

THE RIDDLE OF STEEL

Companion



A Source Book of New Material for The Riddle of Steel



The Riddle of Steel:

Companion



Brian Leybourne

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Written by: Brian Leybourne

Voices and Prophecy by: Jacob Norwood

Norse Trolls and Variant Damage by: George Thompson

Fine Weapons by: Jean Henri Chandler

Concept Based World Building by: Seth Pease

Followers and Animal Companions by: Shawn Michael Kelley

Developer: George Thompson

Editor: Donald Clarke

Assistant Editor: Brian Leybourne

Cover Painting: David O. Miller

Logo: Rick McCann

Design, Layout: David O. Miller

Illustrations: Christian N. St. Pierre, Colin Throm, David O. Miller

Proofreaders: Andrew Dillon

Dedication

This book is dedicated to John Goff (who put my name in print for the very first time), Jake Norwood (who put it back in print), and George Thompson (who is currently keeping it there). And of course to my loving family and friends for all of their support, and to everyone on the TROS Forums for making this so damn fun.

-Brian Leybourne

Playtesters

Donald *"I thought it was a good idea"* Clarke, Andrew *"NEVER SPLIT THE PARTY!"* Dillon, Christopher S. *"Sorry that my character attacked you Don. Hey, if I kill him George, can I play the next Sorcerer?"* Harvey, Ken *"The important thing is, I did it with style!"* Hlavac, Allan *"I better get back my sword Andy!"* Keane, James *"Red Die!"* Memoli, Adam *"You mean my character actually survived?"* Packard, George *"You want to do WHAT?"* Thompson

Thanks to Andy Kitowski for his idea of Meta-Priorities

Visit us on the Web at: www.theriddleofsteel.net

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Introduction

As of the day this book was completed, The Riddle of Steel is just about three years old. In that time, we have released one core book and three (including this one) expansions. That's a fairly slow rate of release, but the great thing about it is that the last two supplements have been released within the last six months, a big improvement over our previous one supplement a year schedule. We intend on keeping this quarterly release schedule with Sorcery and the Fey releasing in late summer, and we have several yet to be announced projects that you will be hearing much more about in the not too distant future.

There are as many ways of playing TROS as there are players, and there are a number of rules that are frequently customized, altered, or simply changed entirely. The book you're holding right now is our attempt to bring together many of the better rule variations we use, and update some of the original rules that were in need of a facelift. Inside you will see a variety of new options and expansions that can be adopted however you choose into your own Riddle of Steel campaigns. We have broken the Companion into three sections, each with their own topic:

Book One: Character Options contains several variants for character creation, some that draw on the Priority system from the original book, but also including an entirely new point-based method. To that, we've added a significant update and clarification of skill and attribute rolls (bringing the Skill and Attribute system more in line with the Combat and other systems TROS is so well known for) as well as a lot of new skills, skill packets, and even social-based skill packets. Finally, we've updated and re-presented Spiritual Attributes to bring them into line with the way we (and many of you) have been playing them anyway. We've added

a new SA (and an entirely new way to use an old one), and even added a Drama mechanic. This chapter contains the most fundamental new or updated rules and systems for The Riddle of Steel, and we highly recommend you adapt the new Skill and Spiritual Attribute mechanics into your game, should they meet your approval.

Book Two: System Additions has several sections introducing new rules or clarifying and expanding on some older ones. We've included an essay on combat strategies and techniques (something a lot of you have been asking for), along with a variant damage system that de-emphasizes the roles of Strength and Toughness in weapon-based combat and takes into account the size of a target when wounds are inflicted. In addition, there are updated rules for encumbrance and fatigue, a system for prophetic/faith based powers and abilities (in a couple of power spectrums), rules and guidelines for human and animal henchmen and companions, and a treatise on Fine Weapons and how to find and/or make them. This chapter contains the less fundamental (and more mix-and-match) new and variant rule systems.

Book Three: For the Seneschal is a section really designed for Seneschals. We've included rules and guidelines for creating your own fantasy worlds to use for TROS campaigns and a section detailing a scary new form of "bad guy" for your players to encounter (including an adventure hook that you can use to propel them right into the action). Topping it off is a pre-prepared adventure (including 5 fully pre-generated characters and a host of NPC's) that you can use as a stand-alone one-shot adventure or to kick-start an entire campaign in a gristly and bloody fashion (one that your players will never forget, we promise!) Players should avoid reading this section of the book



so they don't spoil anything, but hell, if you want to buy your own copy and peek, then go ahead (we wont tell on you, promise!)

Appendix: Just to wrap things up, we have included the usual index, and a new portrait character sheet that is correctly formatted to handle the rule changes in this book, and a more open "TROSman" figure for you to shade in your character's armor coverage, if you're using the new armor rules from The Flower of Battle.

We've made as much of the Companion as self-sufficient as we can; all of the Gifts and Flaws from the original book (and OBAM) have been repeated here along with a whole host of new ones, for example. The same is true of the skill packets and as much of the character creation rules as possible. We did this to reduce the amount of flicking between books that you need to do, and because many of the "repeated" entries have actually been updated and modified for the new rules presented in this book. We hope you'll get as much use out of this book as possible, and that you'll let us know what you like, what you don't like, and what you would like to see next time.

And while we're on the subject of telling us what you like and what you don't, we would like to acknowledge some of our most loyal fans. We get a lot of great traffic to our web page (<http://www.theriddleofsteel.net>) and our forum (<http://www.trosforums.com>) and especially on the forum we have an amazing volume of really great posts – you guys

are excellent at coming up with new house rules, new maneuvers, schools, weapons and equipment, new or alternate settings, and even just answering others' questions for us when we're not quick enough off the bat. The following users, especially, are really active on the forum and we really look forward to your posts – thanks guys, the game wouldn't be what it is without you.

Emiricol, Dragon, Caz, Toli, Dain, Bergh, Sir Mathodius Black, Turin, Irmo, ZenDog, Salamander, Teknosaber, Silentounce, Durgil, Tom, Osric, Ian.Plumb, Ashren, Vagabond Elf, Eggo von Eggo, Wolfen, James, Marcus, Bohemond, Yokiboy, De_Gamer, Shawn Kelley, Bottleneck, Shade, Deliverator, Yakul, Fleinhoy, Wintermute, Richard Strey, Poleaxe, Hereward the Wake, Mike Holmes, Nemo, Kenjib, Overdrive, Ultraviolet, and anyone else who we missed out (please don't be offended!)

And, of course, the Indie-Rpgs guys who were so fundamental and helpful in the early days of Driftwood and TROS, especially:

Ron Edwards, Clinton Nixon, Lance Allan, Ralph Mazza & Mike Holmes

You guys are all awesome. This book is for you.

So, without further ado, let's get started.

- *Brian Leybourne*

- *George Thompson*



Book One:

Character Additions

“This way! I think he’s slipped around the back! Check behind the barrels in the alleyway!”

Sighing, Marcus abandoned his hiding place and ran out of the dingy alley, just barely managing to stay a few moments ahead of the mob as he hightailed it out of the village. Same old story, he supposed he should be used to it really.

Marcus never knew his father. He was born in the slums of Mouren, a pitifully thin waif born of a young girl abandoned by her family for getting herself pregnant out of wedlock. He never even knew his mother’s name – her voice-box had been damaged in a botched attempt to slit her own throat and the best she could manage was a high-pitched squeak now and then.

Growing up hadn’t been easy – food was scarce in the back alleys, and of course it was necessary to hide Marcus from the other beggars and outcasts, least they accidentally see his face and start the kind of trouble he would subsequently find himself in repeatedly through the course of his life. Kind of like right now, in fact.

Marcus’ mother died when he was 15. A fumbled knife fight in an alleyway over a dead squirrel saw her gutted. It turned out to be a poor bargain for her killer – he got to eat the squirrel but lost his life a few days later when Marcus finally caught up with him. A life spent hiding from the sight of others had given Marcus keen skills in many of the darker areas of life, and so although he had never learned the proper use of weapons, he could easily sneak to within killing distance of a man without alerting him to his presence until it was too late.

Unfortunately, the man had friends, and they tracked Marcus down. That was bad enough, but they wanted to see the man they were going to kill, so they pulled off his hood and looked at his face...

That was the first riot of Marcus’ life. In the fuss and confusion he managed to slip away, leaving Mouren entirely and becoming a wanderer. A life-time spent traveling from place to place, never setting down roots, never making friends. He had no possessions to his name but the clothes on his back, the rusty knife in his belt and the boots on his feet (all taken from the man who slew his mother). From time to time, Marcus would stop in a town and take employment for a while, always trying to be careful to avoid letting others see his face. Sometimes he managed to avoid too much attention. Other times he would find himself fleeing a mob.

It wasn’t the life he would have chosen for himself, but some folk never seem to get the right chances. In Marcus’ case there was never any possibility of a normal life. He never knew his father, but he supposed he probably knew why his mother had tried to kill herself. It was mostly his face that gave it away – pointed ears and almond shaped purple eyes. But even forgiving those he wasn’t quite right. His skin was just the wrong shade, and his body far too thin.

No, his father couldn’t have been normal. His father couldn’t even have been human. Marcus was hated and feared because he was different. Not human, but not even lucky enough to be whatever his father was.

Marcus was a halfling.



Character Creation

This section introduces a number of optional changes and additions to character creation in *The Riddle of Steel*. Each section is intended to be able to stand-alone and thus can be mixed-and-matched to whatever extent you desire. All of the rules presented here are optional, of course.

Character Creation (Priority Pick methods)

The priority pick system forces characters to choose which aspects of their character are more important to them than others. Because every group's play style varies, we are presenting several alternate systems for determining characters' base priority picks. For simplicity and clarity (and so you won't need to refer back and forth between the two books as much), we will first present the base system from the rulebook (TROS, p. 14) and then the variants. We've also included an entirely new way of creating a character without using priorities at all - see the Character Point Allocation system on p. 8.

All of the below methods of character creation

except the character point allocation method refer to the following chart (reprinted from TROS, p. 20)

Donald, Allan, Chris, and Ken are creating characters for an upcoming Riddle of Steel campaign. Although we recommend all players use the same character creation system, for the purposes of example they will each use one of the four creation methods described below.

Character Creation (Priority Allocation)

The standard system of character creation forces players to prioritize the six character categories, and rank them in order. Thus, players select an A priority, a B priority, and so on, so that they end up with the 6 areas (Race, Social Class, Attributes, Skills, Proficiencies and Gifts/Flaws) ranked A through F (A best, F worst). As discussed in the main rulebook, insight awards can provide a character with better initial priority allocations (see TROS, p. 68).

Donald is using the default priority allocation character creation method. He wants to make his character a (human) knight, so he starts with that, allocating priority B to social class

Priority	Race	Social	Attributes	Skills	Proficiencies	Gifts/Flaws
A	Fey or Gifted Siehe	Landed noble 250 gold	47	6/6	14	2 major gifts
B	Non-magical Siehe; Gifted Human; Gifted Halfling	Landless noble 100 gold	43	6/7	9	1 major gift
C	Non-magical Halfling	High freeman 50 gold	39	7/7	6	1 major gift; 1 minor flaw
D	Human	Low freeman 25 gold	35	8/8	4	1 minor of each or nothing
E	Human	Peasant 5 gold	31	9/9	2	1 major flaw; 1 minor gift
F	Human	Slave 0 gold	27	9	0	1 major and 1 minor flaw



and priority F to race. Donald decides that his knight is young and strong, but not terribly well educated, so he assigns an A priority to his Attributes, and an E priority to his skills. This leaves Donald with a C and a D priority to assign to Gifts/Flaws and Proficiencies. Studying the benefits of each, he decides that his knight should be a novice fighter who until recently was a mere squire, so he assigns the D priority to his Proficiencies and the C priority to Gifts/Flaws.

Character Creation (Priority Point Allocation)

The first alternative to the standard character creation system looks much the same, but gives a little more choice to the players. Instead of being fixed in the priority picks they may make, players can set any priority as high (or as low) as they like, at the cost of having to set another priority correspondingly low (or high) in return. Each player starts the game with 15 points to build a character. Those points are spent to purchase priorities on the priority chart according to the following table:

Priority	Cost
A	5 points
B	4 points
C	3 points
D	2 points
E	1 point
F	0 points

Thus, with 15 points you can buy an A, B, C, D, E and an F (i.e. the same as a starting character under the default character creation method) but you have more flexibility. For example, you can choose to buy 2 priority A's as long as you accept that this will drop several of your other priorities to make up for it, and so on.

Under the Priority Point Allocation method of character creation, insight simply varies the initial pool of 15 points. Divide the old

High or Low Powered Campaigns

Using this method of character creation, it's easy to adjust the starting power of characters if you're planning a high or a low-powered campaign. You might decide to give all characters 20 points worth of priorities, for example. Conversely, you might limit all characters to 12 points, although be warned that this will create very low-powered characters indeed. It could be very useful for unimportant NPC's, however.

It's also really easy to use this system to make other fundamental variations in your campaign (well, easier than it sometimes is with the default system). For example, some groups dislike the vast disparity in social class that can result from one player wanting to play a noble and another player happy to be a slave (or it might be as simple as the fact that the campaign the Seneschal is planning requires all characters to be nobles because it will be mostly centered around court intrigue). This is easy with the priority point allocation system – simply specify what social class all characters will be and modify the original points allocation accordingly. If you want all characters to be nobles, then don't allow the Social pick at all and subtract 4 or 5 points from the pool they get to choose their characters from (or less if you're feeling really generous). If you want all characters to start off as slaves then you can do so, simply not allowing them to pick a social priority. The Racial pick could be similarly modified in this manner.

character's total insight pool by 15 (rounding down) and add the result directly to the character pick pool. In other words, each 15 points of insight adds 1 point to the pick pool, so a character with 40 points of insight would have 17 (40/15 is 2, plus the base of 15 makes 17) points to purchase priorities with.

Allan begins creating his character using the Priority Point Allocation system. He has 15 points to spend. He decides that he wants to create a mysterious foreigner who is very secretive and enigmatic. Thinking through his options, he decides that his character could even be a halfling – a man bred from both human and fey stock who hides his heritage, fearing persecution. This requires a C priority in race, which costs 3 of his 15 points. He decides that the man is a wanderer, with little but the clothes on his back, so he spends 1 point on the social pick, making his character the equivalent of a peasant, with just enough money to purchase a few essentials that he can carry with him. With 11 points left, Allan studies the rest of the options. He decides that as a wanderer, his character has picked up a lot of skills along the way, so he spends a full 5 points to give his character an A priority in skills (two skill packets at 6/6). He now has 6 points left. Allan wants his character to be able to make full use of those skills, so he needs at least reasonable attributes and he elects for a C priority in those (3 points). This leaves him with Proficiencies and Gifts/Flaws. He doesn't see his character as much of a fighter at all, so he spends just 1 point on Proficiencies (giving him an E priority) and the remaining 2 points he puts into Gifts/Flaws, giving him a D priority there. Allan's final selection is therefore Race: C (3 points), Social: E (1 point), Skills: A (5 points), Attributes: C (3 points), Proficiencies: E (1 point) and Gifts/Flaws: D (2 points) for a total of 15 points.



Character Creation (Random Priority Allocation)

This variant of character creation draws on the first variant described above, but is designed for those people who grew up on “old-style” RPG’s and like the idea of random character creation.

Using the Random Priority Allocation method, players roll 6D6, taking the 6 numbers rolled as their character priority picks, according to the following chart:

Die Roll	Priority Pick
6	A
5	B
4	C
3	D
2	E
1	F

Be warned – as in all random determination systems this can leave some characters vastly under- or over-powered compared to others. There are a few ways to mitigate that randomness a little, however:

1) Allow players to roll 7D6 and drop the lowest value, or allow them to roll 8D6 and drop the lowest and the highest value, this will tend to normalize the results making all characters sit within a closer spread of each other.

2) Allow players to re-roll 1's (but they must keep the second roll, even if it is another 1). This will slightly mitigate the results making very underpowered characters less likely, but will of course tend to make all characters slightly more powerful.

Characters with insight are able to modify these rolls in a couple of possible ways (at the Seneschal's discretion):

Insight Option 1: Divide total Insight by 15 and round the result down (just as in the Priority Point Allocation method). The result is the number of points that can be added to any of the die results before converting them to priority letters. Thus a character with an Insight of 30 would have 2 points to spend, perhaps upgrading a die showing a "3" to a "4" (and thus changing it from a "D" priority to a "C") and a "2" to a "3". No number can be upgraded above 6 of course, as a 6 is already an A priority.

Insight Option 2: Divide total Insight by 30 and round the result down. This number is the number of extra dice that can be rolled, keeping the best 6 as in the 7D6 option. Alternatively, the highest value die and the lowest value dice could be discarded, keeping the middle 6 dice, as in the 8D6 option.

Chris begins rolling up his character using the Random Priority Allocation system. He is using the option to roll 8D6 and drop the highest and lowest rolls, so he throws the dice, receiving

the following results: 6,6,4,3,3,3,2,2. Dropping the highest and the lowest results, he is left with 6,4,3,3,3,2, which gives him the following priority picks: A, C, D, D, D, E. Looking at his choices and thinking through the options, Chris decides that a bold highwayman would be a fun character to play. Such a scoundrel would need to be extremely adept with a wide variety of weapons (A priority in Proficiencies) and have the attributes to back that up (C priority in Attributes). Since his character will be a human, he assigns the E to his racial pick, and that leaves the final three selections (Skills, Gifts/Flaws and Social Class) all at D. Chris' character is therefore a Low Freeman with average skills (two packets at 8/8) and either a minor Gift and Flaw or none at all.

Option: Gift/Flaw Selection

The default method of selecting gifts and flaws gives a selection of major and minor gifts and/or flaws depending on the priority pick selected, according to the chart shown above and on TROS p. 20. However, some players dislike the rigidity of this method of gift/ flaw selection and argue that they should be able to take 2 minor gifts instead of a major gift (or any other similar configuration). This optional alternate method of gift/ flaw selection addresses that concern.

The following column should replace the gift/ flaw column on the character creation chart, and can be used with any of the character creation methods that use the priority chart.

Priority	Gifts/Flaws
A	4 points
B	2 points
C	1 point
D	0 points
E	-1 points
F	-3 points

The gifts/flaws points taken (based on the priority pick chosen) determine how many



points the character has to spend on gifts and flaws. The costs are as follows:

- Major Gifts cost 2 points
- Minor Gifts cost 1 point
- Major Flaws cost -2 points
- Minor Flaws cost -1 point

Thus, the default selections from the original character creation chart are possible under this system, but players can easily modify the selection to their hearts content. Instead of a major and a minor gift at priority B, for example, players could instead take 2 major gifts and a minor flaw, which totals the same number of points. At priority D, no gifts or flaws could be taken, or one minor gift and one minor flaw, but players could equally take a major gift and a major flaw, or a major flaw and two minor gifts, and so on. Under no circumstances should players be allowed to select more than a total of four gifts and/or flaws, however, and they must end up with the exact same number of points (positive or negative) as their priority selection calls for.

Common Gifts

There is one drawback to this method of Gift/Flaw selection that Seneschals need to be aware of. There are some gifts that are extremely popular with players (we find that Major Accuracy is the leading example of this, although we have altered it slightly in these rules, see the section entitled *Gifts and Flaws: New and Old*, on p. 17.) and as such, many players will take those popular gifts as often as they can. With this method of Gift/Flaw selection, any character can potentially pick up a Major Gift simply by taking enough flaws to “pay” for it, and as such you may find that characters (even those with very low Gift/Flaw priorities) will end up with one or more of these popular Major Gifts.

Character Creation

(Character Point Allocation)

The Character Point Allocation method of character creation is the most different from the base rules, as it does not use the priority table at all. Instead, a pool of points is used to purchase race, class, skills, attributes and proficiencies. Finally, flaws may be purchased to earn extra points or gifts may be bought if there are points left over.

Point Allocation vs. Priority System

Although we have tried to keep the Character Point Allocation system as close in cost and in “what’s possible” to the priority system as possible, there are a few sacrifices that we’ve had to make. Thus you will not necessarily be able to *exactly* replicate an A, B, C, D, E, F character using the Character Point Allocation system, but you’ll be able to get very close.

We chose 70 points as the base Character Point Allocation total because it’s a nice, round number, and this system also grants the most flexibility. In actuality, 72 points or so would be a slightly better match against the other character creation systems, so you could consider altering the available points to this number, or even higher – perhaps players start with 75 or even 80 points to develop characters in your games.

All players start with 70 character points to spend. All characters must choose (at least) a race, a social class, a minimum of 2 points in every attribute, and at least one skill packet. Players with Insight from a previous character may add 1 character point to this total for every 5 points of Insight their character accumulated before he died or was retired (round fractions down)



Racial Selection

Racial selection is free if the player wants the character to be a normal human, but additional costs apply for anything more unique, as follows:

Racial Pick	Cost
Human	0 points
Non-Gifted Halfling	10 points
Gifted Human or Non-Gifted Siehe	12 points
Gifted Halfling	13 points
Gifted Siehe or Fey	15 points

Descriptions of what those racial picks mean and what benefits they give the character can be found in the Race section, or in the main rulebook (TROS, p. 16).

Social Class

Social Class may be selected according to the following table:

Social Class	Cost
Slave (0 starting wealth)	0 points
Peasant (5 starting wealth)	3 points
Low Freeman (15 starting wealth)	6 points
High Freeman (50 starting wealth)	9 points
Landless Noble (100 starting wealth)	12 points
Landed Noble (250 starting wealth)	15 points

Each of these options is explained in the main rulebook (TROS, p. 17) and comes with the starting wealth and ongoing income figures as outlined there.

Social Class Selection

The social class options simultaneously select a character's position within society and also his starting and ongoing wealth. In some circumstances, it can be a little restrictive, however. There are occasionally situations where a character may wish to start with more wealth than he can have according to the social class he wants to pick, or vice versa.

In this situation, the Seneschal can optionally allow a character to purchase his wealth and social class separately using the Character Point Allocation system, as shown in the following table:

Social Class	Cost	Wealth	Cost	Total Cost
Landed Noble	10 points	250	5 points	15 points
Landless Noble	8 points	100	4 points	12 points
High Freeman	6 points	50	3 points	9 points
Low Freeman	4 points	15	2 points	6 points
Peasant	2 points	5	1 point	3 points
Slave	0 points	0	0 points	0 points

The total cost for each line is the cost for the usual selection (Landless Nobility starting with 100 Gold, for example) but the trick is that it is possible to buy the class and the wealth independently of each other, as long as the two are not more than one step away from each other. Thus, a High Freeman could be purchased (for 6 Character points) who starts with 15 (for 2 more points), 50 (for 3 more points), or even 100 (for 4 more points) gold. On the other hand, a character who starts with 15 gold (for a cost of 2 character points) could turn out to be a rich peasant (for 2 additional points) an average Low Freeman (for 4 more points) or a poorer-than-usual High Freeman (for 6 more points).

Attributes

Attributes are purchased using the following cost chart. As always in TROS character creation, each attribute must be set to a minimum of 2 points before racial or national modifiers, and the modifier must be taken into account so that the final attribute will be at least 1. Thus, if a character is taking a race and/or nationality that will give -2 or more to a particular attribute, enough points must be put into that attribute so that after the penalty it will still be at least 1. Only one attribute may be bought to a value of 7 but you may have as many attributes at 6 or lower as you wish. Attribute values of 8 and above (and a value of 1) have been included on the table for higher-powered campaigns or characters with a great deal of Insight to spend; the Seneschal has final say over what the available maximum values may be.

Attribute Level	Cost in Character Points
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	9
8	12
9	16
10	20

Skills

Skill packets cost 2 character points to purchase at SR9 and 2 character points to improve by one step (to SR8, then to SR7, and so on). At least one skill packet must be purchased but no more than 2 can be bought, and no skill packet can be improved higher than SR6. Additionally, individual skills can be bought and improved; each 1 character point spent will buy up to three skills at SR9 or improve up to three skills by one step each (or any combination thereof). Note – this

supplements, rather than replaces, the usual MA-based skills bonus during character creation (TROS, p. 19).

Proficiencies

Proficiencies cost 1 character point per point up to a value of 6 in any proficiency. However, the 7th point in a Proficiency costs 2 character points, and the 8th point costs an additional 4 character points on top of that (thus to purchase a Proficiency at 6 costs 6 character points, but to purchase it at 7 costs 8 character points, and to purchase it at 8 costs 12 character points). Only one Proficiency may start at rank 8 but any number of other Proficiencies may start at rank 7 or below.

Ranks in a weapon school (TFOB, p. 92) cost 1.5 character points per point until the base value reaches 6 (round any fractions up), thus it costs 9 character points to buy a base value of 6 in a weapon school. After this, the cost increases, however. To purchase a base value of 7 costs 12 character points, and to purchase a base value of 8 (which is the maximum) costs 18 character points.

Magical vagaries cost 1 character point per vagary level and each vagary is still limited to a maximum value of 3, of course. When using the new magic system in *Sorcery and the Fey*, vagaries are purchased exactly like proficiencies, with the same costs and limits (they can exceed a value of 3).

Gifts and Flaws

Major gifts can be purchased for 6 character points or minor gifts for 3 character points. If a player wishes to buy flaws for his character, minor flaws will gain back 3 character points, while major flaws will gain back 6 character points. Characters cannot select more than a total of four gifts and/or flaws.

Ken will be using the Character Point Allocation system to create his character, and has 70 character points to spend.

Because he has to spend a minimum of 20 points on his Attributes (2 in each attribute), he starts by subtracting that number from his character points, intending to go back and add more points to Attributes later. Next, Ken looks at the racial options. None of the other players have elected to take a magical character, so he decides that might be fun and allocates 12 points to making his character a human sorcerer. Ken doesn't see his character as being anyone particularly special or important (other than being magical) so he allocates 6 points to Social class to make him a low freeman. He has 32 points left (70-20-12-6). Knowing that he will want at least one minor sorcerous gift, Ken allocates 3 points for that now, and puts 10 points into Proficiencies so he will have enough to buy some skill with a weapon and still be able to purchase some magical vagaries. This leaves Ken with 19 points to allocate to Attributes and Skills. He buys two skill packets and improves one of them two steps, leaving him with 7/9 for his skills allocation, and 11 remaining character points. Ken thinks through the options for a while, and decides that 31 points (the 20 he already assigned plus the 11 character points he has left) won't be enough for his character's Attributes. Instead, he decides to allocate 20 more points (giving him a total of 40 points) to divide among his character's Attributes, which leaves -9 character points, which he buys back by taking one major and one minor flaw. Ken ends up with a magic-using Low Freeman human who has 40 points in Attributes (that he can allocate 1-1 unless he wants any Attributes above 6), 10 points of Proficiencies/Vagaries, two Skill Packets at 7 and 9, a Minor (magical) Gift, and a Major and a Minor Flaw.

