a rush to get to the tower, but advise them to relax. Though mostly abandoned, there are people, creatures, and events that still demand the attention of PCs. Congratulate your players on making it inside, and let them know that stakes are only going up from here.

Remember, PCs don't need to stay together if they wish to break apart. Simply give each player equal time as you cycle through scenes that feature their respective characters. You've got this, and so do they!

The inner city of Lux Aurea is almost completely deserted, but not quite. Though it is daylight, ominous dark tendrils seem to twirl in the shadows as if they might come to life. PCs should be told that they instinctively feel grateful for not making this journey at night. Aware that the Sunforge was on the verge of magical meltdown, all but a small number of guards and refugees have fled far away, packing up all their valuables and leaving little behind.

Some of the refugees were too stubborn to leave, some too frail, but now they have all become weak and fearful, the horrible throbbing Sunforge and its fractured light casting a grim pall over the winding streets. Let your players know that the city looks newly haunted, the shining golden buildings still tall and proud, but the air hums with foul portent. You know... spooky. So if they want to explore, feel free to describe some elven buildings and their hubristic architecture, but there's little to be found inside them. It's time to get moving!

Discovery Scene: Weep for the Gatekeep

Named Rachida, Sani, and Yakubu, the Sunfire elves now before the PCs have been severely weakened by the corrupted Sunforge and are the only guards left near the gate. Squinting through the waves of aches and pain that makes them see flashes of white, they relate that the population has all left quickly, and they suspect Lux Aurea will be completely uninhabited soon. PCs feel flashes of a dull, dry heat, but the Sunforge isn't affecting PCs as badly as it is these guards... yet.



Rachida (she/her)

The highest ranking guard at the gates, she longs for the simple troubles of the past and a cool, soothing drink. And oh, what she wouldn't give for an enemy she could trounce like the old days, not these dark magic abominations Viren has created.

Sunfire Guard 8
Weary 8



Sani (she/her)

The most empathetic guard, her favorite part of serving Lux Aurea is the stories she hears from other warriors. Get her to spill her own, and PCs might hear of when she dared journey across the Border in secret to retrieve a rare Durenian flower for her wife.

Sunfire Guard 6
Good Listener 6



Yakubu (he/him)

Still quite wary of outsiders, Yakubu narrows his eyes at every human and elf who is not of his people. Grumpy as he is, he won't leave the gate until the very last refugee is guided past the strange human-esque monsters outside.

Sunfire Guard 6
Suspicious 6

Depending on how Act One went, the three Sunfire elves react differently to seeing the PCs. If the Neolandian humans were dispatched, scared off, or captured somehow, then they offer their thanks. If there's a pile of flaming rubble behind the PCs, the Sunfire elves emerge from nearby buildings and berate the players for bringing the dragon down on the city. Vaake is going to need a hot minute to climb that rubble, too.

If PCs distracted the humans and squeezed through, then they greet PCs briefly and ask them for help with fortifying the gate.

CHALLENGE: Fortify the gate
(EASY, MEDIUM 6 6 6 6)

Suggested traits: **Strength** or **Intellect**.

PCs can haul heavy debris from damaged architecture that the guards were too weak to handle themselves and drop it in front of the gate, or come up with a creative jamming strategy. Either way, if they **succeed**, the humans are held at bay for a long time.

If they **fail**, the PC takes appropriate stress and it's time to have that confrontation with the growling jerks that they may have just tried to avoid in the last scene!

The Neolandian elephant in the room is, of course, that PCs are now hanging out at least briefly with some suffering Sunfire elves who could be restored to their former strength if the serum is used on them.

Remember, don't tell the players how the serum die mechanic works until they use it; simply tell them they don't have to use all of it, and can keep it as an asset.

Rachida, Sani, and Yakubu accept a small portion of the serum reluctantly if it is offered to them, so it only steps the serum die down once rather than three times. They aren't going to take three "doses," so to speak. If the serum comes up for the first time in front of Ekkers, now is when Vaake catches up or emerges from nearby cover, and it is here where you should transition to a version of Act One's Greater Good (page 218) scene.

They shower PCs with thanks, and it takes effect almost immediately. However, they aren't exactly ready to kick butt. It's been a long struggle watching the gate, even if it is a pile of junk, so they want to stay here and keep watching it until the very last of the refugees can flee to safety near Vaake's tent.

Sani can be persuaded to join the PCs—and become an asset—but in addition to fortifying the gate well, PCs must succeed in a test to convince her that two gatekeepers is enough. The Sunforge's horrible current state has made Lux Aurea a much less attractive tourist destination and prospect for conquest, after all.

If PCs ask the three guards for more information about the layout of the city, there's not much they can tell them that Vaake couldn't, as they've been stationed here since the corruption of the Sunforge. They simply suggest PCs weave east and west through the streets, as Lux Aurea does not have linear city blocks. Rather, the buildings flow like waves of plasma on the surface of that incandescent miasma, the sun.

The guards also recognize Klors as the companion of Minsa, a member of the royal guard they believe is still somewhere in the city. They gently pet his mane and ask the PCs if they're planning to reunite the two or have other plans for him. How PCs answer is up to them.

Players should proceed to some version of the Refugee Conundrum scene as they press forward, even if they choose to hurry past. However, listen to your players, and create a scene that best suits your group of characters.

Intrigue Scene: Refugee Conundrum

Depending on how PCs have interacted with Ekkers thus far, if he is leaving the gates with the PCs he is bound to comment on the refugees. Here's some possible lines you can give him as Narrator, depending on how things have come so far.

> *An unfortunate situation for those guards back there, and even worse for the rest of the Lux Aureans still trapped here. We must find them on the way to the Sunforge, and do something!*
>
> *I don't mean to be a bother, but have you considered that there may be more Sunfire elves in peril here? Surely we can use some of this serum on the ones worse for wear, and point out the clearest way we've found into the city so they may leave unharmed?*
>
> *I must say, I know you and Vaake agree that we shouldn't dally, but I am compelled to do something about the inevitable groups of refugees we are bound to spot along the way. Tell me, can you be swayed to join me, or must you all press on?*

If players disagree and push to sprint towards the Sunforge, it requires a contest of **Devotion** to keep Ekkers with PCs. If the PC succeeds, he doesn't argue but he politely suggests that everyone keep an open mind. If a PC fails to convince Ekkers, then that PC takes stress, and Ekkers describes seeing some of his comrades in arms fall to Viren's dark spell.

> *I was a captain, you know. Some of my best soldiers, soldiers with firm heads on their shoulders, began to shriek and roar as they changed, making sounds like metal cut by a dragon's claw. You don't quickly forget what suffering is when you've seen battle. I can't simply ignore the suffering of these elves after what I've seen.*

Of course, feel free to improvise another version of Ekkers' concerns; helping the refugees may ease their suffering.

If Vaake is with PCs, she suggests PCs keep their heads down and keep an eye out for tools that might somehow help them at the Sunforge. She's not sure what, but hopes everyone will know when they see it.

Regardless of whether Vaake brings it up, remind PCs that they have two fist-sized items they know they could utilize: the shard and the serum vial. Vaake isn't keen to use the shard in the Sunforge, but she clearly isn't right about everything.

Some kind of discarded polearm or fruit-picking device could help them with deploying them, should they ride Klors up to the floating orb. What kind of fruit-picking device is lying around Lux Aurea? We're glad you asked. The kind used to pick a pack of peppery pearaloupe fruit, of course. Feel free to initiate a test and give PCs an appropriate asset should this come up and they show interest in searching as they go.

Much as PCs could try and sway Ekkers, they can also try and convince Vaake to have a heart—but Vaake is much more stubborn. Even if she loses a contest, she would rather break from the party and go back into hiding than play along, using her motes of flame to create distance from everyone, if necessary.

Your PCs may have a complex dynamic with the catalysts at this point as well, so feel empowered when doing something like creating a contest with them! Maybe Vaake has had enough of a more confrontational PC; she makes a grab for the serum, crying out over her shoulder, "Enough! You can't be trusted! Meet you at the tower!" as she runs and ducks into an alley. If PCs agree with her, they are rewarded. Vaake's **Devotion** die steps up, and her catalyst die steps up at the end of the session.

There are three major refugee camps in Lux Aurea. Even if PCs are trying to turn a blind eye, they are hard to miss in the periphery of their vision as they jog past them. These refugees are all Sunfire elf civilians who refused to flee the city after the Sunforge fell into corruption, believing it was their duty to stay and protect their homes. Not every single Sunfire elf agreed that the Sunforge's destruction was that big of a deal, after all. So some of them are there because they're used to things like this happening and someone showing up at the last minute to resolve it.

However, Orta has been wreaking havoc and destroying buildings without provocation, the corruption has made everyone weak, and these refugees are clumped together trying to stay alive.

Narrators should tell PCs that as they approach these camps they immediately feel a desire to organize them and hustle them towards the gates; at best, the mission at the Sunforge could lead to some dangerous side effects that may ripple through the city. If players ask whether their PC is compelled to use the serum, tell them that choice is up to them.

Again, if this is their first time using the serum, do not reveal how it will affect the asset. Simply tell them that there is a limited supply and players will hypothetically be allowed to continue keeping it as an asset. Only reveal the asset is stepped down once they've used it, in order to keep the choice based on the story, rather than the mathematical odds they don't yet fully grasp.

Most of the refugees are strong enough to travel, but there is one in each camp who is exceptionally weak. They are the single Sunfire elf in each camp that accepts the serum, so the serum asset is only stepped down once at each camp should PCs choose to offer some of it up.

PCs can choose to keep the serum to themselves, but it has catalyst-related consequences. Ekkers immediately stops to check on the wounded and bolster refugee spirits with optimistic sayings. If PCs parted ways with him earlier, he reappears already at a refugee camp, telling children jokes while feeding soup to their very weak grandmother.

Once PCs have had their first dealings with a refugee camp, it's time for Flame Against Flame, the final scene of Act Two.

Adventure Scene: Flame Against Flame

As players almost reach the large field surrounding the Sunforge's tower, a couple of atmospheric things begin to resonate with the PCs. A low-energy wave of corruptive power pulsates outward from the Sunforge, and everyone's beginning to feel it. It doesn't weaken them yet, but they realize it might soon! And shortly after realizing this, PCs notice that the shard they carry releases an audible, high-pitch "T-I-I-I-ING" sound and it echoes through the city. If either catalyst is nearby they look to the sky and mutter, "Oh dear."

The sound reaches the sky, and this pulsing enrages the corrupted Orta. And again, if a wary PC has already chucked the shard aside, make it clear to players that they have become more exposed, Orta has been staying closer to the Sunforge, and she now spots them as a source of interest. With an anguished shriek, she swoops down and exhales all the fire she can into a building near the PCs.

Orta flies high, then dives again as if to rush the PCs. A Lux Aurean guard rounds a corner, having heard the explosion.

"Halt!" cries this brave, lone guard. "This city is not yours to extinguish, and I will not live to see you destroy my home!"

This bold, undaunted Sunfire elf is none other than Minsa, the mounted guard who once rode upon Klors, the twin-tailed inferno-toothed tiger! Neither PCs nor catalysts know it yet. Klors, however, sees his friend in peril and makes it known as well as someone can without talking. He lets out a low howl, and runs toward her.



Minsa (she/her)

An exceptionally brave mounted warrior of the Lux Aurean royal guard, she has imagined worse than a dragon in her future. Insistent that her oath to Klors be kept but still confident that nothing will separate their shared destiny, she is helpful to PCs but more dedicated to the refugees in this time of great crisis.

Sunfire Guard 8
Fearless 8

Orta is blind with pain, swirling with some kind of dark magical energy that plagues her. But she is now tired from her attack, and is surprised by the opposition. It's time to scare off this dragon!



CHALLENGE: Save Minsa and Klors by chasing off Orta (CHALLENGING, LONG 8 8 8 8 8)

Here's some dice players might want to assemble for their pool:

- **Spirit**: Make a show of courage that even a frenzied dragon can recognize.
- **Strength**: If everyone looks strong enough, the dragon will back down.
- **Intellect**: There are street lamps and pieces of scenery that can be used for tactical advantage.
- **Liberty**: No dragon controls this group's destiny.

Orta is too powerful to be destroyed and always finds a way to escape or survive; such is the nature of dragons in Xadia. But she's not leaving without a fun confrontation! The shard is resonating with the Sunforge, and PCs may be putting that together. And this energy irritates Orta to the point where she's both full of rage and determined to make it stop.

Tell players that they still feel outmatched by this dragon, and that PCs know this instinctively. Make the goal clear: this dragon needs to be frightened away.

And for her part, Orta isn't looking to swallow or crush anyone today; she wants to find this object that she knows just gave her a splitting headache and crush that instead. Though unable to speak, she is still as wise as any PC and does not wish them harm. She isn't malevolent right now; she knew the city was mostly abandoned and thought that leveling an empty building would blow off some steam.

Minsa isn't having it, though, and PCs must now work with her to shoo Orta away from the buildings. Shows of might and power can work when assembling this dice pool. Vaake won't help; she knows she isn't of much use and takes cover. Ekkers, however, proposes something unique if PCs are with him and on good terms. Jump to Help Ekkers Tame Orta for that version.

Should players **succeed** in this challenge, now is your big moment as Narrator! Describe in as much detail as you can the excitement PCs should feel as Orta flies away in retreat. If Ekkers was any part of it, his **Glory** die steps up, and his catalyst die steps up at the end of the session.

If players **fail**, they're going to take on whichever stress is appropriate for the encounter. Some **Afraid**, **Exhausted**, or **Injured** stress may certainly feel fitting after trying and failing to intimidate a dragon.

Orta will find the strength to fly up again and blow up another empty building with her flame, leaving PCs in an assured state of disappointment. It's a good time to congratulate them on whatever heroics they attempted, though, as only heroes have the courage to stand up to an angry dragon.

If the PCs are game, Ekkers has a different strategy:

> See the dark energy coming off of that big green-and-orange miscreant? The same thing is ailing her that is ailing everyone in this city! We must heal her with the serum! Will someone help me lure her down to the height of that nearby streetlamp? I have a plan!

And Narrators, you should know that Ekkers loves the word *miscreant*, as well as the words *cad*, *ne'er-do-well*, and *comrade*, and he's always looking for a PC he can make his official *sidekick*. He's very dramatic.

Ekkers asks for the serum, promising—honestly—that he will use a small amount on Orta to soothe her. PCs don't have to agree, but should they help, succeed in their challenge, and allow a dose to make contact with Orta, she loses her ghastly glow and comes down onto solid ground, panting and exhausted.

CHALLENGE: Help Ekkers tame Orta (HARD, MEDIUM 10 10 10 10)

This challenge isn't as long, but it's much harder. Similar dice can be used for similar reasons they might be used when chasing Orta off, but some more options might be:

- **Devotion**: Saving this dragon is more important than frightening it away.
- **Agility**: The only way to guarantee the serum touches this dragon is to mount it first!

If Ekkers actually cures Orta—no small feat—she is now available as a possible solution for flying towards the Sunforge! Ekkers should immediately let the group know as such. Without speech and too weak to do any flying for more than a brief flight from the roof of the Sunforge up to the orb itself, she can still nod along, sigh apologetically, and follow silently. The corruptive energy was doing most of the work when she was raging earlier, and PCs notice she is recovered but also suffering from a lot of **Exhausted** stress.

If the players **fail**, they have a similar outcome as trying to chase off the dragon.

Regardless, Minsa introduces herself to the PCs as Klors makes a yodel-like, howling roar of happiness and licks her face. And as Narrator, come on, give that noise a shot. She is not badly hurt by the corruptive energies but is very tired—and stressed—and thus the reunion makes her eager to take Klors across the city to guide refugees to safety. The city is clearly no longer a place they should be in, and she's only still there to get others out.

This causes friction with Vaake, however, who practically begs for Klors to stay with PCs to ensure they can fly up to the Sunforge's floating orb. Minsa is unswayed; there are refugees to save, and she suggests PCs start practicing their overhand throw or get a long stick. PCs must decide whether to propose an alternative solution, say they'll just have to hope a solution will present itself along the way, or side with Vaake.

Vaake does not part ways with the PCs if they decide against her wishes and allow Klors to run down another street with Minsa, but it steps down her **Devotion** value as she loses some faith in the PCs, and greatly affects how the story proceeds.

To close out the scene, some refugees reveal themselves from an alley. They have been holed up in a nearby city park for days, heard the explosions just now, and wish to thank everyone for getting rid of the dragon. They tell everyone that the destroyed buildings were empty; by engaging the dragon, everyone was spared further destruction and lives may have been saved.

It's time for Act Three. If Vaake's catalyst die is larger than Ekkers' and she's the catalyst PCs are most aligned with, proceed to the scene called Arboretum Ahoy (page 228). Otherwise head on over to the scene called Scone's Throw (page 229).

Act Three: Tower of Chaos

Before we continue to the first scene, congrats on getting your players this close to the finish line! No doubt there has been a lot of story tension and hopefully you picked up some adorable critters at the veterinary clinic for everyone to cuddle with and lighten things up.

Remember to keep players on their toes here. If they are familiar with Lux Aurea, make a note that while they may have been worried about scaling the high, peaking central circle near the heart of the city, it's a surprisingly simple climb of a long flight of stairs that angles up the side of it. Silent and ominous, it was an obstacle they thought might be challenging, but is eerily straightforward. All PCs hear is the massive cascading waterfall nearby, a loud white noise that makes them aware of how vulnerable they are to being surprised.



And that's just the prelude-to-the-start of Act Three! Here at the edge of the city where the buildings give way to a huge field surrounding the tower, things feel too intense for almost anyone to want to approach; only a refugee who is promised some sort of assistance is brave enough to come close to the PCs. Between the final rings of buildings there is a horrible orange haze lingering in the air, as if the rays of the sun get sick when they enter the city. Even the trees that line the path to the tower have lost all their leaves and turned a sickly, desaturated grey.

You may have noticed some refugee moments were only brief asides in your tale thus far. If the first one was largely ignored, or your players were looking forward to dealing with their evacuation, you may want to take a breather here and allow them to play those narrative moments out before proceeding with the final scenes.

Here's some suggestions for scenes you may want to adapt for your game that we haven't covered yet as the game converges on this climactic location:

- Refugees display the generosity that Vaake thinks she herself cannot show, and tell PCs how to break into the royal Lux Aurean armory; though largely emptied, it contains a protective magical necklace emblazoned with a row of fire rubies that can help Vaake not feel so drained when she uses her arcanum.
- Ekkers gives out some rations and combat tips to the Sunfire elf refugees, when one notes that your group seems a bit underprepared for a climb up the tower. By succeeding a test to get the refugees to warm up to the human catalyst—and possibly human PCs—the Sunfire elves offer an extra-long halberd that can be used to deliver the vial into the Sunforge more easily.
- Near the center of Lux Aurea is a magical fire that broke out during the primary evacuation, caused by a forge being tipped over by a quake emanating from the Sunforge. The fire cannot be put out with conventional means, but lighting something with it creates a magical torch that cannot be extinguished and pushes dark magic away from a small area of the Sunforge's surface. There may be other secondary benefits you might want to let players invent.
- PCs might want to acknowledge an interesting NC you came up with. Indulge those players!

As we proceed with the rest of the tale, keep in mind that scenes in your game may diverge sharply from what we suggest, especially from here on out. We don't have space to write it all!

What we now present is the information on these scenes that we hope is the most helpful, along with tests, contests, and challenges in each that we think will make this as fun as possible.

These scenes offer our catalysts a chance to find deeper meaning in this journey. Whatever happens here, try to give those two a chance to engage with PCs, as well as the city itself.

Trust your gut. If you think your story needs to end in a different way, nothing says it can't! Good luck, and have fun!

Discovery Scene: Arboretum Ahoy

Seeing more refugees is difficult for Vaake, and if players have been saving the serum for the Sunforge, she is pretty wracked with guilt. Vaake knows these refugees near the Sunforge could be hurt by what PCs are about to try. It's all eating at her now.

> *I can't believe how many people are still suffering here in the city. I should have known; not everyone could have fled in the chaos of the last few days. But seeing the reality of it firsthand is devastating. Now that we are so close to the tower we are also close to the Royal Arboretum. Inside there may be enough varieties of rare herbs, roots, and other ingredients that I can create more of the serum and help that nearby refugee camp. We don't have much time, but trying is the least we can do, don't you think?*

Vaake leads the group to the Royal Arboretum, an immense glass structure as large as several city blocks all merged into one. After pushing open a dusty door and entering the humidity on the other side, Vaake immediately goes into alchemist mode and asks PCs for their help in assembling ingredients.



CHALLENGE: Make more of the serum (CHALLENGING, MEDIUM 8 8 8 8)

As players assemble their dice pools, they're going to want to select their dice carefully. Here's some suggestions.

- **Awareness**: It's time to cover as much area as possible to find these plants.
- **Intellect**: Having quick wits will make the biggest difference for the time available.
- **Mastery**: Alchemy is complex business and it requires a steady, learned hand.
- **Devotion**: The people of this city deserve a better hand than the one they were dealt.

And here's what they're hunting for, if you'd like to add some details to their mad dashes down the aisles of this massive indoor approximation of the outdoors:

Ingredients:

- Root of Grimdusk Lichen
- Oil of Brickleseed
- A Leaf of King's Creeper
- Petals of Floppityberry Bloom
- Clean Water

With a **success**, it's possible to create a full, second d10 asset with a nearby plant-food container, making it a new asset in addition to their existing serum asset. It's only d10 and not d12 because everyone is in a hurry. If they've already used some of the serum, allow players to step up the serum supply up to 4 times, accounting for that second container if necessary.

If PCs **fail**, it means some **Exhausted**, **Insecure**, or possibly **Angry** stress. There simply isn't time to stay and create more, and Vaake's expert hands are too tired and knotted with pain to keep going and make another.

There's not much time, as there is that huge field between the city and the tower; PCs sprint across it while wincing through an uneasy feeling that they are running directly into the open fanged-maw of danger. PCs feel the beat of the Sunforge like a silent-but-deafening Tell-Tale Heart pounding high above. Vaake insists on delivering a full, untouched vial to the camp on the way to the tower. PCs can try to argue with her about this level of generosity, that can affect her relationship with the PCs negatively as well as her general loyalty. This means a lot to her.