Option: Racial Selection

The following rules are optional and allow a far greater variety of racial selection at character creation.

More than Human

Any racial pick of D or below on the priority chart results in a character who is a regular human. This is a convenient place for most players to sink their "F" priority without having to resort to being a slave, having terrible attributes, pathetic skills, no proficiencies or a fatal combination of flaws. It does mean, however, that there's very little incentive to take a racial pick of D or E for race (or, if using the priority point allocation system, to put a value of 1 or 2 into that priority).

But what if there was something more than human?

This option is designed to allow characters to get something a little bit extra-special in return for selecting the otherwise "pointless" D and E racial priorities over an F priority.

The Seneschal can either choose to tell the players what the benefit of the D or E priority will be, or elect to keep it a secret until the characters/players work it out for themselves (we think that's the most fun way, but of course it requires that your players trust you...). Essentially, there are a couple of stages of human between a regular person (at Priority F) and a sorcerer (at Priority B), so the two intermediate stages (D and E) should have benefits somewhere between those two paradigms, with D being a little bit more special than E. The best way to handle this is to think of something that is of benefit to the character and fits well into the campaign you have planned, and then let them discover it slowly through play. Tailor the advantage based on whether the player chose D or E priority, making D even more special than E. Here are some real examples from our own games at Driftwood to get you thinking along the right lines:

- * One character who had taken a D priority found over time that animals all seemed to love and trust him. They would constantly



seek to be near him and always tried to assist him. Although this was occasionally tricky to explain away (such as the morning the inn they had stayed in was completely covered in pigeons) it turned out to be extremely useful at times; such as when a wounded wolf allowed him to heal it and later followed the party as they left the woods, attacking an ambush before it could be sprung on them. Another time, an assassin fired an arrow at the character from a hidden location near the docks of the city, and an entire flock of seagulls swarmed into the way, obscuring the target enough that the arrow just missed its mark. Eventually, the character gained a Familiar kind of mental bond with the wolf and it became a long-time trusted companion.

* One campaign dealt with the group's attempt to discover the truth behind a long-lost (and thought by most to be mythical) race of lizardman-like creatures who had settled the area of the campaign centuries ago, before being wiped out by the arriving human settlers. A character who had taken an E priority in race found that he had an easy time learning the language and customs of the lizardmen (which helped in tracking them down). Eventually, he discovered that he was actually descended from them and that because of this they allowed him to locate them and deal with them. Ultimately, he managed to found a new peace between the two races (as well as finding that he had a bunch of nifty lizardmanish powers, like being able to breathe underwater and an affinity with marine life).

* One character who had a D racial priority found that he had an uncanny knack for serendipity – whenever a situation called for something nice to happen to a random person it was usually him, and conversely whenever something nasty was to randomly befall the group, he would usually manage

to be standing just out of harms way. Enemy archers seemed to pick him less often than his companions; shopkeepers and traders seemed a little more willing to be generous, and so on. It took the player a long time to work out that this was happening to his character, but he was pretty happy with the racial pick once he worked it out.

* A character with an E racial priority discovered to his delight that he was somehow immune to all forms of poison and venom. In addition to the obvious benefits of such a condition, his immunity actually enabled him to rid himself of a particularly onerous opponent by hiring on as the man's official food taster. The character then quaffed down an extremely potent combination of Deadly Nightshade, Arsenic and Cyanide (see Poisons, TFOB p. 84) in the man's presence and was able to hand it over proclaiming it to be harmless...

As you can see, the general idea is to give the players/characters something interesting and perhaps just a little supernatural in return for their taking a D or E racial priority pick. There's also no reason why this idea couldn't be used if the players are designing their characters using the Character Point Allocation system – simply allow them to assign character points to their race even though their race is human. We suggest that an expenditure of 2-4 character points warrants an "E"-like bonus ability, while spending 5-7 character points warrants a "D".

Extending the Racial Priority Chart

This option opens up the racial priority chart, which is exceptionally useful for those of us who like to create our own fantasy worlds and populate them with multiple sentient races (see the World Building section from p. 112 for further ideas).

There are two ways to format the racial priority table. One option is to format it



based on rarity (this was how we designed the original racial pick options that you see in the table above and on TROS, p. 20). In essence, the more uncommon and/or unusual a race is in the world, the higher the priority pick should be to account for that. The other option is determined purely on game balance – the more powerful a race is the higher on the racial priority table that race should be to make the players “pay” for taking that option. Here we are going to focus on balancing the table based on the benefits granted by the race.

Given the nature and extreme power of Sorcery in *The Riddle of Steel*, we recommend that the ability to use it should be factored into the racial priority table, but that almost every other facet of a character can be handled through the other priority or character point picks – attributes, skills and so on. Of course, the more “special” the race chosen, the more benefits even apart from magic, such as skill and attribute bonuses, SA advantages and so on might accrue. Racial attribute bonuses or penalties are represented in the requirement to start all characters with a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 6/7 in every attribute. Thus, a race that receives +2 to an attribute could start with that attribute at 8 (or even 9 as long as the next highest one was a 6) and a race with a penalty can start below 2. Although if the penalty is -2 or worse then the player will need to invest points into the attribute so that it actually starts above 0.

We cannot possibly cover every possible race and every possible world that you might want to use in your games and campaigns, but by way of example, here is a Racial Priority pick column for a fairly typical “high fantasy” world that features several sentient races. Below the chart, you will find descriptions of each race and the reasons why we put them in the positions we did on the table. Note – there should ideally always be a point-free item at the bottom of every table; this is the most

common (and probably least special) race in your campaign world.

Priority (Cost*)	Race
A (16)	High Elf
A (15)	Lizardman Sorcerer
B (13)	Half Orc Sorcerer
B (12)	Human Sorcerer
C (10)	Dwarf (Duergar)
C (9)	Dark Elven Sorcerer
C (8)	Lizardman, Orc/Grey Orc
D (6)	Dwarf (Hill)
D (5)	Dark Elf
E (2)	Half Orc
F (0)	Human

** This is the cost if the Character Point Allocation method is being used.*

Note: There’s no reason why you couldn’t extend the More Than Human ideas (above) into this or any other racial priority table. Simply allow the players to purchase any of the races above at one priority pick higher (or 2-4 extra character points under the Character Point Allocation system) for an ability similar to an “E” as discussed above, or two picks higher (5-7 extra character points) for an ability similar to a “D”.

Human

Humans are the default and most numerous species and as such, they fall into the lowest racial priority pick of F (0 points in the Character Point Allocation system, see p. 5). They receive no special bonuses or penalties, but they at least have the advantages of being the most numerous race - armor tends to fit them, doorways are designed for their height, other people don’t automatically hate them on sight (usually) and so on. Alternately, for a B priority pick (12 character points) a human may have that special quality to his or her blood that marks them a sorcerer, and gives them the ability to take sorcerous gifts and flaws and learn magical vagaries.

Half-Orc

Half-Orcs are the bastard offspring of a human and an Orcish parent, and are available for a racial priority pick of E (or 2 character points). Half-Orcs tend not to be trusted by either Humans or Orcs, and often have a hard time fitting into either society (-1 SOC) but they are incredibly strong (+1 ST) and tough (+1 TO). They are known to be fiercely loyal when they give their word (one Oath SA can have a maximum of 6 instead of 5 but also has a minimum of 1). Half-Orcs are very tall, usually at least 6.5 feet, and can weigh upwards of 250lbs, most of it muscle. Some very rare Half-Orcs (priority B or 13 character points) are born with a spark of sorcery in their blood. Such characters can learn magical vagaries and take sorcerous gifts and flaws following the same rules as human sorcerers, but no vagary may be raised higher than level 2.

Dark Elf

Dark Elves are the bastard offspring of High Elves and Humans. They are usually the result of rape of a High Elven maid. They usually mature as second-class citizens in their communities, almost invariably turn bad, and wind up feared and despised as a result. Thus, they have a low racial requirement (D priority pick, or 5 character points) despite their rarity. As such, Dark Elves tend to be loners, although with care they can pass themselves off as Human – the name Dark Elf refers to their disposition and not to their skin coloration, in fact the only outward sign of their elven ancestry tends to be angular features and pointed ears, both of which can be covered by a heavy cowl. When dealing with most Humans or High Elves who know what they are, their Soc is considered to be 2 lower than normal. In size, Dark Elves stand only slightly shorter than an average human; they are very lithe (+1 AG) and intelligent (+1 MA) but tend to be frail (-1 TO). Dark Elves excel in hand-eye coordination and as such receive a bonus of +1 to any one missile proficiency at character creation. Unlike

their High Elven parent, most Dark Elves are not inherently magical, although some few (Priority pick C or 9 Character points) pick up some minor magical ability. Such characters may take minor sorcerous gifts and flaws, and may only learn the Glamour Vagary.

Dwarf

Dwarves are an ancient race known for their craftsmanship and hardiness. There are two distinct types. Both are shorter and stockier than humans. All dwarves can see in darkness as if it was an overcast day, have a -1 to Soc, and a +1 to HT. Hill Dwarves are the least powerful Dwarves on the continent, and can be found in almost any location where the land raises enough to dig caves. It requires a racial priority pick of D (or 6 character points) to take a Hill Dwarf. All Hill Dwarves must take the “little” flaw (average height 3-4 feet). Additionally, any one Crafting skill can be taken at Master (TN4) rank. A more powerful variety of Dwarves, known as Duergar (or Deep Dwarves), live in great communities under the earth. Duergar are a priority C (or 10 character points) race. They are not required to take the “little” flaw. Duergar get +1 to TO. They either begin as Master craftsmen in their chosen craft (TN4) or gain +1 to one melee Combat Proficiency. All Duergar receive double the wealth their Social pick usually grants (as deep miners and crafters, Duergar tend to be very rich).

Lizardman

Lizardmen are a semi-aquatic race that live in the rivers and lakes of the world. They tend to keep to themselves, but wanderers are not uncommon and many of the caravan traders who favor long circuitous routes around the coastal regions of the continent are made up of Lizardmen. A lizardman character requires a racial priority pick of C (or 8 character points). Lizardmen are completely at home in the water, and receive +3 dice on any rolls made to do with water (such as swimming, sailing, water navigation, and so on). All are Competent swimmers (TN6). Additionally,



their hardiness gives them a +1 bonus to HT and EN, and their unblinking bulbous eyes grant +1 Per. Lizardmen never drown as they have gills and can breathe underwater, and they rarely suffer from extremes of temperature (they can live happily in temperatures from -20°C up to as much as 45°C). Some Lizardmen are born with the gift of sorcery. This requires using an A racial priority (or 15 character points), and allows the character to buy sorcerous gifts and flaws and to learn magical vagaries, as well as gaining a +1 bonus in the Vagary of their choice at character creation.



Orc

Orcs are rough and brutish creatures, who are overly fond of ale and meat (they are carnivores, and will not eat any form of vegetable or plant life except whatever has been brewed into their beer). Standing 7-8 feet tall and weighing upwards of 300 pounds, they are the largest and strongest sentient creatures in the world (+2 ST, EN and HT). They don't tend to be overly bright though (-2 WIT and MA). Orcs are not welcomed in "polite" society, although most settlements grin and bear it when an Orcish band passes through to avoid any unpleasantness. Typical Orcs are a mottled green color, and require a racial pick of C (or 8 character points). At the Seneschal's option, a player may elect to take a Grey Orc. Grey Orcs receive no extra bonuses or penalties over regular Orcs, but their green brothers treat them with a form of superstition. This can sometimes be a good thing and can sometimes be bad...

High Elf

High Elves are the most "noble" and rare sentient race in the world. They require an A priority pick (or 16 character points) to select, but receive a number of special benefits. All High Elves are sorcerers, and as such they may take sorcerous gifts and flaws and buy ranks in Vagaries at will (and they start off with 1 rank in the Glamour vagary). All High Elves are ageless – the only way they can grow older is through magical aging, and as such, they tend to be very careful with their magic. High Elves are very intelligent (+2 MA) and incredibly lithe (+2 AG) but they tend also to be somewhat dreamy and detached (-2 WP). Finally, High Elves have magnificent hand-eye coordination and gain a +2 bonus to any one missile proficiency at character creation.

Option: Epic Priorities

Another option at Character Creation is to allow characters to buy "Epic-priorities". Epic-priorities are an option above "A" priority, and allow an extra special boost for characters who wish to spend the points. A character may only ever have a single Epic-priority, and it is purchased in one of the following ways:

If the group is running an epic campaign, the Seneschal may simply replace one priority pick (A-F) with an Epic pick, depending on the nature of the campaign and the generosity of the Seneschal (A-E and Epic instead of the F, if he is really generous). For the Character Point Allocation System, the Seneschal can award 20-30 extra points with the stipulation that at least one Epic-priority must be purchased.

For characters who want Epic-priorities in a standard campaign, at character creation any "A" priority pick can be upgraded to an Epic-priority by voluntarily downgrading any other single B or C priority by 2 steps. Thus, a "B" priority could be downgraded to a "D", or a "C" could be downgraded to an "E". If using the

Priority Point Allocation method of character creation, Epic-Priorities cost 7 points. Under the Random Priority Allocation system, an A priority can be upgraded to a Epic-Priority for the same cost as in the standard Priority Allocation system (a B or C priority gets downgraded to a D or E). Many of the options below can be taken using the Character Point Allocation method; the costs for this have been included where applicable.

Racial Epic-Priority

Application of the Racial Epic-priority varies greatly depending on the campaign world the game is set in. With the permission of the Seneschal, the player may create a new race or a variant of an existing race and gain all of the benefits of that race, including possible attribute, SA and even social benefits; sorcery, bonus proficiencies, extra gifts and/or flaws, and so on. The Seneschal is the final arbiter of what is acceptable and what is not, of course. The costs to purchase a new race under the Character Point Allocation method must be determined by the Seneschal based on the rewards offered for being a member of that race.

Social Epic-Priority

The Social Epic-priority allows a character to be even more important than a landed noble. Depending on the planned campaign, this usually entails making the character a member of the monarchy (usually a prince or duke, never the reigning monarch, although the character could be in the line of succession). While providing great (potential) power and authority, this can also be something of a drawback, as members of the royal family are often not afforded the amount of freedom they might otherwise like to enjoy, and suffer incessant demands upon their time. On the other hand, political power is rife, as is personal wealth – the character has a starting wealth of 500 gold, and a monthly income of 100. This option can be purchased using the Character Point Allocation system, costing 21 points.

Attribute Epic-Priority

The Attributes Epic-priority gives the character 55 points to spend on attributes. Additionally, the maximum attribute allocation is 8 rather than the usual 7, although characters are still required to select one “high” attribute. Characters built with the Character Point Allocation system can spend 3 points to be able to raise a single attribute up to 8, with a max of 7 for all the others.

Skills Epic-Priority

The Epic-priority for Skills gives characters a third starting skill packet, at an initial SR of 5. Thus, the character chooses 3 skill packets at starting values of 5/6/6. At the Seneschal’s option, characters using the Character Point Allocation system may purchase a third skill packet for 3 additional points over the normal cost and must pay the usual amount(s) to buy both the package and also buy down the starting SR of 9.

Proficiencies Epic-Priority

The Proficiencies Epic-priority gives a character 21 points to spend on proficiencies. The cap on starting proficiencies is lifted as well – any proficiency may be started at a value of 10. Characters using the Character Point Allocation character creation method can spend 3 points to gain the ability to purchase proficiencies up to a maximum of 10, but must still buy the proficiency points they want to use, at the usual costs. The 9th point costs 6 additional character points (18 total) and the 10th costs 8 additional points (26 total). School rank costs 50% more than the equivalent standard proficiency.

Gifts/Flaws Epic-Priority

The Gifts/Flaws Epic-priority gives characters 3 major gifts and 1 minor gift (or 7 points to buy Gifts and Flaws if the optional system of buying gifts and flaws is being used). There is no separate option for the Character Point Allocation system as it already has sufficient flexibility to cover this variant.



Gifts and Flaws: New and Old

This section collects together all of the Gifts and Flaws from *The Riddle of Steel* (p. 42- 49) and *Of Beasts and Men* (p. 15) and adds many more. We made the decision to repeat all of the previous gifts and flaws so that they were all in the same place for ease of selection (so you don't need 2 books open in front of you while creating a character). An additional reason is that we have updated and modified many of the original Gifts and Flaws that turned out to be over- or underpowered (including changes to any gift or flaw that utilized Attribute rolls, see the new section discussing Attribute rolls on p. 36). This list should now be considered the definitive collection of (non magical) Gifts and Flaws for *The Riddle of Steel*.

Gifts

20/20

(minor gift)

You have perfect vision and gain +2 to all Perception rolls involving sight.

Absolute Direction

(minor gift)

Those with the gift of Absolute Direction are never lost. They always know which way is North, and which way is up or down. Assuming they've been conscious they can guess the distance they've traveled within a few miles, and which direction they've been going even if they are in a wagon or coach and can't see the road.

Accuracy

(major or minor gift; altered from original)

In the whirl of combat one rarely strikes the exact location that one aims for – you swing for the head and hit the shoulder, you thrust for the body and strike the groin... the examples are endless. Those with the gift of accuracy have an uncanny ability to predict the subtle movements of their opponent and cater their

weapon attacks so that the desired target is struck. Either version of the Accuracy Gift (major or minor) may be purchased to apply to either melee or missile combat, but not both (you can, however, take the gift twice).

The minor version of this gift allows the character to set aside a number of dice from his CP before he makes an attack. For every 2 dice set aside, the D6 hit location roll may be modified by +/-1 if the attack is successful. Note – this gift works in every way like the Progressive weapon school bonus (TFOB, p. 94). As such, characters in the progressive school are already considered to have the Minor Accuracy gift for melee combat and can therefore buy Major Accuracy for melee combat for the cost of a minor gift.

The major version of this gift grants the same benefit as the minor version, with an additional free +/-1 on the D6 roll (even if no dice have been put aside). If Major Accuracy is taken to apply to missile fire, the automatic +/-1 bonus also applies to the 2d6 attack zone location roll (TFOB, p. 9), but allocated dice do not (there is already a method for allocating dice to add to that roll).

Alert

(major or minor gift)

Your character is exceptionally alert and quick to spot or hear things that other people often miss. The minor version of this gift gives the character a TN 5+ when making any Attribute tests involving the Perception attribute (the usual default TN is 6, see p. 36). The major version of this gift gives the character a TN of 4+ when making any attribute test involving Perception, and additionally all tests (Attribute and Skill) involving Perception are open-ended (re-roll 10's to gain possible extra successes). The number of dice that open-end are limited to the character's Perception Attribute (if making a skill test and you possess levels of specialization and/or Grand Mastery, roll the Attribute dice separately or with a different color).

Allies**(major or minor gift)**

Some say it's not what you know – it's who. Allies are those that are willing to help you out, sometimes even at the cost of their own skin. Minor allies are either average people who are willing to go a long way to help you out from time to time, or exceptional or important people who might offer some help (although not too much) should their own circumstances allow it. Major allies are important or exceptional people who gladly offer their help (often at personal sacrifice) from time to time.

Ambidexterity**(major gift)**

Those born with the gift of Ambidexterity are neither left-handed nor right-handed, and may use either hand as if it were their main hand. This is not the ability to fight well with a weapon in each hand (you have to go to school to learn that), but an ambidextrous person may fight freely with either hand. This provides a +1 die advantage when attacking with a one-handed weapon in the left hand in dueling situations (it doesn't make much of a difference on the battlefield though). Additionally, should one arm be wounded, the other may be used at no penalty.

Animal Kin**(major or minor gift)**

This gift creates a meaningful bond with animals of all types. Those who possess this gift are not likely to be attacked by animals, are gifted trainers, and can gain the trust of an animal in very little time.

The minor version of this gift adds +2 dice to any roll that involves communication or interaction with domesticated animals, or +1 die when dealing with wild animals such as wolves, bears, etc. The major version adds +3 dice to rolls with both wild and domestic animals. Appropriate uses include training, calming and even riding animals.

Beauty of Legends**(major or minor gift)**

Most characters are assumed to be somewhat unattractive, average, or slightly attractive looking people; others are born with the “Beauty of Legends”. This gift is available to both sexes (just replace the word “Beauty” with “Handsome” or “Dashing”).

The minor version of this gift applies to those that are markedly beautiful or handsome – those who stick out in a crowd and nearly always attract members of the opposite sex. Any rolls that are directly affected by beauty (many social situations, several entertainment-based skill rolls, and so on) are made with +1 die.

Those with the major version of this gift are stunning – songs are written about them, members of the opposite sex often become irrationally enamored, and they stick out even in a crowd of beautiful people. All die rolls that are directly affected by appearance receive +3 dice.

In addition to any “game mechanics”, beautiful people are simply treated better by everybody.





Many of the advantages to beauty are to be seen only in roleplaying and common sense. However, there is a dark said to this gift as well – beautiful people often attract too much attention, and can even evoke jealousy and enmity of others (remember *Snow White*?)

Careful (minor or major gift)

This gift is in many ways like the opposite of the Accuracy gift. While the accuracy gift allows you to fine tune your attacks to hit an opponent exactly where you want to, the Careful gift allows you to ensure that incoming attacks hit you in the “least bad” place instead of where the attacker would presumably prefer to strike you. Whenever you are struck in missile or melee combat, you can modify the opponent’s D6 location roll by +/-1 (minor gift) or by +/-2 (major gift).

Driven (major gift)

Whatever drives you is in fact a single-minded overriding goal. Your Drive SA can never be changed unless it becomes inapplicable (at which point you automatically lose this gift), but it has a maximum of 6 instead of the usual 5. Additionally, you start with +2 points in that Drive after allocating your SA points at character creation.

Exceptional Hearing (minor gift)

You have keen ears, and can pick up very soft or very distant sounds that most people would miss. You gain +2 to all perception rolls involving hearing.

Glorious Destiny (major gift)

Whether your character is actively aware of it or not, he has a glorious destiny (or terribly dreadful anti-destiny, see p. 46) awaiting him. This gift is mechanically identical to the Driven major gift, but applies to the Destiny Spiritual Attribute.

Accuracy vs. Careful

The Accuracy gift allows a character to fine-tune where he strikes an opponent, while the Careful gift allows that opponent similarly to adjust the specific attack location. So, what happens when an Accurate character strikes a Careful opponent?

If both characters have the same “level” of the gifts, then they cancel out (thus Major Accuracy versus Major Careful means that neither character gets the usual benefit of their gift; this is also true of Minor Accuracy versus Minor Careful). If one character has a major gift and the other has a minor gift, then the minor one is cancelled out and the major one is reduced to minor (thus Major Accuracy versus Minor Careful means that the attacking character gets the benefit of Minor Accuracy only and the defending character loses the use of their gift for that combat). Alternately, Minor Accuracy versus Major Careful means that the attacker cannot use Accuracy at all, while the Defender can only use Careful at its minor “setting”.

Good Reputation

(major or minor gift; altered from original)

A man’s reputation is a funny thing – everybody wants a good one, but few actually enjoy the fame and troubles it can bring; it’s hard to gain a good reputation but easy to lose it. Minor reputations are less impressive and less well known, while major reputations are very impressive and often very well known. Both garner the attention of those who are aware of your reputation (for better or worse).

Those with minor reputations may add +1 die to any roll that directly involves their reputation (particularly Social-based rolls). Additionally, locals will buy drinks and generally be nice to people that they respect. Recognizing someone

with a minor reputation requires an MA roll (each extra success brings more information regarding that person's reputation).

Those with major reputations may add +3 dice to any such reputation-effected rolls, and are likely to be recognized (either by appearance or by name) by almost everybody.

Great Presence (major or minor gift)

Your character is of noble bearing, has strong features, an open and friendly personality (or a dominating one that calls out for respect), or is simply exceptionally self-confident. This gift works in all ways identically to the Alert gift, but it affects the Social Attribute rather than Perception.

Hardy (major or minor gift)

You have an exceptional immune system and your body is fit and healthy. Thanks to this, you are seldom sick, and generally survive the rigors of age a little better than others. This gift works in all ways identically to the Alert gift, but it affects the Health Attribute rather than Perception.

Heir (major or minor gift)

You are heir to a fortune. When your benefactor passes away, you will immediately rise by 1 social rank (you cannot rise above Landed Noble, however) and gain all of the wealth and benefits usually associated with it, including an immediate injection of funds equal to double the usual starting wealth for that rank (your inheritance). If the minor version of this gift is taken, then your benefactor is healthy and unlikely to die at any time soon (although such things can occasionally be arranged...); if taken as a major gift, your benefactor is old, frail and/or sickly.

High Pain Threshold (major or minor gift)

You have an incredible tolerance for pain and are able to "switch it off" and ignore it when

the need arises. The Pain level for all wounds is always considered to be 1 (minor gift) or 2 (major gift) lower for the effect on your combat die pools. You still use the unmodified pain level to determine healing rolls and such, however. Additionally, all combat shock results are decreased by 1 (minor gift) or 2 (major gift) before being applied to your character.

Intellectual (major or minor gift)

Like Einstein, Newton, or even Oppenheimer, your character is one of the great intellectuals of his age. This gift works in all ways identically to the Alert gift, but it affects the Mental Aptitude Attribute rather than Perception.

Jack of all Trades (major gift)

As a wanderer or merely a well-educated intellectual, you have a little bit of knowledge or minor skill in most areas of life. At any time when you are attempting to use a skill that you either do not possess or are a complete beginner, you may roll the skill as if you were a Novice (TN8) instead of using the Beginner (TN9) or





Untrained (TN10) levels. When buying skills, you must still buy them from Beginner rank, even though you will never roll a Skill using the Beginner TN of 9.

Light Sleeper (minor gift)

You have the athletes' ability to wake to full consciousness almost instantly without being groggy. If surprised while asleep, you can go from sleep to full alertness (and full CP) within one round.

Linguist (minor gift; altered from original)

You have an intuition and talent for language. You automatically begin play with an extra three languages (at the same skill level as your native language). Any new languages learned during play take half the usual time to learn and begin at your native language skill level +2 (rather than having to start at the Beginner skill ranking of TN9).

Marksman (major gift)

Years of practice or a spooky natural talent has given you an eagle eye when it comes to the use of missile weapons. Any missile weapon range category of Medium or longer is considered to be one range increment shorter for you. In other words, Medium range is considered to be Short and thus suffers no die penalty; Long range is considered Medium and thus only costs -1 CP; and Extreme range is considered Long and thus only costs -3 CP. Anything beyond Extreme range remains impossible (or -10) to hit, however. See the missile range chart (TFOB, p. 8) for further information.

Nimble (major or minor gift)

You are nimble and agile, and able to move swiftly as well as having excellent hand-eye coordination. This gift works in all ways identically to the Alert gift, but it affects the Agility Attribute rather than Perception.



Patron (major or minor gift)

You, like many artists, explorers and swordsmen, are in the general employ of someone more powerful than you are. In return for your occasional services, they see to it that you eat, are sheltered, and have other resources. Major patrons are often nobility or groups with a great deal of money to burn. Minor patrons are usually lesser nobility or groups, or powerful but stingy nobility. While having a patron is usually a great asset financially, there is often a duty attached (and perhaps even an Oath, see p. 49). Another version of patrons is the feudal system – most knights are indebted through a kind of patronage to their lords.

Quick Hands (minor or major gift)

You are an expert in the rapid deployment of missile weapons. If taken as a minor gift, when trying to reduce the preparation time for any missile weapon, the roll to reduce the time does not need to be made – the reduction is automatic as long as the required MP dice are spent. If Quick Hands is taken as a major gift, all missile

weapon preparation times are automatically 1 round shorter for weapons where the prep time can be decreased (this is specified for each missile weapon individually) and no MP dice need to be spent. However, this doesn't mean that a character can elect to further reduce the prep time – a one round reduction is the best you can ever manage.

Quick Healing (major gift)

This gift facilitates very quick recovery from wounds, doubling the number of dice rolled when healing or recovering from sickness.

Quick Wits (major or minor gift)

Your character has a quick mind and can react (mentally) to almost any situation instantly. This gift works in all ways identically to the Alert gift, but it affects the Wit Attribute rather than Perception.

Resolute (major or minor gift)

Your character is strong willed and unshakable in his determination and drive. This gift works in all ways identically to the Alert gift, but it affects the Willpower Attribute rather than Perception.

Social Butterfly (minor gift)

You are completely at ease in social situations and never feel discomfort or awkwardness. Gain +2 dice on all rolls that use the Social attribute (skill rolls included) when being able to integrate yourself into a crowd or impress large numbers of onlookers would be an advantage.

Steadfast (major gift)

Your word is your bond, and once you have sworn an oath to do (or not do) something, your every will and effort is geared towards fulfilling that duty. This gift is mechanically identical to

the Driven major gift, but applies to an Oath Spiritual Attribute.

Tireless (major or minor gift)

Ever since you can remember, you simply had more staying power than anyone else. Although you may have never been the biggest, the strongest, or the fastest, you're the one who is still standing when everyone else has collapsed from exhaustion. This gift works in all ways identically to the Alert gift, but it affects the Endurance Attribute rather than Perception.

True Compassion (major gift)

Your character is one of those rare few individuals who have a true and deep level of compassion and understanding for others, and this compassion often drives you very strongly. This gift is mechanically identical to the Driven major gift, but applies to the Conscience Spiritual Attribute.

True Faith (major gift)

You are a true believer in, well, whatever it is that you believe in, and you are unshakable in your faith. This gift is mechanically identical to the Driven major gift, but applies to the Faith Spiritual Attribute.

True Leadership (major gift)

While most people can *learn* to lead, others are born with the *power* to lead. Such people in our own world have included George Washington, Alexander the Great, and Jan Sobieski. Those with this gift invariably find themselves in positions of leadership, and almost automatically gain the trust and support of those they lead. In game terms, all rolls that concern leadership or follower loyalty are made at +4 dice.

True Love/True Hatred (major gift)

You either love someone more deeply than



most people will ever know love, or you despise somebody equally strongly. This gift is mechanically identical to the Driven major gift, but applies to a Passion Spiritual Attribute.



Wealthy **(major or minor gift)**

Some people are born into wealth, while others are intelligent or wily enough to earn it. Regardless of your social station, there are usually always those of the same class as you who are wealthier, and those who are poorer. Characters with the Wealthy gift tend to be in that top income bracket for their social class. The Minor version of this gift grants the character double the standard monthly income for his class. The Major version of this gift doubles the starting wealth, and triples the monthly income.

Flaws

Addiction **(minor flaw)**

You have to get a daily fix of whatever it is you're addicted to, whether it's alcohol, gambling, or some other drug. As long as the daily dose is not too much, no major negative effects take place upon or following consumption (use common

sense to determine what "too much" is). Failure to get your daily dose incurs a -1 penalty to ALL rolls until you get it. After a week, the penalty increases to -2 dice, after two weeks to -3 dice. The penalty stays at -3 dice until the fourth week, after which it lowers by 1 die each week. If this process of withdrawal and rehabilitation is successful then the addiction lies dormant, and will only return if the addiction is re-indulged. At any time before, during, or after withdrawal, if the object of addiction is offered, the character must make a Difficulty 3 WP test to resist.

Amnesia **(major flaw)**

Possibly due to an accident, a bump on the head or even an illness, you have no past (or rather, you do but you don't know what it is.) This major flaw should be taken early on in the character creation process, at which time your character sheet is given to your Seneschal. He then determines your character's background, history, skills, proficiencies, gifts/flaws, and attributes (using the priority picks or points you assign to each category). You begin the game not knowing who you are or what you are capable of (and usually waking up with a headache after a big fall, or in a bed after a long illness). This flaw can be an interesting one to role play and it can be a lot of fun discovering things about yourself, but it can also increase the workload on the Seneschal and occasionally lead to revelations and details about your character that you would not have chosen, so whether to take this flaw or not should be seriously considered.

Amputee **(major or minor flaw)**

One of your limbs is badly deformed or missing altogether. The minor version of this flaw refers to a missing hand, while the major version includes a whole arm or any portion of a leg. A missing hand restricts weapon choices to those things that can be strapped on, such as flails and maces (at +2CP activation cost for use) and some shields. Lack of a whole arm precludes

the use of that arm at all (of course!), and causes a -1 penalty to AG. Missing leg parts are extremely difficult to deal with (especially for combat related characters), limiting character movement to crutches or, in some places, to a wooden leg. Generally, a deformed or amputated leg causes a negative die modifier of half the combat pool (and half the Move score as well), assuming a peg leg or cane.

Bad Reputation

(major or minor flaw; altered from original)

It's hard to gain a good reputation, but getting a bad reputation is easy! The hard part is staying alive with this kind of fame. Those with a bad reputation may or may not have earned it – either way they're not very popular. Such infamous characters, while feared, are often hunted by the law, those they've wronged, or those wishing to prove themselves.

The minor version of this flaw costs -2 dice from any roll that the character's bad reputation might affect (mostly Social or other interaction rolls). On the upside, any roll that relies on fear or intimidation of others actually gains +1 die instead. This flaw is best exemplified in well-known brigands and other baddies. Most people will recognize you or your name with an MA test.

The major version of this flaw is reserved for the truly frightening and despicable. Good people abhor such people, and many fear them. Subtract -4 dice from any roll that reputation might affect, or add +2 dice to any roll where such a reputation might be useful (again, fear and intimidation). Most people will recognize you or your name very quickly.

Exact details are left up to the exact reputation and the Seneschal. Nobody will ever be terribly friendly or helpful to the character except through fear. Those that are more powerful than you will show nothing but contempt and disrespect, and may even prove dangerous.

Bleeder

(minor flaw)

You are a hemophiliac and your blood does not clot easily. All Blood Loss results in combat are +1. Additionally, it's harder to get your blood to stop flowing – any First Aid rolls to stop your bleeding have a Difficulty of 2.

Bloodlust/Troublemaker

(major or minor flaw; altered from original)

Instead of avoiding trouble, you look for it; instead of sneaking past the enemy, you do anything you can to hurt them as you pass. The minor version of this flaw could easily be called “troublemaker:” you like to get into and cause trouble – especially fights. You never forget an enemy and find it difficult to forgive those who cross you. This is a common flaw amongst thugs and some blade slingers. The major version of this flaw is much more serious: you have the same troublemaking tendencies and unforgiving spirit as above, but you go for the kill. You fight to kill, you never let an enemy live (not if you can help it, anyway), and have little respect for human life. It's important to note that this doesn't mean you're an unkind person – you probably still love your family and friends... you just have a big problem with your enemies (both making and dealing with them). If you ever need to resist an urge to start trouble, kill an enemy, etc, you need to pass a test. Make a WP test with a Difficulty of 3 (minor flaw) or 5 (major flaw) to swallow your pride and not start anything.

Chicken

(major flaw; altered from original)

You're a gutless yellowbelly momma's boy coward. At the first sign of trouble you either run, or wet yourself (or maybe both!). You can't handle torture or even threats, and you give in easily. Even trying to be a little brave calls for a WP test (the Seneschal will tell you the Difficulty required, but it will usually be 3-5). This flaw is much better if roleplayed rather than relying on die rolls, however.

Compulsion (minor flaw)

You have a serious compulsion for something, be it cleanliness, lying, pilfering shiny things, enjoying carnal pleasures, and so on. You must fulfill this compulsion whenever and whenever possible. If you have an opportunity to do so and you do not, you suffer -1 to all rolls for the following day as you agonize over it (this penalty is not cumulative).

Enemy (major or minor flaw)

Somehow, you have made an enemy at some point in your past. This person is working against you and seeks your downfall. Your enemy will not constantly harass you, but you will come across his works on occasion and at times, he will manage to make your life very difficult. As a minor flaw, your Enemy is a single person with the same resources and approximate abilities as you. The major version of this flaw, however, pits a group of people or an organization against you.

Evil Twin (major or minor flaw)

They say that everybody has a double. In your case, they're actually right – and he's a real bastard. Somewhere in the same geographical area, there is someone who looks exactly like you and he is nasty. If taken as a minor flaw, your Evil Twin either doesn't know of you or has no particular reason to dislike you, but you will fall foul of their misdeeds occasionally. If taken as a major flaw, your Evil Twin knows of you, hates you, and is actively working against you.

Greed (major flaw)

"The love of money is the root of all evil". You love money, wealth, power, or some other form of personal gain. This love and obsession is often overpowering, leading you to cross even those that you love or fear in search of glory, recognition or cash. Any time you

are offered money, power, or whatever your obsession is, make a WP test. The number of successes required varies depending on the risk and the amount of reward involved. This holds true for offers of money and wealth "out in the open", be it in your friend's bag or a dragon's lair.

Lecherousness (minor flaw; altered from original)

Some have a problem with gambling, others with drink; your problem is women (or men, depending on your gender and/or preference). Examples abound in literature of men easily seduced or distracted by beautiful members of the opposite sex (a certain British super-spy is the classic example). Anytime someone of your gender preference makes a pass, no matter how subtle or aggressive, make a WP



test. The test's Difficulty is determined by how attractive this person is, but may also be affected by things such as how long since your last score and how aggressive the pass is. Resisting someone with the Ugly flaw is Difficulty 1. Resisting "average" people is

Difficulty 3, those with a minor gift Beauty of Legends is Difficulty 5, and those with a major gift Beauty of Legends is Difficulty 8.

Lingering Injury **(minor or major flaw)**

Choose a hit location (this is a specific location such as the left shoulder, right forearm or pelvis; do not select an attack zone). That location was wounded at some point in the past and you still have problems with it on occasion. A minor Lingering Injury flaw means that any wounds to that location always increase by +2 pain, as the injury flares up. A major Lingering Injury suffers the same +2 pain penalty, with a minimum final Pain result of 6.

Little **(minor flaw)**

Some Siehe, such as dwarves, are smaller than most people are. This makes it difficult to blend within most social circles, and limits many physical activities. Dwarf-sized characters (around 3-4 feet tall) fight as if their weapon was 2 length categories shorter (including their fists!) when fighting larger persons.

Nearsighted **(major or minor flaw)**

You are either near- or far-sighted, or you have good eyesight in one eye but have lost vision in the other one. In any case, your vision is lacking (and glasses have not yet been invented). If the minor version of this flaw is taken, you suffer a -2 to all Perception rolls involving vision. As a major flaw, you additionally suffer -1 on all melee combat pools and -3 on all missile combat pools.

Obese **(major or minor flaw)**

Those weighing significantly more than “average” for their height are constantly burdened by additional encumbrance. See TROS, p. 93 or p. 70 of this book for further information as to the penalties associated with obesity.

Overconfident **(major or minor flaw)**

Some people just don’t know when they’re outclassed – others don’t care; both suffer from the overconfident flaw. Characters with overconfidence have a bit too much self-esteem – big britches as it were. This flaw may be either major or minor at the Seneschal’s option; it simply depends on what the players are like. Many players, whether they have this flaw or not, will exhibit a good deal of overconfidence – it’s a minor flaw for them. Others are a bit more prudent and must work to be overconfident – it’s a major flaw for them. Either way, this flaw must be roleplayed to the hilt. If a roll is ever called for (we don’t encourage it, but sometimes you have to), make a WP test with a Difficulty of 4 to stand down or be a little humbled.

Phobia **(major or minor flaw; altered from original)**

Some people, no matter how tough they are in other situations, are deathly afraid of some things. Whether it’s closed spaces, open spaces, darkness, light, snakes, rats, the sight of blood, weapons, magic (a debilitating degree of superstition), something causes your character to go weak in the knees, faint, or vomit. When combined with Rage, this flaw can cause substantial problems.

The minor version of this flaw causes people to act irrationally, suffer from sickness or weakness, and incur a -1 penalty to most rolls (at Seneschal’s discretion) when in the presence of their phobia. The major version is simply worse, causing -3 dice to all appropriate rolls in the presence of the phobia, or -1 if the character even thinks the object of their phobia *could* be nearby.

Poor **(major or minor flaw)**

In every social class, there are the downtrodden and the unfortunate - those who were sadly born to the wrong house or who have perhaps suffered a catastrophic downturn in fortunes. Characters with the minor version of the Poor flaw start play

with only half their starting wealth and earn half the usual monthly income on an ongoing basis. Characters who take the major version of this flaw are totally penniless – no starting wealth and no ongoing income, although you still get whatever “social” benefits are normally deserved by one of your class (except that everyone knows you are a pauper). A character with a social class lower than Freeman (i.e. Peasants and Slaves) cannot take this flaw.

Rage/Bad Temper

(major or minor flaw; altered from original)

The Rage flaw makes it difficult for one to control his actions when frustrated or under pressure. Such people often “explode” and go berserk, lashing out physically or verbally at anyone or anything nearby.

In its minor incarnation rage forces one to act out against the source of the frustration in some way or another, be it physically, verbally, or even subtly- it need not be loud or even violent (although it generally is), but it must be immediate. Those wishing to keep their cool must make a WP test with a Difficulty of 4; alternatively, one can simply walk out or in some other way distance themselves from the source of the frustration by rolling with a Difficulty of 2.

The major version of Rage forces the character to act out against the source of frustration immediately and violently. Such characters enter a berserk rage, attacking and perhaps killing anything that gets in their path. Enraged characters can only come out of the Rage by achieving a total of 10 successes on an extended WP check (keep rolling each round and accumulate the successes). Those wishing to keep their cool need 6 successes on a straight WP check; or alternatively 4 successes to walk away and distance themselves. While in a major Rage, characters have an effective +1 on their ST and TO scores, but must always press the attack and take the role of aggressor whenever possible and must use their entire CP pool every round.

Shy

(minor flaw)

You are painfully shy in social situations and dislike being the focus of anybody’s attention. You suffer a penalty of -2 dice (minimum 1 die) on all rolls (including skill rolls) using the Social attribute.

Skeletons in the Closet

(major or minor flaw)

You have a dark secret in your past that would prove very embarrassing (minor flaw) or potentially life threatening (major flaw) if anyone ever found out about it. The details of your secret should be determined with (and must be approved by) the Seneschal.

Sleep Disorder

(major or minor flaw; altered from original)

You have a problem with sleeping. Either you sleep deep and long, needing about 12 hours of sleep a day to feel comfortable (minor flaw), or you have difficulty sleeping well and thus often suffer from major fatigue (major flaw). Characters who have difficulty sleeping well should make a Per Test every night. The Difficulty is 4 in most buildings, but 2-3 in most camps, and noisy areas require only 1 success. Succeeding this roll means that the character has been disturbed too much and suffers a -1 die penalty to all rolls the following day. This penalty applies until the character gets at least one night of good sleep. Failure means a night of tolerable rest and a botch means sound, baby-like sleep.

Telegraphed Techniques

(major or minor flaw)

Either because of substandard training or perhaps just a lack of imagination, in combat, you tend to stick to a few simple routines and often repeat them. Anyone trying to use the Read Body Language skill against you in combat has +2 bonus dice on their skill check. Additionally, after a foe has fought you for 5 rounds (or studies you fight for 5 rounds) they gain a +1 (minor flaw) or +2 (major flaw) die

bonus to their CP when fighting against you thereafter, as they can semi-predict what you are going to do.

Tormented **(major or minor flaw)**

Every person has his own “demons”, but you haven’t come to terms with yours. What’s more, they haunt you regularly. You suffer from “flashbacks”, nightmares, and constant guilt. Your combined Passion(s) and Drive SA’s can never exceed 7 points total with the minor version of this flaw, or 3 points for the major version.

Ugly **(major or minor flaw)**

Something about you just bothers people: your face. This flaw is always taken in relation to those that you are with – it is assumed to be relative to humans first, other races second. Thus, a troll would almost definitely have this Flaw when in contact with humans, but it would probably not be a problem with other trolls.

The minor version of this flaw causes a -1 die penalty to any roll (particularly Social rolls) that involves appearance. The major version inflicts a -3 die penalty to all rolls.

Gift or Flaw

Berserker **(major gift or major flaw)**

The Berserker gift may be selected either as a major gift or as a major flaw. In both cases, it provides the following benefits:

Whenever a character spends at least ten minutes concentrating and focusing his breathing before a combat, he may enter a berserk rage. While berserk, all Blood Loss results are reduced by 4, all Shock is halved, and the character only receives 1/3 of the Pain die loss (remember to record the actual pain

received, as this is used later to determine how debilitating the wound really is). However, the character may not be wearing any armor heavier than AV2 leather. Additionally, the character may only ever make attacks, and may not declare defensive moves except duck & weave (this makes his only possible defense an evasive attack, a simultaneous block/strike, or a duck & weave). The character must always attack the nearest opponent, even one who has surrendered or is running away. A strike that instantly kills the berserker (such as most level 5 wounds to the head or torso) will kill the character immediately unless the berserker can pass a Difficulty 5 WP test. This roll must from that point on be made at the start of every combat round, or the character instantly drops dead. At the end of the combat, apply full Pain penalties, and of course, if the character has been resisting a mortal wound through WP rolls he will then die.

The main difference between taking this as a gift or a flaw lies in the control the character has over his or her berserk rage. When taken as a gift, the character may elect to end the berserk rage at any time, although he will need a minute to recover for every combat round he was berserk (so don’t end it while there are still opponents around!). If this is taken as a flaw, the character must succeed at a Difficulty 5 WP test at the end of combat, or continue to fight – attacking innocents or even companions as he struggles to gain control of his berserk rage. This WP roll must be made at the start of every combat round (the required number of successes reduces by one each round, however) until the berserker finally regains control and stops fighting. Additionally, when taken as a flaw the berserk rage may be sparked at any time, even without concentrating on it. Whenever a character takes a wound in combat while not raging, he must get as many successes as the Pain Level of the wound on a WP test or immediately enter a berserk rage with all of the bonuses and penalties described above.



Skills and Attribute Checks

After combat and spiritual attributes, the skill system is the most fundamental mechanic present in *The Riddle of Steel*. It's been two years now since the TROS rule book was released, and we've put out a couple of supplements in that time covering combat options and beasts, so we thought it was time the skill system had a bit of a facelift too. This section presents some optional clarifications and alterations to the skill system that help tie it into the combat and other resolution systems better, and iron out some of the foibles of the system. Additionally, the attribute check system we put into the original rules doesn't resemble anything else in TROS, so we've ditched it, offering a better system here which is married to the skill system. Everything presented here is optional, of course, and much of it can be mix-and-matched with the existing system in whatever combination suits your own campaigns, but we recommend adapting all of the following guidelines for a smoother and more streamlined TROS experience.

Of course, anything not specifically mentioned here still holds true from the main rulebook, and Spiritual Attributes – as always – can be added directly to skill and even attribute checks when they apply.

Buying, Managing, and Rolling Skills

One of the oddities of the skills system in the standard TROS rules is that they work so differently from the combat system. In combat, you count successes, while with Skill rolls, you're really only looking for a single success unless you're trying to beat someone else's number of successes. Additionally, there are too many ways for the Seneschal to alter the difficulty with no real guidelines on which should be used. In an attempt to clarify all of this, we have made some minor changes to the skill system, as follows:

First, there are no longer any TN's higher than 10. A completely untrained skill is considered to be TN10 when that skill is rolled. Through training (SA expenditure, see below) skills can be improved through each of the ranks listed below, right down to Master (which gives TN4 on skill checks). On your character sheet, it's probably easiest to list skills with their TN (Sailing: TN5 as opposed to Sailing: Journeyman), but that's entirely up to you.

Skill Defaults

In the main rulebook (TROS, p. 31+), different skills have defaults ranging from 9 up to 13 in some cases. Under this altered system, the default for all skills is 10. Skills can still default from each other, but this default can never be any worse than 10).

Untrained (TN10)
Beginner (TN9)
Novice (TN8)
Apprentice (TN7)
Competent (TN6)
Journeyman (TN5)
Master (TN4)

Skills can only be improved through the expenditure of SA's. For all the regular skill levels, it costs 2 SA points to improve a skill by 1 rank. If you are using the Grandmaster skill levels as discussed in the sidebar on the next page, it costs 3 SA points plus the current level of Grandmaster to improve a skill past the rank of Master. To improve from Master to First Rank Grandmaster thus costs 3 SA points, but to improve from fourth level Grandmaster to fifth level would cost 3+4 or 7 SA points. Skills can only be improved one rank per session.

Rolling Skills

When a character makes a skill roll, they pick a relevant Attribute and roll that many dice against the TN specified by their skill. Characters who



Grandmaster Skill Levels

Although Master is technically the highest level obtainable in a skill, it should always be possible to get just a little bit better at whatever it is that you do best. As such, it's possible to train your skills even higher than Master – the Grandmaster levels. At Grandmaster, the TN of the skill check remains the same (TN4) but you gain one extra die in your pool to roll it whenever you make a check against that skill. At second rank Grandmaster, you gain two extra dice, and so on.

First Rank Grandmaster

(TN4 + 1 extra die)

Second Rank Grandmaster

(TN4 + 2 extra dice)

Third Rank Grandmaster

(TN4 + 3 extra dice)

(and so on)

have purchased Grandmaster ranks in a skill keep the TN at 4 but each rank of Grandmaster adds one die to the roll.

Titus is attempting to use his Climbing skill (in which he is ranked Competent) to climb a cliff face. Because it's a relatively short climb, the Seneschal determines that the governing attribute will be Titus' Agility (on a much longer climb, his Endurance might have been used instead). Because his Agility is 5, Titus will roll 5 dice against a TN of 6. If Titus was a second ranked Grandmaster in climbing, he would have rolled 7 dice (5 for his Agility plus 2 because he is a second ranked grandmaster) against the Master/Grandmaster TN of 4.

Die Pool Modifiers

At the Seneschal's discretion, die pools may be modified by tool use where a skill allows it (the use of ropes and climbing claws for a Climbing check, lockpicks when attempting to use the Lockpicking skill, and so on). Superior tools add +1 die, while Exceptional tools add +2. Conversely, substandard tools penalize the die pool by -1 die, and inferior (or improvised) tools

Improving skills through use

In the original skill system, it was possible to improve a skill through play, using the three check boxes beside each skill on the character sheet. It didn't make sense to us (or our fans) that skills could improve in this manner while Attributes, Combat Proficiencies, Sorcerous skills and the like could not. As such, we have removed that as a default improvement system – TROS is a game all about your passions and goals driving you forward and helping you improve yourself, and thus skills, like everything else on the character sheet, are only able to be improved through your SA's.

However, if you like the old way of improving skills, far be it from us to tell you that you can't use it. Every time a character uses a skill *under duress*, give them a tick on that skill on the character sheet (we suggest that you award no more than one tick per session). Once a character has amassed three ticks, let them make a roll to see if the skill improves. We suggest they roll a number of dice equal to the TN their skill usually grants, and they need 3 successes at TN8. Thus to improve from Novice to Apprentice, you would roll 8 dice at TN8 and need 3 successes, but to improve from Journeyman to Master you only get to roll 5 dice and you still require 3 successes. This makes it progressively harder and harder to get better without making it impossible. Note that at Master and Grandmaster ranks, you will still only roll 4 dice – extra dice from the Grandmaster bonus do not count).



by -2. Penalties for substandard or inferior tools only apply where tools are required, of course.

Additionally, it is often possible to gain extra dice on a skill check by taking extra time - doubling the time taken to perform a skill gains +1 die, while tripling the time adds +2 dice. Note, this only applies in situations where taking extra time to perform a skill would be an advantage, thus it is likely to apply on a Research or Search roll, but is less likely to apply on a Dancing or Orate check. Conversely, having to do a “rush job” on a skill penalizes the die pool – at the Seneschal’s discretion characters can knock one third off the usual time to perform a skill for a penalty of -1 die, or halve it for -2 dice.

Condition	Modifier
Exceptional tools	+2 dice
Superior tools	+1 die
Standard tools	-
Substandard tools	-1 die
Inferior (or improvised) tools	-2 dice
Spend triple the usual time	+2 dice
Spend double the usual time	+1 die
Spend 2/3rds of the usual time	-1 die
Spend half of the usual time	-2 dice

Petre’ and Andre’ are thugs attempting to sneak into the house of a man foolish enough to cross their master. While Andre’ keeps watch, Petre’ attempts to pick the lock. He is a Journeyman at Lockpicking and has an Agility of 6, so he will be rolling 6 dice against a TN of 5. The Seneschal tells him that the lock is a particularly complicated one and he will require ten minutes to pick it, needing 4 successes. Luckily, Petre’ has a set of Superior lockpicks, which will add +1 die to his pool, and he elects to slow down and take his time over the attempt as well, spending 20 minutes instead of 10 and thus gaining another bonus die. Petre’ therefore rolls 8 dice against TN5, and gets 4 successes - exactly what he needed! With the house infiltrated, he and Andre’ slip inside to teach the target the error of his ways...

How many Successes are Needed?

There are two types of skill checks – simple and contested checks.

Simple Checks

A simple check is any check that is not being contested by another person. The Seneschal determines the difficulty of the check and the character rolls, trying to get at least as many successes as the difficulty. This number is generally in the range 1-5, but on rare occasions, higher numbers may be called for.

Difficulty	Number of successes needed
Simple	1
Average/Default	2
Tricky	3
Difficult	4
Hard	5
(Extremely hard)	6+



If the character achieves the required number of successes, then the skill check is successful; otherwise, it has failed. If the character rolls no successes at all, and has one or more 1's, then the roll is a botch, and the Seneschal should adjudicate accordingly.

Titus is still attempting to climb the cliff. Because of the steepness of the slope, the Seneschal determines that the base difficulty of the climb is 2. However, the route Titus chose is unusually smooth (his brother goaded Titus into trying it the hard way), so the Seneschal adds +2 to the difficulty. This means that Titus will need 4 successes on his Climbing Skill roll to successfully climb the cliff.