Vaake is eager to hand it off, no questions asked, and encourages the refugees to make a break for the city exit. Vaake also feels relief from helping them, and can have a moment of lightheartedness here, saying "Come on now, before the Sunforge goes black like a banana! Scoot!" The refugees only have a few elderly Sunfire elves who really need the serum's strengthening powers to make a quick exit towards the city gates; they have been wandering around looking for food and are strong, as they haven't been close to the tower for long. Should PCs wish to negotiate directly with them, they happily say as much, and only ask to use three doses. This can still leave PCs with a vial asset with a d4 die rating, in addition to their other asset. But they have to make a point of asking for it or else the newer vial will leave their possession.

It's now time for the PCs to head through the field, scale the tower, and figure out how their tale will conclude. Head to the list of potential endings that begins on page 230 and see if one of those endings fits the plans your players have. But keep in mind that their plans may wildly vary from what we're offering, and these final scenes are just suggestions. You may find a contest or challenge useful; but, from a storytelling perspective, you may want to flex your creative muscles to give your players an ending that fits their plan.

Discovery Scene: Scone's Throw

If PCs have been allied with Ekkers the most, he wants to stop and come up with a game plan before departing the buildings and entering the open air of the fields around the tower. The tower's oppressive pulsing is giving everyone a headache just short of actual in-game dice of stress, and he thinks going indoors somewhere might help organize everyone's thoughts. He parts ways with the refugees he saw after the bout with the dragon, wishing there was more he could do to help.

Ekkers leads PCs a bit more east than Vaake would, where there is some kind of large royal pavilion; he sees a small shop and smells fresh bread, pointing excitedly. "There might even be a fresh scone in there! Ahem, I mean, what harm is there in some nourishment before a climactic effort? For us, and maybe even those refugees!"

The shop is one Sunfire elf PCs might recognize if Lux Aurea is somewhere they have lived. Called The Scone's Throw, it's humbly nestled into the side of a much larger pavilion for political meetings, and is where the elite fetch an indulgent breakfast from time to time. There is a note pinned to the door.

> I am off to join the refugees. Unfortunately I was unable to bring the food I promised, as we recently had a new lock installed and I locked myself out. Alas! Hundreds of scones and cookies gone to waste. These politicians insisted that as a part of the pavilion I have this ridiculous magic door and magic lock installed in case there are thieves, and now I am locked out of my own food store in a time of crisis.
>
> Mark my words, whoever finds this note, never let landlords install wacky security systems on your home. I live upstairs, and left my father's halberd there as well. I sure could use it to fight off the humans now.
>
> —Teel, Baker and Proprietor

Ekkers is determined to break into the bakery and deliver the food to the refugees. And yes, there's enough: a little for PCs, hungry little animals that may be perched on PC shoulders, and Ekkers himself, as well.

CHALLENGE: Recover the food for the refugees (CHALLENGING, LONG 8 8 8 8 8)

The door is a massive golden slab standing nine feet high with many moving parts; there's a glowing latch that is speckled with red that is clearly some kind of Sun magic. There was some unique spell that used to disarm it that the baker couldn't quite get right to open their door. This scone heist is going to require quite the well-coordinated cooling of a fiery latch, pulling of a giant industrial metal locking pin bolted across the latch, and forceful tugging of the door at the same time. This can be done with a lot of people rolling their dice pools very well and using brute strength, but various magics can also be used to pop the lock with a gust of powerful and concentrated air, or a spell that removes the fiery power imbued in the latch.

Ways PCs can accumulate a dice pool can include:

- **Intellect**: If they've seen someone pick a lock, they can handle that locking pin.
- **Strength**: Time to yank this freaking thing right off its hinges.
- **Spirit**: For the refugees! Taaaaaarts!
- **Justice**: There are so many weak refugees who need this food; this is a necessity.

Should players **succeed** in getting the door open, there are trays and trays of bread loaves, scorchberry scones, and yes perhaps even glistening, buttery tarts. Ekkers will run to fetch the refugees, who will pack up enough to take to some of the refugees you saw closer to the gates.

They also offer help with the much needed tactics Ekkers was planning to brainstorm. One of the refugees tells Ekkers that just under the giant open-air floor with the Sunforge orb hovering over it is another floor where the army hid a war catapult, meant for attack against invaders. Launching a PC with it would use way too much energy and send them too far, but if it were dragged up top and carefully sprung, the mechanism should form a tall, ladder-like structure that PCs can climb to the Sunforge's orb. They also warn that once PCs go inside the tower they will be deeply pained by the magic energies radiating into them. The top floor is even worse. Just, you know, a heads up.

If a PC wants to head upstairs in order to grab that halberd, they absolutely can. You might even want to suggest they realize the vial of serum could be tied to it, so PCs can have a few feet between them and the Sunforge orb at the big moment.

To be clear, there's plenty of food for characters to share in the bounty and take a recovery scene in the form of a snack break.

And again, if Orta is in tow and free of her corruptive influence, she will perch politely on the roof during all of this. PCs can offer her a scone, if they like. Klors too, if he made it this far, though the poor guy is a bit too tired to fly onto the roof.

As mentioned at the end of the previous scene, your tale may diverge from all the offered endings. But read on! You'll get a sense of how to enter the tower and interact with the Sunforge at the very least.

Final Conflicts

You did it! You're in the home stretch. The climactic scene lies ahead. And it can go so many ways, and hopefully feel quite dramatic! So here's a few notes that we hope will help guide you through the rest of the tale, no matter what plan players come up with.

Regardless of their path to the tower and whether a catalyst led them there, once PCs reach the tower they meet up with each other and both catalysts—provided they're all still standing and didn't decide to be somewhere else. Vaake may have to admit she's been following the PCs in secret again, and Ekkers might go on a little too long about the exhibition duel he had with a teenage Sunfire elf refugee. It's time for everyone to gather, and make peace in order to save the world.

It's also been easy to see from the beginning that a ghastly violet haze is emanating from the Sunforge. Foul portents and ominous vibes abound; try to paint the picture of what a bad idea this all seems like, even though they know they must press on.

Both catalysts try to make the appropriate apologies, if necessary. Take a look at the catalyst die ratings at this point. Whichever is the higher rating is the catalyst who will offer to go to the top.

If they are equal, base who steps forward off of your Narrator's intuition of how the relationships have developed at this point; both catalysts agree that with this many people here and the waves of corruption coming off the Sunforge being so strong, it's best one of them head back to help the refugees and maybe even take some of the found resources with them.

Of course, things could be downright antagonistic with one of the catalysts at this point, depending on how your PCs perceived and reacted to them. As Narrator, you should have the catalyst everyone's the most cross with be the one to eat some humble pie and head for the refugees, sighing and apologizing for their role in the bad blood.

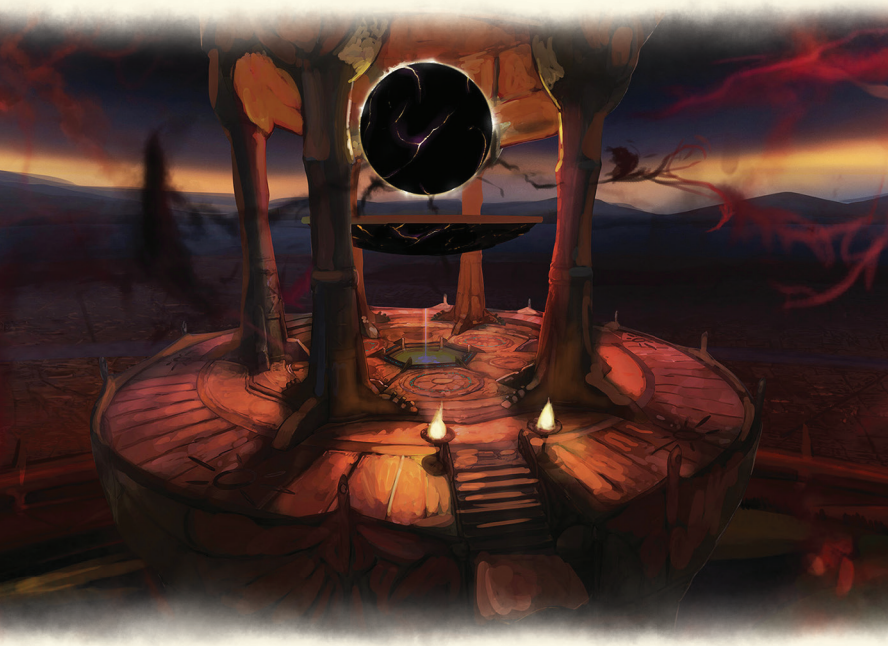
If anyone has a cute critter with them, the Sunforge looms ominously and totally terrifies them, making their eyes get really big and cute.

Neither Klors nor Orta is strong enough to fly all the way up the tower, as the energy coming from the Sunforge is too powerful and repellant. Orta will climb up the outside of the tower while everyone else ascends the stairs inside.

Once inside—or riding Orta up the outside—PCs immediately take **Corrupted** 6 stress. Let them know that it is quite possible that they will have to take another **Corrupted** 6 stress (stepping up the stress they already had) before the ascension is complete, and they may want to plan accordingly to only have some of their group go to the very top. PCs who went to the bakery with Ekkers and succeeded in helping the refugees there have the specific intel that it's the top level where the corruption energy will likely add another 6 of stress.

The process of ascending the tower is grueling, the thrumming of the Sunforge causing everyone to break into a cold sweat. As PCs get closer, all color seems to leave their surroundings but for the thick orange mists of corruption that seem highlighted by beams of sunlight; shadowy ghosts seem to flicker to life for a moment as if calmly descending the stairs next to the PCs. These shadows are made of magic and cannot be directly interacted with, though if PCs linger for a long time attempting to, they take another **Corrupted** 6 stress.

If Vaake is gone and there's no serum left, let players know that all their PCs get an intuitive sense that they probably need either Vaake or her serum for a decent shot at an ideal ending; they figure this out before they enter the tower and Vaake jogs too far away. Vaake gets weak easily, and PCs should at least get a pang of empathy for her and all the work she put into this gambit.



CHALLENGE: Get the serum to the Sunforge (HARD, MEDIUM 10 10 10 10)

As you help players assemble a dice pool, be mindful of assets like polearms, halberds, and maybe even long sticks that they can attach the vial to the end of. After all, nobody wants to touch that Sunforge and end up like Orta!

As for whether PCs should use the serum, the shard, or both, the answer is the serum will technically get the best outcome. Vaake insists on using whatever serum she has. Using *only* the shard—clear emphasis on *only*—by inserting it somehow into the sphere causes the surface of the Sunforge to violently bubble and boil. It soon gets Orta's attention, but PCs may feel it pulse and brace themselves for a corrupted being's arrival if Orta is still corrupted as such.

Using both simultaneously or sequentially? Check out the special ending scene called The Infinity Hole on page 234 to see the significance of that result. But using only the shard is not ideal, so feel free to create your own challenge for doing it with Orta-related consequences.

On a **success**, players see the Sunforge flash bright yellow like its old self again, then beat with dark magic in a steadily increasing pulse. PCs and NCs alike have just enough time to rush down the tower and out the city before a wave of dark energy cascades over the entire city, dark shapes swirling around it like frightening demons. PCs realize that this could have happened to all of Xadia had they not intervened.

The refugees? Gauge whether to address this with players based on how much they ignored them as they traveled. Don't make PCs feel guilty, but if it feels relevant let players know that not all of them have made it out.

You need not directly address the idea of death for anyone during *The Tale of The Corrupted Core*. Such worries can be addressed vaguely—note the ominous sprint made out of the city, the mystery of which refugees made it out, and whether anyone could survive inside being a question no one can truly answer. Be sensitive to each player; we don't recommend you leverage any feelings onto them with the stakes of life itself. Express the ambiguity of the situation. Regardless of PC efforts, there are many refugees panting outside the city by Vaake's tent when PCs arrive there. Let their number be encouraging at the very least.

Be patient if players **fail** to heal the Sunforge. The catastrophic nature of such a plot element is... a lot. If they haven't yet used the arboretum, and Vaake is there, she can potentially instigate a delayed scene to create more of the serum and give everyone another chance. Perhaps. But only for a second asset if you haven't created one yet.

Once at the top, it's time for the ultimate challenge: getting the serum in the Sunforge! We'll outline the challenge itself here, but narratively it can go a few ways. So read here, then skim ahead to some of the situations you may need to borrow from.

But speaking of failures, there is a narrative fail-safe for you, Narrator. Should you think this darkest timeline should not mean the end of Xadia for your players, take heart that the world won't end. Noticing a failed attempt to deliver the serum, Orta pushes through her fever of anguish and flies directly into the Sunforge. At her core she is aware of what is happening, and is willing to sacrifice herself to save her world and those she loves.

Opening her wings wide and using them to wrap around the orb as she slams into it, she also breathes one last breath of flame into it. PCs definitely know it's time to retreat, as the dark magic explosion is still about to consume all of Lux Aurea; but thanks to Orta absorbing and weakening the magic inside, it does not take the entire world with it.

Regardless, Lux Aurea is not a place people would be able to explore or salvage again.

Here are the different approaches the PCs might have. Don't resist players that come up with another plausible solution to reaching the Sunforge not listed here; they're just creative!

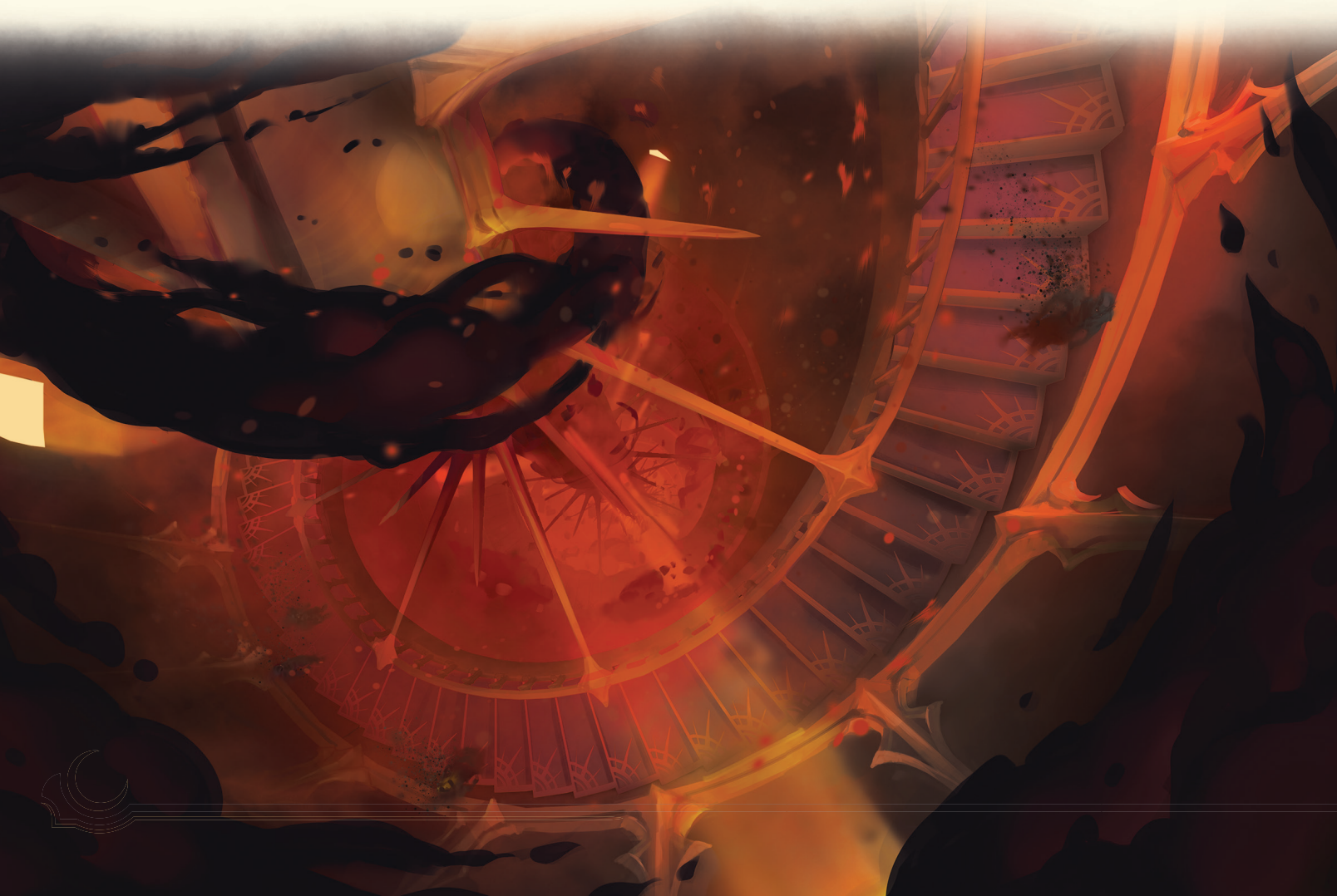
Flight of the Tiger

Yes, in case you're wondering, feel free to improvise a song around the title of this scene.

This is perhaps the outcome that is most likely, as Vaake has been pitching it to PCs since the very beginning; we are talking about a big scene where a PC hops on Klors' back and flies up to the Sunforge, then gets close enough to douse the Sunforge with the serum.

A weakened Klors—he's been rather weak the whole time; the poor guy has seen a lot—has just enough energy for one pass at flying a PC up to the Sunforge. That means he can fly up more than once, but each subsequent pass causes both him and the PC to take **Corrupted** 6 stress. Each dose of the serum lets the PCs, as well as Klors, recover their **Corrupted** stress by 6—which probably means stepping it down by one if they have 8 or more. But you get the idea: the more tries, the less effective the serum is when PCs finally get it in the Sunforge.

One possible wrinkle here is that Klors would rather be with Minsa, and Minsa did not want to come to the tower; odds are that if Klors is present he's pretty bleakly frustrated, and if Minsa was convinced to tag along you've got a bleakly frustrated Minsa there, too.



If PCs have been harsh on either of them, a test is needed to get them to follow orders. The NCs remember that source fracture in the relationship with the PCs and get upset that they're being bossed around again. Minsa in particular insists on being the one to ride Klors to the Sunforge, if she is there.

If this somehow works itself out to be the scenario in your particular game, make sure to recall the journey of Minsa and Klors, their reunion, and the significance of a Sunfire elf making this effort to make up for the fact that players are surrendering this very important role in the resolution of the challenge. Minsa will also dismount and thank PCs tearfully for allowing her to do it before encouraging them to quickly make their collective escape from the city.

Orta Rider

Odds were Orta would still be full of stress and flying circles around the tower, not helping PCs. It took some impressive moves to get a helpful dragon this far. So make sure you properly reward PCs with a cinematic description of what it looks like as they ride Orta upwards towards glory. Orta also won't take **Corrupted** stress like Klors as she flies near it.

So what's the downside? We're glad you asked! Because it can be frustrating, sad, and madcap all at once.

Orta is much, much larger than Klors, and it's possible that failing this challenge will result in her making accidental contact with the Sunforge. Which she's done before. It went horribly.

As you may have guessed, the brave PC that just flew upwards triumphantly is now riding around a bucking, corrupted dragon! Orta loses track of who healed her last time she was corrupted, and that's because she's now taking on **Corrupted** trauma. But at least the PC is holding the serum, so hopefully they can pour some over her before she tosses the PC right off of her back.

If PCs do use the vial on Orta, it of course steps down the vial's asset die, but that's better than seeing Orta drop a PC off just to sacrifice herself on the Sunforge.

The War Catapult

While it'd be nice to have a flying creature here at the potential end of the world, not everyone is so lucky.

Here's another way PCs can try to get the serum up into the Sunforge: a war catapult stored just under the top floor of the Sunforge tower, which PCs have heard about if they communed with the refugees while snacking on scones. It can also be found if PCs get to the top of the tower, gulp hard, and make a mad scramble to find something to help them reach the orb floating high above the floor. There's also some ladders, ropes, and grappling hooks.

As mentioned on page 230, the catapult has a lot of kinetic energy stored up and is meant to hurl a large mass off of the tower, so PCs won't want to be launched. Tell PCs that they take one look at it and realize, oh, this would launch me as far as the city gates and it wouldn't feel so good.

However, there is an extra task here. PCs need to haul it up to the top of the tower from the floor just beneath, set it off, and climb it like a ladder to get close to the Sunforge's orb.

TEST: Haul out the war catapult (HARD 10 10)

Suggest that different PCs do the hauling and the climbing; given how painful it is for everyone to be here at the top of the tower, the PCs would intuitively guess this.

A **success** creates a handy ladder that gets PCs within 20 feet of the Sunforge.

As for a **failure**, it's hard work climbing while the dark radiation of the Sunforge beats down on a PC. PCs take **Corrupted** 6 stress for entering the tower as well as another 6 for being on the same floor as the Sunforge. They take another 6 for exerting so much effort so close to the Sunforge, and another climbing up and throwing the serum into it. Failure adds yet another, which can stress out some PCs and give them **Corrupted** trauma.

TEST: Climb the pillars to reach the Sunforge (HARD 10 10)

PCs can also use the ladders, ropes, and grappling hooks to climb the surrounding pillars and lower themselves near the Sunforge, which requires a massive amount of strength and keen accuracy.

With a **success**, PCs find places to hook in their tools and lean their ladders and dangle by ropes high up near the Sunforge.

Failures results in breaking the tools, leading to **Angry** or **Insecure** stress, as appropriate.

If players want to try another creative combination of these tools, try to adapt the conflict to suit their idea rather than call it impossible. For instance, they could try and find more of them, but the time it takes causes yet more stress.

The Big Toss

Maybe they didn't bring a flying creature up to the top of the tower and are in too much of a rush to dig around for big honking war catapults. Maybe they've been cheering themselves along for three acts chanting "Chuck! The! Vial!" PCs may decide to just hurl the bottle with no additional assets or other assistance.

It's probably not the smartest move, but it has a relatively satisfying dramatic element to it!

TEST: Tossing the serum
(VERY HARD 12 12)

The orb that is known as the "Sunforge" proper floats high above the floor of the tower some 100 feet into the air, and the PCs must hope the arc of the throw goes high and deep enough. NCs, catalysts, and common sense all warn against it, but hey, plans often go awry and it's so improbable it just might work. Let's take a look at how the test might go in this case.

If the roll is a **success**, this is a slow motion pitch worthy of any sports film. The refugees below coincidentally turn to look over their shoulders as they flee towards the gates. What is that sparkling object hurtling up towards the Sunforge? Why, that's a vial thrown by one of the PCs, who will go down in history as having the best arm in Xadia!