Contested Checks

For a contested check, both characters make their individual skill rolls and compare the number of successes both to their own personal difficulty and also to the number of successes the opponent had. It's necessary both to succeed, and also to beat the number of successes of the opponent in order to win. The easiest way to handle it is to subtract the difficulty from the number of successes for each contestant, and then compare the total successes each has left.

If one character has more successes than the other then the victor of the contest is obvious. If both have the same number of successes, then the victor is the "defender" in situations where one skill is being used actively against another (sneak versus spot, for example), or the person with the better natural skill in situations where skills are being used in competition (e.g. two characters trying to out-swim each other). In this case, if the skill rankings are identical then the character with the better governing attribute wins the tie.

Titus is trying to climb the cliff before his brother, Faustus, can do so. Titus has an Agility of 5 and a TN of 6 (because he is a Competent Climber) and he has a Difficulty of 4 as mentioned earlier. Faustus has an Agility of only 4, but he is a Master Climber (TN 4) and he picked a better route, so his Difficulty is only 2. They both roll, and Titus gets 4 successes while Faustus gets 3. Titus needed 4 successes just to climb the cliff (which he has done) so those are subtracted from his successes leaving zero. Faustus needed 2 successes to climb the cliff, which are subtracted from his total leaving 1. Comparing the remainders, Faustus has one success more than Titus and has thus successfully climbed

Evening the Odds

The system presented here, requiring a number of successes to make a skill check works out pretty well from a percentage perspective. There's an even better way to smooth out the probability curve, but it involves a lot more die-rolling for the Seneschal, which is why we have presented it here as an optional rule.

If you want to make your skill checks even smoother in probabilities, then instead of the player trying to achieve a set number of successes, every roll should be treated as a contested roll, with the Seneschal rolling a number of dice equal to double the difficulty, against a flat TN of 6. If the player gets equal or greater number of successes than the Seneschal then the skill check has succeeded, if he gets no successes (even if the Seneschal also rolled no successes) or rolls fewer successes than the Seneschal, then the skill check has failed. Although it means a little extra die rolling for the Seneschal, we prefer this option as it means that players always have a chance (however slim it may be) to make any roll. If the difficulty is 4 and you only have 2 dice to roll, you can't possibly succeed under the standard system, but with the alternate system you can (however unlikely it may be that the Seneschal will get fewer successes than you with his eight dice...)

the cliff faster, winning the contest. If Titus had rolled only three successes, he would not have even been successful climbing the cliff, let alone beating his brother – that's what letting your opponent pick your route does for you...

Extended Skill Rolls

Both types of skill checks (simple and contested) can be made as Extended checks. Extended checks are used when a character has the luxury to devote time to a skill, rolling and accumulating successes until he achieves the desired amount. In this case, the Seneschal will specify a total number of required successes and how often checks can be made, and the character rolls, accumulating successes with each roll until he reaches the desired amount or botches a roll. If any roll is botched then the entire check has failed and must be started over from scratch; a failure on any particular roll simply means no progress was made during that period.

Benedict is researching ancient magical rituals while hidden in the temple library. The Seneschal instructs him to make a Simple Extended Research roll, and informs him that he will need 10 successes to find the information he is seeking. Each roll will represent one hour of research, but he only has just over five hours (and thus 5 rolls only) until the monks return from their services, at which time he will have to flee whether he has found the information or not. The first roll is made, achieving 4 successes. The second roll is a failure, and Benedict spends a frustrating hour accidentally reading an ancient cookbook. On the third roll, another 3 successes are rolled, and at the fourth roll he makes a further 4 successes, which exceeds the 10 successes he required. After 4 hours of research, Benedict has found the book he needs and he slips out of the library with it, with just over an hour to spare.

Contested Extended skill checks can be made also, perhaps to see which of two characters can successfully perform a task faster.

Crafting Skill Rolls

One common use of Extended skill rolls is when a character is attempting to use a craft skill. The Seneschal will determine the number of successes needed to perform the crafting project, and how long each roll might take. Thus, a tailor might roll Wit/Craft: Clothier every 3 hours while making a pair of trousers, requiring 8 successes to finish. There is one extra wrinkle to consider when Extended skill rolls are being used for crafting, however – determining the quality of the completed item. Crafting rolls are usually made with the Wit attribute.

During the series of skill rolls to complete a crafting project, the character should keep track of the number of successes he achieved on each roll. If every roll had at least one success, then the project has been completed normally. However, if any of the rolls were failures, then the character has created a substandard item (or done a substandard job, in the case of manual labor or similar craft skills). Conversely, if the character rolled at least 3+ successes on each roll, then the item is of superior quality, or exceptional quality if 5+ successes were achieved on every roll. At any time during the crafting, a character may choose to spend a single drama or relevant SA point to re-roll any single roll, perhaps to avoid a failure or maintain a 3+ or 5+ minimum roll. Drama and/or SA points cannot be spent in the case of a botch however – if a character botches then the entire crafting check has failed and half of the raw materials are used up in the process.

Condition	Quality
5+ successes on every roll	Exceptional
3+ successes on every roll	Superior
1+ successes on every roll	Standard
No successes on one or more rolls	Substandard
Entire roll failed due to a botch	Inferior (or nothing – Seneschal's call)

While crafting, characters may take more time or use better quality tools and materials to improve their die pools, as outlined in the Die Pool Modifiers section on p. 30.

James' character Aesbiorn the shipwright is working on a mighty longship for his Thane. The Seneschal informs him that he will need to accumulate 20 successes on an Extended Crafting roll, and that each roll will represent 1 month of work. Aesbiorn is a 2nd rank Grandmaster with a Wit of 6, so James will be rolling 8 dice (Wit 6 + 2 for the Grandmaster skill levels) against a TN of 4 each "month". For the first roll, James rolls 3 successes. The next roll is 2 successes, followed by 3 again, then 5, and then 4. Aesbiorn has accumulated 17 successes from 5 months of work, and anticipates only one more month of effort. However, James' next roll is a failure. Although he could choose to simply carry on and roll again for the following month (the failed roll simply counts as month of effort that gathered no successes), James is aware that having rolled a failure will mean that the longship will be substandard in some small way, possibly displeasing the Thane. James elects to spend a point of Drama and re-rolls the failed roll, getting 3 successes, which totals 20, which are exactly what he needed. After 6 months of work, the Thane's ship is finally completed. The ship is of standard quality, but it could have been better. If James had chosen to spend a point of Drama or an SA point to re-roll the month where he only got 2 successes (and had managed to get 3 or more on the re-roll, which with 8 dice against TN4 is likely) then all of his rolls would have been 3's or higher. The ship would therefore have been of superior quality

Extra Degrees of Success?

As long as a character achieves the required number of successes (based on the difficulty) then the skill or attribute check is successful. However, any extra successes over this required number could be considered "extra gravy" allowing a character to complete the

Difficult Crafting

The Seneschal might decide that some items require more than 3/5 successes for a superior/exceptional result, if it would be even more difficult to craft an item of high quality. As an example, see crafting fine weapons on p. 99).

skill in record time, or with an extra degree of proficiency. It is the Seneschal's decision as to what extra successes might mean, but as a guideline:

Number of extra successes	Result
0 (but the result was a success)	The check is successful
1-2	The check is successful but with a little extra flair
3-4	The check is exceptionally successful, impressing onlookers
5+	The character has outdone himself and has displayed clear excellence in the skill or task at hand

Skill Specializations

It is also possible for characters to specialize within a skill. Specialization involves picking a particular aspect of a skill and focusing attention on training that aspect. An example might be specializing in "Combination Locks" within the Lock Picking skill, a certain language in the "Secret Languages" skill, knowledge of a particular city or town as a specialization of the "Streetwise" skill, or even using Animal Guise against a specific kind of animal.

Specializations can be purchased at any point during an adventure, but the same skill cannot have more than one specialization purchased for it (or the same specialization improved more than once) within the same session. A



specialization costs 2 SA points and grants +1 die to all Skill rolls involving the specialization. This specialization may be improved to +2 dice for another 2 SA points (total: 4) and again to +3 (the maximum) for a final extra 2 SA points. In other words, the total cost in SA points is double the bonus level of the specialization.

Any specialization that the Seneschal agrees to may be purchased, and as such they may be as broad or as narrow in scope as the Seneschal cares to limit. This can be an occasional cause

of contention as some skills are narrower than others by definition, but this should not mean that a single specialization can easily cover most uses of the skill. As a general guideline, any specialization that can be applied to more than one out of every three (or so) uses of a skill is probably too broad, while any specialization that can only be used every fifth or sixth time a skill is rolled is probably too narrow.

Luis is a petty thief who is Competent (TN6) at using the Disguise skill, but he specializes

Sample Specializations

Listed here are some sample specializations for many of the skills, to get you thinking along the right lines.

Acting: Stage Acting, Impersonation

Ancient Language: Each specific language would be a specialization

Animal Handling, Herding: Each type of animal is a specialization

Boating: Each broad class of boat is a specialization

Breaking and Entering: Forced Entries, Security Habits

Climbing: Ropes, Rock Faces

Combat/Weapon Art: Each weapon school would be considered a specialization

Diplomacy: Court Diplomacy, International Relations

Disguise: Various different classes of disguise or even specific disguises

Farming: Growing crops, Managing herds

Folk Lore: Each region's folklore could be a specialization

Games: Each game is a specialization

Heraldry: Each nation is a specialization

Hunting/Trapping: Large beasts, small game

Intimidate: Brute Force, Insinuation, and Threats

Law: Each nation's law is a specialization

Lock Picking: Combination locks, key locks, bar locks

Navigation: By the Stars, By Landmarks, Knowing true North

Panhandling: Entertaining, Faking Injury

Riding: Each class of horse (Palfrey, Destrier, etc; see OBAM for details)

Sailing: Each class of sailing ship is a specialization

Sneak: Urban or Woodland

Strategy: Large battle strategy, Personal conflict strategy

Streetwise: Each region or city is a specialization

Style Analysis: Each school could be considered a specialization

Survival: Each type of terrain (desert, arctic, mountainous) is a specialization

Theology: The most obvious specialization is one's own faith

Tracking: Tracking men, tracking beasts

Traps: Each class of traps is its own specialization (bear traps, pressure plates, etc)

(with 2 ranks) in disguising himself as a young girl – useful for spying on potential pickpocket victims while pretending to be a poor young waif selling posies! If he has a Wit of 4, he can always roll 4 dice against a TN of 6 to work up a new disguise, but he instead gets 6 dice (4 +2 for his specialization) whenever he tries to disguise himself as a young girl.

Specializations at Character Creation

At the Seneschal's option, characters may purchase skill specializations at Character Creation. When the character reaches the step where skills may be improved or purchased according to the character's MA attribute, each MA point may instead be used to purchase a +1 specialization in a skill rather than improving the skill one level.

Skill Defaults as Specializations

At the Seneschal's option, some skills could even be used to give specialization-like bonuses to other skills. Where a skill is listed as having a default (e.g. Boating defaulting from Sailing) and where the character is not *using* the default (because they have actual skill levels in both skills), the Seneschal may award 1-2 bonus dice on a roll where the character is especially skilled in the defaulting skill. Generally, any skill level of Apprentice or better in a highly complimentary skill could award +1 die, while a skill level of Master (or Grandmaster) could award a bonus +2 dice.

Kiera is making an Herbalist Skill check to identify some plants she has found. Because Kiera also happens to be a Journeyman in the Farmer skill (which Herbalist can default from, although she is not using that Default since she has actual ranks in the Herbalist skill) the Seneschal awards a bonus +1 die to her die pool for the check.

Attribute Checks

Attribute checks should be handled just like skill checks. Whenever a default attribute check is required (which shouldn't be terribly

often as there's usually a skill to handle most situations, but now and then a character will want to do something that calls for pure Strength or pure Health, or whatever), then simply determine the difficulty as outlined above, and have the character roll the attribute against a TN of 6. At the Seneschal's option, he can roll it as a contest (see the sidebar 'evening the odds') or simply require the character to achieve the number of successes specified by the difficulty.

New Skills

Below, you will find a number of new skills that we feel are presently missing from *The Riddle of Steel* (along with the Language and Research skills, which actually were missing from the main book, but shouldn't have been!) Along with each skill is its description, the common attributes that are used with it, and its defaults.

Appraisal

The Appraisal skill is used whenever a character needs to determine the value or condition of something, or study minutiae in various situations. The skill can therefore be useful in a criminal sense (MA + Appraisal to determine the value of pilfered items, the difficulty depending on how rare or old/damaged the item is), in an economic sense (Wit + Appraisal to determine on-the-fly how much of a good deal the slightly shady salesman is really offering you) or even socially (Soc + Appraisal to study and calculate the underlying tensions and factions in a courtly environment).

Defaults:

If used in a courtly manner, the Seneschal may allow Appraisal to default from Etiquette (Court) at +2. When used for a craft skill, Appraisal can default from the skill at a penalty of +1 *for that skill only* (thus a smith is always able to Appraise smith goods, a tailor is always able to Appraise clothing, and so on).

Sample Specializations:

Jewelry, Works of Art, Coinage, Emotions



Forgery

The Forgery skill involves extremely fine and delicate work with the hands. It allows a character not only to make exact duplicates of documents, but also to carefully carve out a duplicate of a wax seal, copy signatures and personal handwriting, and so on. This skill is usually governed by the Wit attribute. It is possible to copy a document even if the language it is written in cannot be read or understood, but the character must be able to read & write – as such, the Forgery skill can never be of a higher ranking (i.e. lower TN) than the Read & Write skill of the character.

Defaults:

The Forgery skill can default from Read & Write at +5

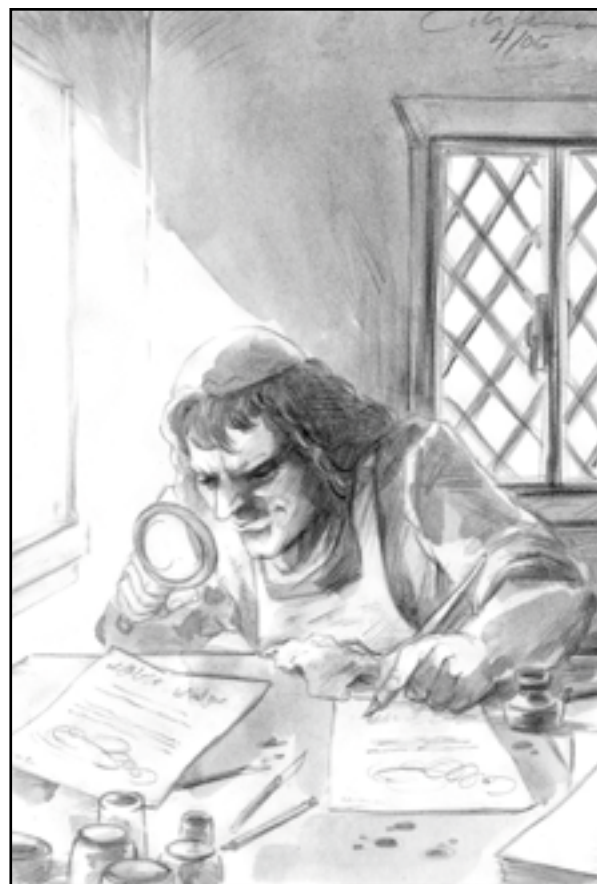
Sample Specializations:

Letters of Correspondence, Wax Seals, Official Documents

Language

For some reason, we managed to leave out the actual description of the Language skill in the main rulebook. Each language or dialect should be taken as its own Language skill, but languages that are very close or which are regional or belief-based variations of each other should be able to default at a standard penalty of +2 or +3 depending on how close the variations are (Italian and Spanish might default to each other at +2, for example).

Actual skill rolls for languages should not be called for very often. As a rule, Beginner or Novice skill levels (TN 8 or 9) will require a skill roll at the start of a conversation with another speaker of the language to be able to speak it at all. An Apprentice can carry on basic conversations without rolling unless difficult words come up. As soon as a character is at least Competent (TN6 or better) in a language, he will never need to make skill rolls unless he is trying to copy specific accents or pass himself off as a



native of the language. It is not possible to make Untrained rolls for languages – if you don't know it then you don't know it and no amount of "try, try again" is going to help.

Research

Research is another skill whose description was missing from the original book. This skill governs the ability to pore through large amounts of information and pull out the salient points. It also has potential martial and skill applications – the ability to research old fighting tomes or instructional guides can be invaluable for discovering useful tidbits of information, potentially discovering new areas for skill specializations or combat techniques. The research skill is usually rolled with the Wit or MA attributes.

Defaults:

The research skill can default from some relevant Craft or Knowledge skills at +2 or +3, and from the Stewardship skill at +4.

Search

The Search skill is used whenever a character is making an active search of an area; be it searching through a set of drawers for clues, looking for a particular book in a library, checking the dusty floor for trapdoors, and so on. For a casual check to see if a character just happens to notice something, a standard Per roll should be made. The governing attribute is usually Per, but Wit might be substituted at the Seneschal's option if the character is looking for something that has been intentionally hidden.

Defaults:

In some circumstances, Search could be defaulted from Hunting/Tracking at +3.

Sample Specializations:

Concealed doorways, secret compartments.

Seduction

The Seduction skill is used whenever a character attempts to persuade another person using their own sexuality. This may or may not be intended to actually seduce the target. The governing attribute is usually Soc, but might be Wit or even WP depending on the circumstances.

Defaults:

The Seduction skill defaults from Sincerity at +2

Sample Specializations:

Flattery, sexual innuendo

Weather-Sense

The Weather-Sense skill involves the ability to predict the weather based on small signs and clues that most people would miss. The governing attribute is either Wit or (more likely) MA. The further ahead the character tries to predict the weather, the higher the Seneschal should set the difficulty.

Defaults:

At the Seneschal's option, the Weather-Sense skill can default from Hunting/Tracking at +3.

Skill Packets

Here is a selection of new skill packets we thought should be included in the game, along with a reprint of the packets from the original book and *Of Beasts and Men*. We chose to reprint all of the original packets so that it was possible to reference all of the packets in one place rather than having to refer to three different books. Additionally, we have updated a couple of the packets (particularly Swordsman) which we thought were a little under- or over-powered the first time around, and we've added the new skills listed above into relevant packages that should contain them, with the appropriate modifiers. Remember that a negative modifier is good (because the skill TN starts that many points below the packet value), while a positive modifier is not as good, because it means the skill TN starts that many points higher than the packet value.

In addition, skill packets do not necessarily map to a specific profession or occupation (although many do). They are instead designed to group common skills someone would have learned during their life leading up to the point at which the game started. Thus, it's possible to have skill packets such as "beggar", even though it isn't a profession, because someone who spends his days shuffling through the streets, panhandling and (when the opportunity arises) stealing from others is going to learn a certain set of skills.





Academic

Ancient Languages
Read and Write -1
Orate
Research
Etiquette -1
Any 4 Knowledge, Language, or Lore skills
Search

Assassin

Herbalist -2
Acting -1
Camouflage
Climbing +1
Disguise -1
Lock Picking +1
First Aid -1
Sincerity
Secret Languages +1
Traps +1

Beggar/Street Urchin

Panhandling -1
Streetwise
Scrounging -2
Sneak
Pickpocket +1
Gambling
Persuasion -1
Survival +2
Disguise +2
Acting +1

Bounty Hunter

Sneak
Camouflage
Body Language (read) +1
Scrounging -1
Persuasion +1
Streetwise
Disguise +1
Tracking -1
Intimidate +1
Appraisal +2

Clergyman

Etiquette (Court, Church) -1
Meditation
Leadership
Orate
Law +1
Read & Write -1
Theology
Ancient Languages
Stewardship
Diplomacy +1
First Aid -1 or Surgery +1
Forgery +2

Courtier

Etiquette (court) -2
Persuasion +1
Ridicule
Games -1
Dancing
Diplomacy +1
Read & Write -1
Intrigue
Law +1
Sincerity -1
Appraisal +1
Forgery +1
Search +2

Druid or Ritualist

Meditation
 Sneak +1
 Arcane Theory +1
 Ritual Magic +1
 Symbol Drawing -1
 Herbalist +1
 Astronomy +1
 Surgery +1
 Secret Languages -1

Entertainer

Ridicule
 Dancing -1
 Intrigue +1
 Orate
 Musical Instrument
 Juggling -1
 Games -1
 Acrobatics +1
 Acting
 Disguise
 Singing -1

Guardisman

Combat/Weapon Art +1
 First Aid +1
 Law -1
 Diplomacy +2
 Etiquette
 Persuasion -1
 Orate
 Search -1
 Riding +1
 Tactics
 Tracking -1

Highwayman

Orate
 Teamster +2
 Riding -1
 Survival -1
 Tracking
 Body Language +1
 Scrounging -1
 Seduction
 Sneak +1
 Persuasion -1
 Sincerity -1

Knight

Riding -1
 First Aid -1
 Hunting
 Heraldry -1
 Battle -1
 Strategy
 Tactics +1
 Etiquette (Tourney)

Laborer

Teamster -1
 Streetwise -1
 Intimidate -1
 Gambling -1
 Any 1 craft skill (mining, shipbuilding, etc) -2



Manservant/Butler/Seneschal

Etiquette -1
Stewardship -3
Diplomacy -1
Read/Write
2 bonus Language skills
Sincerity +1
First Aid +1
Persuasion +1
Research

Merchant/Trader

Diplomacy -1
Law
Sincerity
Intrigue
Ridicule +2
Streetwise +1
Secret Languages
Persuasion -2
Body Language +2
Appraisal

Peasant or Craftsman

Any 1 craft skill
First Aid -1
Stewardship +1
Folk Lore -1
Animal Handling, Herding
Survival +1
Farming, or Boating and Fishing -2
Hunting or Trapping
Teamster -1

Pirate

Sailing -1
Navigation +1
Gambling -1
Climbing
Boating -1
Swimming
Intimidate
Survival +1
Ridicule +1
Scrounging +1
Persuasion

Prostitute

Seduction -2
Acting -1
Body Language +1
Gambling
Games
Persuasion -1
Pickpocket -1
Sincerity -1
Appraisal

Sailor

Navigation
Swimming -1
Sailing
Gambling +1
Artillery +1
Climbing
Boating -1
Tactics (Sea) +1
Heraldry (flags) -1
Streetwise -1
Astronomy +1
Weather Sense -1

Soldier

Leadership
 Intimidate
 Riding
 Heraldry
 Strategy
 Tactics +1
 Battle -1
 First Aid -1

Spy

Search -1
 Appraisal
 Streetwise -1
 Etiquette (court)
 Seduction
 Acting
 Body Language (read) +1
 Forgery -1
 Intrigue +1
 Sincerity -1

Swordsman

Combat/Weapon Art -1
 First Aid -1
 Body Language (read)
 Style Analysis +1
 Etiquette (school) -1
 Battle -1
 Intimidate +1
 Tactics -1

Thief

Panhandling -1
 Traps
 Streetwise -1
 Scrounging
 Sneak
 Pick Pocket +1
 Lock Picking +1
 Climbing +1
 Gambling +1
 Breaking and Entering
 Appraisal
 Search +1

Warrior (Clan or Tribe)

Battle
 Hunting -1
 First Aid -1
 Etiquette (Clan) -1
 Sneak +1
 Leadership +1
 Intimidate
 Gambling +1
 Boating -1

Woodsman/Ranger

Hunting -1
 Tracking +1
 Survival
 Scrounging
 Animal Guise
 Herbalist +1
 Orienteering -1
 Sneak +1
 Camouflage
 Climbing +1
 Swimming -1
 Weather Sense

Social Skill Packets

This optional rule introduces something we've always wanted to add into TROS but have never had the vehicle to do it before. There are certain skills that we feel certain social classes should always possess. As such, here is a selection of Social Class based skill packets. After you have selected the social ranking of your character, select one of the following skill packets (for free) that fits into that rank. These packets are small and merely provide a core group of skills that a character of your ranking should have.

Slave (Slave social class only)

Native Language
Scrounging
Panhandling
Folk Lore

Street Urchin (Slave or Peasant social class)

Native Language
Scrounging
Streetwise
Survival

Villager (Slave, Peasant or Low Freeman social class)

Native Language
Farming or Craft
Folklore
Animal Handling

Rural (Peasant or Low Freeman social class)

Native Language
Hunting or Trapping
Survival
Orienteering

Coastal (Peasant or Low Freeman social class)

Native Language
Swimming
Sailing or Boating
Navigation or Craft: Fishing

Townfolk (Low Freeman or High Freeman social class)

Native Language
Streetwise
Craft or Stewardship
Sincerity or Persuasion

Noble (Noble or High Freeman social class)

Native Language
Riding
Etiquette (court)
Read and Write

Dandy (Noble or High Freeman social class)

Native Language
Ridicule
Diplomacy
Etiquette (court)



Spiritual Attributes

Easily the most fundamental and important aspect of *The Riddle of Steel* is the Spiritual Attribute system. What would the story of Arthur be, if not for his burning love for Guinevere, his faith in his God, and his strong friendship with Lancelot? How interesting would Conan's story be if it weren't for his destined rise to the throne of Aquilonia and his indomitable drive to retain it, even against overwhelming odds? How could Samwise have possibly overcome Shelob if he did not have multiple SA's firing in that epic confrontation?

More than anything else, SA's define, develop, and guide characters, driving them forward. One of the most frequent comments we receive from our fans is that the section regarding Spiritual Attributes wasn't well enough defined and clarified in the original rules, and they're right. When we first developed *The Riddle of Steel*, even we didn't fully realize just what we really had with the Spiritual Attribute system, and as such, it didn't get quite as much focus as it really deserved. In this chapter, we're going to try to fix that – here you will find a more fleshed-out description of Spiritual Attributes and how and when they work in the game. We have also streamlined the mechanic whereby they are utilized, we've added a new SA, and we've removed an old one and replaced it with a new (and optional) “drama-based” mechanic.

Some of the information below is repeated in part from the original TROS rulebook. This is intentional, as it means that all the information you need to know regarding SA's is all in the same place. Even if you think you know it all, have a careful read, we have made some major and some minor changes to streamline and refine the system; we think you'll like what you see.

What are Spiritual Attributes?

All characters have three sets of attributes. Temporal attributes govern the character's

physical aspects – his Strength, his Toughness and so on. Mental attributes govern his mind and force of will – his Wit, his Mental Aptitude, his Social ability, and the like. To continue the paradigm, the third set of attributes could be said to govern his soul. Spiritual Attributes define a character's drives, motivations, and goals. We've all experienced love and hatred, we've all had goals and ambitions, and most of us have experienced the exhilaration of being able to push ourselves further and harder when we were doing something related to those things – because we truly cared about something we did just that little bit better when working towards it.