A **failure** is brutal. The vial shatters. The serum splatters. Not enough can be recovered without some seriously ingenious improvising. Losing the serum should immediately prompt Orta to sacrifice herself and divebomb the Sunforge with all of her might. Xadia won't be lost, but oh boy, let players know that their PCs feel their stomachs fall to a sub-basement somewhere below their feet before they make their hurried sprint down the tower stairs. They definitely take **Afraid** stress as they run for their lives.

The Infinity Hole

Many clever players will assume from the beginning that the best solution relies on both the serum and the shard being used together. Try to keep your poker face if you hear one of them announce at the top of Act One "Oh, I bet we have to put *both* of these in the Sunforge!" You don't want to tip your hand and stop them outright from making that choice, but as the outcome of this choice is grim, you want there to be some warnings.

Vaake tells PCs who debate aloud whether to put the shard back into the Sunforge that it's probably not a great idea.

She'll remind the PC:

> That flew out of the Sunforge when Viren corrupted it. It doesn't want to be in the Sunforge anymore; putting it back might have consequences. Focus on getting the serum into the Sunforge!

She'll insist, and other NCs echo this if nearby. Even Ekkers, who agrees with Vaake on almost nothing else, nods nervously at this sentiment if he is within earshot.

Alas, you might have some defiant PCs on your hands, and we feel we should outline this choice so your players can keep their agency over it.

CHALLENGE: Replacing the shard
(HARD, SHORT 10 10 10)

Using both the shard and the serum has a uniquely strange and destructive result. PCs should still follow through on something akin to one of the preceding strategies just to get the serum and the shard close to the Sunforge and guarantee both will get in. So make sure you visit those possible scenes, possibly play them through, and then note this specific second challenge, unique to the others.

A horrible, deafening crackling noise emanates from the Sunforge. Suddenly, like a recording being played in fast reverse, the magic swirling in the Sunforge is pulled inside of it. It becomes a giant, golden, metallic wrecking ball. PCs jump aside as it crashes to the floor. It's a moment of shock and horror, prickling the hair on the back of everyone's necks.

But the Sunforge isn't done. There's a rumbling sound and the floor erupts as the Sunforge—no longer a floating ball of magic but a supernaturally dense orb—smashes quickly through bits of staircase, platforms, and other structures below.

The tower sways, and PCs need to flee it however they can, as quickly as they can.

What ensues still makes the city uninhabitable, but in an entirely different way. Embellish a bit to drive the point home that this is altering the shape of Xadia itself.

The metallic reincarnation of the Sunforge cuts through every layer of its tower and burrows rapidly into the Xadian dirt and bedrock, and plows into the lower layers of Xadia's crust. Fissures blast across the city, ripping buildings in half as PCs flee towards the gates and out to the vast city limits. The entire city buckles like a tin can, with rips zipping across the landscape. A distant mountain loses its peak as it tumbles down into a valley.

Don't forget to take breaks in describing this to let your players know that everyone is still running to safety, so there's at least a little relief mixed between the more dire visuals you describe.

The destruction causes no deaths but looms over this world for a long time. Eventually the Sunforge drills down so low it produces volcanic activity; within weeks, Lux Aurea will begin to reach towards the sky as a volcano forms. For years, mages will debate whether the ominous object deep below the surface will one day cause some sort of cataclysmic event. Not in the PCs' lifetime, probably. As far as they know.

Whatever tale comes next for the PCs who experience this, the Xadian landscape will be far different than it is for PCs who played through Act Three in a more typical fashion.

Concluding the Tale

Once PCs escape the gates of Lux Aurea and make it beyond the outlying borders, let them spend a moment catching their breath, and describe the sad end of Lux Aurea with whatever narrative flourish you think your players have earned.

If Vaake is nearby, let her grieve for her city. If she should feel comfortable, describe Vaake removing a hidden locket and tracing a drawing in it with her fingertip. It's the face of her long lost love, Kadija, a casualty at the battle of the Storm Spire. They were childhood sweethearts who met on the streets of Lux Aurea, and in a way their story truly ended today.

Ekkers vows to continue to help the Sunfire people until the end of his days, and announces that he will stay nearby to help refugees find a new home. He invites PCs to help him, if they like, as he's not much for setting up tents and has been mostly sleeping in bushes since he defected from Viren's army.

Seed of Promise

Many dismayed Sunfire elves gather as the city achieves its final uninhabitable state. Mixed amongst them are a few Moonshadow elves keeping a low profile, with Ekkers the only human other than possible PCs who journeyed on this tale. Ekkers' relationship with the PCs determines just how comfortable the crowd is with his presence, but regardless he gives a rousing but humble speech professing his allegiance to the Sunfire elf people.

PCs can help decide if that's met with waves of cheers or some throat clearing and a single awkward clap.

Once the noise has dimmed, PCs are approached by a small group of important looking Sunfire elves, including a young priest who breaks away while their compatriots whisper to each other about the ominous sight in front of them, their city in ruin.



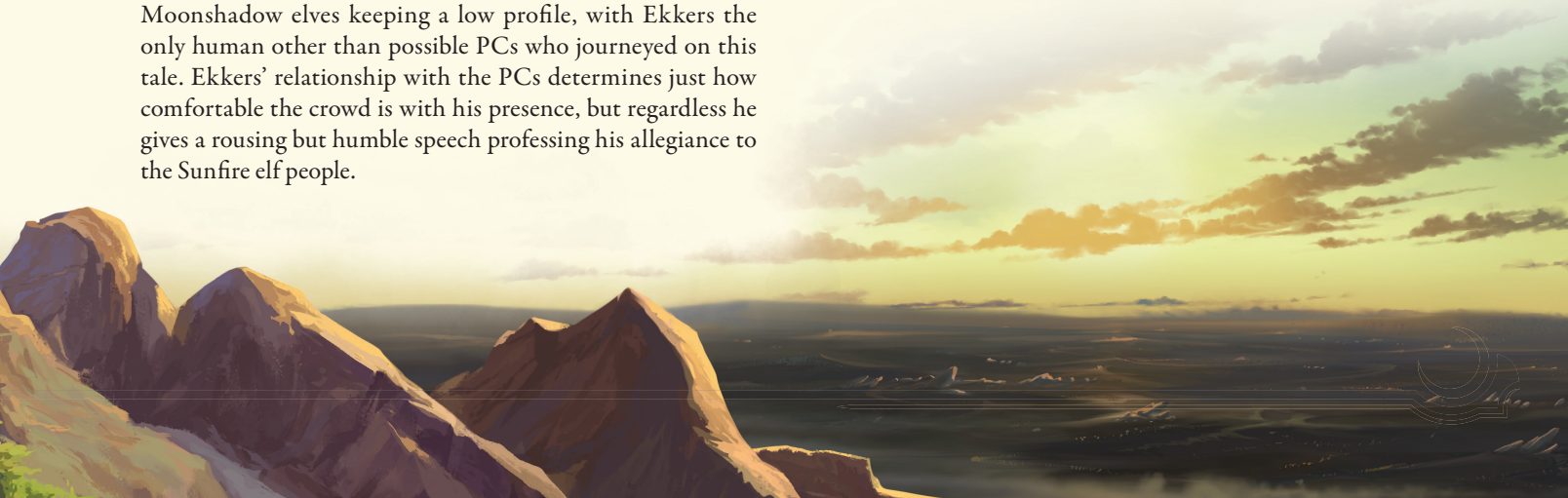
Lamis (she/they)

Bright eyed but contemplative, she is a priest who hopes to one day wield the sacred staff of the city and watch over the Sunforge. Until that day, they act as an intermediary between Lux Aurean leadership and the people who might help build a new city.

Sunfire Priest 6
Diplomatic 6

The priest's name is Lamis, and they thank PCs profusely for their bravery in saving Xadia. She tells them the loss of the city is dire indeed, but there is hope for their people. They note that strewn across Xadia there are a few very powerful artifacts imbued with Sun magic, and perhaps one may be able to help generate enough power for Sunfire elves to establish a new home.

> RAYLA: I've been thinking about something someone once told me, about how when one person hurts another then that person hurts them back, it becomes a cycle that never ends.
>
> CALLUM: Who told you that?
>
> RAYLA: You did.
>
> CALLUM: Oh.
>
> RAYLA: But Callum, to break that cycle, someone has to take a stand when no one else will.
>
> CALLUM: You're right. If we're really going to change things, we can't just watch while humans and Xadia keep hurting each other.
>
> *Book 2: Sky, Chapter 7: Fire and Fury*





"Perhaps there is an artifact that can help us rebuild?" With this, Lamis' eyes dart upwards and she wrings their hands worriedly, wondering how that particular question will be resolved.

As Lamis finishes speaking, another Sunfire elf finishes their group conversation and approaches PCs.

> *Excuse me, Lamis, I would also like to interject if I may—friends, I wanted to thank you all personally. I am Karim, and it is due to your efforts that the flame of the Sunfire elves can continue to burn.*



Karim (he/him)

He is lanky, wearing an elegant shoulder cape, and has short-cropped red hair with the sides shaved. His gentle eyes give way to a proud smile as he offers his own earnest gratitude.

And with that, the tale comes to a close. Who is the mysterious Karim, and what could he have been discussing?

While you and your PCs may have to wait for that answer, there are many tales you can try now. We offer some of our own on *talesofxadia.com*.

What is especially important for you to observe here, as Narrator, is the momentum your players have created for themselves. They may be eager for a hook into the next tale. Their desires should inform this next journey, but don't leave all of the discussion to them! Offer what you see as the most clear options for the group, then invite players to chime in with more goals if they have them.

This is also a wonderful time for you to introduce your own tale. What magical artifact do you wish existed in the world of *The Dragon Prince*? What shady catalyst might protect it? What adorable little critter might nuzzle PCs along the way? By having some notes and ideas prepared before your final playing session, you can have any NC or one of your own creation guide PCs to the next chapter of your own *Tales of Xadia*.

Note: If you're wondering what the ideal powerful magic artifact is for rebuilding, the answer shall be revealed in *Tales of Xadia's* next full-length publication, *Sunfire Chronicle*. There you can continue the story and discover more about the fate of Lux Aurea and the Sunfire elves.

Appendix

Welcome to the reference section of *Tales of Xadia*. Here you can find an assortment of journals, definitive lists, and reference guides for players and Narrators. For all things summarized or supplemental, visit this section.

APPENDIX BREAKDOWN

The Baker's Dozen (page 238): These are the character journals for the 13 premade characters.

Distinctions in Detail (page 252): A list of all the kindred, vocation, and quirk distinctions, along with associated values and SFX.

All of the SFX (page 268): Nearly all of the SFX in the book for use as they are or to inspire your own SFX.

Interior Artist Credits (page 275): An easy reference for identifying the amazing artists who helped make this book beautiful.

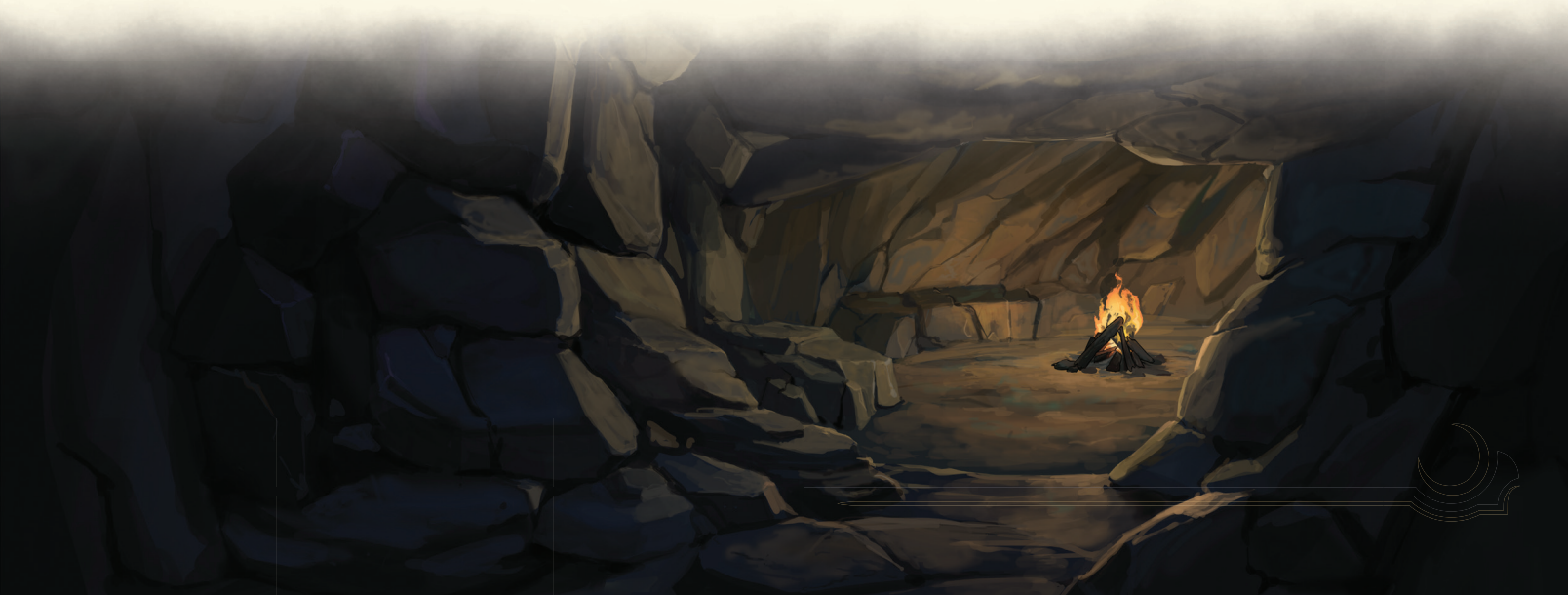
Glossary & Index (page 278): Well, it's an index with a glossary built right in.

Blank Character Journal (page 291): For making your very own PCs.

Blank Narrator Character Journals (page 294): For making your very own Catalysts and NCs.

Player's Reference (page 296): A useful tool for players to keep on hand as they play the game.

Narrator's Reference (page 298): A useful tool for Narrators to use while running the game.





The Baker's Dozen

Here are the full character journals for the Baker's Dozen, the premade player characters you may have noticed throughout the book. They're ready for any player to grab one and go.

There's an overview of these PCs and some guidance on which ones you might like to play on pages 62-64.

Twelve were originally released online at *talesofxadia.com* before the publication of this book, so they could be played in our pre-release tales *The Lost Oasis* and *The Gloaming Glade* (which are still available and playable on the website). We're completing the Baker's Dozen with one more character for you to meet and play as, Hestia the Earthblood elf!

Without further ado—

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- Bineta 240
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- Draylenn 242
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- Hestia 245
- Ponmalar 246
- Pyrda 247
- Routhna 248
- Tressal 249
- Vinaya 250
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BABUKAR (he/him)

Brother of the warrior Bineta, Babukar takes quiet pride in his ability to strike fear in his enemies alongside her in battle through his magic. He also serves as a secret weapon behind the scenes, for though he is something of a battle mage, he is also a master interrogator and has cracked the minds of foes as well as their skin.



- 8 Agility
- 8 Awareness
- 6 Influence
- 10 Intellect
- 8 Spirit
- 6 Strength

VALUES

Devotion 6

Privately I am preoccupied with my greater purpose.

Liberty 4

I sometimes get lost in my work and forget myself.

Glory 10

I live to see the day when I may overcome a worthy foe.

Mastery 6

My talent is innate, not something I must polish.

Justice 8

I relish my duties; they are never a burden.

Truth 8

I have seen so many truths that I hardly know my own.

DISTINCTIONS

Sunfire Elf 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Heat-Being:* Add **Angry** 8 stress in order to step up both your **Agility** and **Strength** for the duration of any test, contest, or challenge.

Hotheaded Sun Mage 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

Simplicity is the Best Solution 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Straight to the Point:* Spend a PP and either gain a 8 asset or step up an existing asset when undertaking a challenge because of your keen insight.

SPECIALTIES

Crafting 6

Sun Magic 8

ASSETS

Sun Magic Spells 8

- ***Circulus Luminis*** (Ring of Light)
- ***Fulmen Ignem*** (Bolt of Fire)
- ***Verum Animo*** (Sense Truth of the Heart)

BINETA (she/her)

Sister of the mage Babukar, Bineta considers herself not only a knight, but the very dagger in the hand of Lux Aurea itself. Bold and unafraid, she has a knack for carving through the densest battlefield, though she will likely pick up some careless scars along the way.

Agility 8
Awareness 6
Influence 6
Intellect 8
Spirit 10
Strength 8



VALUES

Devotion 8
I love my people as much as a warrior can.

Liberty 6
I am a servant, not a conqueror.

Glory 4
If my name does not go down in the history books, so be it.

Mastery 8
My sword is as hot as my temper, and it will not slip my grasp.

Justice 10
My great might represents defense, not destruction.

Truth 6
Fools need smiting more than they need saving.

DISTINCTIONS

Sunfire Elf 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Heat-Being:* Add **Angry** 8 stress in order to step up both your **Agility** and **Strength** for the duration of any test, contest, or challenge.

Knight of Lux Aurea 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Stalwart:* Spend a PP to step down all of your stress dice after you succeed at a contest with a foe.

Fickle Luck 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

SPECIALTIES

Animal Training 6 | Strategy 6 | Swordplay 6

ASSET



Sunforge Blade 8

This blade glows with heat. Thankfully it comes with a magical protective sheath.

DIYAN (he/him)

As headstrong as he is kind, Diyan fought alongside Vinaya in Queen Aanya's army wielding a thick skull and a Durenian spear. But his soul was sprinkled with wanderlust; if human hostilities ever ebb, he hopes to travel with Vinaya to visit Katolis, as their Duren ancestors did.



VALUES

Devotion 10

I find passion and heart in everything, even battle.

Glory 8

Although fighting is often unpleasant, my legacy demands it.

Justice 8

When honor calls, I do not waver.

Liberty 4

Society is too important for me to put myself above it.

Mastery 6

I won't make a fool of myself fixing what isn't broken.

Truth 6

My actions speak louder than empty promises.

8	Agility
8	Awareness
6	Influence
6	Intellect
8	Spirit
10	Strength

DISTINCTIONS

Durenian Freefolk 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

Soldier of the Garden 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Graceful Warrior:* Spend a PP to add both your **Agility** and **Strength** dice to your dice pool in a test, contest, or challenge that deals with battle, instead of just one attribute.

Never Back Down 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Resolute:* Spend a PP to add one of your stress dice to a test, contest, or challenge. Step down that stress die afterwards.

SPECIALTIES

Agriculture 6

Spearfighting 8

ASSET



Durenian Spear 8

A long, tri-pointed spear common among Durenian soldiers.

DRAYLENN (she/her)

A passionate keeper of Xadian wildlife, Draylenn worries that the tumult in the world puts her beloved friends in danger. She's sought help from Sunfire elves; she's open to parlaying with humans if it means less strife for her village, the Hollow Wood.



- 6 Agility
- 8 Awareness
- 6 Influence
- 8 Intellect
- 10 Spirit
- 8 Strength

VALUES

Devotion 10

I can improvise many a spell if it means saving my beloved friends.

Liberty 8

Nature has brought me great freedom and I love to bask in it.

Glory 4

My life is no more important than a community's.

Mastery 6

I've a thing or two to learn, but I'm more about living in the moment.

Justice 8

I'm grateful that I can use my power for what is right.

Truth 6

Only the trees and the light that beams through them know real truth.

DISTINCTIONS

Moonshadow Elf 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

Passionate Mage 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Preserve the Spirit:* Use your effect die to recover your or another character's existing stress on a success, instead of inflicting stress or removing a challenge die.

Friend of the Forest 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Furry Friends Forever:* When you first meet a non-hostile animal, you may gain them as a friendly asset for free; if you spend a PP, you may step up the die rating. You may spend this asset to recover your **Afraid**, **Angry**, or **Insecure** stress.

SPECIALTIES

Animal Ally 8

Moon Magic 6

ASSETS



Beetle Brooch 6

An opal charm that resembles an ancient beetle from a bygone era, imbued with Moon magic.

Moon Magic Spells 6

- ***Luceat Candorem*** (Dazzling Lights)
- ***Mystica Arbora*** (Group Invisibility)

EASGANN (he/him)

Hoping to become a modern folktale, Easgann wanders the small rural towns of Xadia righting wrongs as best he can, but thus far he's worked from the shadows. As regional tensions rise, he considers whether he should abandon his loner lifestyle in favor of lending his sneaky talents to his newly acquired friends.

10 Agility
8 Awareness
6 Influence
6 Intellect
8 Spirit
8 Strength



VALUES

Devotion 6

I know my heart, and it rarely interrupts me on my path.

Glory 10

Future generations will whisper my name, if all goes according to plan!

Justice 8

The real point of living is making things right.

Liberty 8

I need the wind on my back if I'm to feel free.

Mastery 6

I've learned hard enough lessons just living my life.

Truth 4

The legends of my adventures will decide who and what I am.

DISTINCTIONS

Skywing Elf 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Elf Grace:* Spend a PP to step up your **Agility** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that factors in your elven speed and balance.

Silent Scout 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

Dashing Do-Gooder 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Pay It Forward:* When you step down a value die to step up someone else's value in a test, contest, or challenge, you may also recover one of their stress dice equal to your original value die rating.

SPECIALTIES

Singing 6 | Sneaking 6 | Swordplay 6

ASSET



Long Dagger 8

A dagger as long as Easgann's forearm that can parry any blade.

ELJAAL (they/them)

Eljaal travelled a great distance to Del Bar to assassinate a human target some months ago. Before they could complete the task, their target fell to his death in a climbing accident in clear view of Eljaal. They have since been wandering the human lands, trying to come to grips with the future ahead, knowing that the elves they love might not accept their circumstantial failure. Eljaal hopes to find a new purpose, or a reassuring path home.



- 10 Agility
- 8 Awareness
- 6 Influence
- 6 Intellect
- 8 Spirit
- 8 Strength

VALUES

Devotion 8

I am open to new bonds as I search for my path.

Liberty 6

I yearn for the security of my old home.

Glory 8

I've traveled far and hope it was for a purpose.

Mastery 10

I rely on my deadly skills during this trying time.

Justice 6

I have yet to find true balance in this world.

Truth 4

Facts only matter if they help get the job done.

DISTINCTIONS

Moonshadow Elf 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Elf Grace:* Spend a PP to step up your **Agility** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that factors in your elven speed and balance.
- *Moonshadow Form:* When trying to hide, sneak, or go unseen during a full moon, spend a PP to double your **Moonshadow Elf** distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.

Homesick Assassin 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

A Song for All Occasions 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

SPECIALTIES

Sneaking 8

Swordplay 6

ASSET



Elven Sword Staff 8

This staff has blades on either end which can rotate outwards when in use.

HESTIA (she/her)

Longing for adventure after years of quiet study in her magical grotto full of books, Hestia is eager to take to the forest trails. Though her mind is quick and witty, her lack of social interaction makes her awkward at times. She more than makes up for it by being inventive, both with magic and with self-deprecating apologies.



Agility	6
Awareness	6
Influence	8
Intellect	10
Spirit	8
Strength	8

VALUES

Devotion 8
If I didn't want friends, I'd've stayed in the grotto!

Glory 6
Eating a fun new food is all the conquest I crave.

Justice 4
I haven't had to make many tough calls, and I'm not sure what they'll be.

Liberty 10
I've got wanderlust like pollen on the breeze.

Mastery 8
I know more magic than almost anyone. Ugh that sounds proud, sorry!

Truth 6
I'm smart enough to know that truth is relative; I don't worry about it much.

DISTINCTIONS

Earthblood Elf 8
- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Earth Focus:* When in contact with the earth or minerals, replace two dice of the same size in your dice pool with a single die of one size higher.

Cloistered Mage 8
- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Independent Study:* When you have time to be alone with your thoughts, away from anyone else, spend a PP to create a 8 asset for the next scene in which you interact with another character.

Wisened Wanderer 8
- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

SPECIALTIES

Earth Magic 6

History Keeper 6

ASSETS



Petal 8
A loyal chlormeleon who clings to Hestia's shoulder.

Earth Magic Spells 6
- ***Creatura Lenta*** (Slowed Creature)
- ***Medito Ad Crystallo*** (Meditation Crystal)

PONMALAR (they/them)

Silent, deadly, and skilled beyond measure with a heavy bow, Ponmalar is a former Evenerean soldier who grew weary of how often their superiors put them in harm's way. In the wake of the assassination of Queen Fareeda, they deserted rather than endure the ensuing chaos. Ponmalar uses their keen eyesight to scan the horizon for fellow Evenerean expatriates and those who value life over conquest.



- 10 Agility
- 10 Awareness
- 4 Influence
- 8 Intellect
- 8 Spirit
- 6 Strength

VALUES

Devotion 8

I've been through battles, and lives are too precious to risk.

Liberty 10

I'm done fighting for nations; I'm here for myself and my friends.

Glory 4

I'd rather just use an arrow to defuse a fight if I can.

Mastery 6

I spent years perfecting my skills; I'm just about survival these days.

Justice 8

Power always seems to end up in the wrong hands.

Truth 6

A secret or two builds character, so to speak.

DISTINCTIONS

Evenerean Exile 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

Marsh Ranger 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *The Bigger They Are:* When you are in a test, contest, or challenge against an opponent who is at least twice as big as you are, spend a PP to double your **Marsh Ranger** distinction die and keep an extra die in your total.

Watchful Expatriate 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Always on Guard:* Spend a PP to create a 8 asset for an ally who is in the same challenge as you are.

ASSET



Heavy Bow 8

A military-grade bow that fires spear-like arrows through dense underbrush.

SPECIALTIES

Archery 6 Mathematics 6 Sneaking 6

PYRDA (she/her)

Pyrda believes her destiny lies in preserving the balance of magic. She is eager to experience a wider variety of primal forces and hopes to acquire artifacts that will be shared by all peoples, rather than hidden from the world. She's befriended Easgann, suspecting he'll lead her to her dream of one day retiring as a guardian of knowledge.



Agility 6
Awareness 8
Influence 6
Intellect 8
Spirit 10
Strength 8

VALUES

Devotion 8
Love writes better stories than greed and other nonsense does.

Glory 4
I serve magic and knowledge, not my own ego.

Justice 8
Judgment seeks us out; we will all be beholden to it one day.

Liberty 6
I follow a destiny that speaks louder than I.

Mastery 10
I am not ashamed to humble myself before the great process of life.

Truth 6
I search for my own truth, rather than the truth others feed me.

DISTINCTIONS

Skywing Elf 8
- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Wingover:* Spend a PP to add both your **Agility** and your **Strength** dice to your dice pool when you are airborne or using your wings.

Mage of the Wind 8
- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Share the Gift:* When you use your **Sky Magic** specialty in a test, contest, or challenge, you may keep an additional effect die and grant it to another character as an asset.

Thoughtful Mediator 8
- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

SPECIALTIES

Diplomacy 6

Sky Magic 8

ASSETS



Glass Bird Artifact 6
Figurine of an extinct Xadian dove, imbued with Sky magic.

Sky Magic Spells 6
- ***Alis Secreto*** (Long Distance Whisper)
- ***Aspiro*** (Forceful Gust)

ROUTHNA (she/her)

Proud and loud, Routhna delights in bragging of her conquests on the battlefield, often in disquieting and rude ways. Though her manners are terrible, she's eager to become an ally to more than her homeland and to fight alongside friends she can trust. She's grown fond of Tressal, who she regards as a future leader.



VALUES

Devotion 6

I know how to be sweet, but I prefer not to be almost all the time.

Liberty 6

I've seen good and bad causes in my day and I prefer to stay flexible.

Glory 8

It's better to get out of my way than it is to distract me.

Mastery 10

I'll sharpen my sword and do crunches all day if it means victory.

Justice 8

If the cause is right, it has my blade.

Truth 4

What did you say? Who am I? Why am charging you? I don't know, really!

8	Agility
6	Awareness
6	Influence
8	Intellect
8	Spirit
10	Strength

DISTINCTIONS

Neolandian Traditionalist 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Resourceful:* Activate an opportunity to switch out an existing asset for two assets of one step lower in size. These new assets last until the end of the scene unless you spend a PP for each asset to carry over into the next scene.

Royal Guard 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

Blunt Braggart 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *I Can Do Better:* When you fail a roll to beat your opponent in a contest or challenge, spend a PP to reroll your dice pool and try again. You must keep the result of this new roll. If you succeed, step up your effect die by one. If you fail again, step up any stress you take.

SPECIALTIES

Swordplay 8 — Unarmed Combat 6

ASSET



Massive Broadsword 8

This ancient Neolandian blade weighs in around 100 pounds.

TRESSAL (he/him)

A salty and snarky teenager, Tressal resents his elders for dragging him into petty political struggles. Originally sent on a mission to use his dark magic gifts to collect and consolidate power to bring back to Neolandia, he's grown fond of unfamiliar Xadian cultures, and he increasingly questions the isolationist beliefs he was taught.

VALUES

Devotion 4

I am only just beginning to learn the value of companionship.

Liberty 8

I'm getting a feel for the value of my independence.

Glory 6

I was raised to seek conquest but find it tiresome of late.

Mastery 8

I'm better at what I do than most people, and like to make a show of it.

Justice 6

There is a need to right wrongs, but it depends on how I feel.

Truth 10

Hero worship is for suckers; they all lie to stay powerful.

DISTINCTIONS

Neolandian Isolationist 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

Dark Acolyte 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Price of Darkness:* When you use a magical creature asset in any dice pool with your **Dark Magic** specialty, step up or double **Dark Magic**. Convert that asset into **Corrupted** stress after the roll.

Brooding Wanderer 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Bad to the Bone:* Recover either **Afraid**, **Exhausted**, or **Insecure** stress when you create a bad situation out of your own actions

SPECIALTIES

Cooking 6 | Dark Magic 6 | Politics 6



ASSETS

Dark Magic Spells 8

- ***Cigam Rouy Laever*** (Reveal)
- ***Eciov Eht Laets*** (Silence)
- ***Semalf Gnippiks Gnipael*** (Dancing Flames)

VINAYA (she/her)

Vinaya felt her icy noble veneer crack when she and her best friend Diyan met Winda the hunter, who shares her skepticism of manipulative personalities. Vinaya's specialty is seeing through centuries-old grudges that her elders lean on like crutches, and her friends try to convince her to use that power for more generous reasons than she may normally be inclined.



VALUES

Devotion 4

I have my friends, but who needs everyone else?

Glory 6

War is for the weak. I'd rather surgically analyze the problem.

Justice 8

I may be bitter, but it's because I so clearly see right from wrong.

Liberty 6

The real fight is work, not tussling in the streets.

Mastery 8

Through determination I will outsmart them all.

Truth 10

You can find a liar by the scent of their lies.

6	Agility
8	Awareness
10	Influence
10	Intellect
8	Spirit
4	Strength

DISTINCTIONS

Durenian Noble 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

Herald of the Queen 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Orate:* Spend a PP to double your **Influence** or **Spirit** die on a test, contest, or challenge that involves using your speaking voice.

You Don't Have to Remind Me! 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Instant Recall:* Spend a PP to remember a helpful fact or detail from something you once read, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.

ASSET



Chronicles of Elarion 8

A bound collection of stories, tales, and poems from the ancient days of the Human Kingdoms.

SPECIALTIES

Diplomacy 6 **History** 6 **Politics** 6

WINDA (she/her)

After the death of King Florian, Winda grew dispassionate about her homeland and decided to explore the wilderness. There she discovered her new friends Diyan and Vinaya of Duren. Though gruff and sarcastic by nature, she has grown curious about the greater possibilities for Xadia and whether her actions could actually play a role in its unification.

VALUES

Devotion 8

I may snark, but I'm loyal to a tee.

Glory 6

I'd rather wander alone than upset the balance.

Justice 6

I don't run from wrongdoing, but I don't run to it either.

Liberty 10

You couldn't drag me to a fancy meal kicking and screaming.

Mastery 8

My survival skills are incredibly important to hone.

Truth 4

I'd rather serve you snark than what I'm really feeling.



DISTINCTIONS

Del Barian Hinterlander 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Tough:* Spend a PP to convert your **Injured** or **Exhausted** stress into another kind of stress. If you already had stress of that new type, step up that stress.

Trailblazing Hunter 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.
- *Keen Eye:* Spend a PP to double your **Awareness** or **Agility** die in your dice pool when following a trail, aiming at a distant target, or spotting something far off.

Foolhardy Friend 8

- *Hinder:* Gain one PP when you switch out this distinction's die rating for a 4.

SPECIALTIES

Climbing 6

Tracking 8

ASSET



Light Crossbow 8

A finely-crafted crossbow with a case of quarrels.

Distinctions in Detail

This section covers in some detail all of the various distinctions and distinction elements we referred to earlier in Creating Your Own Character on page 112. Specifically, each distinction is included in alphabetical order within its category, with the value or values it steps up, and the locked SFX it adds to your list.

Note: The following section is made up of lists of options to help make sense of what goes with which. Kindreds, vocations, and quirks are color-coded with their corresponding SFX.

DISTINCTION KEY

● **Kindred** ● **Vocation** ● **Quirk**

Kindred Distinctions

Kindred distinctions are composed of two specific elements: community and family. Each has three SFX and gives you one value step, for a total of six SFX and two value steps.

See page 68 for more on kindred distinctions.

Community Distinctions

Your community determines if you're from one of the Human Kingdoms or one of the elven communities.

Del Barian

You were raised in the Human Kingdom of Del Bar.
Value: **Liberty**

- *Hunting Party:* When you use your kindred distinction in a challenge, spend a PP to add an additional 6 for each of your allies undertaking the challenge with you.
- *Resolute:* Spend a PP to add one of your stress dice to a test, contest, or challenge. Step down that stress die afterwards.
- *Tall Tales:* When you win a contest, you can choose to keep an additional effect die to create an asset for yourself.

Durenian

You were raised in the Human Kingdom of Duren.
Value: **Devotion**

- *Inspired Instinct:* Spend a PP to step up your **Spirit** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that draws on your creative instincts.
- *Inventive Fury:* Add **Angry** 8 stress in order to create a 8 asset when you are forced to improvise a solution.
- *Worker Bee:* Spend a PP to choose to ignore either your **Exhausted**, **Injured**, or **Insecure** stress for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge.

Earthblood

You were raised among a band of Earthblood elves.
Value: **Truth**

- *Earth Focus:* When in contact with the earth or minerals, replace two dice of the same size in your dice pool with a single die of one size higher.
- *Fellowship:* When you use your kindred distinction in a test, contest, or challenge, you may keep an additional effect die and grant it to another character as an asset.
- *Wood-Wise:* Spend a PP to double your **Earthblood Elf** distinction when you use herbal remedies to recover stress.

Evenerean

You were raised in the Human Kingdom of Evenere.
Value: **Justice**

- *Mimicry:* Spend a PP to mimic a sound, voice, or behavior, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.
- *Surefooted:* When in difficult terrain, replace two dice of the same size in your dice pool with a single die of one size higher.
- *Well Educated:* Spend a PP to step up your **Intellect** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that draws on your scholarly studies.

Katolian

You were raised in the Human Kingdom of Katolis.
Value: **Mastery**

- *Cosmopolitan:* When dealing with other cultures, replace two dice of the same size in your dice pool with a single die of one size higher.
- *Lead by Example:* When you use your kindred distinction in a challenge, you may spend a PP to keep an additional effect die, which you can give to an ally as an asset.
- *Suspicious:* Spend a PP when you distrust an outsider, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.

Moonshadow

You were raised in a village of Moonshadow elves.
Value: **Devotion**

- *Moon Bonded:* Choose up to five allies. Spend a PP to add a 6 for each ally to your dice pool when creating an asset with a test. Keep an additional effect die for each ally.
- *Moonshadow Form:* When trying to hide, sneak, or go unseen during a full moon, spend a PP to double your **Moonshadow Elf** distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.
- *Resolute:* Spend a PP to add one of your stress dice to a test, contest, or challenge. Step down that stress die afterwards.

Neolandian

You were raised in the Human Kingdom of Neolandia.
Value: **Glory**

- *Relentless:* When you would be stressed out of a scene, spend a PP to step down the affected stress and remain in the scene instead.
- *Reliable:* Spend a PP to reroll your dice when creating an asset with a test. You must keep the result of this new roll.
- *Resourceful:* Activate an opportunity to switch out an existing asset for two assets of one step lower in size. These new assets last until the end of the scene unless you spend a PP for each asset to carry over into the next scene.

Skywing

You were raised in a traveling family of Skywing elves.
Value: **Liberty**

- *Free-Spirited:* Spend a PP to convert your **Insecure** or **Afraid** stress into another kind of stress. If you already had stress of that new type, step up that stress.
- *Wind-Whisper:* Spend a PP to join or leave a scene that includes an ally that is already underway.
- *Wingover:* Spend a PP to add both your **Agility** and your **Strength** dice to your dice pool when you are airborne or using your wings.

Sunfire

You were raised in a city of Sunfire elves.
Value: **Mastery**

- *Heat-Being:* Add **Angry** 8 stress in order to step up both your **Agility** and **Strength** for the duration of any test, contest, or challenge.
- *Light-Being:* Spend a PP to convert another character's stress into **Exhausted** stress and then transfer that stress to yourself. If you already had **Exhausted** stress, step it up instead.
- *Relentless:* When you would be stressed out of a scene, spend a PP to step down the affected stress and remain in the scene instead.



Family Distinctions

Your family determines what part of society you're from within your community. If you're an elf, this is just "Elf."

Cityfolk

Your family lived and worked in a human city.
Value: **Mastery**

- *Busybody:* You may begin to interfere in a contest without spending a PP. Continuing to interfere still costs a PP.
- *Hearth and Home:* When you enjoy the comforts of civilization during a recovery scene, choose a stress to step down twice instead of once.
- *Skilled:* Spend a PP to step up or double a specialty.

Elf

You're from a family of elves. You cannot choose this if you're a human.
Value: **Devotion**

- *Elf Grace:* Spend a PP to step up your **Agility** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that factors in your elven speed and balance.
- *Elf Senses:* Spend a PP to step up your **Awareness** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that factors in your keen elven senses.
- *Elf Might:* Spend a PP to step up your **Strength** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that factors in your elven power and endurance.

Exile

You or your family were forced to leave your homeland.
Value: **Truth**

- *Free-Spirited:* Spend a PP to convert your **Insecure** or **Afraid** stress into another kind of stress. If you already had stress of that new type, step up that stress.
- *Self-Sufficient:* When you are in a test, contest, or challenge against an opponent alone, spend a PP to double your kindred distinction die and keep an extra die in your total.
- *Untethered:* Spend a PP to step up your **Mastery** or **Truth** value in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge.

Freefolk

You are from a smaller community such as a village or town.
Value: **Devotion**

- *Fellowship:* When you use your kindred distinction in a test, contest, or challenge, you may keep an additional effect die and grant it to another character as an asset.
- *Friendly Face:* When you first meet a human who isn't hostile towards you, you may gain them as a friendly asset for free; if you spend a PP, you may step up the die rating. You may spend this asset to recover your **Afraid**, **Angry**, or **Insecure** stress.
- *Pastoral:* When you enjoy the rustic life during a recovery scene, choose a stress to step down twice instead of once.

Hinterlander

You are from a community in a remote part of your kingdom.
Value: **Liberty**

- *Find the Way:* Spend a PP when lost or trying to find your way to uncover a path, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.
- *Roughing It:* When you are in the wilderness during a recovery scene, choose a stress to step down twice instead of once.
- *Tough:* Spend a PP to convert your **Injured** or **Exhausted** stress into another kind of stress. If you already had stress of that new type, step up that stress.

Isolationist

You or your family grew up in seclusion or hiding within your homeland.
Value: **Liberty**

- *All-for-One:* Spend a PP to step up your **Devotion** or **Liberty** value in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge.
- *One-for-All:* When you use your kindred distinction in a test to create an asset, you may step down the asset once to share it with everyone in the scene.
- *Singleminded:* When another character successfully interferes with a contest you are already in, you can continue the contest without spending a PP. Your opponent must still spend a PP. If you win the contest, step up your effect die.

Noble

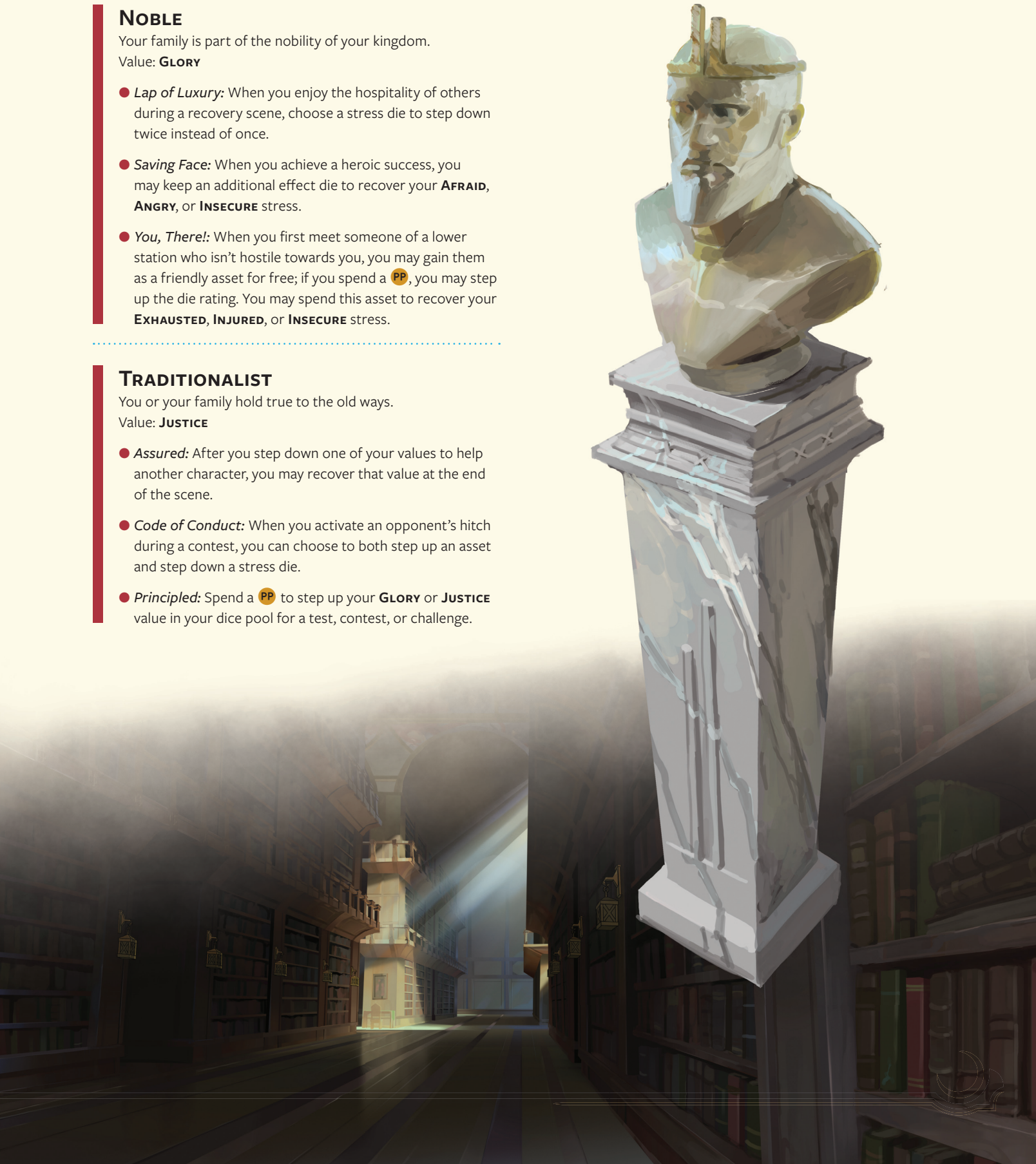
Your family is part of the nobility of your kingdom.
Value: **Glory**

- *Lap of Luxury:* When you enjoy the hospitality of others during a recovery scene, choose a stress die to step down twice instead of once.
- *Saving Face:* When you achieve a heroic success, you may keep an additional effect die to recover your **Afraid**, **Angry**, or **Insecure** stress.
- *You, There!:* When you first meet someone of a lower station who isn't hostile towards you, you may gain them as a friendly asset for free; if you spend a PP, you may step up the die rating. You may spend this asset to recover your **Exhausted**, **Injured**, or **Insecure** stress.

Traditionalist

You or your family hold true to the old ways.
Value: **Justice**

- *Assured:* After you step down one of your values to help another character, you may recover that value at the end of the scene.
- *Code of Conduct:* When you activate an opponent's hitch during a contest, you can choose to both step up an asset and step down a stress die.
- *Principled:* Spend a PP to step up your **Glory** or **Justice** value in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge.