We've all heard about people of otherwise average strength who have lifted fallen trees or even cars to free a loved one trapped beneath – a feat that they or even much stronger people have not been able to duplicate later. Similarly, we've seen people in the midst of religious fervor walk across white-hot coals or lie on beds of nails without harming themselves. What was it that allowed these people to lift those weights or survive those ordeals? It was one of their Spiritual Attributes kicking in – their love (Passion) for the trapped person or their belief (Faith) that their God would protect them. That is the essence of Spiritual Attributes, and is the reason they're so important in *The Riddle of Steel*.

All characters pick 5 Spiritual Attributes. Each one can have any value from zero up to a maximum of 5. However, the SA itself, not the score in the SA, determines how passionate the character is about the specific thing. A person with Faith 4 is not necessarily more devout than another person with a Faith of 1, and having a low Passion score doesn't mean that you love the target of the Passion any less than you did when its value was higher.

By way of example, here is one possible vision of a set of Spiritual Attributes for a very famous figure. We'll revisit these attributes



throughout this article as we discuss them. Although characters usually only pick 5 SA's, we have included six for Arthur, so that he has one of each type of SA (of course, he can only have 5 at a time just like everyone else). These represent some of the SA's he might have held at various stages through his life; another example might be a Passion: Friendship SA for Lancelot. You'll notice that Luck is absent from the list, and you'll see a new SA that may not be familiar to you. Please see the relevant sections below for clarification.

King Arthur of Avalon

Anti-Destiny: To die at the hands of
his own son, Mordred
Drive: To find the Holy Grail
Passion: Love for Guinevere
Faith: Christianity
Oath: The Knights of the Round Table
Conscience

So, keeping those in mind, let's take a look at each SA and what it means to characters who choose it.

Conscience

Conscience refers to one's desire to "do the right thing," be it compassion, heroism, or any other manifestation of "right and wrong". It's a common quality of determined men, heroes, and others that struggle with the difference between good and evil.

Conscience comes into play whenever the character does the right thing in situations where there are alternatives that might be more profitable, might make more sense, might be less dangerous, or simply be more fun.

Conscience is the only Spiritual Attribute that does not need to be further clarified, characters simply have a conscience, or they don't. Whenever a character acts within his conscience as described above, he gets to add his Conscience score in dice to any relevant die pool, making the task he is attempting a little easier. Additionally, at the Seneschal's option he may gain an additional point in the Conscience after the roll. Also, at the Seneschal's option, a Conscience may actually be penalized and

reduced if the character repeatedly ignores it and continues to do whatever he wishes to regardless of what might be “right”. Characters may only take the Conscience SA once.

Arthur’s Conscience kicked in at several points throughout his life. It was his conscience (sense of what was right) that led him to return Excalibur to the Lady in the Lake. It was his conscience that spared Lancelot when he really would have liked to kill him, and it was his conscience that similarly spared Guinevere after she betrayed him.

Destiny

Destiny signifies a higher calling – perhaps to become king by your own hand, or to bring down a nation, or restore peace throughout a troubled land. Most characters will not be aware of their destiny (but the players are, and they are encouraged to use as many opportunities as possible to help the Destiny come to pass for their characters). Destiny creates special characters with added depth, but can be tricky to play. Obviously, a character can only have one Destiny at a time.

Destiny points may be added to any die pool whenever important events in the character’s Destiny come to pass. These events are rare and short-lived, but very important and should be the main time that a character stands to gain points in the Destiny SA. Note – a Destiny may not be used as an excuse to gain frequent bonus dice. Instead, the Seneschal will determine when pivotal moments that lead to the Destiny apply, and during those (rare) moments, the character gains his full Destiny bonus on all die polls related to it until the Seneschal deems the moment has passed. For a further example, see the sidebar entitled “Napoleon Bonaparte: Destined to Conquer Europe?”, below. Some sample Destinies are mentioned in the sidebar “Compulsory Destinies” on p. 48.

Anti-Destinies

It’s not only possible to take an “anti-destiny,” it

can actually be a lot of fun too. An Anti-Destiny is any kind of destiny that the character probably wouldn’t want to see happen. Examples range from a destiny to die at the hands of a specific person (Mordred, in Arthur’s case) or at a specific time, or maybe as simple as a destiny “to fail at the moment of greatest triumph” or “to see all my loved ones die at my own hand”. An Anti-Destiny is taken as a Major Flaw, with all of the usual benefits of such. Anti-Destinies, like Destinies, kick in at pivotal moments in a character’s career that help bring the destiny to pass or simply herald it. When the final moment of the destiny finally arrives however, the Flaw kicks in and instead of the character gaining bonus dice, his opponent (or whatever is opposing him to make the Anti-Destiny come to pass) gains 5 dice to all actions (regardless of what the actual die-value level of the Anti-Destiny was at the time).

So why take an Anti-Destiny? The simple reason is because it’s fun, and because it’s interesting. Who can resist taking a character with a fatal flaw or a black streak, something to muddy his “perfect” waters just to give him that little bit more depth and color. On top of that, it’s a Major Flaw which can help pay for other character benefits or simply a bonus Major Gift.

Arthur’s Anti-Destiny was to die at the hands of his son, Mordred. This Destiny would not apply whenever Arthur was battling someone else (although it might if he was fighting someone whose death would turn Mordred against him). It would apply in any situations where his actions would have a strong negative impact on his relationship with his son, so that each time the Destiny applied the relationship had sunk a little deeper and driven the two of them a little more irrevocably apart, until finally Mordred came for him and slew him. At this point, regardless of Arthur’s current score in the Anti-Destiny, Mordred would gain 5 CP dice per round.



Napoleon Bonaparte: Destined to Conquer Europe?

As a further example of how a Destiny may work in practice, let's take a brief look at the life of Napoleon Bonaparte and his Destiny "To Conquer Europe".

Born in 1769 on the island of Corsica, Napoleon was the fourth child of a lawyer. His father struggled to raise eight children under difficult circumstances, especially since he opposed the French who had recently acquired Corsica from Genoa. Napoleon would not have appeared to be destined for any greatness at all. However, his destiny had other ideas.

Napoleon's destiny first kicked in when his father reached an accommodation with the French that led to the young Napoleon getting a French military education and a commission just in time for the French Revolution. He swiftly rose from Captain to Brigadier General due to his role as artillery commander in the capture of Toulon from the British in 1793.

Despite setbacks, he rose steadily from then onwards. He was regarded as a friend of Robespierre, and his destiny pulsed again when he was not executed after Robespierre went to the guillotine in 1794. Brilliant, and driven by an insatiable ambition, Napoleon went from the Republic's commander in Italy, to the conquest of Egypt. His destiny kicked in again when he survived the collapse in Egypt caused by Nelson's victory at the Nile; instead he managed to return to France, lead a coupe-de-etat and become First Consul. The battle of Marengo forced the Austrians to sue for peace and grant France her "natural frontiers" - the Pyrenees, the Alps, and the Rhine. By the end of 1802, Napoleon was the undisputed ruler of an enlarged France, and at peace, but it was not enough. His destiny cried out for more.

In May 1803, Britain declared war again. They needed allies on the European mainland to face the French on land, and Napoleon won victory after victory as he foiled their efforts. Austerlitz, Jena, and Wagram were only some of the major French successes, although Trafalgar ended any chance of defeating the British at sea. In 1804, his destiny reached a new height when he decided he would be Emperor of France. The next few years saw his ambition and destiny lead him to the mastery of Europe, until finally he went a few steps too far.

The two factors that led to Napoleon's defeat were both sparked by his destiny to rule Europe. The first was his installation of his brother as the King of Spain in 1808. This led to a long running insurrection and an opportunity for the British to commit a land army to bleed the French. The guerillas and the British formed a "Spanish ulcer" that drained French strength. The second factor was Napoleon's invasion of Russia. Over 400,000 troops, the bulk of the French army, perished on the retreat from Moscow and the Allies could finally face him with superior numbers and competent commanders. Again, both the occupation of Spain, and the invasion of Russia were fuelled by Napoleon's Destiny SA, even though both actions served to ultimately make the Destiny fail to come to pass. They're tricky things, Destinies...





Compulsory Destinies

Although it's not a requirement in these rules, we recommend that all characters should have a Destiny or Anti-Destiny SA as one of their 5 choices. Like the philosophy section of the character sheet, a Destiny more than almost anything else tells the Seneschal exactly what the player envisions the character really striving for and achieving (or not) in the long term. Other SA's direct the action "here and now" and are protean, but a character's Destiny should be long-term, almost unobtainable, and something that really focuses "where the character is going"

Some Sample Destinies: Arthur's (anti) destiny was to die at the hands of Mordred; Conan's was to "bear the jewelled crown of Aquilonia upon a troubled brow"; Napoleon's was to conquer Europe (which didn't come to pass, but that's the way of Destinies sometimes).

One great option is for the players to leave their characters' Destinies in the hands of the Seneschal. Just specify that you have a Destiny (or Anti-Destiny), assign points to it, and ask the Seneschal to come up with something appropriate. The disadvantage of this method is that you have no control over what your character's Destiny is. On the plus side your Destiny will be picked so as to fit well into the overall plot, and you'll have fun working out what it is by watching carefully whenever the Seneschal tells you to gain points, lose points, or add Destiny dice to your rolls.

Drive

Drive defines an extra level of determination and a powerful sense of purpose. Someone with a drive has a worthy cause that they would die for and (probably) kill for because they believe it to be extremely important. Examples of people with great drives include William Wallace, Alexander the Great, Hannibal, and

yes, even those whose Drives we may not approve of such as Genghis Khan or Attila the Hun. The Drive Spiritual Attribute must be further defined with the object of the Drive, and a character may not have more than one Drive at any one time.

Characters get to add their Drive value to any roll that furthers or defends the cause it is associated with; this applies as often as the Seneschal agrees that it should, and after such a roll the character may (again, at the Seneschal's option) gain a point in the drive. On some occasions, the drive may actually decrease if the character repeatedly ignores opportunities to fulfill and/or defend it.

Some examples of good Drives include Conan's drive to regain his stolen kingdom and defeat Xaltotun, Hannibal's drive to cross the Alps with his elephants, or the Man in Black's drive to catch up with the kidnappers in *The Princess Bride*.

Arthur's Drive *to find the Holy Grail* kicked in after the Grail Quest began and would have assisted him during the long years he searched for it. This doesn't mean that he got to add his Drive dice on every roll he made after the quest began, but that at pivotal moments when the Seneschal deemed he was in a position to discover a clue or stumble down the right path or simply when he was focusing on that and nothing else the Drive would apply.

Faith

Faith reflects the bond between a person and his or her God. This does not pre-suppose that the God necessarily exists, as it is the belief in the God and His ideals and strictures that drives the character further and harder and allows him to achieve great things. The Faith Spiritual Attribute must be further defined with the actual faith/belief or Deity worshipped, such as Faith: Christianity or Faith: The Seven Vows of the Prophet. As long as a true and deep belief exists, any Faith SA is allowable (at the Seneschal's

discretion, of course) so even Faith: Atheism is possible, but only if the character were strongly and truly atheist, as opposed to just not believing in God. Generally, characters may only have one Faith Spiritual Attribute at a time, although in certain circumstances the Seneschal may make an exception (for an example of this, see the NPC Garrick Suneson, OBAM p. 20).

Faith Spiritual Attribute dice may be added to any roll that significantly furthers or defends the belief or religion involved, or to any roll that defends or protects the truly faithful (at the Seneschal's discretion). This second application can even protect the character in some circumstances, such as adding Faith dice to an Endurance roll to walk across hot coals while chanting in a religious fervor, but it should not be used in a catch-all "I should get the dice on all combats because my God would be upset if I died" kind of way. As always, Seneschal fiat and common sense dictate available uses of the SA. After applicable rolls, the Seneschal may award bonus points in the character's Faith SA, and should certainly remove points whenever the character actively works against or repeatedly ignores his Faith.

The Faith SA's that may be taken depend on the campaign and campaign world being used. Arthur's Faith in Christianity would have assisted him at times of great trial when he truly believed God was with him and guiding his actions.

Oath

Oath is a new Spiritual Attribute being introduced for the first time in this book. In some ways, an Oath is similar to a Passion (see below), but where a passion is a deep love (or hatred) of a single person or entity, an Oath is a binding agreement with a person, group or organization to do (or not to do) a specific thing or task. It's not necessary to love or even like a person or group that you are Oathbound to, the important factor is the character's personal honor and commitment to do what he has sworn to do

regardless of personal cost or other factors. In some situations, an Oath may therefore be very similar to the Conscience SA, but it doesn't have to be. A character could just as easily have an Oath to do something that he knows is wrong but he feels bound to do it anyway (or he's being paid to do it, or someone is going to kill his wife if he doesn't do it, or...)

Oath Spiritual Attribute dice may be added to any roll that significantly furthers or defends the character's Oath, and after such rolls the character may (at the Seneschal's option) receive a bonus point in the Oath. Similarly, attempting to get around the Oath or work against it may lose a point, and if the character actively and irrevocably breaks the Oath then he should immediately lose all points in the SA (and be encouraged to choose a new one to replace it unless there's a possible way to salvage it). Characters may swear multiple Oaths and as such may have more than one Oath Spiritual Attribute. What's really fun is if they contradict each other...

Oath is a common Spiritual Attribute for bodyguards or militia (to protect a person or place), and even for couriers and the like who may be Oathbound to deliver a message or obtain a specific item and return it to the person who made them swear the Oath.

Arthur (and, in fact, most of his Knights) had an Oath to the Knights of the Round Table – a pact that they would defend, protect, and serve in the interests of each other for the betterment of the order and all of England.

Passion

Passion entails a specific love, hatred, or loyalty to a single person or entity that occupies your character's thoughts and actions entirely. This adds life and vibrancy to your character and is perhaps the most fun to play.

Passion dice may be added to any roll that directly affects the object of the Passion, such

as defending a loved one or slaying a sworn enemy. After such rolls, the Seneschal may award bonus points in the Spiritual Attribute, or he may remove points in the SA if the character repeatedly ignores opportunities to engage in the passion. Characters may take multiple Passion SA's.

Good examples of the Passion Spiritual Attribute include Lancelot and his friendship with Arthur (later overcome by his love – and competing Passion – for Guinevere), Romeo and Juliet's love for each other, and the Count of Monte Cristo who spent many years plotting and seeking revenge on his friend who had horribly betrayed him.

Arthur's Passion was for Guinevere (and sadly, because of his strong love for her he completely failed to spot her infidelity), and it kicked in when he fought for her or in her name.

(Luck)

The observant among you will notice that we have removed Luck from the list of available Spiritual Attributes. We have always felt that luck was the poorest fit for an SA – all of the other Spiritual Attributes denote what drives and focuses a character, while Luck is an external force out of his control. Don't worry though – it hasn't vanished entirely. Instead, we've rolled it into the new Drama rule – see the Drama section on p. 52. for more details.

Spending Spiritual Attributes

As well as gaining bonus dice on various die rolls, Spiritual Attributes provide the mechanism for characters to improve their skills and abilities over time. Thus, it is only by working towards the things that you most care about that you achieve fulfillment and balance enough to improve yourself. This is achieved by permanently selling down your Spiritual Attributes for the following benefits. Note that although this expenditure of SA's is permanent, that doesn't mean you can't earn them back

up again by roleplaying them. And in fact, if you don't sell them down you will soon get to the point where you can earn no further points, because you have capped them out at 5. It's this constant cycle of earn-spend-earn that makes Spiritual Attributes the most changeable aspect of *The Riddle of Steel*.

Points spent may be taken from any Spiritual Attribute in any quantity. Thus to pay a cost of 4 SA points to improve a proficiency, all 4 points may be taken from a single SA, or you could take 2 points from each of two SA's, or 2 points from one SA and 1 point from each of two others, and so on.

Insight

Whenever a character spends Spiritual Attribute points, the number of points spent is added to the character's Insight tally, as outlined on TROS, p. 68. If the character dies, the current Insight level denotes bonus priority picks or extra points for creating a new character. See TROS p. 68 or the new Character Creation section of this book (p. 5-8) for further details.

Temporal and Mental Attributes

Spiritual Attribute points may be spent to improve Temporal or Mental attributes. No attribute may be raised higher than 10, which is the human maximum. Additionally, no mental or temporal attribute can be raised more than once per session. The costs can be found on the following table.

Current Attribute	Cost to raise to next level
1	1
2	2
3	4
4	7
5	10
6	13
7	16
8	19
9	22

Proficiencies

Proficiencies are cheaper to improve than temporal and mental attributes, but they require that the character either receive training or use the proficiency in the course of play. Not much training is needed, assuming the character has at least an hour or so a day to practice. Raising a proficiency costs the current level of the proficiency in Spiritual Attribute points, thus to raise a proficiency from 4 to 5 costs 4 Spiritual Attribute points, to then raise it from 5 to 6 would cost another 5 points, and so on. No proficiency can be increased more than once per session, however.

Acquiring a new proficiency requires a teacher of at least proficiency level 5 to train the character, and costs 1 SA point to buy the first level of the proficiency, or more if the proficiency is coming from a default. For example, a character with a proficiency level of 5 who is attempting to learn a new proficiency that defaults from it at -2 is already assumed to have the new proficiency at the calculated default level of 3. To actually buy a point in the proficiency, he must pay 3 SA points to buy the proficiency at level 4, from which point on the proficiency is actually defined and is not a default anymore. Remember, no proficiency can ever default higher than 6.

Weapon School base investments (see TFOB, p. 92+) are improved in a similar way, but the cost is the current level times 1.5, thus to improve a Weapon School level from 6 to 7 costs 9 SA points. Always round any fractions up.

Vagaries

Sorcerous vagaries are purchased in the same way as Proficiencies, but the cost is double the current level of the Vagary, plus one. Thus to buy the first point in a vagary costs 1 SA point, to buy the second point costs 3 SA points, and the third point costs 5 SA points. These costs are further doubled (2,6,10) unless the character has access to a teacher who has level 3 in the vagary concerned, or at the very least

a large library or other magical resource. Note, the preceding applies to the standard sorcery system in *The Riddle of Steel*, pp 101-140. When using the new magic system in *Sorcery and the Fey*, vagaries are purchased exactly like proficiencies, with the same costs.

Gifts and Flaws

During play, new gifts may be purchased, and old flaws may be bought off. Minor gifts cost 10 SA points and major gifts cost 20 (upgrading a minor gift to a major gift costs 10 SA points if a minor and major version of the game gift both exist). Buying off (getting rid of) minor flaws costs 10 points, and buying off major flaws costs 20. Again, a major flaw can be reduced to a minor flaw (where both versions of the same flaw exist) for a cost of 10 SA points.

Of course, the Seneschal has final adjudication over which gifts or flaws can be bought (or bought off). Some, such as the Amputee Flaw can never be bought off, and some gifts may not be able to be purchased after character creation. On the other hand, sometimes characters may gain the equivalent of a gift (such as allies) or a flaw (such as amputee) through roleplaying without needing to spend points at all.

Skills

As discussed in the Skills section (p. 29), skills no longer improve automatically through play. Instead, it costs 2 SA points to improve a skill one rank, and no skill may be improved by more than one rank per session. This cost increases past Master level once you get into the Grandmaster ranks, costing 3 SA points plus the current Grandmaster Skill Ranking; see p. 30 for further details.

Since all skill levels of 10 are considered “untrained”, a character may always purchase new skills at the Beginner rank (TN9) for a cost of 2 SA points. For a different choice, a character can also purchase 1-3 levels of specialization within that skill for 2 SA points per level. The specialization only grants an

Instant Success

One more way that SA's can assist a character is with the Instant Success rule. This is an optional rule, and it is entirely up to the Seneschal as to whether to allow its use or not. Under this rule, characters may permanently spend a point from a Spiritual Attribute in order to automatically succeed in a single skill or attribute check where the SA would normally have applied. This should never apply to combat rolls in any form, but for skill or attribute rolls, it provides exactly the minimum number of successes needed to succeed in the check. Additionally (or alternately), you might allow a character to burn a permanent SA point to reduce a wound he has just received. Again, allow this only in a situation where the SA should be coming into play (such as when battling to save the princess who is the object of your Passion SA, and getting wounded right now really wouldn't be helpful in saving her life). Only one SA point may be spent in this way per wound (and only in the instant the wound is received) but it reduces the Pain, Shock, and Blood Loss of the wound by 3.

Spending SA points in this fashion still generates Insight (see p. 50).

additional die or dice within the specialization, as per the rules on p. 34. This can be done instead of, or along with, increasing a skill.

Drama

Finally, SA points can be cashed in for a Drama points (see Drama, below). However, spending SA points in this fashion does NOT add to a character's Insight. Normally, SA points can only be converted into Drama points between sessions, not during a session.

Changing Spiritual Attributes

People change, and so do their priorities. At

various stages in a character's career, some or all of his SA's may become less important to him, or perhaps it's just that something else a great deal more pressing is occupying his mind. In this situation, players will want to change some or all of their character's Spiritual Attributes. This is done in the following manner:

First, the old SA should be bought down to a score of 0. This can either be done by spending the points on an improvement, or by converting them into Drama Points (see Drama, below). Once an SA has been reset to zero, the character spends 1 Drama point to be allowed to redefine the SA's descriptor (e.g. swapping one Passion for another) or 3 Drama points to be allowed to change the SA entirely (swapping a Passion for a Drive, for example). At all times, the standard rules apply (you can have multiple Passions and/or Oaths, but you can only have one Drive, one Faith, one Destiny and one Conscience).

Drama

As you will have noticed while reading this book, we have removed the Luck Spiritual Attribute. Luck is an external factor, unlike all of the other SA's that are driven from within the character, so it didn't make sense where it was. However, to make up for it, we have introduced a new Drama mechanic.

Characters start the game with as many Drama points as their lowest Mental Attribute. Drama points can never accumulate above 10, however. The Seneschal should award Drama points for exceptional role play, or when the character or the group has achieved a special victory. Drama points might also be awarded when the Seneschal deems that the character deserves some form of reward but there are no particularly applicable SA's. Finally, SA points can be converted into Drama points. This costs 1 SA point per Drama point, but can only be done between sessions. At the Seneschal's option, SA points can be concerted to Drama points during a session at a cost of 2 or 3 SA's to one Drama point.



Awarding Drama

In our games at Driftwood, we like to use Drama as a general “gimmie” bonus scheme for characters. When a player makes the group laugh, give him a Drama point. Whoever gets the luckiest roll or the unluckiest roll of the night earns a Drama point. When a player brought the 5 lb bag of M&M’s for the group, he got a Drama point. You get the idea.

This kind of reward scheme isn’t for every group, of course. As a Seneschal, you need to decide how generous or stingy you want to be with Drama (heck, and SA) rewards. We like to be fairly generous with them because constant Drama use makes for flashier and more “epic” games, but if you’re going for a grittier feel then you should restrict them a little more.

Drama Points can be spent on improvements, just like regular SA’s. However, Drama Points can also be spent during the game for any of the following benefits:

- One point can be used to add one automatic success to any roll (no more than one point can be spent in this manner per roll).
- One point can be spent to open-end all dice already rolled for an action. This means that all dice showing 10’s may be re-rolled to gain possible extra successes (and they remain open-ended, so a re-roll of another 10 adds another success and allows another re-roll, and so on...)
- One point can be spent to convert a botched roll into a failure or to re-roll all failed dice from a single roll (thus it costs 2 Drama points to re-roll a botched roll, one to convert it to a failed roll and a second to re-roll those failed dice).
- One point can specify cosmetic or minor changes to the environment to suit your character. An example is the sword that just happens to be hanging above the fireplace you’ve just been backed against by an armed

foe, the hay cart that just happens to be parked under the window you just jumped out of, and so on. Alternately, one point can make minor or cosmetic story changes (with the Seneschal’s approval, of course), such as upgrading that throw-away NPC to be someone important, specifying that the Princess secretly has a crush on a particular character (although that might not be a minor change, depending on the campaign) and so on.

- Flash of insight – a point can be spent to have a “flash of insight” in a tricky situation. When a character spends a drama point in this fashion, the Seneschal will suggest a suitable and/or profitable and/or sensible course of action or perhaps the character suddenly puts 2 and 2 together when the player wasn’t able to (in the form of a hint from the Seneschal).
- One point can lower the TN of an action by 1 before the roll (no more than one point can be spent in this manner per roll).
- One point can cancel 2 levels of damage from a successful attack, turning a level 5 wound into a level 3, and so on (no more than one point can be spent in this manner per roll).





Varying the effect of Spiritual Attributes

SA's are perhaps the most fundamental mechanic in *The Riddle of Steel*, but they're not for everyone. In a game that otherwise focuses on gritty realism, some players may dislike the idea that a hero with a couple of Spiritual Attributes firing can go from a mediocre swordsman to a combat god just because he really hates the guy he's fighting (or whatever). For such groups, we recommend a couple of possible alterations to the SA rules:

Limit all SA's to 3 points instead of 5

This allows you to still use SA's in your games, but reduces the in-game benefits of several SA's firing at the same time. Because players cannot store as many points in their SA's (to use for improvements) in this case, we recommend raising the limit on the Drama Pool to 15-20 to compensate.

Limit Drama

Instead of a 1-for-1 exchange rate, perhaps it costs 2 or even 3 SA points to purchase Drama, or maybe players cannot convert SA points to Drama but can still earn it through roleplaying rewards. With either of these options you may also refuse to allow Drama points to be used on character improvement, so that the players are forced to keep using their SA's for improvement. This ensures that they will tend to have lower SA scores at any given time instead of simply letting their SA's cap out at 5 and leaving them there. Finally, the actual number of Drama points that characters can have might be modified. Instead of a cap of 10, you might limit drama to 5 points (like an SA); alternatively, you might expand it and allow players to store up to 20 points of Drama. However, the more points they can store, the more points they can use in a short period of time, perhaps when facing off against an encounter you have spent weeks or months building up to...

Remove the Drama mechanic entirely

This returns the game to feel more like the original SA rules in TROS, but the removal of the Drama option makes the game a little grittier, as the players have no way to spend points to reduce wounds, modify rolls that are not directly related to an SA, and so on.

Or, if you're feeling really extreme:

Take away the numbers

This option allows players to still choose SA's, but the descriptor is used solely to determine when the players should earn experience points. It's your option as to whether to still use the idea of the Drama Pool; or whether to just award the points into an "experience pool" and do away with the Drama mechanic as well. If you keep the Drama Pool, make the limit at least 20 points and put all rewards in on a 1-for-1 basis, since your players will use it as a Drama Pool and to improve their characters. If you use the experience pool option, be warned. This makes for an incredibly deadly game as it removes the characters' ability to spend Drama points to reduce wounds and keep themselves alive, as well as the facility to suddenly become a lot better at whatever they're doing as and when the situation (and their pre-selected SA's) call for it.