Vocation Distinction

Vocation distinctions have two specific elements: a vocation and an adjective that describes it. Each has a SFX and a value step, for a total of two SFX and two value steps. See page 68 for more on vocation distinctions.

Common Vocations

These are the jobs, roles, and professions of the world of Xadia. We call them "common" to differentiate them from magical vocations, as some of them are anything but common.

Advisor

Variations: Consultant, Lieutenant, Vizier
Value: **Truth**

- *Word to the Wise:* Spend a PP when giving advice or counsel to give an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.

Animal Keeper

Variations: Beekeeper, Goatherd, Horse Trainer
Value: **Devotion**

- *Word to the Wild:* Spend a PP to step up or double your attribute die when interacting with animals.

Archer

Variations: Artillerist, Slinger, Spear Thrower
Value: **Mastery**

- *Empty Quiver:* Gain a PP when you run out of ammunition.

Artisan

Variations: Blacksmith, Carpenter, Clockmaker, Tailor
Value: **Mastery**

- *Fine Crafting:* Spend a PP to step up or double a specialty that relates to your craft during an asset test.

Assassin

Variations: Bodyguard, Mercenary, Ruffian
Value: **Justice**

- *On Target:* When you have a target or quarry as your goal, you can spend a PP to use it as an asset for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge. Then, step down that goal's die rating. If you already have a goal at the new die rating, step up the other goal.

Athlete

Variations: Climber, Runner, Tumbler
Value: **Glory**

- *Pulse Racing:* When you spend a PP to push your **Exhausted** or **Injured** stress, do not step it up.

Botanist

Variations: Florist, Gardener, Herbalist
Value: **Devotion**

- *Green Thumb:* Spend a PP to step up or double your attribute die when interacting with plants.

Child

Variations: Orphan, Urchin, Youth
Value: **Devotion**

- *Life's Not Fair:* Gain a PP when your vocation makes things particularly difficult or inconvenient for you.

Competitor

Variations: Champion, Duelist, Jouster
Value: **Mastery**

- *Have at Thee:* Activate an opponent's hitch during a contest to give them a 6 stress of your choice. Step up that stress for each additional hitch the opponent rolled.

Cook

Variations: Baker, Chef, Gourmet
Value: **Devotion**

- *Homecooked Meal:* When you spend a recovery scene feeding others, step down their **Angry** or **Exhausted** stress an additional time.

Counselor

Variations: Confidant, Mentor, Sage
Value: **Devotion**

- *Heart-to-Heart:* When you spend a recovery scene comforting others, step down their **Afraid** or **Insecure** stress an additional time.

Disciple

Variations: Devotee, Seeker, Zealot
Value: **Mastery**

- *Seeking Answers:* When you question a value, instead of adding a die to your growth pool, you may choose to keep that die as an asset for the rest of the session.

Elder

Variations: Grandparent, Senior, Veteran
Value: **Mastery**

- *Wasted on the Young:* Gain a PP when your vocation makes things particularly difficult or inconvenient for you.

Enthusiast

Variations: Expert, Fanatic, Virtuoso
Value: **Mastery**

- *And Another Thing:* Gain a PP when pursuing your special interest gets you into trouble.

Fortune Teller

Variations: Oracle, Soothsayer, Visionary
Value: **Truth**

- *Foretold:* Gain **Afraid** 8 or **Insecure** 8 stress to reroll your dice pool when your action relates directly to one of your goals. You must keep the result of this new roll.

Gambler

Variations: Gamester, Swashbuckler, Trickster
Value: **Truth**

- *Push Your Luck:* When you roll a hitch in a contest, you may spend a PP to reroll your pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.

Guard

Variations: Custodian, Sentry, Watchperson
Value: **Justice**

- *Sentinel:* When another character takes stress, you can spend a PP to take that stress in their place.

Healer

Variations: Doctor, Physician, Veterinarian
Value: **Devotion**

- *Healing Hands:* When you spend a recovery scene treating others, step down their **Exhausted** or **Injured** stress an additional time.

Herald

Variations: Envoy, Orator, Diplomat
Value: **Truth**

- *Orate:* Spend a PP to double your **Influence** or **Spirit** die on a test, contest, or challenge that involves using your speaking voice.

Investigator

Variations: Detective, Examiner, Sleuth
Value: **Truth**

- *On the Trail:* Spend a PP to add both your **Awareness** and **Intellect** dice to your dice pool in a test, contest, or challenge that deals with searching for clues or deducing a solution, instead of just one attribute.

Knight

Variations: Gallant, Lancer, Standard-Bearer
Value: **Glory**

- *Stalwart:* Spend a PP to step down all of your stress dice after you succeed at a contest with a foe.

Laborer

Variations: Builder, Farmer, Groundskeeper
Value: **Mastery**

- *Whistle While You Work:* When you spend a PP to push your **Angry** or **Exhausted** stress, do not step it up.

Leader

Variations: Captain, General, Officer
Value: **Justice**

- *Tactics:* When you activate an opportunity, you may apply its benefits to another character instead of yourself.

Merchant

Variations: Dealer, Guilder, Trader
Value: **Mastery**

- *Good Trade:* When you give an asset to another character, recover a stress of your choice with that asset before handing it over.

Messenger

Variations: Agent, Courier, Page
Value: **Truth**

- *Just in Time:* When you are not participating in a scene, you can spend a PP to give an information-based asset to a character in that scene.

Mystic

Variations: Cleric, Priest, Philosopher
Value: **Devotion**

- *Mindfulness:* Spend a PP to add both your **Awareness** and **Spirit** dice to your dice pool in a test, contest, or challenge that deals with faith, truth, or insight, instead of just one attribute.

Performer

Variations: Actor, Musician, Singer
Value: **Glory**

- *Composure:* When you spend a PP to push your **Exhausted** or **Insecure** stress, do not step it up.

Ranger

Variations: Custodian, Forester, Warden
Value: **Liberty**

- *The Bigger They Are:* When you are in a test, contest, or challenge against an opponent who is at least twice as big as you are, spend a PP to double your vocation distinction die and keep an extra die in your total.

Rider

Variations: Carriage Driver, Cavalry, Elephant Mahout
Value: **Liberty**

- *In the Saddle:* When riding your mount, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.

Sailor

Variations: Boater, Pirate, River Warden
Value: **Liberty**

- *Sea Legs:* When at sea or on a boat, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.

Scavenger

Variations: Tinker, Vagabond, Wanderer
Value: **Mastery**

- *New to Me:* Step up your effect die once when you succeed on an asset test to find something used or abandoned.

Scholar

Variations: Academic, Librarian, Lorekeeper
Value: **Mastery**

- *By the Book:* Spend a PP to add both your **Intellect** and **Spirit** dice to your dice pool in a test, contest, or challenge that deals with knowledge, research, or scholarship, instead of just one attribute.

Scout

Variations: Guide, Bandit, Ruffian
Value: **Devotion**

- *On the Road:* Spend a PP to add both your **Agility** and **Awareness** dice to your dice pool in a test, contest, or challenge that deals with pathfinding, stealth, or wilderness travel, instead of just one attribute.

Servant

Variations: Butler, Maid, Steward
Value: **Devotion**

- *Helping Hand:* When a character uses an asset that you created and rolls a hitch, you may give them a PP.

Socialite
Variations: Dilettante
Value: **Glory**

- *Gossip:* Spend a PP when inflicting **Angry** or **Insecure** stress to step up the stress die once.

Soldier
Variations: Infantry, Person-At-Arms, Spearcarrier
Value: **Justice**

- *Graceful Warrior:* Spend a PP to add both your **Agility** and **Strength** dice to your dice pool in a test, contest, or challenge that deals with battle, instead of just one attribute.

Student
Variations: Acolyte, Neophyte, Trainee
Value: **Mastery**

- *Trial and Error:* When you roll your growth pool, reroll any hitches. You must keep the result of this new roll.

Teacher
Variations: Educator, Instructor, Pedagogue
Value: **Truth**

- *One to Grow On:* When an ally is building their growth pool, you may give them one of your own growth dice. If they fail the roll, you regain the die after growth is completed.

Thief
Variations: Cutpurse, Rogue, Scoundrel
Value: **Liberty**

- *Sleight of Hand:* When you win a contest, you may choose a second effect die to represent an asset you have stolen from your opponent.

Tracker
Variations: Fisher, Hunter, Slayer
Value: **Mastery**

- *Keen Eye:* Spend a PP to double your **Awareness** or **Agility** die in your dice pool when following a trail, aiming at a distant target, or spotting something far off.

Common Adjectives

These are qualities or descriptors, presented as adjectives. Add one to your vocation element to create a full vocation distinction.

Adaptable
Value: **Liberty**

- *In the Moment:* Spend a PP and step down an attribute to step up any other attribute once for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge.

Ambitious
Value: **Mastery**

- *I Can Do This:* Spend a PP to step up a value associated with a goal you are currently pursuing for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge.

Aspiring
Value: **Mastery**

- *Shoot for the Moon:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Mastery** value in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.

Begrudging
Value: **Justice**

- *Okay, Fine:* When you give in during a contest, you may recover a stress of your choice using your opponent's effect die.

Brazen
Value: **Glory**

- *Playing with Fire:* When you take **Injured** stress, you can choose to step it up once. If you do, gain a PP.

Brooding
Value: **Truth**

- *Bad to the Bone:* Recover either **Afraid**, **Exhausted**, or **Insecure** stress when your actions create a bad situation.

Cheerful
Value: **Devotion**

- *Sunny Side Up:* When you succeed on a recovery test to help another character with their **Afraid** or **Insecure** stress, step up your effect die once.

Clever
Value: **Mastery**

- *I Know This One:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Intellect** attribute in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.

Cloistered
Value: **Mastery**

- *Independent Study:* When you have time to be alone with your thoughts, away from anyone else, spend a PP to create a 8 asset for the next scene in which you interact with another character.

Conflicted
Value: **Truth**

- *Hemming and Hawing:* When you question a value, you may take **Insecure** 8 stress. If you do, do not step down the questioned value, and add a 8 to your growth pool instead of that value's die rating.

Considerate
Value: **Devotion**

- *It's the Thought That Counts:* When you give an asset to another character, you can spend a PP to step up that asset's die rating.

Creative
Value: **Mastery**

- *Out of the Box:* When you receive an asset from another character, you can spend a PP to step up that asset's die rating.

Cunning
Value: **Truth**

- *I Can Handle Them:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Influence** attribute in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.

Decisive
Value: **Justice**

- *Some Regrets:* Gain a PP when your decision-making causes a bad situation.

Dedicated
Value: **Devotion**

- *I Believe in Us:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Spirit** attribute in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.

Fearless
Value: **Glory**

- *Tag In:* Give a PP to a character who has just lost a contest. You may now immediately join and continue that contest.

Gentle
Value: **Devotion**

- *Pull Your Punches:* Use your effect die to create an asset for yourself or another character on a success, instead of inflicting stress or removing a challenge die.

Graceful
Value: **Liberty**

- *I'll Find a Way:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Agility** attribute in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.

Haughty
Value: **Glory**

- *Stoke the Flames:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Glory** value in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.

Headstrong
Value: **Glory**

- *Not Today:* When you would gain or step up **Insecure** stress, spend a PP to step that stress down once.

Homesick
Value: **Devotion**

- *Fond Memories:* Recover either **Afraid**, **Exhausted**, or **Insecure** stress when you spend a scene interacting with someone or something from your home.

Hotheaded
Value: **Glory**

- *How Dare You:* When you take **Angry** stress, you can choose to step it up once. If you do, gain a PP.

Humbled
Value: **Truth**

- *How Could You:* When you take **Insecure** stress, you can choose to step it up once. If you do, gain a PP.

Idealistic
Value: **Devotion**

- *Head in the Clouds:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Devotion** value in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.

Inquisitive
Value: **Truth**

- *Killed the Banther:* Gain a PP when your curious nature gets you into trouble.

Insightful
Value: **Truth**

- *I See What's Happening:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Awareness** attribute in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.

Intimidating
Value: **Glory**

- *You Don't Scare Me:* When you would take or step up **Afraid** stress, spend a PP to step that stress down once.

Jaded
Value: **Liberty**

- *See If I Care:* When you take **Corrupted** stress, you can choose to step it up once. If you do, gain a PP.

Meticulous
Value: **Justice**

- *Measure Twice:* When you roll a hitch in a test, you may spend a PP to reroll your pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.

Mighty
Value: **Glory**

- *I'll Hold Them Off:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Strength** attribute in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.

Mysterious
Value: **Truth**

- *Beneath the Surface:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Truth** value in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.

Nervous
Value: **Mastery**

- *Worrywart:* When you take **Afraid** stress, you can choose to step it up once. If you do, gain a PP.

Nurturing
Value: **Devotion**

- *Bedside Manner:* When you succeed on a recovery test to help another character with their **Exhausted** or **Injured** stress, step up your effect die once.

Open-Minded
Value: **Liberty**

- *Seize the Day:* When you give in during a contest, you may create an asset using your opponent's effect die.

Opinionated
Value: **Liberty**

- *Soapbox:* When you interfere in a contest, spend a PP to double your vocation distinction die and keep an extra die in your total.

Opportunistic
Value: **Glory**

- *Crack in the Armor:* When you include an opponent's **Afraid** or **Insecure** stress in your dice pool, you can spend a PP to step that stress up.

Passionate
Value: **Devotion**

- *Preserve the Spirit:* Use your effect die to recover your or another character's existing stress on a success, instead of inflicting stress or removing a challenge die.

Patient
Value: **Justice**

- *Just Breathe:* When you would take or step up **Angry** stress, spend a PP to step that stress down once.

Pragmatic
Value: **Mastery**

- *Look to the Stars:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Liberty** value in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.

Profound
Value: **Mastery**

- *That's Deep, Friend:* When an ally wins a contest, spend a PP to gain an asset equal to their effect die.

Redeemed
Value: **Justice**

- *Stand Your Ground:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Justice** value in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.

Refined
Value: **Mastery**

- *Table Manners:* When interacting with polite society, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.

Reluctant
Value: **Liberty**

- *Reconsider:* Surrender a goal. Use that goal's die rating to recover a stress of your choice.

Reserved
Value: **Justice**

- *Just Another Day:* Spend a PP to convert your **Afraid**, **Angry**, or **Insecure** stress into **Exhausted** stress. If you already had **Exhausted** stress, step it up.

Responsible
Value: **Justice**

- *Time Management:* Gain a PP when you forgo pursuing one of your current goals to help another character pursue theirs.

Restless
Value: **Liberty**

- *On the Go:* When you would take or step up **Exhausted** stress, spend a PP to step that stress down once.

Revered
Value: **Glory**

- *Sure of Phrase:* When you roll a hitch while using your **Influence** attribute, you can spend a PP to reroll your dice pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.

Royal
Value: **Glory**

- *Crown and Country:* When interacting with subjects of your land, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.

Ruthless
Value: **Justice**

- *Twist the Knife:* When you include an opponent's **Exhausted** or **Insecure** stress in your dice pool, you can spend a PP to step that stress up.

Sarcastic
Value: **Liberty**

- *Foot in Mouth:* Gain a PP when your sarcastic comments land you in a bad situation.

Silent
Value: **Liberty**

- *Sure of Foot:* When you roll a hitch while using your **Agility** attribute, you can spend a PP to reroll your dice pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.

Stern
Value: **Glory**

- *Um, Actually:* Gain a PP when you assert your authority where it is not welcome.

Stylish
Value: **Liberty**

- *Panache:* When you achieve a heroic success, instead of stepping up your effect die you may recover a stress of your choice.

Trusting
Value: **Justice**

- *They Seem Nice:* Gain a PP when putting your trust in someone else lands you in a bad situation.

Unyielding
Value: **Devotion**

- *Sure of Heart:* When you roll a hitch while using your **Spirit** attribute, you can spend a PP to reroll your dice pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.

Valiant
Value: **Justice**

- *Sure of Might:* When you roll a hitch while using your **Strength** attribute, you can spend a PP to reroll your dice pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.

Vengeful
Value: **Justice**

- *I'll Remember That:* When you lose a contest, you may create an asset using your opponent's effect die.

Vigilant
Value: **Liberty**

- *Sure of Sense:* When you roll a hitch while using your **Awareness** attribute, you can spend a PP to reroll your dice pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.

Wayward
Value: **Liberty**

- *I Think It's This Way:* Gain a PP when you get completely, hopelessly, utterly lost.

Worldly
Value: **Truth**

- *Sure of Wit:* When you roll a hitch while using your **Intellect** attribute, you can spend a PP to reroll your dice pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.

Magical Vocations

This list of magic vocations has a dual purpose. You can use them either as the vocation part of the distinction—and apply an adjective to it—or you can use them as adjectives to apply to common vocations. This gives you combinations like **Worldly Sun Mage** or **Knight of the Sun.**

Dark (Mage)

Value: **Mastery**

- *Price of Darkness:* When you use a magical creature asset in any dice pool with your **Dark Magic** specialty, step up or double **Dark Magic**. Convert that asset into **Corrupted** stress after the roll.

Earth (Mage)

Value: **Devotion**

- *Body of Earth:* When you take stress, spend a PP to step that stress down once. Then, gain an asset equal to the stress die's new rating.

Moon (Mage)

Value: **Truth**

- *Mire the Mind:* When you use your **Moon Magic** specialty in a test, contest, or challenge in which your pool includes an opposing character's stress, spend a PP to step up or double that stress in your pool.

Sky (Mage)

Value: **Liberty**

- *Share the Gift:* When you use your **Sky Magic** specialty in a test, contest, or challenge, you may keep an additional effect die and grant it to another character as an asset.

Sun (Mage)

Value: **Glory**

- *Guiding Flare:* When you take or step up **Angry** stress, spend a PP to create a 6 asset for another character. If that character already has an asset from this SFX, step it up instead.

Location-Based Vocations

Every location-based adjective has the same SFX. You can choose which value to assign to it, or use the value associated with the relevant kindred distinction—for example, **of Lux Aurea** would be associated with the Sunfire elves, and therefore **Mastery**.

- *Familiarity:* When you are interacting with or present within the environment related to your vocation, spend a PP to step up or double this distinction for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge.



Quirk Distinctions

Your quirk distinction is a single element, giving you one SFX and two value steps. See page 68 for more on quirk distinctions.

A Song for All Occasions
Values: **Glory, Devotion**

- *Tra-La-La:* Spend a PP to share a melodic tune, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.

Act First, Think Later
Values: **Liberty, Glory**

- *No Time for That:* Gain a PP when you go in unprepared.

Ahead of the Pack
Values: **Glory, Mastery**

- *Me First:* Spend a PP to go first in a round of a challenge.

Anything for My Fans
Values: **Glory, Devotion**

- *And One for You:* Gain a PP when trying to impress someone lands you in a bad situation.

Blunt Braggart
Values: **Glory, Mastery**

- *I Can Do Better:* When you fail a roll to beat your opponent in a contest or challenge, spend a PP to reroll your dice pool and try again. You must keep the result of this new roll. If you succeed, step up your effect die by one. If you fail again, step up any stress you take.

Chronically Underestimated
Values: **Mastery, Justice**

- *Didn't See That Coming:* Gain a PP when you go up against a much more powerful force.

Conquest Has Consequences
Values: **Glory, Justice**

- *Butterfly Effect:* Gain a PP when you face the unintended consequences of achieving one of your goals.

Courageous Combatant
Values: **Justice, Devotion**

- *Get Behind Me:* Gain a PP when you put yourself in danger to protect someone else.

Dark Secrets
Values: **Truth, Liberty**

- *Did You Know... :* Gain a PP after you reveal a dramatic secret.

Dashing Do-Gooder
Values: **Justice, Glory**

- *Pay It Forward:* When you step down a value die to step up someone else's value in a test, contest, or challenge, you may also recover one of their stress dice equal to your original value die rating.

Destiny: A Book I Write Myself
Values: **Liberty, Truth**

- *Rewritten:* Spend a PP to reroll a hitch. You must keep the result of the new roll.

Earnest Enforcer
Values: **Justice, Liberty**

- *The Rules Say... :* Gain a PP when following the laws to the letter lands you in a bad situation.

Fickle Luck
Values: **Liberty, Mastery**

- *Whoops:* When you fail a roll to beat your opponent in a contest or challenge, remove a die from your pool to reroll your dice and try again. You must keep the result of this new roll.

Focused Resolve
Values: **Mastery, Glory**

- *Sure Thing:* Spend a PP to set a die in your dice pool to a result of 2 before you roll.

Foolhardy Friend
Values: **Devotion**, **Truth**

- *My Bad:* Gain a PP when someone you trusted betrays someone else.

Friend Indeed
Values: **Devotion, Mastery**

- *I Sure Can Pick 'Em:* Spend a PP to step up or double a relationship asset in your dice pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge.

Friend of the Forest
Values: **Devotion, Liberty**

- *Furry Friends Forever:* When you first meet a non-hostile animal, you may gain them as a friendly asset for free if you spend a PP, you may step up the die rating. You may spend this asset to recover your **Afraid**, **Angry**, or **Insecure** stress.

Heavy Weighs My Shame
Values: **Truth, Justice**

- *Had It Coming:* When you push **Insecure** stress, you do not have to spend a PP.

High and Mighty
Values: **Glory, Justice**

- *With a Silver Spoon:* Gain a PP when your privileged status lands you in a bad situation.

I Tried, and I Failed
Values: **Mastery, Truth**

- *This Reminds Me:* Spend a PP to remember a past mistake and what you learned from it, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.

Ironic, Don't You Think?
Values: **Truth, Mastery**

- *Yeah, I Really Do:* When trying to mislead someone, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.

Life Is Precious
Values: **Justice**, **Devotion**

- *Please, Allow Me:* When helping someone to recover their stress, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.

Mournful Loner
Values: **Truth, Liberty**

- *Woe Is Me:* Gain a PP when your bad mood lands you in a bad situation.

My Promise Is My Bond
Values: **Truth, Devotion**

- *Oath Shattered:* Gain a PP when you break a promise.

My Scars Are My Armor
Values: **Glory, Truth**

- *I've Had Worse:* When you push **Injured** stress, you do not have to spend a PP.

My Time to Shine
Values: **Glory**, **Mastery**

- *All Eyes on Me:* Gain a PP when making a situation about yourself, makes it worse.

Never Back Down
Values: **Devotion, Justice**

- *Resolute:* Spend a PP to add one of your stress dice to a test, contest, or challenge. Step down that stress die afterwards.