To mitigate this, if using the Take Away the Numbers option with Drama, you could allow players to spend Drama to activate relevant SA's at a value of 3 (or 5) for an action or even an entire scene by spending a Drama point. Although they are not tracking values for the SA's, they at least know what they are, so as an option players can spend a drama point whenever a relevant SA moment occurs to gain full use of the SA as if it had a value of 3 (or 5, or any other number the Seneschal decides). In effect, you're bringing back SA's but fixing their value at 3/5/whatever, and only allowing their use when fuelled by Drama.



Book Two:

Rules Expansions

“Where did that freak get to? Find it and kill it! You, go check the docks. You, try the Inn!”

Cursing under his breath, Marcus jumped through the window of the hostelry and fled down the street. Once again he had let his guard down and a young girl had seen his face. She had been interested at first – children are hard to shock and their natural inquisitiveness and curiosity had led her to ask far too many questions. Marcus had tried to discourage her gently, but she had become upset and called for her father, who had burst in before Marcus could cover up his face.

So much for this town.

Sprinting through the back streets of the town, Marcus came across a sickly mastiff bitch giving suck to a litter of ravenous pups. The runt had been pushed off to one side by his brothers, and was whining pitifully as it tried to get close enough to feed. Marcus slowed to a halt, heedless of the cries from the crowd behind him as he regarded the pup. Its struggle for acceptance and fraternity echoed Marcus’ own and he found himself drawn to it, crouching down and pushing aside one of the other puppies to find a teat for the runt. It suckled briefly, then turned from its mother and pattered over to Marcus, rubbing itself against his leg and nipping painfully at his ankle. Smiling, Marcus stooped down and lifted the pup.

“You’re the first living creature since my mother to seem pleased to see me,” he muttered to the young dog as he rubbed his bleeding ankle. “And you have a hell of a set of teeth on you. I think I’ll call you Biter”

Marcus and Biter fled the town, scant minutes ahead

of the crowd still seeking him. For the next two years they travelled together, moving from town to village. Biter grew to be huge and strong, a useful companion for someone whose own martial skills were scant at best, and Marcus’ “other” skills kept them fed. Biter proved to be a highly intelligent beast, and Marcus delighted in training him in a multitude of commands. Before long, they had become strong friends, and at times Marcus could swear that Biter could sense what he was thinking. It was certainly true that they tended to get agitated at the same time, and Marcus would feel an odd sense of fullness whenever Biter had eaten a large meal.

They soon became known in the local area – the mysterious hooded figure that never showed his face, with his huge and fierce mastiff who could bring down a stag on the hoof but who would allow children to ride on his back or rub his belly. Marcus and Biter became figures of mystery; was he scarred under that hood? Was he someone famous travelling incognito? This reputation actually worked for him – because he was such a mystery, folk actually avoided seeing his face for to “solve” the mystery would lessen it.

Finally, Marcus had found some form of acceptance. He still needed to act with care, lest someone accidentally see under his hood and the troubles start again, but for the time being, his status as an enigma was working for him, and his superbly loyal and intelligent dog was the fan of old and young alike.

It took two outcasts coming together to make one whole person. Finally, Marcus and Biter were happy.

Until the day the young girl went missing...



Combat Strategy Guide

One of the most common questions we get asked on our forums, in email and in person is “can you give me any tips on how to fight in *The Riddle of Steel*”. The combat system is complex and offers a great number of options, many of which can be overwhelming especially for new roleplayers or those more used to the “roll a die and subtract hit points” systems. Here are a number of hints, suggestions, and strategies that may help both Seneschals and players fight more effectively in *The Riddle of Steel*.

Using Less Common Maneuvers

There are some maneuvers available in TROS that seem to be greatly underutilized. Here are a few of the more commonly misunderstood maneuvers and why and when you might want to use them.

Expulsion

Expulsion is a maneuver that is a little confusingly worded in the main rules. It allows a defender to spend an additional activation cost for a parry (usually 2CP) to gain an advantage on his follow-up attack. If the parry is successful, the margin of defense successes is added as a penalty to whatever defense the opponent makes in the following exchange, as long as you target him with a thrust.

Jared and Davin are two rapier masters dueling with foils for the benefit of some watching students. Jared declares a 10 die thrust at Davin's chest, to which Davin responds with an 11-die expulsion (which costs him 2 dice for activation). Jared rolls and gets 6 successes, while Davin rolls 9 successes on the defense. The following exchange, having stolen initiative because of his successful defense, Davin declares a thrust at his friend's stomach. Whatever defense Jared makes, it will cost him an additional +3CP because of the successful Expulsion.

Feint

Feinting is a useful and widely used maneuver, but we just wanted to point out a couple of common misconceptions regarding it. First, the activation cost of a feint goes up when you feint repeatedly against an opponent (ever, not just during a single duel) but it is only for each identical feint (the word identical is even italicized in TROS, p. 61). This means that following a feinted slash at the head which was redirected, only the cost for future feints to the head for that opponent increase, a later feint to the arm is not an identical feint and does not incur the increased cost. Second, although feint is split into feint-and-cut and feint-and-thrust, that doesn't mean you can't feint with a bashing weapon (for “cut” you should really read “swing” in this instance), likewise (if your Seneschal agrees) you could feint into or from a draw-cut (TFOB, p. 66) or even a Beat or Hook (TROS, p. 60,63). Just remember that the activation cost for the feint has to be paid, plus the activation cost (if any) for the final maneuver actually performed. For feinting into or from more complicated maneuvers such as the Beat or Hook, we recommend adding +1 to the feint activation cost, but that's an optional rule – we leave it up to individual groups to find the balance that seems right for them.

Stop Short

The Stop Short maneuver is not actually an attack. It does count as one, but the main difference is that the opponent does not mount an actual defense against it. This means that beyond the dice you have invested into the maneuver you're not risking much – because the opponent doesn't declare a defense he also cannot decide to ignore you and launch an attack of his own. Although the opponent gets to roll his Reflex (which is generally likely to be slightly higher than the attackers' WP), he has a base TN of 7 and for a minor investment of 2-3 dice; this TN can be raised to 9 or 10. In return, the attacker is rolling against his opponent's Per score, which is usually an average of 4 (and if he's wearing a helmet, don't forget the

-2 penalty to his Per, making it an average of 2). All of this adds up to a strong possibility of an advantage to the attacker, who then keeps initiative and costs his opponent some dice at the start of the next exchange.

And here's another very useful tip – if you're ever stuck in a situation where it's the 2nd exchange of the round and you have initiative but you've screwed up, leaving yourself with only 1 or 2 dice and you think your opponent has a lot more (and is thus likely to declare an attack instead of a defense which could spell doom for you) simply declare a Stop Short instead. This only works once or maybe twice in a battle, because then the activation cost starts to mount up. The first time you do it though, it's an easy way to ensure that all those dice he has won't be any threat to you – since he doesn't declare a defense against a Stop Short, he also can't ignore it and declare an attack!

Toss

On the face of things, Toss is not a terribly useful maneuver. The disadvantage you can give your opponent is a 1-die penalty per success you roll, and that means that the absolute best penalty he can get is equal to the number of dice you rolled, making you both equal in die-loss (and you're unlikely to get all successes at ATN 7). So, why use the maneuver? First, a careful read will show that, like the Stop Short, your opponent does not declare any actual defense – instead he is given the option of dodging the tossed object (which he uses CP dice for) or not. Either way he will potentially lose dice from your toss attack (and maybe from spending dice on his defense) but he cannot ignore the toss and attack you instead. Second, and most importantly, he loses the dice at the start of the following exchange rather than immediately, which means that if you use this maneuver in the second exchange of a round, the following round you will refresh your full die pool. He will then lose as many dice as the Toss penalty, putting him at an immediate disadvantage.

The downside of Toss? There isn't really one, except that you have to have something in your hand to toss at him, so it's generally a once-per-combat kind of maneuver.

Scamming

One very simple and yet not-obvious tactic that clever duelers use is known as “scamming” – holding back and appearing to be less proficient than you really are to lull the opponent into a false sense of security. In TROS terms, this means holding back on the number of dice that you use, sticking to the same number every round until your opponent thinks he knows how many you have, and then drawing him into making a mistake which will let you take advantage of the “scammed” dice.

Boris is facing off against a cutthroat who has him cornered in an alleyway. Boris has a CP of 14, but he chooses to only use 11 dice every round for the first 3 rounds or so of the combat. The cutthroat has been counting the number of dice Boris has been using, and now thinks that his CP is 11. In the first exchange of the 4th round, Boris declares an 11-die swing at the cutthroat. Thinking that Boris has used his entire die-pool, the cutthroat feels confident enough to use his entire pool for a partial evasion. The evasion is successful, but with no dice left the cutthroat is wide open to a follow-up 3-die attack from Boris that he was not expecting and has no defense against...

Clever use of Terrain

It should go without saying that one of the best ways to get ahead in any TROS combat is to make full use of the Terrain rules (TROS, p. 77; TFOB, p. 48). Rather than simply waiting for the Seneschal to declare (un)favorable terrain and responding to it, wily characters will always be looking for ways to use terrain to their advantage. They could be leading or Pressing (TFOB, p. 50) the opponent into unfavorable or unstable terrain, jumping onto a table, rock or other high spot to gain a height



advantage, or perhaps shifting the combat so that the sun (or other light source) is behind you and therefore in his eyes. The possible uses of terrain are endless and can easily turn the tide of any combat if well utilized.

Thomas is battling a cultist on a high castle wall. Thomas' player asks the Seneschal how high the wall is and how crumbly the edge is, and declares that he will be using terrain to press his opponent back towards the edge. As the opponent gets closer and closer to the edge, the Seneschal begins assigning tougher and tougher TN terrain rolls to prevent slipping or losing dice due to a lack of good balance or attention. Eventually, the cultist fails such a roll and his die pool drops to the level where Thomas can step in and easily finish him off.

Use of Stances

Stances (TROS, p. 74; TFOB, p. 45) can be used if a character has time before a fight to prepare for the first exchange. Although they cannot generally be used after the first exchange of the first round, wily players will realize that any significant pause in the action will allow time to drop into a stance. It could be the lull between one opponent falling and the next stepping up, after a full evasion by either party, or simply because neither opponent declares an attack for an exchange (perhaps one is negotiating tricky terrain and the other is watching with amusement – hey, it could happen!) Additionally, stances can be used to trick your opponent and lull him into a false sense of security – any advantage can help. For example, a High Back guard (TFOB, p.47) gives you a bonus when swinging at an opponent's head or shoulders but a penalty when thrusting at him. This will usually lead an opponent who has shown he likes the Favoring rules (TFOB, p.26) to allocate dice to defending his head and shoulders because he assumes you will attack him there. If he over-allocates those dice, a lower thrusting attack actually gives you the advantage because he has lost more dice to the now-useless favoring than you have

lost due to the penalty, especially if you had declared the stance as aggressive which gives you +1 die back for the attack.

Weapon Selection

The correct choice of weapons for the right opponent can make a lot of difference to the outcome of a fight in *The Riddle of Steel*. Against fast moving, lightly armored and primarily evasive opponents, light, fast weapons such as rapiers, backswords and such are generally the most useful. Against more heavily armored opponents, heavy mass weapons (especially picks and hammers) are useful to punch through the armor and /or add shock to wear down their CP even if you can't actually wound them very heavily. Flails are very useful against opponents who use shield blocks and favoring. Ensuring that your character has a wide variety of reasonable weapon proficiencies and being prepared to switch between them to suit the fight is the first step towards winning it.

Another important consideration with weapon selection is the reach. Fighting someone with

Reach in combat

Some of our fans think that long weapons should have an even greater advantage over short weapons during combat. To simulate this, try giving the longer weapon double the range benefit over the shorter one while at the longer weapon's optimal range (in other words, if one weapon is 2 range increments longer than the other, the benefit at that range is a 4-die penalty to attacks by the shorter weapon, rather than the usual 2. When the range has been closed to the shorter weapon's range, the penalty to the longer weapon (for attack and defense) is only 1-die per step as usual, however.

Be warned – this optional rule changes combat dynamics substantially, giving a huge advantage to long weapons in combat!



a weapon of a vastly different length may seem like a good benefit (especially if your weapon is the longer of the two and thus the fight starts at the optimal range for you) but can cause issues if your opponent manages to get to his own comfortable range and you are unable to switch it back. Remember also that although all weapons suffer a range penalty on attack, only a longer weapon suffers a range penalty on defense (when using that weapon for defense) against a shorter weapon. In other words, wielding a pike against a dagger is only a benefit until the dagger wielder successfully closes range, after which you are in serious trouble. For this reason, if you choose to fight with a long weapon, it may be wise to be proficient in a shorter weapon as well, and be prepared to draw and switch to it when your opponent has closed range rather than risking a poor defense while trying to widen the range with your opponent again. If your weapon is the shorter of the two, you start the fight with a range disadvantage, but your best bet is to close range as quickly as possible, and then harry your opponent, keeping him on his toes so that he never has the opportunity to extend the range back or spend terrain dice to draw a shorter weapon.

Using Skills in Combat

Some of the more combat oriented skills are easy to overlook during combat, but to do so can be a deadly mistake. Some of the more common “combat useful” skills are listed below along with some suggestions on their use.



Body Language

The skills section of the rulebook lists one way that Body Language can be used to anticipate an incoming attack and (potentially) gain dice against it (TROS, p. 33). This is far from the only way that the Body Language skill can be utilized however. In our own games at Driftwood, we allow characters to make Body Language skill rolls (usually using the Per attribute) to determine if the opponent is favoring any areas of his body for defense. One success lets the character know the opponent is favoring, three successes lets him know which zones, and five successes lets him know with how many dice. If watching a combat, this use of the skill is free, but during a battle, studying one's opponent and his Body Language takes

a little concentration away from the fight, so there is an activation cost of 1CP (but a potential benefit of far more given that you may know which areas are more vulnerable than others).

Intimidate

Often, a lesser opponent (or one who just thinks he might be inferior because you have successfully convinced him that you're better than you really are) can be intimidated into backing down from a fight and/or surrendering. This use of the intimidate skill should be opposed by the opponent making a WP or perhaps Wit (Seneschal's option) check at the standard TN. If the intimidation is successful, the opponent suffers a 1-die CP penalty for each success the character won the opposed check by, or flees entirely (Seneschal's call). This penalty persists until the opponent successfully lands a hit on the character (even a non-damaging one) at which point they regain their courage. It is not possible to use Intimidation more than once against the same opponent during a duel.

Ridicule

Ridicule can often be used to start a combat, by taunting the opponent into attacking. This is particularly useful when your opponent has adopted a defensive stance and to attack will therefore cost him dice. We also allow the use of the Ridicule skill to draw NPC opponents into overextending their attacks and over committing dice through anger and rage (The Seneschal must adjudicate the results of the Ridicule depending on how successful the character was).

Style Analysis

This skill is extremely useful if one has an opportunity to watch an opponent fight prior to combat. The ability to learn which maneuvers a person's style favors (TROS, p. 40) cannot be understated, and even more useful is the ability to learn how large a potential opponent's combat pool may be – this information can single-handedly win

or lose a battle since you will know when the opponent has overreached or under-spent during a particular exchange.

Tactics/Battle/Leadership

Although these skills are generally more useful in large battle situations (TFOB, p. 101), a case could be made for allowing their use to sway smaller, more personal conflicts. Depending on the style of campaign desired and Seneschal fiat, Tactics and/or Leadership rolls could be made by someone watching the fight (or several fights going on at the same time) to call out suggestions and instructions. These rolls could perhaps grant a number of extra dice equal to the result of the rolls that are spread across all of the companions that he is calling instructions to. This should only be allowed after the leader/tactician has had an opportunity to watch the fight for a few moments, perhaps after three full rounds and again after every other group of three. The Battle skill might be used when facing large numbers of opponents, success in a Wit/Battle roll might allow a reduction equal to the number of successes or the number of opponents (whichever is lower) on the TN of a Terrain roll to move about in such a way as to only face one or two of them (TROS, p. 77; TFOB, p. 49).

Swapping Styles and Weapons

One good way to throw off an opponent is to change weapon styles (and even weapons) during a battle. Many weapons can be utilized with more than one weapon proficiency, and other weapons can be drawn during a combat following the guidelines in *The Flower of Battle* (TFOB, p. 32). Switching proficiencies can only be done between rounds; but it possibly opens up new maneuvers (or changes the activation cost of maneuvers), plus it may even improve your CP. Swapping weapons may allow you to switch to a weapon that will be more effective against your opponent (a flail to get around his shield, a pick to punch through his armor, a dagger because he has managed to shorten the range, and so on).

Steradian and Lysander are battling as a part of Lysander's prize playing exhibition at his Weapon School. Steradian is wielding a Greatsword, while Lysander is using Sword & Shield. Finding himself unable to punch through Lysander's defense, Steradian evades during the second exchange of the round and drops a terrain die to draw his flail from his belt, switching to his Mass Weapon proficiency at the start of the next round. Seeing that his shield has now become a lot less effective, Lysander drops it a couple of exchanges later, and thus shifts from Sword & Shield to his Greatsword/Longsword proficiency, losing the now relatively useless blocking options, but giving him access to a few new maneuvers such as Half-Sword, Stop Short and Evasive Attack. If he gets really desperate, he can now even use defensive grappling to attempt to catch or trap Steradian's flail.

Wearing out your Opponent

One useful tactic to use when facing a heavily armored opponent is to rely on the weight of his armor to tire him quickly (see Fatigue, p. 71 or TFOB, p. 33). Remember that the higher a CP penalty a character has from his armor, the faster he will lose dice to fatigue. By dancing around, with liberal use of Full Evades and other defenses, it is possible to cause such a character to deplete his CP to the point where you can overcome him more easily and more safely. Additionally, cunning fighters will look for ways to enhance this using speed (by hurrying, you force the opponent to hurry as well which increases the armor penalty), terrain (try using terrain rolls or pressing (TFOB, p. 50) to move the opponent into rough terrain which may cause him extra fatigue to move safely though), and so on. Every little bit will help even the odds against such a well-armored opponent.

Francisco, an Italian fencer with an Endurance of 6 and very light armor (no CP penalty) is facing off against the heavily armored Sir Vhord who has an endurance of 4 and a CP penalty of -3. Francisco will lose 1 from his

CP every 12 rounds, while Sir Vhord will lose a point every 5. Knowing that his rapier will have trouble getting through the heavy plate amour his opponent is wearing, and fearing the likelihood of Sir Vhord simply relying on his amour for defense and thus having a large pool for attacking, Francisco uses a lot of evasions and defenses, being careful not to overextend himself and waits. Over time, Sir Vhord's CP drops more than twice as fast as Francisco's, eventually to the point where Francisco can move in and start placing strong attacks with a lot less fear of heavy reprisals from the exhausted Sir Vhord.

Pick your Attack Location Carefully

A lot of players like to attack the most vulnerable body locations, especially the head and the upper torso because of the extreme damage results hits to those locations can yield. It's quite easy to forget some of the other less-obvious body locations that one can target, such as:

The arms

Blows to the arm (and especially the hands) usually force a roll by the opponent to prevent dropping his weapon; this is the case even with relatively minor margins of success in such attacks. Additionally, if your group is using the optional hit location modifiers (TROS, p. 234) such attacks actually gain a free +1CP if using a swinging weapon.

The legs

Strikes to the legs usually force knockdown rolls, and if the opponent has a shield and uses it to block your attack you gain a free + 1 CP on the attack (if using the optional hit location modifiers). On top of that, the legs are often the most weakly armored parts of the body, and so you may find it easier to damage an opponent there (to rack up his pain and take advantage of shock results) than other, more heavily protected regions. Finally, the legs (and especially the lower legs) cannot easily be protected using the Favoring rules, so they are often a good spot to



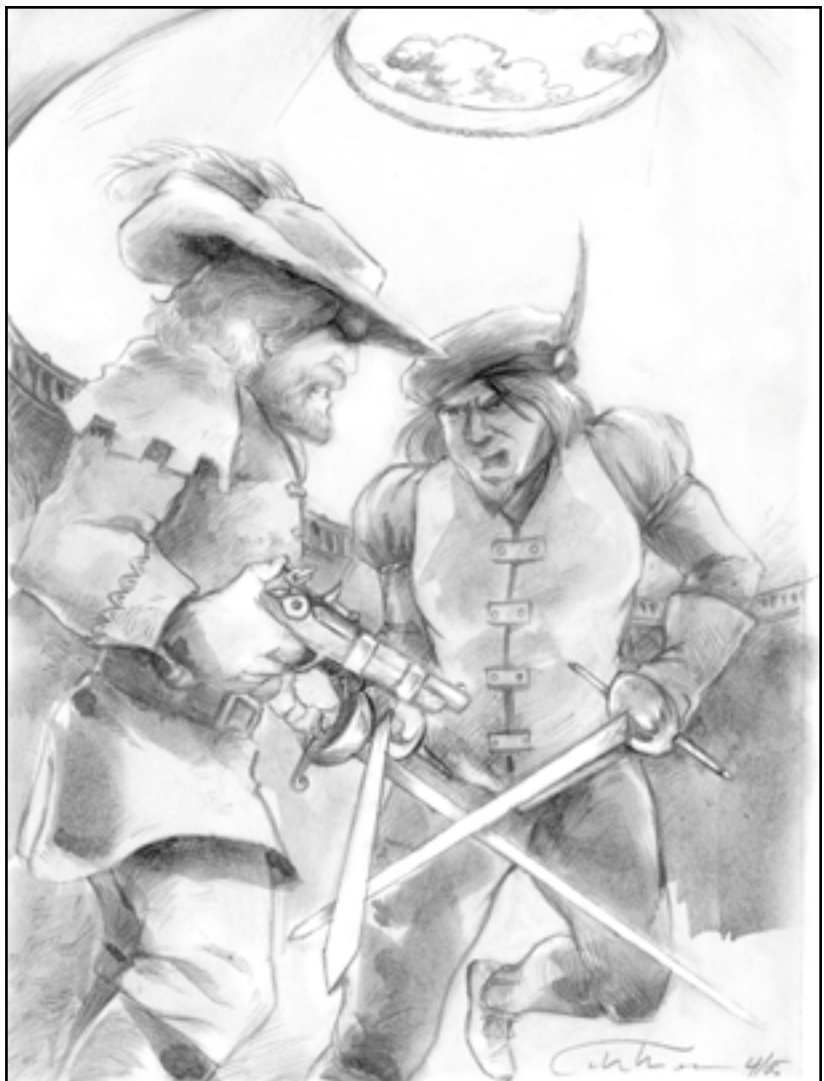
swing at to avoid targeting a Favored location where the opponent has extra protection.

Missile Weapons during Melee

A useful tactic within melee combat is to keep the opponent on his toes by using missile weapons. Pulling and firing a small crossbow or pistol, or flicking throwing daggers at an opponent can be very effective. This especially true when performed while using Terrain dice to force the opponent back or during a regular attack so that he has two attacks to defend against at the same time - see the Double Attack maneuver (TROS, p. 60) for more information regarding defending against double attacks. This is particularly effective when several missile attacks can be made in quick succession, such as with multiple throwing knives or a brace of primed pistols.

It's pretty obvious that the character has to have a hand free, and he has to already have the missile weapon in that hand or he'll need to use the rules for drawing weapons during combat (TFOB, p. 32). At any point thereafter, he can declare that he is making a missile attack against his opponent. Because this is taking attention away from the melee combat, the dice come out of his CP, but he cannot use more dice than his Proficiency with the missile weapon (his Aim does not come into play since he doesn't have time to stop and aim the weapon) and the attack has an activation cost of 1. If desired, this attack may be made at the same time as another attack is launched with his melee weapon; this counts as a double attack for the purposes of the opponent defending himself and has an activation cost of 2.

Rinaldo is dueling his archenemy Stefan. Stefan is using two rapiers, while Rinaldo fights with only one. At the end of one round, while defending himself from a low thrust Rinaldo drops two dice in a terrain roll to pull his pistol from his belt. The weapon is already cocked and primed. At the start of the new round, his CP refreshes and he declares a shot at Stefan. Because Rinaldo has a Firearms: Pistols proficiency of 6, he cannot assign more dice than this to the attack, and he has to pay a 1-die activation cost as well. He elects to use 5 dice for the attack and so he subtracts 6 dice from his CP and rolls the shot. Because he's firing at point-blank range, he gains an extra die as well (TFOB, p. 8). Stefan has little option but to Partial Evade the shot (he cannot Full Evade, since he attacked in the last exchange). He will



also need to spend an extra 2 dice to gain the initiative or Rinaldo will keep it and be able to attack him in the second exchange (perhaps while using terrain dice to draw a second primed and cocked pistol from his belt...)

Attack as a Form of Defense

Although it seems obvious when rationally thought out, many fighters fall into the trap of simply defending against incoming attacks and relying on a successful defense to gain the initiative and thus go onto the offensive. Analyze your opponent's attacks carefully – strong attacks should be met with strong defense, but weak attacks (particularly those that you are fairly confident will miss or will be stopped by your armour) can often be ignored in favor of launching an attack at the same time (which, under normal conditions will land just after your opponent's attack). This move can be risky, because your opponent may end up rolling a lot better than the odds would suggest. In addition, he may in fact be feinting and the attack will instead target a different area of your body, usually one that isn't as well armored or which is otherwise more vulnerable than the one you thought he was attacking. When pulled off right, however, this kind of pre-emptive attack can punish a complacent opponent who underinvests in his attacks, hoping to save dice.

It is also possible to buy initiative (TROS, p. 75; TFOB, p. 38), of course, meaning that your attack will actually land before your opponent's one. This can be deadly if pulled off right but be wary of two important considerations: First, making an attack and stealing initiative is expensive in terms of dice from your CP, and this means that if you don't kill or disable your opponent you may be unable to successfully defend yourself against a follow-up attack from him. Second, your opponent (if he has dice left in his pool) can simply choose to steal initiative back, meaning that his attack will land first after all and you're down a number of dice.

Evasion as a Form of Defense

Although the Full Evasion maneuver is well utilized, many fighters overlook Partial and Duck & Weave evasions in favor of parries and blocks. Duck & Weave is seen as too difficult to pull off, while Partial Evasion does not steal initiative (unless 2 additional dice are spent). However, there are a few good reasons why both maneuvers are a part of any successful fighter's repertoire.

Partial Evasion

Partial Evasion is the defense of choice for any fighter using a weapon that has a poorer DTN than the Partial Evasion's DTN of 7. However, the maneuver is useful for another very important reason. This is that a partial evasion involves a great deal more movement – if you are trying to lead your opponent into difficult terrain or simply want to move around so you can get closer to the door, a partial evasion gives you more movement than a block or a parry would. If your group specifically tracks character movement (perhaps on a hex grid or similar) we suggest you allow a character who

Duck & Weave / Partial Evasions

Many groups feel that the Duck & Weave evasion is too difficult to use successfully in combat. Its high DTN of 9 makes it tricky to use successfully, particularly against an opponent who is using a fast weapon with a TN of 5 or 6. We like the maneuver just as it is, but if you feel it's a little difficult to use, try dropping the TN to 8 – this makes the evasion a little easier to pull off without making it too easy. It's still hard to use against very fast weapons, but is quite usable against slower swinging weapons (with ATN's of 7 or even 8), just as it should be.