No Rest for the Wicked
Values: **Liberty, Devotion**

- *I Can Do This All Day:* When you push **Exhausted** stress, you do not have to spend a PP.

No Time to Cry
Values: **Justice, Truth**

- *Let It Go:* When you push **Afraid** stress, you do not have to spend a PP.

Occasional Pacifist
Values: **Devotion, Justice**

- *Sit This One Out:* Gain a PP when you choose not to engage in a contest after your opponent rolls first.

Simplicity Is the Best Solution
Values: **Truth, Mastery**

- *Straight to the Point:* Spend a PP and either gain a 8 asset or step up an existing asset when undertaking a challenge because of your keen insight.

Single Mindedly Acute
Values: **Mastery, Truth**

- *Zero In:* When taking a step that would complete one of your goals, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.

Tell It to the Trees
Values: **Truth, Liberty**

- *Roiling Storm:* When you push **Angry** stress, you do not have to spend a PP.

There's Always a Way
Values: **Liberty, Mastery**

- *Think It Through:* Spend a PP to recall a passage, path, or process, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.

Thoughtful Mediator
Values: **Justice, Devotion**

- *Talking to a Wall:* Gain a PP when you interfere in a contest and lose.

Two Left Feet
Values: **Liberty, Devotion**

- *Ally-Oop!:* Gain a PP when your lack of coordination or grace creates a bad situation.

Watchful Expatriate
Values: **Liberty, Justice**

- *Always on Guard:* Spend a PP to create a 8 asset for an ally who is in the same challenge as you are.

The Wallflower's Perks
Values: **Truth, Justice**

- *Eavesdrop:* Spend a PP to remember an overheard conversation or secret, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.

Wisened Wanderer
Values: **Truth, Liberty**

- *Have You Considered:* Spend a PP to share a thoughtful insight or experience, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.

You Don't Have to Remind Me
Values: **Truth, Mastery**

- *Instant Recall:* Spend a PP to remember a helpful fact or detail from something you once read, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.



All of the SFX

Here's a list of nearly all of the SFX used in this book. Magical and asset SFX can be found on page 126. We've arranged them alphabetically so you can find them if you know their names. You can browse through these looking for ideas or just wholesale lift one from here and rename it as needed.

A

- *All Eyes on Me:* Gain a PP when making a situation about yourself, makes it worse.
- *All-for-One:* Spend a PP to step up your **Devotion** or **Liberty** value in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge.
- *Ally-Oop!:* Gain a PP when your lack of coordination or grace creates a bad situation.
- *Always on Guard:* Spend a PP to create a 8 asset for an ally who is in the same challenge as you are.
- *And Another Thing:* Gain a PP when pursuing your special interest gets you into trouble.
- *And One for You:* Gain a PP when trying to impress someone lands you in a bad situation.
- *Assured:* After you step down one of your values to help another character, you may recover that value at the end of the scene.

B

- *Bad to the Bone:* Recover either **Afraid**, **Exhausted**, or **Insecure** stress when your actions create a bad situation.
- *Bedside Manner:* When you succeed on a recovery test to help another character with their **Exhausted** or **Injured** stress, step up your effect die once.
- *Beneath the Surface:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Truth** value in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.
- *Busybody:* You may begin to interfere in a contest without spending a PP. Continuing to interfere still costs a PP.
- *Butterfly Effect:* Gain a PP when you face the unintended consequences of achieving one of your goals.
- *By the Book:* Spend a PP to add both your **Intellect** and **Spirit** dice to your dice pool in a test, contest, or challenge that deals with knowledge, research, or scholarship, instead of just one attribute.

C

- *Code of Conduct:* When you activate an opponent's hitch during a contest, you can choose to both step up an asset and step down a stress die.
- *Composure:* When you spend a PP to push your **Exhausted** or **Insecure** stress, do not step it up.
- *Cosmopolitan:* When dealing with other cultures, replace two dice of the same size in your dice pool with a single die of one size higher.
- *Crack in the Armor:* When you include an opponent's **Afraid** or **Insecure** stress in your dice pool, you can spend a PP to step that stress up.
- *Crown and Country:* When interacting with subjects of your land, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.

D

- *Did You Know... :* Gain a PP after you reveal a dramatic secret.
- *Didn't See That Coming:* Gain a PP when you go up against a much more powerful force.

E

- *Earth Focus:* When in contact with the earth or minerals, replace two dice of the same size in your dice pool with a single die of one size higher.
- *Eavesdrop:* Spend a PP to remember an overheard conversation or secret, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.
- *Elf Grace:* Spend a PP to step up your **Agility** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that factors in your elven speed and balance.
- *Elf Might:* Spend a PP to step up your **Strength** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that factors in your elven power and endurance.
- *Elf Senses:* Spend a PP to step up your **Awareness** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that factors in your keen elven senses.
- *Empty Quiver:* Gain a PP when you run out of ammunition.

F

- *Familiarity:* When you are interacting with or present within the environment related to your vocation, spend a PP to step up or double this distinction for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge.
- *Fellowship:* When you use your kindred distinction in a test, contest, or challenge, you may keep an additional effect die and grant it to another character as an asset.
- *Find the Way:* Spend a PP when lost or trying to find your way to uncover a path, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.
- *Fine Crafting:* Spend a PP to step up or double a specialty that relates to your craft during an asset test.
- *Fond Memories:* Recover either **Afraid**, **Exhausted**, or **Insecure** stress when you spend a scene interacting with someone or something from your home.
- *Foot in Mouth:* Gain a PP when your sarcastic comments land you in a bad situation.
- *Foretold:* Gain **Afraid** 8 or **Insecure** 8 stress to reroll your dice pool when your action relates directly to one of your goals. You must keep the result of this new roll.
- *Free-Spirited:* Spend a PP to convert your **Insecure** or **Afraid** stress into another kind of stress. If you already had stress of that new type, step up that stress.
- *Friendly Face:* When you first meet a human who is not hostile towards you, you may gain them as a friendly asset for free; if you spend a PP, you may step up the die rating. You may spend this asset to recover your **Afraid**, **Angry**, or **Insecure** stress.
- *Furry Friends Forever:* When you first meet a non-hostile animal, you may gain them as a friendly asset for free; if you spend a PP, you may step up the die rating. You may spend this asset to recover your **Afraid**, **Angry**, or **Insecure** stress.

G

- *Get Behind Me:* Gain a PP when you put yourself in danger to protect someone else.
- *Good Trade:* When you give an asset to another character, recover a stress of your choice with that asset before handing it over.
- *Gossip:* Spend a PP when inflicting **Angry** or **Insecure** stress to step up the stress die once.
- *Graceful Warrior:* Spend a PP to add both your **Agility** and **Strength** dice to your dice pool in a test, contest, or challenge that deals with battle, instead of just one attribute.
- *Green Thumb:* Spend a PP to step up or double your attribute die when interacting with plants.

H

- *Had It Coming:* When you push **Insecure** stress, you do not have to spend a PP.
- *Have at Thee:* Activate an opponent's hitch during a contest to give them a 6 stress of your choice. Step up that stress for each additional hitch the opponent rolled.
- *Have You Considered:* Spend a PP to share a thoughtful insight or experience, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.
- *Head in the Clouds:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Devotion** value in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.
- *Healing Hands:* When you spend a recovery scene treating others, step down their **Exhausted** or **Injured** stress an additional time.
- *Heart-to-Heart:* When you spend a recovery scene comforting others, step down their **Afraid** or **Insecure** stress an additional time.
- *Hearth and Home:* When you enjoy the comforts of civilization during a recovery scene, choose a stress to step down twice instead of once.
- *Heat-Being:* Add **Angry** 8 stress in order to step up both your **Agility** and **Strength** for the duration of any test, contest, or challenge.
- *Helping Hand:* When a character uses an asset that you created and rolls a hitch, you may give them a PP.
- *Hemming and Hawing:* When you question a value, you may take **Insecure** 8 stress. If you do, do not step down the questioned value, and add a 8 to your growth pool instead of that value's die rating.
- *Homecooked Meal:* When you spend a recovery scene feeding others, step down their **Angry** or **Exhausted** stress an additional time.

- *How Could You:* When you take **Insecure** stress, you can choose to step it up once. If you do, gain a PP.
- *How Dare You:* When you take **Angry** stress, you can choose to step it up once. If you do, gain a PP.
- *Hunting Party:* When you use your kindred distinction in a challenge, spend a PP to add an additional 6 for each of your allies undertaking the challenge with you.

I

- *I Believe in Us:* Spend a PP to step up or double our **Spirit** attribute in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.
- *I Can Do Better:* When you fail a roll to beat your opponent in a contest or challenge, spend a PP to reroll your dice pool and try again. You must keep the result of this new roll. If you succeed, step up your effect die by one. If you fail again, step up any stress you take.
- *I Can Do This All Day:* When you push **Exhausted** stress, you do not have to spend a PP.
- *I Can Do This:* Spend a PP to step up a value associated with a goal you are currently pursuing for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge.
- *I Can Handle Them:* Spend a PP to step up or double our **Influence** attribute in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.
- *I Know This One:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Intellect** attribute in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.
- *Inspired Instinct:* Spend a PP to step up your **Spirit** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that draws on your creative instincts.
- *I See What's Happening:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Awareness** attribute in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.
- *I Sure Can Pick 'Em:* Spend a PP to step up or double a relationship asset in your dice pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge.
- *I Think It's This Way:* Gain a PP when you get completely, hopelessly, utterly lost.
- *I'll Find a Way:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Agility** attribute in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.
- *I'll Hold Them Off:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Strength** attribute in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.
- *I'll Remember That:* When you lose a contest, you may create an asset using your opponent's effect die.
- *In the Moment:* Spend a PP and step down an attribute to step up any other attribute once for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge.
- *In the Saddle:* When riding your mount, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.
- *Independent Study:* When you have time to be alone with your thoughts, away from anyone else, spend a PP to create a 8 asset for the next scene in which you interact with another character.
- *Inspired Instinct:* Spend a PP to step up your **Spirit** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that draws on your creative instincts.
- *Instant Recall:* Spend a PP to remember a helpful fact or detail from something you once read, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.
- *Inventive Fury:* Add **Angry** 8 stress in order to create a 8 asset when you are forced to improvise a solution.
- *It's the Thought That Counts:* When you give an asset to another character, you can spend a PP to step up that asset's die rating.
- *I've Had Worse:* When you push **Injured** stress, you do not have to spend a PP.

J

- *Just Another Day:* Spend a PP to convert your **Afraid**, **Angry**, or **Insecure** stress into **Exhausted** stress. If you already had **Exhausted** stress, step it up.
- *Just Breathe:* When you would take or step up **Angry** stress, spend a PP to step that stress down once.
- *Just in Time:* When you are not participating in a scene, you can spend a PP to give an information-based asset to a character in that scene.

K

- *Keen Eye:* Spend a PP to double your **Awareness** or **Agility** die in your dice pool when following a trail, aiming at a distant target, or spotting something far off.
- *Killed the Banther:* Gain a PP when your curious nature gets you into trouble.

L

- *Lap of Luxury:* When you enjoy the hospitality of others during a recovery scene, choose a stress die to step down twice instead of once.
- *Lead by Example:* When you use your kindred distinction in a challenge, you may spend a PP to keep an additional effect die, which you can give to an ally as an asset.
- *Let It Go:* When you push **Afraid** stress, you do not have to spend a PP.
- *Life's Not Fair:* Gain a PP when your vocation makes things particularly difficult or inconvenient for you.
- *Light-Being:* Spend a PP to convert another character's stress into **Exhausted** stress and then transfer that stress to yourself. If you already had **Exhausted** stress, step it up instead.
- *Look to the Stars:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Liberty** value in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.

M

- *Me First:* Spend a PP to go first in a round of a challenge.
- *Measure Twice:* When you roll a hitch in a test, you may spend a PP to reroll your pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.
- *Mimicry:* Spend a PP to mimic a sound, voice, or behavior, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.
- *Mindfulness:* Spend a PP to add both your **Awareness** and **Spirit** dice to your dice pool in a test, contest, or challenge that deals with faith, truth, or insight, instead of just one attribute.
- *Moon Bonded:* Choose up to five allies. Spend a PP to add a 6 for each ally to your dice pool when creating an asset with a test. Keep an additional effect die for each ally.
- *Moonshadow Form:* When trying to hide, sneak, or go unseen during a full moon, spend a PP to double your **Moonshadow Elf** distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.
- *My Bad:* Gain a PP when someone you trusted betrays someone else.

N

- *New to Me:* Step up your effect die once when you succeed on an asset test to find something used or abandoned.
- *No Time for That:* Gain a PP when you go in unprepared.
- *Not Today:* When you would gain or step up **Insecure** stress, spend a PP to step that stress down once.

O

- *Oath Shattered:* Gain a PP when you break a promise.
- *Okay, Fine:* When you give in during a contest, you may recover a stress of your choice using your opponent's effect die.
- *On Target:* When you have a target or quarry as your goal, you can spend a PP to use it as an asset for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge. Then, step down that goal's die rating. If you already have a goal at the new die rating, step up the other goal.
- *On the Go:* When you would take or step up **Exhausted** stress, spend a PP to step that stress down once.
- *On the Road:* Spend a PP to add both your **Agility** and **Awareness** dice to your dice pool in a test, contest, or challenge that deals with pathfinding, stealth, or wilderness travel, instead of just one attribute.
- *On the Trail:* Spend a PP to add both your **Awareness** and **Intellect** dice to your dice pool in a test, contest, or challenge that deals with searching for clues or deducing a solution, instead of just one attribute.
- *One-for-All:* When you use your kindred distinction in a test to create an asset, you may step down the asset once to share it with everyone in the scene.
- *One to Grow On:* When an ally is building their growth pool, you may give them one of your own growth dice. If they fail the roll, you regain the die after growth is completed.
- *Orate:* Spend a PP to double your **Influence** or **Spirit** die on a test, contest, or challenge that involves using your speaking voice.

- *Out of the Box:* When you receive an asset from another character, you can spend a PP to step up that asset's die rating.

P

- *Panache:* When you achieve a heroic success, instead of stepping up your effect die you may recover a stress of your choice.
- *Pastoral:* When you enjoy the rustic life during a recovery scene, choose a stress to step down twice instead of once.
- *Pay It Forward:* When you step down a value die to step up someone else's value in a test, contest, or challenge, you may also recover one of their stress dice equal to your original value die rating.
- *Playing with Fire:* When you take **Injured** stress, you can choose to step it up once. If you do, gain a PP.
- *Please, Allow Me:* When helping someone to recover their stress, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.
- *Preserve the Spirit:* Use your effect die to recover your or another character's existing stress on a success, instead of inflicting stress or removing a challenge die.
- *Principled:* Spend a PP to step up your **Glory** or **Justice** value in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge.
- *Pull Your Punches:* Use your effect die to create an asset for yourself or another character on a success, instead of inflicting stress or removing a challenge die.
- *Pulse Racing:* When you spend a PP to push your **Exhausted** or **Injured** stress, do not step it up.
- *Push Your Luck:* When you roll a hitch in a contest, you may spend a PP to reroll your pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.

R

- *Reconsider:* Surrender a goal. Use that goal's die rating to recover a stress of your choice.
- *Relentless:* When you would be stressed out of a scene, spend a PP to step down the affected stress and remain in the scene instead.
- *Reliable:* Spend a PP to reroll your dice when creating an asset with a test. You must keep the result of this new roll.
- *Resolute:* Spend a PP to add one of your stress dice to a test, contest, or challenge. Step down that stress die afterwards.
- *Resourceful:* Activate an opportunity to switch out an existing asset for two assets of one step lower in size. These new assets last until the end of the scene unless you spend a PP for each asset to carry over into the next scene.
- *Rewritten:* Spend a PP to reroll a hitch. You must keep the result of the new roll.
- *Roiling Storm:* When you push **Angry** stress, you do not have to spend a PP.
- *Roughing It:* When you are in the wilderness during a recovery scene, choose a stress to step down twice instead of once.

S

- *Saving Face:* When you achieve a heroic success, you may keep an additional effect die to recover your **Afraid**, **Angry**, or **Insecure** stress.
- *Sea Legs:* When at sea or on a boat, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.
- *See If I Care:* When you take **Corrupted** stress, you can choose to step it up once. If you do, gain a PP.
- *Seeking Answers:* When you question a value, instead of adding a die to your growth pool, you may choose to keep that die as an asset for the rest of the session.
- *Seize the Day:* When you give in during a contest, you may create an asset using your opponent's effect die.
- *Self-Sufficient:* When you are in a test, contest, or challenge against an opponent alone, spend a PP to double your kindred distinction die and keep an extra die in your total.
- *Sentinel:* When another character takes stress, you can spend a PP to take that stress in their place.
- *Shoot for the Moon:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Mastery** value in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.
- *Singleminded:* When another character successfully interferes with a contest you are already in, you can continue the contest without spending a PP. Your opponent must still spend a PP. If you win the contest, step up your effect die.
- *Sit This One Out:* Gain a PP when you choose not to engage in a contest after your opponent rolls first.
- *Skilled:* Spend a PP to step up or double a specialty.
- *Sleight of Hand:* When you win a contest, you may choose a second effect die to represent an asset you have stolen from your opponent.

- *Soapbox:* When you interfere in a contest, spend a PP to double your vocation distinction die and keep an extra die in your total.
- *Some Regrets:* Gain a PP when your decision-making causes a bad situation.
- *Stalwart:* Spend a PP to step down all of your stress dice after you succeed at a contest with a foe.
- *Stand Your Ground:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Justice** value in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.
- *Stoke the Flames:* Spend a PP to step up or double your **Glory** value in your pool for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge when you use your vocation distinction.
- *Straight to the Point:* Spend a PP and either gain a 8 asset or step up an existing asset when undertaking a challenge because of your keen insight.
- *Sunny Side Up:* When you succeed on a recovery test to help another character with their **Afraid** or **Insecure** stress, step up your effect die once.
- *Sure of Foot:* When you roll a hitch while using your **Agility** attribute, you can spend a PP to reroll your dice pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.
- *Sure of Heart:* When you roll a hitch while using your **Spirit** attribute, you can spend a PP to reroll your dice pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.
- *Sure of Might:* When you roll a hitch while using your **Strength** attribute, you can spend a PP to reroll your dice pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.
- *Sure of Phrase:* When you roll a hitch while using your **Influence** attribute, you can spend a PP to reroll your dice pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.
- *Sure of Sense:* When you roll a hitch while using your **Awareness** attribute, you can spend a PP to reroll your dice pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.
- *Sure of Wit:* When you roll a hitch while using your **Intellect** attribute, you can spend a PP to reroll your dice pool. You must keep the result of this new roll.
- *Sure Thing:* Spend a PP to set a die in your dice pool to a result of 2 before you roll.
- *Surefooted:* When in difficult terrain, replace two dice of the same size in your dice pool with a single die of one size higher.
- *Suspicious:* Spend a PP when you distrust an outsider, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.

T

- *Table Manners:* When interacting with polite society, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.
- *Tactics:* When you activate an opportunity, you may apply its benefits to another character instead of yourself.
- *Tag In:* Give a PP to a character who has just lost a contest. You may now immediately join and continue that contest.
- *Talking to a Wall:* Gain a PP when you interfere in a contest and lose.
- *Tall Tales:* When you win a contest, you can choose to keep an additional effect die to create an asset for yourself.
- *That's Deep, Friend:* When an ally wins a contest, spend a PP to gain an asset equal to their effect die.
- *The Bigger They Are:* When you are in a test, contest, or challenge against an opponent who is at least twice as big as you are, spend a PP to double your vocation distinction die and keep an extra die in your total.
- *The Rules Say... :* Gain a PP when following the laws to the letter lands you in a bad situation.
- *They Seem Nice:* Gain a PP when putting your trust in someone else lands you in a bad situation.
- *Think It Through:* Spend a PP to recall a passage, path, or process, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.
- *This Reminds Me:* Spend a PP to remember a past mistake and what you learned from it, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.
- *Time Management:* Gain a PP when you forgo pursuing one of your current goals to help another character pursue theirs.
- *Tough:* Spend a PP to convert your **Injured** or **Exhausted** stress into another kind of stress. If you already had stress of that new type, step up that stress.
- *Tra-La-La:* Spend a PP to share a melodic tune, giving yourself or an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.
- *Trial and Error:* When you roll your growth pool, reroll any hitches. You must keep the result of this new roll.
- *Twist the Knife:* When you include an opponent's **Exhausted** or **Insecure** stress in your dice pool, you can spend a PP to step that stress up.

U

- *Um, Actually:* Gain a PP when you assert your authority where it is not welcome.
- *Untethered:* Spend a PP to step up your **Mastery** or **Truth** value in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge.

W

- *Wasted on the Young:* Gain a PP when your vocation makes things particularly difficult or inconvenient for you.
- *Well Educated:* Spend a PP to step up your **Intellect** die in your dice pool for a test, contest, or challenge that draws on your scholarly studies.
- *Whistle While You Work:* When you spend a PP to push your **Angry** or **Exhausted** stress, do not step it up.
- *Whoops:* When you fail a roll to beat your opponent in a contest or challenge, remove a die from your pool to reroll your dice and try again. You must keep the result of this new roll.
- *Wind-Whisper:* Spend a PP to join or leave a scene that includes an ally that is already underway.
- *Wingover:* Spend a PP to add both your **Agility** and your **Strength** dice to your dice pool when you are airborne or using your wings.
- *With a Silver Spoon:* Gain a PP when your privileged status lands you in a bad situation.
- *Woe Is Me:* Gain a PP when your bad mood lands you in a bad situation.
- *Wood-Wise:* Spend a PP to double your **Earthblood Elf** distinction when you use herbal remedies to recover stress.
- *Word to the Wild:* Spend a PP to step up or double your attribute die when interacting with animals.
- *Word to the Wise:* Spend a PP when giving advice or counsel to give an ally a 8 asset for a single test, contest, or challenge.
- *Worker Bee:* Spend a PP to choose to ignore either your **Exhausted**, **Injured**, or **Insecure** stress for the duration of a test, contest, or challenge.
- *Worrywart:* When you take **Afraid** stress, you can choose to step it up once. If you do, gain a PP.

Y

- *Yeah, I Really Do:* When trying to mislead someone, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.
- *You Don't Scare Me:* When you would take or step up **Afraid** stress, spend a PP to step that stress down once.
- *You, There!:* When you first meet someone of a lower station who is not hostile towards you, you may gain them as a friendly asset for free; if you spend a PP, you may step up the die rating. You may spend this asset to recover your **Exhausted**, **Injured**, or **Insecure** stress.

Z

- *Zero In:* When taking a step that would complete one of your goals, spend a PP to double this distinction die in your dice pool and keep an extra die in your total.



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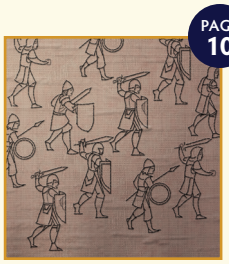

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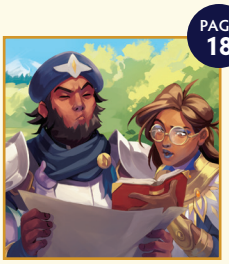

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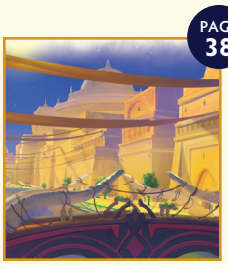

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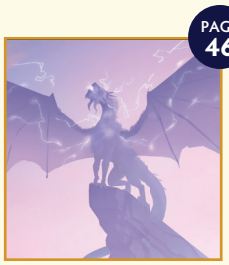

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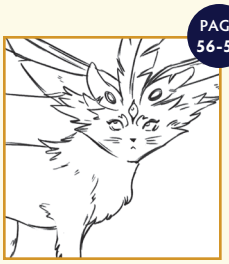

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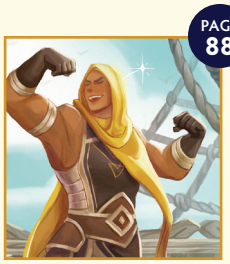

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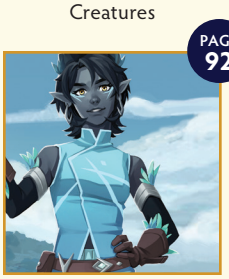

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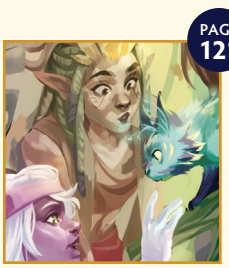
Amagoia Agirre



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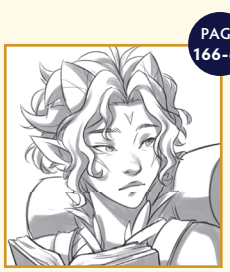

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NCs



Amagoia Agirre



Dorothy Yang
Catalysts



Bruno Freitas


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Hanna Hofer


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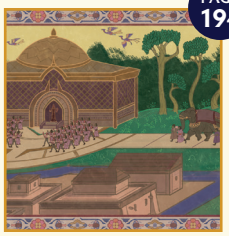
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Glossary & Index

Entries marked (spoilers!) are in regards to player-related spoilers in *The Tale of the Corrupted Core*. Lists of characters from *The Dragon Prince*, locations in Xadia, and types of dragons are on page 289.

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see also Catalyst

Neolandia
see Human Kingdoms

Nexus
A powerful location tied to one of the primal sources
Moon Nexus 31, 37, 41, 58, 135, 204

O OCEAN

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Adoraburrs 56, 70, 124
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Spells 143
Symbol 138

Primal Source 9, 138, 143
Arcanum 138
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Tidebound Elves 44-45
Narrating 196

Opening Scene 102-103, 185
A scene that opens the session and sets the stage

Opportunity 20
A die that comes up as 1 in a Narrator's roll; players may pay a PP to activate it
- Activating 71, 77-78
- Spotlighting 68
- Unclaimed 77-78

Opposition Pool 73
The dice pool put together to oppose another roll
- Example in Play 23-25
- Test 88
- Stress in 71
- *see also Challenge Pool*

Outcome 73, 98
What happens after the dice are rolled and all game effects are decided
- Challenge 96, 98
- Contest 90, 98
- Test 88-89, 98

P

Pentarchy 31
A gathering of the five leaders of the Human Kingdoms

Player 18, 19
One of the people playing the game, specifically the people who aren't the Narrator
- Choosing a Character Concept 113
- Quick Reference 296-297
- Responsibilities 19, 72
- Safety 77, 113, 186

Player Character (PC) 19
A character run by a player, one of the stars of the show, also called PC
- Creating your own Mage 129-130, 145
- Creating your own PC 112-131
- Death of 80, 86
- Distinctions in Detail 252-267
- Freeform PC Creation 127-128
- Introducing 127
- Names 127
- Pronouns 127
- Ready to Play 62-64, 238-251
- in Scenes 102-103
- SFX, all of the 268-274
- *see also Character Journal*

Plot Point (PP) 21, 76-78
A resource earned by getting invested in the game and taking risks, and spent to alter the outcome of tests, contests, and challenges, or to do other cool things
- Earning 76
- Example of Play 25-26
- Interfering in a Contest 94
- Opportunities 77
- Spending 77-78
- at Start of Session 103

Primal Magic 9, 134
Magic fueled by a primal source and used by rune mages
- Primal stones/artifacts 10, 30, 134-138
- Spells 142-144

Primal Source 9, 134-138
One of the sources of magic that give life to the land of Xadia: Moon, Sky, Sun, Earth, Ocean, and Star
- *see also Earth, Moon, Ocean, Sky, Star, Sun*

Push Stress 80-82
Using your stress die in your dice pool, at the cost of stepping it up afterward

Q

Questioning a Value Statement 98-100
Players act against one of their PC's value statements to get 3x the die rating, at the cost of stepping down the value die
- and Growth 98, 106-107
- Updating due to 108

Quirk Distinction 68
Sums up your character's most memorable or peculiar feature
- in Creating a PC 117
- in Detail 265-267

R

Recover 79
Make a test to step down or eliminate stress
- Corrupted Stress 146, 148
- Growth Pool 106-107
- Scenes 103, 185

Recovery Scene 103, 185
A quieter scene for regrouping and recovering stress

Relationship Asset 70, 109
Created by spending growth, lasts for one scene then goes away

Result 19, 73
The number that comes up on a die after it's been rolled

Round 94
Each player taking a turn in a challenge, represents some passage of time

Rune Mage 139-144
Someone who casts spells by drawing runes connected to a primal source
- Babukar 62, 239
- Draylenn 63, 242
- Hestia 63, 245
- Ibis 42
- Lamis 235 (spoilers!)
- Lujanne 41, 204
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Rune Magic 9, 139-144
Casting spells using access to a primal source
- Human Use of 30
- Mimicking with Dark Magic 149-150
- *see also Earth, Moon, Ocean, Sky, Sun*

S

Safety Tools 186
Methods to help ensure that your table stays a safe, welcoming, and enjoyable space for you and your players
- Consent 77, 101
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Scene 102-103
A unit of time in the game, usually in one location and with one set of characters
- Adventure 102-103,185
- Discovery 102-103, 185
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- Example of Play 23-26
- Flashback 103, 185
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- Location 183
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- Recovery 103, 185
- Tag 103, 185

Session 102-103
All the gameplay that takes place in one sitting around the table or online
- Checklist for 182
- Ending 187
- First 160-161

Setting
The shared game world in which scenes and sessions take place

SFX 71
A special effect, usually attached to a trait, that allows a player to influence the story in some way
- Creating 130-131
- in Creating a Mage 126
- in Creating a PC 113-117, 125-126
- Difficulty for Growth 110
- in Distinctions 252-267
- Example of Play 25
- Limit-style 126
- List of 268-274
- Magical Items 153
- Twist 169
- Unlocking 109-110, 125-126

Shut Down
Making a trait inactive or unavailable until it's later restored
- in Limit-style SFX 126

Situation 102-103, 184
A central hook or story idea for a session

Size 19
The number of sides on a die; the only thing that matters for effect dice

SKY

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- Adoraburrs 56, 70, 124
- Brightbells 56, 124
- Flying Batfish 36, 57
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- Innean 42

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- Community Distinction 113, 253
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Eyeless Snakes 135
Kathi Roll, Onyx 2
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Specialty 70-71
A trait that represents a narrow area of focus
in Creating a Mage 123, 130
in Creating a PC 121-124
Improving 109-111

Spells 139-151
Doing things with magic, represented by multiple game mechanics
Asset 125, 139
Casting 139-140, 145-146
Dark 150-151
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Lists 142-144, 150-151
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Rune 134, 142-144

Spend
Using a PP or die or other tracked currency from a pool to do something
Example of Play 25
Growth 108-109

Spotlighting 68
Activating an opportunity to step up an asset for a short time

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Unicorns 30, 59, 138

Dragons 55

Magic 138
Symbol 138

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Startouch Elves 45
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Step Down 20
Replace a die with the next lowest die type, e.g., a 6 becomes a 4
Below 4 20
Value 66, 101

Step Up 20
Replace a die with the next highest die type, e.g., a 6 becomes a 8
Above 12 20, 21, 74
Heroic success 74
Trauma 86-87

Storm Spire, Battle of 12, 13, 31

Stress 21, 71
A type of complication that represents harm and hinders action: **Afraid**, **Angry**, **Corrupted**, **Exhausted**, **Injured**, **Insecure**
Contest 90-91, 189
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and Growth 84-85, 106-107
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at Start of Session 103
Test 88-89

Stressed Out 21, 79-80
Having a stress die stepped up beyond 12, which means the character can no longer act in the scene
Example of Play 26
compared to Give In 93
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T

Tag Scene 103, 108, 185
Scene at the end of a session, used to reflect and plan for the next session

Tale 19, 102, 103, 192-193
A story set within the World of Xadia, with a specific set of starting situations, one or more catalysts, and no fixed ending, might take multiple sessions to finish
into a Chronicle 194-195
Corrupted Core, The Tale of the 206-236
Genres of 192-193
Ending 187
Published Tales 161

Temporary Asset 70, 90
Helpful trait created during play that can be included in a dice pool when appropriate; these range from lasting a single roll, to a scene, to a session
Example of Play 24-26
Helping others 101
see also Asset

Test 87, 88-90, 102-103
A use of the dice to determine the outcome of an objective or goal, needs to beat the difficulty set by the Narrator
Create Asset 90
Difficulty 88-90
with Dragons 197
Example of Play 23-26
Improve Traits 109-111
Narrating 188-189
Outcomes 88, 96
Stress 88-89
Symbol 19

Tidebound Elves
see Ocean

Total 19, 73
Usually, the two highest rolling dice results in a dice pool added together; may be more or fewer results added together, depending on the circumstances
Example of Play 23-25

Trait 20
Game stats rated by dice of various sizes, usually included in a dice pool and belonging to a trait set
Catalyst Traits 168-170
Choosing Die Ratings 113
Improving 109-111
NC Traits 165-166

Trait Set 20
Traits grouped together in categories, including assets, attributes, distinctions, specialties, and values
Example of Play 23-26

Trauma 21, 86-87
Long-term stress that's harder to recover from, gained when a character is stressed out
Corrupted 146-149
Recovering 86-87
at the Start of a Session 103
at the Start of a Tale 103

Turn 95-96, 102
In a challenge, each player gets one turn per round, rolling against a difficulty set by the challenge pool
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U

Unicorn 59, 138, 198
A magical creature of the Star arcanum that once roamed Xadia
Leola 30

Unlocking 109-110, 125-126
Using growth to make distinction SFX available on a character journal

V

Value 66-67
A trait that represents deeply held beliefs or attitudes: **Devotion**, **Glory**, **Justice**, **Liberty**, **Mastery**, **Truth**
- Catalysts 169, 170, 171-172
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- in Creating a Mage 129
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- and Goals 105
- and Growth 106-107
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Value Statement 66
A phrase attached to a value that provides context and connection
- Catalyst 169, 170
- in Creating a PC 120-121
- at the End of a Session 103, 108
- Questioning *see Questioning a Value Statement*
- Updating 108

Versatile 117
Arrangement of attributes with a wider spread of good die ratings

Vocation Distinction 68
Provides training and a description your character can call on, made of a vocation and an adjective
- Common Adjectives in Detail 259-263
- Common Vocations in Detail 256-259
- in Creating a Mage 114, 116, 129
- in Creating a PC 114-116
- in Detail 256-264
- Location-Based 264
- Magical Vocations in Detail 264

X

Xadia 7-15, 30-57
The entire magical land of *The Dragon Prince*, also sometimes a reference to specifically the magical lands east of the Border that humans have been banished from



Characters from *The Dragon Prince*

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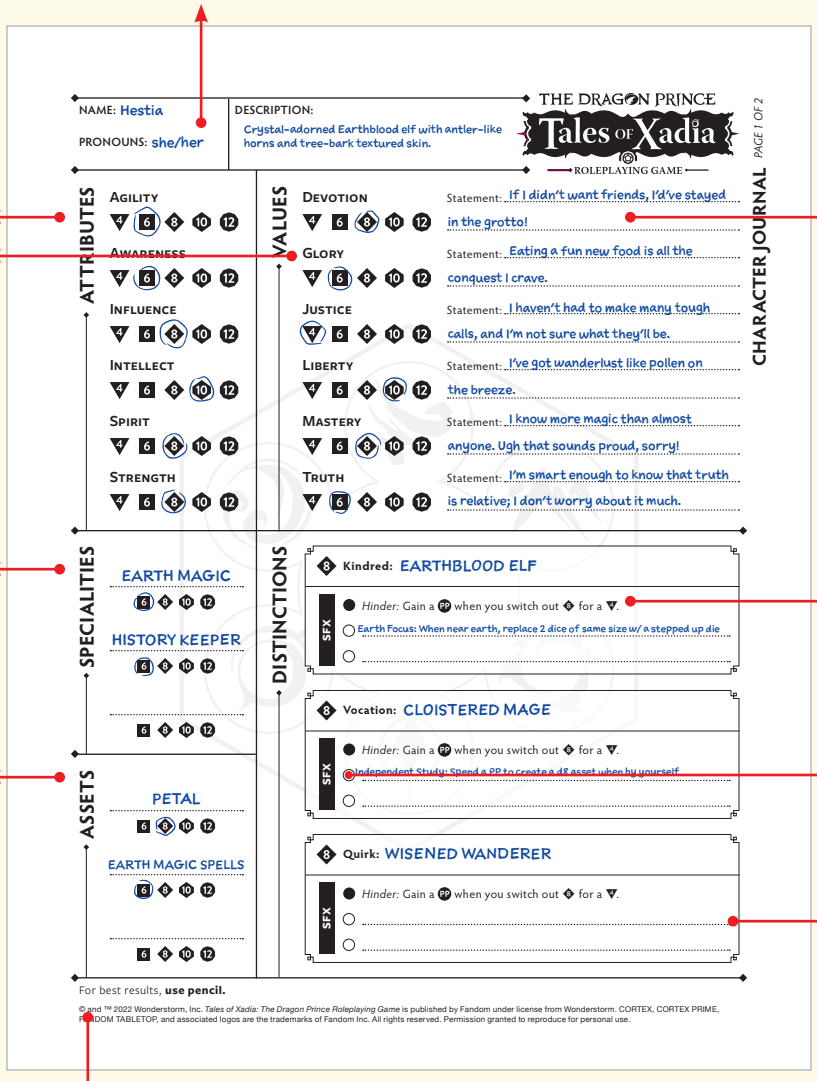
Phantasm Dragons 48
Phase Dragons 48
Sand Dragons 53
Shadow Dragons 48
Slate Dragons 53
Smoke Winged Dragons 51
Smolder Wyrms 51
Spark Drakes 51
Star Devourer Dragons 55
Storm-Maned Dragons 50
Thunder Dragons 50
Tornado Dragons 50
Underglow Dragons 54
Void Dragons 55
Whirlpool Dragons 54
Whispering Specter Dragons 50

How to Fill the Blank Character Journal

To demonstrate what our blank character journal would look like when filled out, we took Hestia's stats from her character journal on page 245 and applied them to the journal. As a character's traits are always in flux, make sure to use pencil to make it easier on yourself as your character progresses!

For guidance on how to build your own character, check out Creating Your Own Character on page 112. Don't forget the second part of the blank journal on the next page, which is used to track spells, goals, stress, trauma, and growth.

Fill out vital details like name, pronouns, and what your character looks like



Circle your die ratings for your attributes and values. You can use dotted lines, a checkmark, or other ways to show when you've stepped a rating up or down temporarily for a roll

Each value comes with room to write out your value statement

A character can have one or two specialties. Both the ratings and specialties can change over the course of a chronicle

All three types of distinctions come with *Hinder* already unlocked

You can also keep track of temporary assets here as well as character assets

As you unlock SFX, fill in the circle next to it to show that it is active

Different SFX are associated with specific distinctions. Check out the list on page 252

Use this area to keep track of notes or extra details, or any of the margins, or even the back of the journal itself

NAME:

PRONOUNS:

DESCRIPTION:

THE DRAGON PRINCE
Tales of Xadia
ROLEPLAYING GAME

CHARACTER JOURNAL

ATTRIBUTES

Agility 4 6 8 10 12

Awareness 4 6 8 10 12

Influence 4 6 8 10 12

Intellect 4 6 8 10 12

Spirit 4 6 8 10 12

Strength 4 6 8 10 12

VALUES

Devotion 4 6 8 10 12
Statement: .....

Glory 4 6 8 10 12
Statement: .....

Justice 4 6 8 10 12
Statement: .....

Liberty 4 6 8 10 12
Statement: .....

Mastery 4 6 8 10 12
Statement: .....

Truth 4 6 8 10 12
Statement: .....

SPECIALITIES

..... 6 8 10 12

..... 6 8 10 12

..... 6 8 10 12

ASSETS

..... 6 8 10 12

..... 6 8 10 12

..... 6 8 10 12

DISTINCTIONS

8 Kindred:

SFX
- ● *Hinder:* Gain a PP when you switch out 8 for a 4.
- ○ .....
- ○ .....

8 Vocation:

SFX
- ● *Hinder:* Gain a PP when you switch out 8 for a 4.
- ○ .....
- ○ .....

8 Quirk:

SFX
- ● *Hinder:* Gain a PP when you switch out 8 for a 4.
- ○ .....
- ○ .....

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Using the Second Page of the Blank Journal

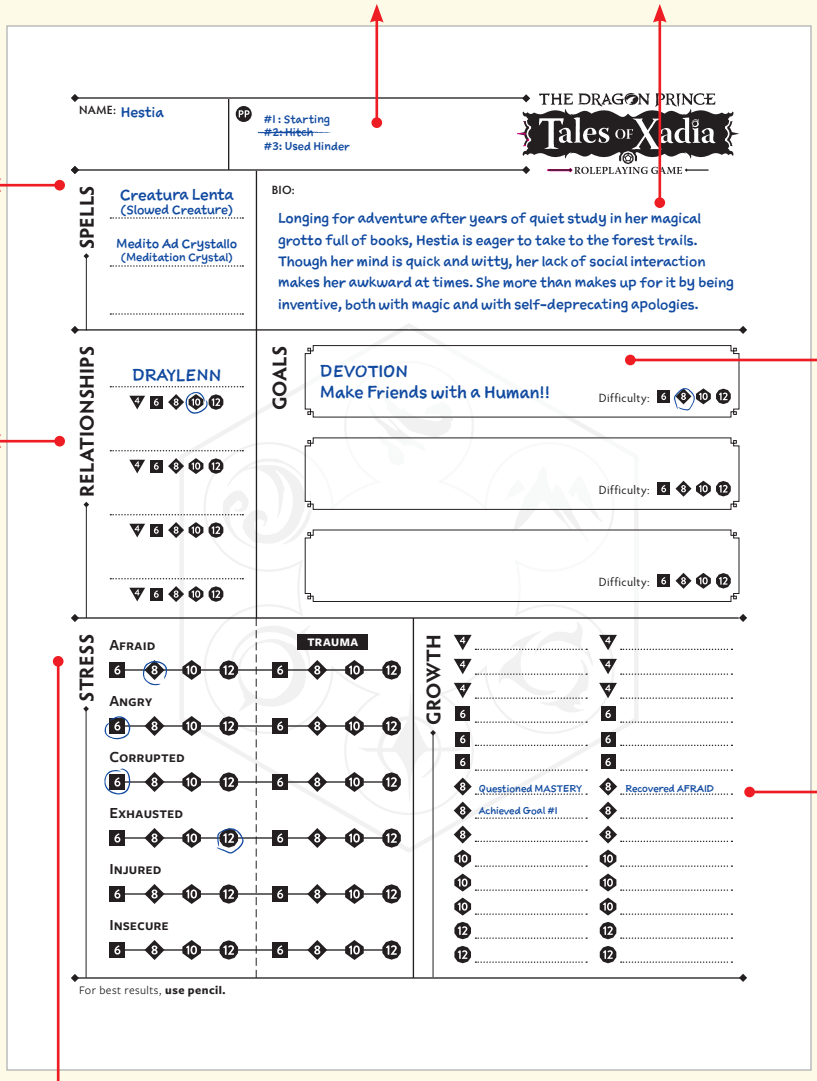
The blank journal also comes with a second page to list your spells, write your bio, and keep track of what happens during your sessions. You can track your plot points, goals, stress (and trauma), and whatever growth dice you gain. There's also a section for creating relationship assets with other characters. To demonstrate how this second page works, we again use Hestia (page 245) and add some example gameplay mechanics.

This is where you can track your plot points! At the start of each session, you gain 1. As you gain more and spend them to do exciting things, mark the changes here. If you're using physical tokens to represent your PP during play, don't forget to mark how many you end the session with before putting those tokens away (page 76)

Expanding on your brief description from the first page, delve into your character's history here. This can be a great resource for your Narrator to draw inspiration from

Mages like Hestia will need to list the spells attached to their asset from the first page. Since Hestia has a **Earth Magic Spells** 6 asset, she gets two spells to start play with (page 125)

Have some growth dice you want to spend before the end of a tale? You can turn them into relationships and mark them here until you use them. Hestia used a 10 from her growth pool to add a relationship with Draylenn after a previous session (page 109)



Your character can have up to three goals (page 104), each of which are linked to one of your values! You can work with your Narrator to create goals that suit the tale you're playing, and define new goals as you play. To start with, Hestia is going to set a **Devotion** 8 goal: Make friends with a human.