If you make this change, we recommend dropping the DTN of the Partial Evasion maneuver to 6 (otherwise it becomes tactically less viable, given that Duck & Weave's DTN is only one higher).



is doing a Partial Evasion to move up to half their Movement score (assuming the Evasion is successful) and the attacker is forced to move with them to remain in close combat.

Duck & Weave

The Duck & Weave Evasion is a great deal more useful than it may first appear. As well as being a defense, it resets the combat to the usual range for your own weapon – you have weaved and maneuvered yourself back into the optimal position for your weapon length. This can usually only be done with successful attacks, not successful defenses (Partial Evasion doesn't affect range at all, and Full Evade doesn't reset the range so much as halt the combat and reset it to whatever the longer weapon's optimal range is). Even better, follow-up attacks after a successful Duck & Weave are deadly; because you are now at the correct range for your weapon and your opponent can neither use his shield, nor a full evasion (he can't full evade because he attacked you in the previous exchange, remember) to defend himself. On top of that, he is treated as if he botched the attack you evaded, meaning that he loses a number of dice from his CP equal to half the number he had committed into the attack. This loss makes up in great part for the extra dice you may have had to allocate to the attack because of the possibly high DTN of the Duck & Weave maneuver. The opponent's now-reduced die pool along with his limited defensive options and your optimal range can spell a lot of trouble for him!

Finally, all evasions are useful in the case of a fighter with a longer weapon than his opponent while the fight is in his opponent's optimal range – for parries and blocks the range difference is applied as a penalty to the defense of the character with the long weapon, but this is not the case with evasions. On the other hand, armor CP penalties are applied to evasions (if using the optional rules in TFOB - see p. 12) so this must also be taken into account (it's difficult to leap about like an acrobat when you're encased head to toe in plates of metal!).

Full Evasion

Full Evasion is a powerful defensive move as it can be used to avoid all incoming attacks in the same exchange (and it ends the round, which means you can use your entire die pool on it). Just a note of warning, however: using all of your dice on a full evasion that fails in the first exchange is very deadly – you're left in the second exchange not having evaded and having no dice left to defend yourself.

A couple of points to remember/consider: First, you cannot perform a Full Evasion in an exchange immediately following one in which you attacked your opponent. Second, you can't perform a Full Evasion at all unless it's reasonable that there is some way for you to get quickly away – behind a tree or table, through a door, and so on – it's not possible to full evade while you're surrounded, your back is to a wall, in an open field without cover, and so on.

Hemi, an island club-and-shield fighter (with a medium length club) is attacking As'wa, a spear (with a very long spear) fighter from eastern lands. The range is currently in Hemi's favor and he has declared a downwards swing (zone V) with 6 dice at As'wa. Knowing that the range penalty means that a parry will cost him an additional activation cost of 3 dice, As'wa instead declares a Duck & Weave evasion with all but 1 of his remaining 11 dice. They both roll, Hemi achieving 4 successes, and As'wa (who is using a DTN of 8 for the Duck & Weave, as outlined in the sidebar above) gets 5 successes. Not only was As'wa's defense successful, he has moved back to the optimal range for his spear, and Hemi loses 3 dice from his pool at the start of the next exchange as well as not being able to use his shield for defense. Suddenly, the fight has swung very much in As'wa's favor!

Re-attacking Old Wounds

One of the more overlooked rules in TROS is the idea that repeated attacks at the same location

can re-open and re-hurt old wounds. As stated in the main rulebook (TROS, p. 81), subsequent attacks to the same specific location will cause the higher shock result of the two wounds, thus it only takes a very minor attack to seriously hurt an opponent if you can strike a region that previously took a more serious blow. Note – by “region” the rules are talking about specific locations, not zones. So, if you target zone I and hit the knee, any further attack to the knee (which could be zone I or II) is eligible for this rule, as long as it’s the same knee of course!

Geralt and Rinaldo are battling over a comment Geralt made regarding Rinaldo’s parentage. Early on in the battle, Rinaldo manages to land a level 4 wound to Geralt’s right shoulder – a nasty blow that causes 10 Shock but not much actual pain due to Geralt’s abnormally high WP. Geralt manages to push on and they fight for several more rounds. At one point, Rinaldo is seriously low on dice but has the initiative, so he declares a swing to Zone VI (upwards swing) with 1 die (leaving 1 in his pool). Geralt knows that a 1-die blow to that region will do little damage, and so he ignores Rinaldo’s attack and announces an attack of his own. At this point, Rinaldo declares his attack to be a feint, spending his final die as the activation cost and shifting his attack to zone V. With his Major Accuracy gift and Geralt’s lack of defense this gives him a 50/50 chance of striking the shoulder, and even that 1-die margin of success will guarantee 10 dice of shock, foiling Geralt’s attack and probably leaving him at a die disadvantage for the following round.

Don’t Over-Invest Dice while Attacking

Many novice fighters in TROS don’t see why it’s not a good idea to throw all (or at least most) of your dice into a single attack. However, this can be very foolhardy thing to do. While it does generally force your opponent to invest heavily in defense, he has a few options that can seriously turn the fight immediately in

his favor. First, he could choose to declare an attack himself and steal initiative – with all or most of your own dice already invested in your attack, you have no way of stealing initiative back, and the shock from his attack will reduce your attacking pool first (TFOB, p. 40). Second, if he has more dice than you and successfully defends, you may have put yourself into a bad situation for the second exchange – being down 1 die to 3 is a lot worse than being down 4 dice to 6 (for example). Finally, and most importantly – the Counter (TROS, p. 65) and Rota (TFOB, p. 70) maneuvers will use all of your attack successes against you in the following exchange if successful and there will possibly be very little you can do about it.

New Maneuver: Shield Bashing

One new maneuver that we wanted to add into *The Flower of Battle* but ran out of room for is the Shield Bash – literally using a shield as a weapon. This is useful at any time when you have dropped or otherwise cannot use your actual weapon. Any character using a shield can declare a bashing attack at his opponent using that shield. The ATN of the attack depends on how large and cumbersome the shield is (see the table below) and the Damage Rating is ST+1b. There is an activation cost of 1CP for this maneuver, and it cannot be used in any kind of double attack, but the advantage is that a shield bash cannot be parried; it can only be evaded or blocked. Additionally, if the opponent blocks a shield bash with a smaller shield, he suffers a 1CP die penalty on his defense for every size increment his shield is smaller by (thus using a Buckler to block a bash from a Large shield would carry a 2-die CP penalty).

Shield Size	ATN
Hand or small	6
Medium or large	7



Devon, a doppelhander fighter, is attacking Feula, a cut & thrust student. Thinking he has a die advantage (and a bigger, nastier sword), Devon declares a mighty swing at Feula's left-hand side zone IV using 12 of his 13 CP. In response, Feula declares a counter using all of his 14 dice in his pool (less 2 for the activation cost). Devon rolls 12 dice and achieves a mighty 7 successes, but is horrified when Feula rolls his counter and gets 9 successes from 12 dice. In the second exchange, Feula rolls on the counter table and ends up thrusting at Devon's face with 7 dice (from Devon's 7 successes) while Devon has only a single die left to defend himself with (and he can't even Full Evade). We will refrain from giving details of what happened next, but it involved a loud squishy noise...



Two Weapon Combat

One fairly common misconception is that fighting with two weapons does not provide as much of a benefit as it should in TROS. It actually provides several advantages that are often overlooked. First, it opens up a few nifty maneuvers that would not otherwise be available, such as simultaneous block/strike (yes, that can be done using a parrying weapon, making it actually “simultaneous parry/strike”) and bind and strike. Second, it allows the double

attack maneuver – even though on first read it doesn't appear that splitting your attacking dice between the two weapons is much of a benefit, being able to launch two half-dice attacks against different areas of the opponent can be a huge advantage. Unless he also has 2 weapons (or a weapon and a shield) he will have a hard time defending himself properly, and the shock and pain results from 2 medium wounds can often total up to more than the results from one slightly larger wound would have been!



Variant Damage System

Some of our fans have expressed a preference for a system where the degree of attack success and equipment outweigh the attacker's and defender's temporal Attributes, and where the size of an opponent is factored into how hard you can hit him. We present this optional damage system for those looking for such a mechanic. We have also included a few additional Gifts and Flaws to incorporate into your campaign should you choose to use this system.

How the New System Works

Melee damage is calculated by taking the final number in the attacker's Margin of Success, adding in the weapon attack modifier (if any) and then multiplying it by the Weapon's Damage Factor (WDF, for short). The WDF of a weapon is determined by its mass and size, as outlined in the following table.

Weapon Type	Weapon Damage Factor
Punches/Kicks or very Light Weapons *	x2
Standard Weapons	x3
Heavy Weapons *	x4

* See light and heavy weapons sidebar for more information.

Once you have determined the base damage from your Margin of Success, add to it your character's Strength and subtract your opponent's Toughness and Armor (see the sidebar below for alterations to armor values). The result is the total damage inflicted.

Darrius is battling a bandit, and hits his opponent with a margin of success of 3. His weapon has a damage rating of +1, which he adds to the MoS, and then multiplies this result by 3 (because his sword is a normal weapon

Armor Values

This system is designed so that the Margin of Success and equipment play a more important role in combat than just your raw ability. To achieve this, the armor values need to be raised to correspond with the increase in damage from the Weapon. Use the following table to determine the AV values of armor when using this variant damage system (essentially, multiply all AV's by 3). If you are using the optional armor modifiers vs. differing damage types as found in TFOB on p. 13, add or subtract the modifier and then triple the result for the final armor value. Thus standard Mail (AV4) against a cutting attack (AV+1) results in an AV of 15 under this system.

Additionally, creatures that rely solely on natural toughness are disadvantaged by the alterations to the Toughness and Armor rules presented here. For larger or naturally tough creatures, treat half of their natural TO as AV protection (which gets tripled as discussed above) and the other half as TO. For example, a Wurm (OBAM, p. 72) has a TO of 12. Under this system it instead has a TO of 6 and an AV of 6 (which gets tripled) for a final result of TO 6/AV 18. In effect, the TO protection is simply being doubled (in this case from 12 to 24) but in some situations it might be necessary to know what portion of that protection constitutes TO and what portion constitutes AV.

Armor Type	AV
Padded, Fur	3
Leather	6
Cuir Bouilli, Light Mail	9
Scaled Armor, Mail, Light Plate	12
Double or Banded Mail, Plate	15
Heavy Plate	18



with a WDF of 3). This makes his base damage 12. He has a Strength of 6, which when added to the 12 makes a total of 18. The bandit has 6 Armor and 4 Toughness, reducing Darrius' total damage to 8.

Light and Heavy Weapons

Punches and Kicks are considered light weapons under these rules, and thus have a WDF of x2. Additionally, very small weapons such as those carried by pixies, goblins and other tiny creatures also qualify as light and thus have only an x2 WDF multiplier. Heavy weapons with a WDF of x4 are intended for larger than man-sized creatures, such as Dragon claws and Troll clubs. At the Seneschal's option, you may consider using this modifier for some of the bigger (and higher TN weapons) found in the core rulebook and *The Flower of Battle* to make them more valuable compared to their Attack TN. Some possible candidates for this include Doppelhandlers and Claymores, Heavy Polearms, and perhaps Arbalest or Heavy Crossbow fire. Keep in mind, however, this makes these weapons much more dangerous.

Damage Threshold

It is now necessary to calculate the wound a struck opponent will receive based upon the damage calculated in the previous paragraph. Every creature has a damage threshold based upon its size. This threshold determines the wound level received as shown in the following tables.

In the previous example, Darrius achieved 8 points of damage against a bandit. Since the bandit is a normal human, we take the total damage and compare it to the Medium chart. With 8 points of damage, we see that the bandit has suffered a level 3 wound.

Miniscule (Cats, Rats, Birds)

Damage	Resulting Wound level
1	Level 1
2	Level 2
3	Level 3
4	Level 4
5+	Level 5

Small (Large Dogs, Dwarves, Children)

Damage	Resulting Wound level
1-2	Level 1
3-4	Level 2
5-6	Level 3
7-8	Level 4
9+	Level 5

Medium Size (Humanoid, Wolf)

Damage	Resulting Wound level
1-3	Level 1
4-6	Level 2
7-9	Level 3
10-12	Level 4
13+	Level 5

Large (Hef, Gorem, Trolls, Horses)

Damage	Resulting Wound level
1-4	Level 1
5-8	Level 2
9-12	Level 3
13-16	Level 4
17+	Level 5

Very large (Manticores, Elephants)

Damage	Resulting Wound level
1-5	Level 1
6-10	Level 2
11-15	Level 3
16-20	Level 4
21+	Level 5

Gigantic (Dragons and such)

Damage	Resulting Wound level
1-6	Level 1
7-12	Level 2
13-18	Level 3
19-24	Level 4
25+	Level 5

Option: Random Damage

Many players enjoy having a random element to the amount of damage they do. To represent this, you may optionally allow any attack die result of 10 rolled by the attacker to add +1 to the damage inflicted, and any 10 rolled by the defender to subtract -1. Extra damage inflicted cannot be higher than the original Margin of Success of the attack, and similarly the damage cannot be reduced by more than the original margin of success either.

Darrius' player rolled five 10's in that roll against that bandit and the bandit only got a single 10 on his defensive roll. This gives Darrius a "net" four 10's, so he gets to add an additional 3 to the total damage (he can't add 4 because his margin of success was only 3). That makes his total damage 11 instead of 8, which is enough extra damage to bump the wound up to Level 4.

This optional variant damage system makes Strength and Toughness a great deal less important than in the default TROS damage system. Characters wearing little or no armor who get hit

are going to get hurt, badly, and swashbuckling types and the like should seriously consider the Armor of Heroes gift (below).

New Gifts/Flaws to use with this System

Armor of Heroes (major or minor gift)

For some extraordinary reason, blows seem less likely than normal to impart their full effect when you are wearing little to no armor. For the minor version of this gift, add +3 to your AV when wearing AV 3 or less protection. For the major version add +6 to your AV when wearing AV 6 or less protection. These figures are after the armor multiplication described in the armor sidebar, not before (you don't triple the +6 and get a final bonus of +18AV!)

Large (major gift)

You are very large for your size, and as sturdy as a horse...literally. Use the large size chart when you take damage.

Small (major flaw)

You are very small for your size, and your body simply cannot take as much punishment as a full sized person. Use the Small size chart when you take damage.

Option: Variable Wound Effects

One of the advantages of this variable damage system is that because each wound falls within a range of results instead of a single result (well, except for the Miniscule table,) it's really easy to slant results one way or the other if you like the idea of promoting certain kinds of wounds over others.

This would need to be done for each table individually of course, but using the Medium/Humanoid table as an example, you might stretch the ranges for lower wounds and shrink the ranges for the higher wounds as in the following example:

This will slant all wounds to lower levels, making combat a little less deadly. Conversely, you could in fact increase the lethality if you wanted to, by slanting the table the other way (although this would make combat very nasty indeed). You could even create different tables for different damage types or conditions - perhaps in your campaign world there is a special metal that is anathema to human skin and burns it. Instead of simply increasing the DR of weapons made from that metal, you could construct a different set of tables which tend to slant wounds higher when inflicted by weapons made of that metal.

Damage	Wound
1-5	Level 1
6-9	Level 2
10-12	Level 3
13-14	Level 4
15+	Level 5



Encumbrance and Fatigue

The encumbrance rules presented in the main rulebook (TROS, p. 93) take weight and impedance into account when determining how encumbered a character is, but do not consider armor (TROS, p. 85, further updated in TFOB, p. 10).

The armor rules provide their own Move and CP penalties for armor usage and simultaneously determine the effect the armor has on the character's fatigue. Other clothing and equipment can similarly affect encumbrance and fatigue however, as outlined in the following rules. If you are using the original armor rules from the main rulebook (TROS, p. 85) then use the encumbrance rules found in that book also. However, if you are using the updated armor rules from *The Flower of Battle*, you might find the following system a better match.

The encumbrance rule determines how impeded a character is by the clothing, equipment and armor he is wearing. This provides an immediate and permanent (until

he takes the clothing or equipment off) penalty to Move and CP. Fatigue, on the other hand, takes into account the effect weight and load distribution have on a character and gradually imposes increasing penalties. These two factors must be considered separately.

Encumbrance

Items that sit on or around the torso do not encumber the body; unless these items are so inflexible the wearer cannot twist and turn easily. Clothing or equipment that impedes the movement of the arms or legs, however, does so. The rules on TFOB, p. 10+ outline the encumbrance penalties for armor usage. These values should be further increased by other clothing and equipment according to the table below. Remember, this is an encumbrance penalty that always applies (but does not increase) while the character is wearing or using the clothing or equipment in question. The same equipment can also cause increased fatigue (see the Fatigue section, below).

The calculated CP penalty should also be applied to any skill or attribute use where the character needs to have full range of motion (jumping, climbing, running, swimming, and so on).

Clothing / Equipment	CP penalty	Move Penalty
Small backpack	-1	-
Large backpack	-1	-1
Anything that restricts the arms (heavy jacket, heavy long-sleeved robes, etc)	-1	-
Anything that restricts the legs (long snug skirt, etc)	-	-1
Carrying anything heavy or unwieldy (lantern, torch, sack)	-1	-1
Carrying anything heavy and unwieldy (a body, a full sack, a large coil of rope)	-2	-1



Sir Vhord is wearing a full plate suit and full helm, which together carry a total CP penalty of -3 and a Move penalty of -2. Additionally, Sir Vhord is wearing a large backpack, which adds another -1 CP and -1 Move penalty, making the totals -4 CP and -3 Move. If Sir Vhord has time to shrug off his backpack before a fight, the penalty returns to -3 CP and -2 Move.

Fatigue

Any movement eventually causes fatigue. Fatigue increases over time, gradually slowing down and tiring out a character. As outlined in *The Flower of Battle* (TFOB, p. 33) a character loses 1 CP from fatigue during combat after a number of rounds equal to double his Endurance score (and again after the same period of time again, and so on). Outside combat, Fatigue should be calculated and applied after every increment of double the character's Endurance score times 30 minutes (a character with an Endurance score of 4 therefore gains fatigue every 8 rounds in combat, or every 4 hours outside combat). Riding a beast is less fatiguing than marching – halve all fatigue penalties in this situation.

Fatigue reduces a character's CP, and (like Encumbrance) can optionally be applied to any use of a Skill or Attribute where physical exhaustion would be a detriment to the activity being attempted (although as a general rule, only half the current fatigue level should be applied to skill or attribute checks as they



use a smaller die pool). Luckily, Fatigue is relatively easy to remove. A few rounds of rest can restore combat fatigue (TFOB, p. 33), although at the Seneschal's discretion fatigue earned over long periods of activity might require a more substantial period of rest to recover from – for each hour of rest, make a roll to recover fatigue.

Fatigue increments slowly over time (as outlined above) but this rate is increased by the wearing of encumbering or very heavy armor, clothing, or equipment. The total CP penalty determined from armor and the encumbrance rules above should be subtracted from the calculated $EN \times 2$ of the character to



determine how often they lose 1 CP to fatigue (both in and out of combat). In addition to the penalties calculated above and in the armor section of *The Flower of Battle*, extra weight will cause Fatigue to increment even faster, as outlined in the following table.

calculation meaning that he will actually lose 1 CP to fatigue every 2 combat rounds (Endurance of 4 doubled is 8, less 4 for the CP penalty and 2 more for the fatigue penalty). Sir Vhord would be well advised to drop his heavy backpack before he enters melee combat, as

Clothing / Equipment / Condition	Fatigue penalty
Character carrying less than (ST+EN)x3 pounds of weight in extra equipment	None
Character carrying more than (ST+EN)x3 pounds of weight in extra equipment	+1
Character carrying more than (ST+EN)x5 pounds of weight in extra equipment	+2
Character carrying more than (ST+EN)x10 pounds of weight in extra equipment	+3
Character carrying more than (ST+EN)x20 pounds of weight in extra equipment	+5
Character Overweight	+1
Character Obese	+2

The penalty described in this table is not applied to the CP or Move score of the character directly; it is solely used to increase the speed at which fatigue affects the character by further lowering the time intervals between fatigue penalties. The example after the table should make things a little clearer.

Sir Vhord has an Endurance of 4. His encumbrance CP penalty is -4, as calculated above, which means he will lose 1 CP due to fatigue every 4 rounds (double his endurance is 8, subtract 4 leaves a total of 4). However, Sir Vhord's backpack contains 45 pounds of equipment, which is just over five times his EN+ST of 8. This results in a further fatigue penalty of +2 as referenced in the table above. This additional +2 is not applied to Sir Vhord's CP directly, but it does increase the CP penalty for the purposes of fatigue

its weight and bulkiness are adding to both his encumbrance and the rate at which he fatigues himself – with the backpack he has -4 CP and loses one more every 2 rounds through fatigue, but without the backpack he has only -3 CP and loses 1 CP every 5 rounds – a big difference!

Outside combat, the situation is no better. With his backpack on, Sir Vhord will lose 1CP due to fatigue every hour – if he's ambushed during a long march he could be in a lot of trouble. If he loses the backpack (or hires someone to carry it for him, or buys a mule, or...) he would only gain fatigue every 2 1/2 hours – a much more manageable rate.

(Sir Vhord's entirely average Endurance of 4 is not helping either; he should consider improving it...)



Voices and Prophecy for The Riddle of Steel

Religion, whether as a product of setting or Spiritual Attributes, is a key theme in *The Riddle of Steel*. When Weyrth--TROS' current "default" setting--was designed, more thought went into the interplay of religion than any other aspect in the world climate. The Thayers, worshipers of the Three Gods Become One, and the followers of the Seven Vows of the Prophets all start as brothers or cousins. Even sorcery stands as a splinter of this happy little family, acknowledging Xanar Stormbringer as one of the Nine.

Holy wars between such closely tied factions are inevitable. On our own world, no one ever did as much damage to the Catholics as did the Protestant armies of the Reformation, or vice-versa. Placing your campaign in the middle of a holy war on Earth, Weyrth, or your own game world sets your players up for stories full of conflict, emotion, and faith...prime TROS real estate. Here, however, we want to go one step further: your characters are not only in the middle of such a conflict--they're at the bottom of it!

It's All About Being the Protagonist

The Riddle of Steel is not a game about watching metaplot go by. Spiritual Attributes force the characters into the very nexus of in-game conflict and provide the players with the resources to funnel and direct the story beyond even the wishes of their characters. Voices takes the Player/Character divide one step further toward creating a very specific type of story. This isn't for every play group, and even then, it's not for every campaign, but it will be earth shattering for your campaign world.

On Weyrth, in the land of Fahal, Fahal is the Land, the Sky, and the One God. The faith of the Fahalanim is an unorganized one that demands

obedience and loyalty to a god that doesn't seem interested in making up too many rules. Amongst the most revered in all that ashen-gray land is Go'shen, the Prophet of Fahal, Who has Seen His Face and Lived. Some details of Go'shen's story are available in the Fahal section of the Weyrth book in TROS. However, what if Go'shen was not an NPC at all, but instead a Player Character...?

Step One: The World Before

Gray grasses intermixed with patches of golden wild wheat and new-green brush bent in the wind. That same wind pushed against the short caravan cresting the hills that led from Fahal to Khrym-Khanaan and her slave markets. In the ox-drawn cages sat ashen-skinned and ebony-haired men, women, and children--the sons and daughters of Fahal. At the head of those cages rode Go'shen, also grey-skinned and black-haired. Also a child of Fahal. But disowned, surely; what parent wishes one son to sell another for profit in the filth of heathen eastern cities? "If Fahal is angry," Goshen mused as the winds continued to beat on his leathery face, singing in disapproval, "then he must not be overly so. It's only wind, after all." Only the sound of the slaver's lash on ox and man alike drew his attention from inward back onto the trail, where it belonged.

This rule places a player character or small groups of PC's into the shoes of prophets, spiritual reformers, apostles, controversial oracles, or even the embodiment of a divine figure in the World of Men. In order to do that, a few things need to be factored into both the story's setting and the lives of the characters who will shortly be drawn into a world where Faith is Knowledge.

1. The PC's nation, land, social order, or (best yet) church/organized religion is running contrary to the will of its patron deity.
2. The PC must likewise live a life contrary both to the will of his/her deity and the current social norm for the setting.

3. The PC cannot have any Faith Spiritual Attribute and must have a Destiny: To become a Prophet (or whatever) Spiritual Attribute.

4. All players at the table need to agree that they want their campaign to run “this way”. The player(s) running the soon-to-be-touched-by-God characters need to be on board in a big way - a prophetic character’s potential to dominate the entire story is far beyond that of even powerful Sorcerers (for a “cut down” version of these rules that is not quite as dominating, see the Chosen of the Gods section, p. 79).

In Go’shen’s story, italicized above, we learn that slaves are being led out of Fahal (the land), contrary to the will of Fahal (the god), and Go’shen is at the head of this convoy as its leader. He’s clearly a traitor to his people as well as his god. Because Go’shen is basically an apostate to the Fahalan religion, he takes no Faith SA; instead, he has Destiny: To See the Face of Fahal. Outside of the game, an agreement has been reached between Go’shen’s player, the other players, and the Seneschal, that Go’shen and his rise to the station of Prophet will be the centerpiece of this campaign. The other players have essentially agreed to be supporting cast! The Seneschal will do his best, in return, to make sure that each mundane character has an important role in the story, whether as key disciples, supporters, or adversaries.

Step Two: Descent into Hell

The Khrymean horsemen had come too fast for anyone to react. All those outside the cages were killed or captured, sentenced to death by torture for sport alone. The same held true for the men inside the cages. Only the women and children were spared... if it can be called that. Go’shen fought hard. Fought for his profit. Fought for his life. Inevitably, in the end, he was overcome.

And then he awoke--oh that he hadn’t woken from that sticky-sweet sleep! His smallest bones were cracked; his flesh was seared. Go’shen wept, but his desiccated body struggled to find

tears. Dryly he sobbed in the quiet, flame-lit chamber. No other cries echoed through the halls beyond. “By now the others are all dead”, he thought. He hoped. However, the black iron tools of pain around him only seemed to snicker at his hopes. There was no hope.

“Good morning, my friend.” Go’shen was not alone. A skinny, greasy Khrymean with forge-burns and one white eye gnashed his toothless gums and took up some kind of clamp from a small fire. Go’shen hacked in response. It was good to hear a voice. Even that voice. Not so lonely anymore. How long had he hung there, draped from chains as if to be drawn and quartered? He couldn’t feel his hands or feet, but he knew that they were broken, and that they hurt.