Through playing the game and telling a story with your friends, your character will earn growth dice to track here. At the end of a session where Hestia questioned her **Mastery** 8 value (page 98), had help from Vinaya in recovering her **Afraid** 8 stress (page 79), and achieved a 8 goal (page 106), she has three dice in her pool. At the end of a tale she can use them to improve her traits (page 108)

Characters don't start the game with any stress, but you'll need this section when you start playing! Partway through this session, Hestia has gotten her **Afraid** stress to 8, her **Corrupted** stress to 6, and her **Exhausted** stress all the way to 12! After finishing a recovery scene where she can take care of herself, she'll get to step all of her stress (except **Corrupted**) down once (page 79). Hopefully Hestia gets some rest and recovers her **Exhausted** stress, because she's in danger of getting trauma (page 86)

NAME:

PP

THE DRAGON PRINCE
Tales of Xadia
ROLEPLAYING GAME

CHARACTER JOURNAL

SPELLS

BIO:

RELATIONSHIPS

4 6 8 10 12

4 6 8 10 12

4 6 8 10 12

4 6 8 10 12

GOALS

Difficulty: 6 8 10 12

Difficulty: 6 8 10 12

Difficulty: 6 8 10 12

STRESS

TRAUMA

Afraid
6 8 10 12 — 6 8 10 12

Angry
6 8 10 12 — 6 8 10 12

Corrupted
6 8 10 12 — 6 8 10 12

Exhausted
6 8 10 12 — 6 8 10 12

Injured
6 8 10 12 — 6 8 10 12

Insecure
6 8 10 12 — 6 8 10 12

GROWTH

4 4
4 4
4 4
6 6
6 6
6 6
8 8
8 8
8 8
10 10
10 10
10 10
12 12
12 12

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NAME:

PRONOUNS:

DESCRIPTION:

THE DRAGON PRINCE
Tales of Xadia
ROLEPLAYING GAME

CATALYST JOURNAL

CATALYST DIE

4 6 8 10 12

Twist (12): Step down the catalyst die to end the current scene in the catalyst's favor. Award each PC a PP.

BIO:

VALUES

DEVOTION 4 6 8 10 12

Statement:

GLORY 4 6 8 10 12

Statement:

JUSTICE 4 6 8 10 12

Statement:

LIBERTY 4 6 8 10 12

Statement:

MASTERY 4 6 8 10 12

Statement:

TRUTH 4 6 8 10 12

Statement:

SPECIALITIES

6 8 10 12

6 8 10 12

6 8 10 12

ASSETS

6 8 10 12

6 8 10 12

6 8 10 12

SPELLS

DISTINCTIONS

8 **Kindred:**

SFX
- ● *Hinder:* Gain a PP when you switch out 8 for a 4.
- ○

8 **Vocation:**

SFX
- ● *Hinder:* Gain a PP when you switch out 8 for a 4.
- ○

8 **Quirk:**

SFX
- ● *Hinder:* Gain a PP when you switch out 8 for a 4.
- ○

STRESS

AFRAID	6	8	10	12	6	8	10	12	TRAUMA
ANGRY	6	8	10	12	6	8	10	12	TRAUMA
CORRUPTED	6	8	10	12	6	8	10	12	TRAUMA
EXHAUSTED	6	8	10	12	6	8	10	12	TRAUMA
INJURED	6	8	10	12	6	8	10	12	TRAUMA
INSECURE	6	8	10	12	6	8	10	12	TRAUMA

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NOTES:

THE DRAGON PRINCE
Tales of Xadia
ROLEPLAYING GAME

NARRATOR CHARACTERS

NAME: PRONOUNS:

DESCRIPTION:

Trait #1: 4 6 8 10 12

Trait #2: 4 6 8 10 12

Trait #3: 4 6 8 10 12

NAME: PRONOUNS:

DESCRIPTION:

Trait #1: 4 6 8 10 12

Trait #2: 4 6 8 10 12

Trait #3: 4 6 8 10 12

NAME: PRONOUNS:

DESCRIPTION:

Trait #1: 4 6 8 10 12

Trait #2: 4 6 8 10 12

Trait #3: 4 6 8 10 12

NAME: PRONOUNS:

DESCRIPTION:

Trait #1: 4 6 8 10 12

Trait #2: 4 6 8 10 12

Trait #3: 4 6 8 10 12

NAME: PRONOUNS:

DESCRIPTION:

Trait #1: 4 6 8 10 12

Trait #2: 4 6 8 10 12

Trait #3: 4 6 8 10 12

NAME: PRONOUNS:

DESCRIPTION:

Trait #1: 4 6 8 10 12

Trait #2: 4 6 8 10 12

Trait #3: 4 6 8 10 12

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PLAYER QUICK REFERENCE

THE DRAGON PRINCE
Tales of Xadia
ROLEPLAYING GAME

This reference summarizes the rules for *Tales of Xadia* if you're a player. Use it when you're in the middle of a game and don't want to flip through the book!

PLAYER RESPONSIBILITES (p. 72)

Decide what your PC does, and how they change and grow

Confront problems the Narrator throws in front of your PC

Point your PC in directions that make for good stories

Support other PCs and give them the chance to shine

Explore the world of Xadia and tell your PC's story

BUILDING A DICE POOL (p. 72)

When rolling in a test, contest, or challenge, build a dice pool using your traits. Always include one each of:

- ☑ Attributes like **Agility**, etc. (p. 65)
- ☑ Values like **Devotion** (p. 66)
- ☑ Distinctions (p. 68)

Additionally include these when they apply:

- ☑ One specialty (p. 70)
- ☑ One or more assets (p. 68)

WHY YOU ROLL DICE (p. 73)

Not every decision needs to lead to dice. Unless the outcome of a roll—success or failure—would be interesting or move the story along, don't bother to roll.

TEST (p. 88)
The Narrator sets a difficulty by rolling dice. You build a dice pool and try to get a higher total. If you do, you succeed. If you don't, you fail and take stress.

CONTEST (p. 90)
You put together a dice pool and roll to set the difficulty. An opposing PC or catalyst rolls and tries to get a higher total.

- If they don't get a higher total, you win the contest. Give them stress
- If they get a higher total, you can roll again (take stress if you fail) or give in (take a PP and give the opponent what they want in your own terms)
- A contest continues until one character loses or gives in

CHALLENGE (p. 94)
A series of tests against a pool of dice. PCs take turns to overcome the challenge in unique ways. If you fail, you take stress. If you succeed, use your effect die to step down or remove a die from the pool.

PLOT POINTS

Points you can spend to push the story in interesting directions (p. 76).

Remember: PP gained while building a dice pool cannot be used until you roll. PP gained after rolling cannot be used until that roll is resolved.

GAINING PP

- Rolling hitches that your Narrator activates (p. 20)
- Giving in during a contest (p. 90)
- Activating SFX that grant PP (p. 71)
- Engaging in remarkable moments of roleplaying
- Starting a session (p. 76)

SPENDING PP

- Activate SFX that cost PP
- Create a 6 temporary asset for one PC for a test, contest, or challenge. **+1** PP to extend it through the session (p. 77)
- Include another result from your rolled dice pool in your total (p. 77)
- Keep a second effect die for a different outcome (p. 75)
- Share a temporary asset with another character (p. 77)
- Activate a Narrator's opportunity (p. 77)
- Push your stress (p. 80)
- Interfere in a contest (p. 94)

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PLAYER QUICK REFERENCE

THE DRAGON PRINCE Tales of Xadia ROLEPLAYING GAME

More summarized rules for players at your fingertips.

STRESS & TRAUMA (p. 79)

Your stress is added to the opposing dice pool, making things more challenging for you. If your stress is stepped up above a 12, you are stressed out of the scene.

RECOVERING STRESS (p. 79)

- Activating Narrator opportunities
- Activating SFX that step down stress
- Ending a recovery scene
- Being the subject of a recovery test (Difficulty: 8 8 + Target Stress)
- Starting a new session as long as the last one didn't end on a cliffhanger!

HELPING ANOTHER PC

You don't need to stand down when your friends need a hand. Here's how you can help—both on or outside of your own turn.

ON YOUR TURN

- Attempt an asset test to give a PC a temporary asset equal to your effect die (p. 88)
- Take your own turn in a challenge

OUTSIDE OF YOUR TURN

- Spend a PP to give a PC a 6 temporary asset (p. 77)
- Step down your matching value to step up the PC's (p. 101)

FREQUENT TERMS (p. 20)

Botch: All of your dice came up 1

Hitch: A PC die with a result of 1

Opportunity: A Narrator die with a result of 1

DICE POOL	DICE RESULTS	OUTCOME	TOTAL
6 6	1 1	2 hitches, a botch!	0
6 8 12	2 6 1	1 hitch	8

Double: Add another die of the same size to the dice pool before rolling (p. 20)



Step up/step down: Swap out a die for one that is one size larger or smaller in size (p. 20)



STEPPING UP BY 1 | STEPPING UP BY 2 | STEPPING DOWN BY 1

OTHER RULES

Heroic Success: For every 5 points above the difficulty your roll is, step up your effect die once (p. 74)

OPPONENT	YOU	HEROIC SUCCESSES	RESULT
5	10	1	your 6 effect die steps up by one to 8
5	15	2	your 6 effect die steps up by two to 10
5	19	2	your 6 effect die steps up by two to 10

Questioning Values: Changing your PC's mind about a value statement for a roll. Triple the die for the test, contest, or challenge. Then, step down the value (p. 98)

Last Ditch Effort: Perform a recovery test on a character who has been taken out to let them take one last action in a scene (p. 82)

Goal: An outcome your PC wants to achieve associated with one of their values. Surrender a goal to turn it into a temporary asset (p. 104)

Growth: A pool of dice built by questioning values, recovering stress, and achieving goals. Can be rolled between tales to grow your character (p. 106)

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NARRATOR QUICK REFERENCE

THE DRAGON PRINCE Tales OF Xadia ROLEPLAYING GAME

This reference summarizes the rules for *Tales of Xadia* if you're a Narrator. Use it when you're in the middle of a game and don't want to flip pages!

NARRATOR RESPONSIBILITES (p. 160)

Prepare and present the tale to your players

Act out NC parts and decide how they react to PCs

Ask leading questions of your players to lead them into further adventure

Reveal important details to your players

Watch over the game rules at the table and manage the session's pace

Bring the world of Xadia to life in the players' minds

CATALYSTS (p. 168)

Major NCs in a tale that change and alter the story.

AFTER A CONTEST (p. 171)

- If the catalyst won, step up the value they used. Then, step down a different value.
- If the catalyst lost, ask the winning player which value they would like to step up or down. Choose another value to step in the opposite direction.

DURING GROWTH (p. 172)

- If the catalyst was involved in a contest, step up their catalyst die.
- If there was no interaction with PCs this session, you may step down their catalyst die.
- Rewrite applicable value statements, if necessary.

STRESS AND TRAUMA (p. 71)

When a PC has stress or trauma, add one type to any difficulty pools that oppose them.

- **Afraid**: Fear and panic.
- **Angry**: Rage and frustration.
- **Insecure**: Apprehension and worry.
- **Corrupted**: Stress of dark magic.
- **Exhausted**: Fatigue and weariness.
- **Injured**: Pain and wounding.

Stress stepped up past (12)? The PC is stressed out of the scene.

SCENES (p. 185)

Determine what type of scene you're setting to define what the scene is about:

- **Opening**: Set up the core situation for the session.
- **Adventure**: High stakes, cinematic action, conflict. Make something exciting happen.
- **Discovery**: Exploration, learning, answering questions. Get new information and clues.
- **Intrigue**: Influencing other characters. Move the people in the story along!
- **Flashback**: Fill out the backstory of an interesting moment.
- **Recovery**: Regrouping, making plans, checking on allies. Take a breather!
- **Tag**: Growing, reviewing, and tying up loose ends. End the session!

Answer these questions to frame the scene:

- **Who's there?** Which of the PCs are in the scene? Are there any NCs or catalysts?
- **Where is it?** Where is the scene taking place? Does the locale have any special distinctions?
- **What's happening?** What is underway when the scene begins? What prompts the PCs to act?

ATTRIBUTES (p. 65)

Agility: Hand-eye coordination
Awareness: Perception of surroundings and people.
Influence: Presence and persuasiveness.
Intellect: Capacity to comprehend.
Spirit: Mental resolve and emotional reserves.
Strength: Physical fitness and power.

VALUES (p. 66)

Devotion: Have you ever been obligated to others?
Glory: Have you ever wanted to be celebrated by history?
Justice: Have you ever been compelled to fix what's wrong?
Liberty: Have you ever resisted the control of others?
Mastery: Have you ever needed to rise above your own limits?
Truth: Have you ever sought out all the answers?

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NARRATOR QUICK REFERENCE

THE DRAGON PRINCE Tales of Xadia ROLEPLAYING GAME

More summarized rules for Narrators at your fingertips.

TESTS (p. 88)

When: a PC wants to do something where the outcome may be interesting, and they are not directly opposed by another PC or catalyst.

DICE RATING	DIFFICULTY
4 4	VERY EASY
6 6	EASY
8 8	CHALLENGING
10 10	HARD
12 12	VERY HARD

Plus any additional dice that represent traits of the location, scene, or NCs that make the test more difficult for the PC. The PC succeeds if they beat your total. Otherwise, they fail, taking stress equal to your effect die.

CHALLENGES (p. 84)

When: your PCs take on an extended obstacle. A series of tests against a pool of dice. PCs take turns to overcome the challenge in unique ways.

LENGTH: # OF DIFFICULTY DICE (p. 94)

- SHORT = **+1 die**
- MEDIUM = **+2 dice**
- LONG = **+3 dice**

TAKING TURNS IN A CHALLENGE (p. 95)

- Choose which PC acts first
- Each player chooses who goes after their turn
- The challenge pool acts after all PCs
- The last player to act picks which PC goes first next round

CONTEST (p. 90)

When: a PC wants to do something, but another PC or a catalyst NC wants a different outcome. Rolling continues back and forth until one character loses or gives in.

- If a character doesn't beat the difficulty, they lose. The winner gives them stress, and the story continues. The characters can engage in another contest, but the loser's stress works against them!
- If a character gives in, they gain a PP and give the other character what they want within their own terms. The character who gave in can't try to start the contest over again!

OTHER RULES

Heroic Success: For every 5 points above the difficulty a character's roll is, step up their effect die once (p. 74)

Questioning Values: A player changing their PC's mind about a value statement for a roll. Triple the die for the test, contest, or challenge. Then, step down the value (p. 98)

Last-Ditch Effort: Perform a recovery test on a character who has been taken out to let them take one last action in a scene (p. 82)

Goal: An outcome a PC wants to achieve associated with one of their values. Surrender a goal to turn it into a temporary asset (p. 106)

Growth: A pool of dice built by questioning values, recovering stress, and achieving goals. Can be rolled between tales to grow a character (p. 108)

Recovery Test: One character can help another recover stress. 8 8 + the target stress (p. 79)

FREQUENT TERMS

Botch: All of your dice came up 1 (p. 20)

Hitch: A PC die with a result of 1 (p. 20)

Opportunity: A Narrator die with a result of 1 (p. 20)

Double: Add another die of the same size to the dice pool before rolling (p. 131)

Step up/step down: Swap out a die for one that is one size larger or smaller in size (p. 20)

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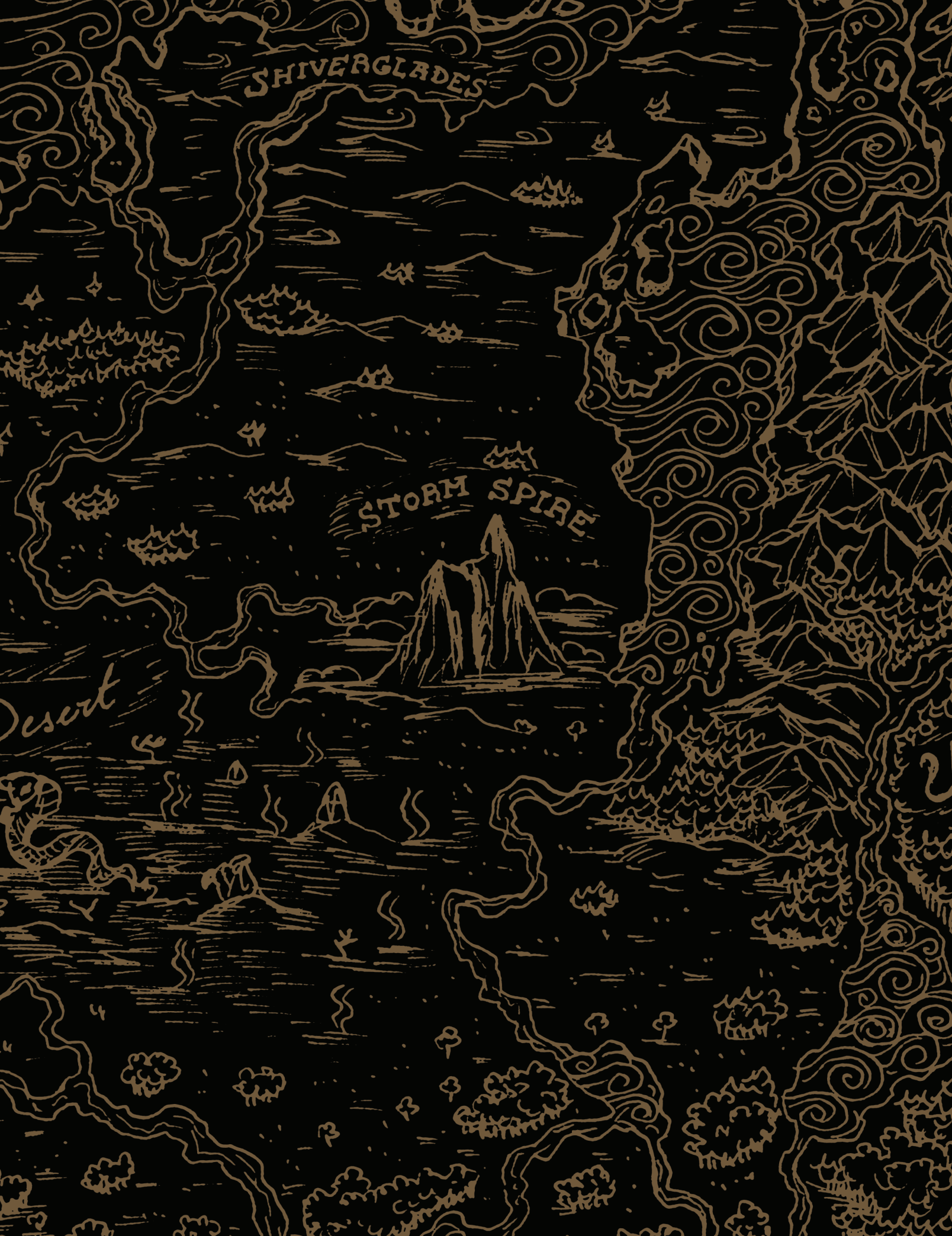
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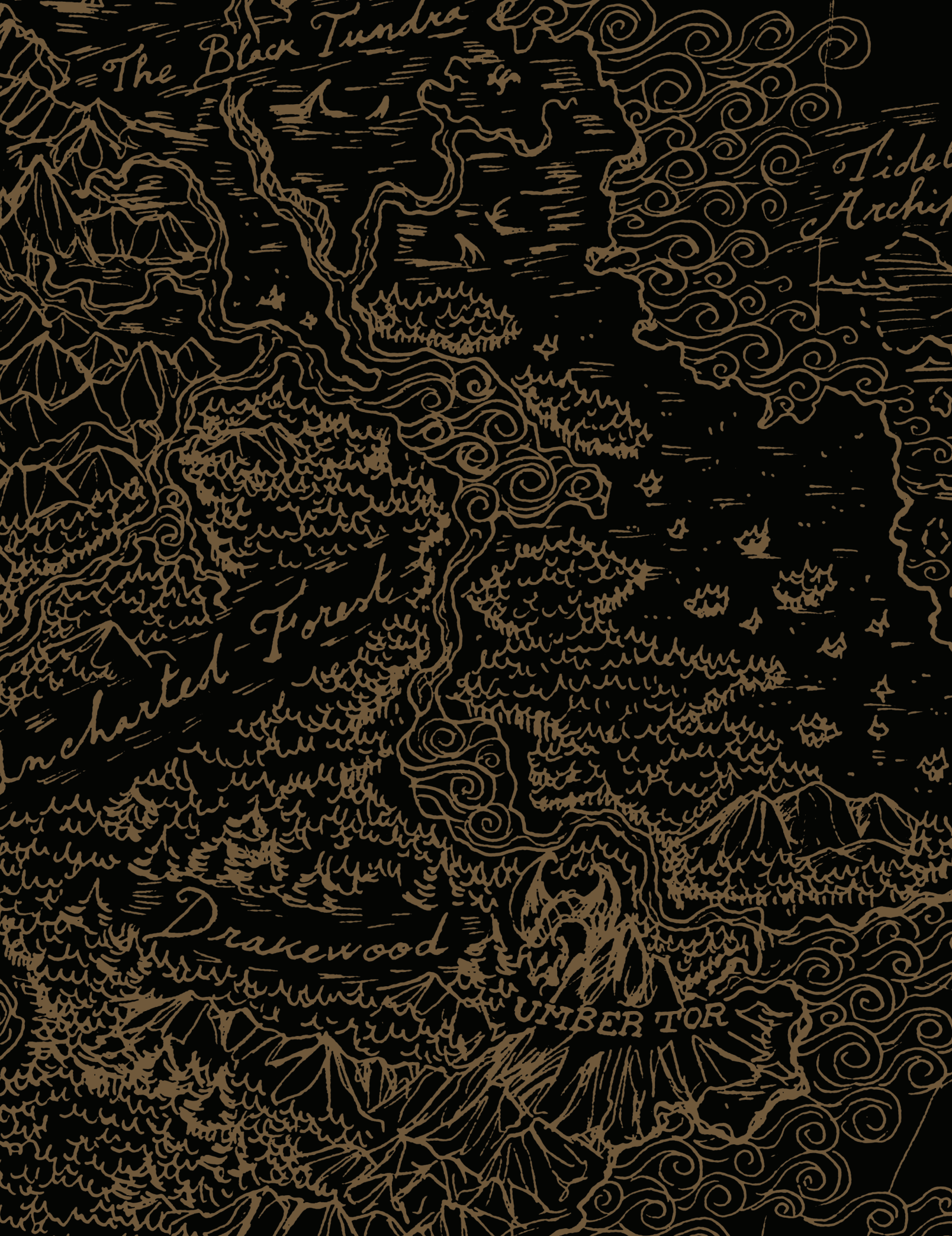
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Tales of Xadia: The Dragon Prince Game Handbook FTT01100

ISBN-13: 978-1-64853-002-9

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