“We will slowly cut you up. You are sport. You are food. Your parts and organs will be added to potions and balms that will keep our queen young. Don’t worry anymore, grey man. You don’t die in vain.” The Khrymean bent down before the racked Fahalan and placed the clamps around his testicles. No torture in this, no special joy or disgust. The oily torturer snapped them free, tore them loose, and placed them in a fired clay jar.

Go’shen made little noise. A whimper or a grunt, maybe. Mostly, he wept moisture-less tears.

Many prophets undertake a descent into some form of Hell. Christ had his time both fasting in the wilderness for 40 days and later on the cross. Moses wandered in the desert for 40 years. Saul was blinded before becoming Paul. Go’shen... he was tortured. A lot. Then he paid a price.

Where game mechanics are concerned, most of what happens in the Descent into Hell portion of a Prophet’s story is up to the Seneschal and the players in-play. It should be largely spontaneous and universally horrible. In Go’shen’s story, above, he becomes a eunuch. Pretty drastic, certainly, but TROS

is a game about drastic actions and drastic consequences. Where torture may not have reached the player, the clamp most certainly did. That's the idea. Part of the transformation from mundane into Prophet is Loss.

Loss is a largely self-explanatory concept. As part of the shove, a deity gives to the prophet-to-be some kind of horrible price must be paid. This must never be the sort of thing that the character is likely to thank his god for, but it doesn't have to be something that comes from the god directly, either. In TROS terms, this is considered a Major Flaw, even if the Loss is really something that normally counts as a Minor Flaw. Along those same lines, an "Anti-Destiny" (see p. 46) can also take the place of a loss if the Seneschal allows it (it's OK for the character to have an Anti-Destiny as well as his Destiny to become a Prophet at this point, because that Destiny is about to vanish – see the Prophetic Faith SA, (see below) so long as this dark future is common knowledge to all of one's followers and enemies. It has to actively work against the Prophet.

Example Losses

- Amputee Flaw
- Blind Flaw
- Haunted Flaw (those pesky personal demons that never go away)
- Poverty (immediately and permanently reduces all funds to nothing but the clothes on your back and a bauble or two; how this happens is part of the Descent into Hell.
- Ugly Flaw (from related disfigurement)
- Anti-Destiny: To die a long, horrible death as a martyr at the hands of one of your closest friends

Step Three: Visitation and Conversion

Goshen hung. Bleeding. Sobbing. Dying.

"My son," in the darkness of his mind, he heard it.

"My son." Go'shen's eyes opened; still it was dark. Dark despite the fires burning all around. Then he saw.

Not with his eyes. With his soul.

"This is what I want you to do..."

This is when it happens: the Angel Gabriel to Mohammed, the Burning Bush to Moses, and Saul on the road to Tarsus. In some form the mundane character is touched by the hand of his god and speaks with Him or His direct messenger. The message is always vague in-play. As in Go'shen's story, the Seneschal may cut the scene away, leaving the details foggy only for the player, not for the character. This is a key factor in playing a Prophet: the character receives instructions--often strict instructions--from his deity; the player does not.

New Spiritual Attribute: Prophetic Faith

Upon visitation the character gains a new Spiritual Attribute: Prophetic Faith. This replaces the Destiny SA that the character began play with. Unlike other SA's this one does not cap out at 5 (or 7 for the Fahalanim). In fact, it has no upper limit at all! There are, however, several new rules associated with Prophetic Faith.

Points from Prophetic Faith...

- ...cannot be used for Character Advancement and cannot be used to buy Drama points.
- ...act as Drama (or Luck if you're not using Drama) points that can be given to others, but never for the Prophet himself.
- ...are earned as regular Faith points.
- ...are also earned by calling people to repentance or otherwise preaching the word of your god in public, according to his instructions (whatever they are).
- ...can be spent to fuel Miracles (explained below).
- ...still become Insight points when spent when filling any of the above capacities.



New Major Gift: Prophet

In addition to the Prophetic Faith Spiritual Attribute, visited characters also receive a new Major Gift: Prophet. Where the Prophetic Faith SA represents the Prophet's relationship with his god, this gift represents the ultimate association that a deity has with his chosen servants. As long as the god is pleased with his worthy messenger, this gift stays in effect. Should the Prophet somehow fall from grace in some minor way the gift becomes temporarily unavailable until suitable penance is met. If no repentance takes place, or if the fall is too great, the gift is lost forever and replaced by the Major Flaw: Fallen Prophet, described later on.

A sizeable congregation of powers comes with this gift. First and foremost, it puts the life of the character into the hands of his god. Simply stated, a Prophet cannot die unless he has become a Fallen Prophet, or his death serves the greater designs of his god. The same holds for any permanent injury. However, the loss of a single

limb might be considered good for building strong character in the eyes of many deities, so this isn't quite invincibility! Despite that, it is an invitation to boldly go about preaching the word with little regard to life or limb, because God will preserve you so long as it suits him... no matter what.

In game terms, any time a character receives a wound that would cause instant death the Seneschal will instead modify the details or specifics of the wound so that it doesn't. Pain doesn't change, Shock doesn't change, and CP loss doesn't change. Blood loss, however, becomes irrelevant. Although a character may pass out from blood loss, they will not die from it unless their god wills it.

Second, a Prophet character has access to Miracles via the expenditure of Prophetic Faith Spiritual Attribute points. The range and power of possible miracles is endless, and really relies on the creativity of the play group and the nature of the represented deity. Here are a few examples:

Cost	Effect
1	Heal a Pain 1-2 Wound or minor sickness
2	Heal a Pain 3-4 Wound or major sickness, cast away a minor spirit or devil
3	Heal a Pain 5-6 Wound or several people of minor sicknesses; command animals to do some short task
4	Heal a Pain 7-8 Wound or hundreds of minor sicknesses or several major sicknesses, cast away a middle-strength spirit or devil
5	Heal a Pain 9-10 Wound or hundreds of major sicknesses; command plants and trees to do some short task
7	Heal a Wound of any Pain level; restore a lost limb, eye, etc., including healing the lame or naturally crippled; cast away a powerful spirit or devil
10	Bring back the recently deceased (3 days, died of natural causes or accident); command the stones of the earth to do some short task (without really going anywhere)
12	Bring back the recently murdered or violently killed (3 days)
15	Resurrect the dead (up to a few weeks)
18	Curse someone with horrible disability (for their own good, of course)
21	Smite someone (dead!)
24	Smite lots of people (pillars of fire!)
27	Move mountains, part the sea, cause the earth to swallow a city
30	Call down the very armies of heaven, chariots of fire, and all!



New Major Flaw: Fallen Prophet

Should a Prophet fall dramatically from grace, or simply fail to reform over time, the Major Gift: Prophet is replaced with the Major Flaw: Fallen Prophet. This transition will be apparent to all the Prophet's former followers whose Faith is directed toward the deity or the church that represents it. The change is invisible, however, to those followers that possess any SA's revolving around the Prophet, instead of the god who spoke to him. These blind followers will continue in their devotion until swayed to leave by others, scorned by the object of their adoration, or otherwise overtly convinced that their beloved Prophet has fallen. Such individuals always grow to hate the deceiver they loved--no matter how open about the fall the Prophet may be. They gain a Passion: Hate the Fallen Prophet immediately. This functions as a Major Bad Reputation Flaw around everyone who might know about the character, regardless of their feelings about the church or god he once spoke for. Hypocrites aren't loved by anyone.

The support of the divine is also lost. Not only is the Prophetic Faith SA removed (along with all its accompanying points; these points are moved straight into Insight--enjoy them in the next life), but also it is replaced with an Anti-Destiny: "to die some horrible, despicable death as a lesson to all". No miracles may be performed ever again, nor is the Fallen Prophet protected from death or injury. On top of that, any injuries that were incurred as "close saves" from the hand of death re-open, fester, and generally make a nuisance of themselves all the time. These old wounds permanently cause 1 Pain that will never heal or go away.

Step Four: Spreading the Word

"Despite my wounds, my broken bones, my shattered body, I was strengthened. Fahal's voice strengthened me. I tore the chains from their stony moorings and left that place." Go'shen proudly spoke before the assembled Sha'al Clan--the third camp he had visited

since the last new moon. Young and old had gathered to hear. Somehow, they listened to him, although they never knew him.

"Did you kill them, Holy One? Did you kill them all?" Children pose the most important questions.

"I wished to. I yearned to. Fahal delights in such vengeance...but it was not to be. I was denied vengeance for a greater purpose." The onlookers hushed somewhat. Murmurs of "what purpose is greater than vengeance?" zigzagged about the crowd. Go'shen smiled a baleful smile.

"There are those among us that are greater enemies to Fahal than the horsemen of the east. We must purge our own sins before we can cleanse the world around us..."

The primary duty of a divinely sponsored messenger is, of course, to spread the word and will of the divine. As outlined previously, however, that will is vague to the player, though it may be crystal clear to the character. How do we, the players at the table and the Seneschal, learn the will of the character-Prophet's God? The Prophet tells us.

This gives the Prophet's player tremendous power to direct the story--more than any other player, including, at times, the Seneschal. Any time the Prophet wishes to utter prophecy or otherwise represent his deity through teachings or decrees, the player simply speaks the words of the Prophet (or the gist of the Prophet's message in the case of larger teachings and sermons). There are a few stipulations:

- * The words of the Prophet must generally fit the standard Modus Operandi of the deity in question, either in execution or in end result. If a Prophetic decree is too outlandish for even the most flexible of believers, the Prophet may be reprimanded by his god in a vision or through a temporary fall from grace.
- * The words of the Prophet must not be for the

sole benefit of the Prophet. Thus, “Bring the Prophet all of your gold” is unacceptable, and is likely to result in a fall from grace. On the other hand, “Bring the Prophet all of your gold for the purchase of arms and the construction of churches and fortifications for the coming war with Taveruun, a war that is both physical and spiritual” is fine.

- * Hypocrisy is the fastest, surest way to fall from grace. If a Prophet ever goes against his own word, he immediately suffers a temporary fall from grace, with penance prescribed by the Seneschal speaking as the irritated deity. If a Prophet goes against his word willfully and maliciously, he may fall from grace permanently.

Assuming the above conditions are met, the words of the Prophet absolutely must come to pass. The Seneschal is encouraged to work with the entire play group in creatively fulfilling those words. Simply put, just because the Prophet foresaw “The fall of King Harold from his Throne on the 31st day of the third month of this year” doesn’t necessarily mean that there will be a political upheaval on March 31st (though it might). It could simply be a premonition

of a nasty feinting spell after
having eaten
something
the king



shouldn’t have. Here the Seneschal, as lead arbiter amongst the play group as a whole, carries a great responsibility for interpreting the words of the Prophet into actual physical acts in the game world. If the Seneschal constantly undermines the Prophets predictions with dumbed-down versions and results, however, the entire system presented here is significantly weakened. Some guidelines for the Seneschal-as-prophetic moderator are:

- * The fulfillment of a prophecy should be obvious to onlookers who have heard the prophecy in question, even if it isn’t what they had expected.
- * The fulfillment of a prophecy should display the POWER and WISDOM of the Prophet’s deity...not His sense of humor.
- * The fulfillment of a prophecy must help move the story, much in the same way that Spiritual Attributes do. Prophecy fulfillment must be important to as many characters involved in a scene or scenario as possible. Again, use the Spiritual Attributes of all involved parties as a guideline.
- * Guide the Prophet in his duties. If a Prophecy seems out-of-character for the sponsoring deity, talk it over with the Prophet’s player to see what it is that he or she has in mind.
- * Likewise, while there is no hard limit or minimum on prophecies-per-session, if the Prophet never speaks in the name of his god, he isn’t much of a prophet. If he finds himself playing Seneschal by predicting the weather or otherwise abusing his power on a regular basis, he may be in store for either a fall, or for his death to benefit the will of his god. Let him know.

Ultimately, a Prophet-based game is really a complex social contract between all the players at the table. If someone is abusing the contract then play has become dysfunctional, and it

needs to be discussed with the group. Be open about reservations you, as a Seneschal, have about the Prophet character's actions. Listen to your play group's goals for the Prophet-based story as well.

TROS games using these principles and rules will produce highly charged sessions and campaigns centered on themes of Faith, religion (yes, there is most certainly a difference, even in TROS), and the corrupting influence of power. The more terrible the loss, the more dramatic the Prophet, the greater the rise, the harder the fall--be it by martyrdom, apostasy, or ascension into the kingdoms of a Prophet's god.

And, of course, because this is *The Riddle of Steel*, who's to say that there even is a god? Maybe all these miracles are just twisted sorcery. Maybe all these prophecies are just uncanny coincidence. Maybe all these visions are just the insane imaginings of a man who just lost his only chance at reproduction in a white-hot Khrymean clamp. Your play group doesn't have to decide. They don't have to even know. The question should always be there: are those the words of Fahal, or did Go'shen just make it all up...?

Lesser Saints and TROS: Chosen of the Gods

Not every group or story is going to benefit from a full-blown mouthpiece of the gods running amok. This optional modification provides more options for religiously-themed games without the full weight of the Prophetic rules presented here, and is suitable for more "moderate" powered games and campaigns -- a character who is "Chosen by the Gods" is on a similar power scale as a TROS Sorcerer.

Major Gift: Chosen of the Gods

This gift makes a character into some form of saint, holy man, or simply someone with a divinely directed mission. It provides access to lesser miracles through SA expenditure.

Performing Miracles

In order for a Chosen to bring a certain miracle to pass he or she must first buy the Miracle with SA points which then become the dice that the player rolls to actually perform it.

The SA points used to "purchase" miracles can come from any of the following Spiritual Attributes under certain conditions. Primarily, as with all Spiritual Attribute use in TROS, the Spiritual Attribute providing the needed points for the miracle must ultimately apply to the situation at hand.

Destiny and Anti-Destiny

The gods have anointed some holy figures to accomplish some important task. This task is described in a Chosen character's Destiny. Destiny or Anti-Destiny points may be used any time a miracle brings the fulfillment of this holy Destiny closer.

Oath

A holy oath, witnessed and signed off by the gods, may fuel the miracles of the Chosen.

Drive

Like Destiny, above, the gods may have sent the Chosen on a mission, but success is hardly guaranteed...it seems to be the journey that's most important here. Miracles may be powered with this SA if doing so brings the Drive closer to fruition.

Faith

The obvious choice. Use this SA if a miracle will build the Faith of others or simply aid the Chosen during a trial of their Faith.

Not Suitable

Passion, Conscience, and Luck/Drama can never be used to purchase miracles although they can be added to appropriate rolls as per normal SA usage (see p. 44). Destiny, Anti-Destiny, Oath, Drive and Faith can all similarly influence rolls, but not if they have been used to purchase the miracle in the first place.



Buying and Performing Miracles works very much like terrain rolls in TROS (p. 77). The player pulls SA points, in the form of dice, from the Spiritual Attribute that is “buying” the miracle. These points are spent normally and become Insight as usual. The dice gained with these SA points are rolled against a Miracle Difficulty Target Number (see the table below). Other SA’s and Luck/Drama can affect these rolls as normal (but not the SA used to buy the miracle – a character with 5 Faith cannot draw a single point from his Faith to buy a miracle and then claim that the other 4 should be added on as bonus “free” dice. If he wants more dice to apply to the roll he must permanently spend more Faith, or find another SA which can add its dice as the usual free SA bonus). A single success on the Miracle roll causes the miracle to occur as planned. More successes cause it to somehow repeat itself or otherwise increase in potency (if one success heals a diseased person, then two successes would perhaps heal both the intended target and another ailing person nearby, for example). If the roll is failed then the initial SA points are simply spent and wasted (although Insight accumulates as normal). Dig deeper next time.

The Chosen do not have any power over the



Doctrine of their religion, nor do their players get to invent the future or the word of their deity the way a Prophet character can. The Seneschal, through dreams or prayers, leads the Chosen along the divine path. Like Prophets, however, the Chosen may fall. Doing so simply removes the Gift permanently; although after proper penance (Seneschal’s discretion) the Gift may be re-purchased normally with SA points.

Miracle TN	Type/Example Miracles
4	Little things that can’t readily be seen or attributed to the Chosen: Purifying water, making the rain stop, bringing about a strange “coincidence” in answer to a prayer.
6	Minor manifestations of divine power: Healing Pain 3-4 Wounds or severe sicknesses, predicting the weather or the best road to travel given a chancy future.
8	Noticeable manifestations of divine power: Healing Pain 9-10 Wounds or mortal illnesses, changing water to wine, walking on water or air, predicting the near future as it relates to a single event.
10	Impressive stuff: Changing the weather or environment to sway a battle, seeing the distant future, healing an entire camp of horribly diseased people, providing food for hundreds out of little or nothing.



Followers and Animal Companions

Aleksander walked slowly through the encampment. From time to time, he stopped at a nearby fire and spoke with the men huddled around it. A quick pat on the shoulder, a query about home, a word of encouragement; these were not much to offer but still Alek made them. Though he had been particularly fatigued after the day's battle, he rose after his staff went to sleep and made his nightly rounds.

After several hours, he approached a low hill on the right of the camp. There, the Landsknecht mercenaries had pitched their tents, and it would be his last stop of the evening. He strode through the camp to the fire blazing at its center and nodded to the five men who sat around it.

"Well fought today Beren," Aleksander said to the Company's Captain, "Had your men not held my left flank, the reserves would have been overrun".

The Big Mercenary stood and took Aleksander's offered hand. "That is what you are paying us for." Beren Shrugged.

"Yes," Aleksander agreed, "But Baron Vernholt paid you good gold to fold my left flank, did he not?" It was more a statement than a question, and for a moment, the grizzled mercenary captain locked gazes with the young idealistic knight. Several minutes passed in silence as the two measured one another; but it was Beren who broke the silence first.

"You knew?" Beren asked. Aleksander nodded and looked back towards the rest of the camp.

"Yes, I have eyes and ears in many places. You took his money but you did not turn on me. Why?"

"You don't know?" Beren asked. A barely perceptible shake of the head was all the answer young Aleksander gave.

"Well, "shrugged Beren," It's a lot of little things that make a good leader. Look at the men in your army. Each of us is better armed, armored and provisioned than their station would normally allow. You talk to the men each night as though they are equals. You work alongside the men and don't rest when other nobles would." Beren paused and watched the young lord for any sign of reaction, but Aleksander just stood patiently waiting.

"You listen, which is rare for one so young. One thing stands out to me most though - young Paedrig took an arrow meant for you at the crossing. You'd already paid his fee and you owed him and me nothing. Yet you gave me a purse of silver for his wife and young child." Beren said slowly.

Aleksander stared at the mercenary for a moment before answering. The confusion showed on his young face and he shook his head in denial, "I did nothing that my father didn't teach me, Beren, nothing that any noble is not obligated to do..."

"And you don't understand how rare that is," Beren cut him off. "We took that money two days ago, and you knew, but you didn't turn us out or kill us as we slept. I would have."

"I had it on good authority that you would not turn," Aleksander informed him, "But I was prepared to deal with you if you did. Did you not think it strange that the bulk of the reserve shifted behind your position, or that my light horse was ranging out to the left? I had them there to slaughter you at the first sign of treachery. Thankfully, you proved yourself true. I would have hated to kill you. You have been my best soldiers."

Beren tried to hide his surprise, but the look on



Sir Aleksander's face told him he had failed.

"I wondered, but counted it as inexperience," Beren mused, "I'd hate to be dead," the mercenary chuckled. The boy was more than fair, they all knew, but now they also knew he could be hard if needed. They would not forget.

The following rules are optional, and provide guidelines for adding followers and animal companions to your *Riddle of Steel* game. Keep in mind that these rules are not meant to cover every situation imaginable, only the most common ones. Seneschals should feel free to alter the ideas presented to fit their specific campaign. As always, flexibility is the key to deciding what works in your game, so if the rules don't fit a given instance then use the examples to make a judgment, or discard the rules and go with what makes sense to you. Hopefully, the ideas listed here will serve to give you your own ideas to make every campaign be as unique and rich as possible.

Followers and Devoted Servants

There comes a time in most campaigns when the players decide to hire troops, whether they are mercenary warriors or a small group of specialists. There are also times when the Characters' reputations become so widespread that others will seek them out in order to serve them. A knight, for instance, will usually require some followers in the form of pages and squires, and perhaps one or two men-at-arms.

In a campaign, these two situations can be trying for the Seneschal, adding work to an already impressive load. Hiring or attracting men who are willing to follow the characters may add a touch of realism to the game - after all, few men would realistically take on an adventurer's battles without some sort of assistance - but this means that the Seneschal has an additional cast of characters to play. Decisions the Seneschal makes for the NPC's directly affect the characters, but often those

decisions are arbitrary because there are no guidelines dealing with morale and loyalty. The options presented here are mainly for Seneschals and players who want to add a more detailed morale system to their games. It also includes ideas and suggestions on how and when to hire followers, the benefits of followers, and the factors that will ultimately affect their loyalty.

Acquiring Followers

No matter what type of followers your players are looking for, there are really only two ways to get them. The easiest way is simply to hire them. This can be tricky, however, depending on where the characters are when they decide to do so. Obviously, it is far easier to find a company of heavy horse in a metropolitan area than in rural surroundings. It is the Seneschal's call as to whether or not a specific type of service is available.

Availability

For those who wish to add a bit more detail when determining the type of services available in an area, make a Perception check. In a city or large town, the Difficulty is 1. In a small town or large village, the Difficulty is 2-4, while in the country or at/near a border fort or trading post the Difficulty is at least 4-5. The Streetwise skill may be substituted in a heavily urban setting.

If men are available for hire, use the pay indicated for the service being purchased. For large groups, use the tables provided with the optional battle system in *The Flower of Battle* (TFOB, p. 102). For smaller groups, or individuals, you should use the services tables at the back of the main rulebook (TROS, p. 204). Unless the tables indicate otherwise, a Seneschal can assume that the listed price is for someone of average ability for that profession.

The quality of groups or individual men will affect the final hire price. Use the guidelines found in *The Flower of Battle* (TFOB, p. 102) to determine the price increase or decrease due to various levels of training. Keep in mind that these are guidelines and the Seneschal is free to adjust them. After all, heavy cavalry or paid assassins in a land where such men are scarce or important will likely be unavailable at any price, or be prohibitively expensive. The same can be said for any type of unit or service. Common sense should be the rule and not the exception.

The real advantage to hiring followers is that they usually have their own equipment, and they should remain moderately loyal at least as long as the money flows.

There are times when, because of the character's reputation, NPC's will want to seek them out in an attempt to follow and perhaps learn from them. Such followers come with a very wide array of abilities and skills. Some will be green young men hoping to train under the famous hero, but it is equally credible that some may be more experienced and rugged; perhaps attracted to the characters' sides by similar morals, ideals or causes (SA's can often lead to such reputations).

Normally, when followers approach the characters in this manner, the Seneschal has already decided what type and how experienced the NPC will be. However, there are times when you may feel that a recent story arc is reason enough for a potential follower to seek out the character(s). It is always up to the Seneschal to determine how powerful the NPC follower will be, but events can unfold before the decision is made. In that case, roll 1d10 against the following table for each applicable category.



Social Class

Use the guidelines for social class included in the core rules (TROS, p. 20) to determine money and equipment.

Die Roll	Social Class
1-2	Peasant
4-7	Low Freeman
8-9	High Freeman
10	Landless nobility

Ability relative to Character

Die Roll	Ability relative to Character
1-3	Green/Poor
4-5	Poor
6-8	Average
9	Expert
10	Veteran

Green/Poor

For an untrained follower, simply use the standard NPC templates, (TROS, p. 220, OBAM, p. 7) decreasing the overall skill level by 1 to 2 and the combat pools by half.

Average

For trained followers use the NPC templates as listed.

Expert

These followers are every bit as skilled as the characters and should be built using the character creation rules, and the same amount of insight as the character(s) (p. 5-8 or TROS, p. 20).

Veteran

Followers who are obviously more powerful than the character should be made using at least twice the character's insight. Finding out why such a person wishes to join the character could be the hook for a whole series of adventures.

The Seneschal should modify any random follower result rolls to compliment the flow of the story and the group of players he has.

There are clear advantages to followers acquired through a character's reputation. Since the followers have chosen to serve the character, they are more likely to remain loyal as long as they are treated well and the character remains true to the ideals that attracted the follower in the first place.

Regardless of how the characters come by their followers, there are always dangers that can cause the followers to leave, or sometimes betray the group. Deciding when, and if, the followers will flee or turn is another story altogether.

Morale

Most men will not, as a rule, fight to the death. The optional cinematic rules presented in *The Flower of Battle* (TFOB, p. 4) suggest having mooks flee after receiving minor wounds. This

morale system is intended to expand on that idea, allowing a morale roll to determine their reactions. The idea is heavily inspired by the animal morale suggestions in *Of Beasts and Men* (OBAM, p. 26), which are expanded in the Animal Companions section, p. 86. For large battles and groups of followers use the battle system to resolve morale issues, while for single followers or for small groups (10 or fewer) use the rules presented below.

The following notes should be consulted to see when a follower or mook might break and flee from battle. The tables use troop qualities (TFOB, p. 102) to determine the difficulty. With some experimentation, they can be expanded to include other factors. All opponents or followers must make a standard WP Test (see p. 36) with the following Difficulty when they receive any wound to the face, neck, or head; a single level 3 wound anywhere else, or any three (or more) lesser wounds.

Troop Quality	WP Test Difficulty
Green	5
Poor	4
Average	3
Expert	2
Veteran	1

These values are not absolute; they are intended merely as a guide to assist the Seneschal in determining when a follower or opponent may flee. There are other factors that may increase morale and keep men fighting longer, and among these is inspired or effective leadership.

Leadership and Morale

An effective leader can inspire men to fight on long after they would normally flee. However, much of the skill or artful leadership takes place off the battlefield, and directly affects the disposition of the men being led.

Use the following list as a guideline to determine bonuses and penalties to morale checks.



Character's Actions	Modifier
Followers given extra or superior equipment	+1 die
Followers given additional pay	+1 die
Followers allowed a share of battlefield spoils (per 5 percent share received)	+1 die
Followers given additional rations	+1 die
Other appropriate treatment at Seneschal's discretion (Rousing speeches, fireside chats, warm housing etc.)	+1 die per incident
Physical abuse of followers or other poor treatment at Seneschal's discretion	-1 die per incident

During battle, the character can directly influence his followers' morale. Any character with the appropriate skill can use a Per/Battle or Per/Tactics roll to recognize troops on the verge of fleeing. The character may then attempt to bolster the followers' morale by rolling WP/Leadership. A number of successes equal to the followers' WP Attribute must be achieved to keep them from fleeing.

Sir Aleksander has been attacked on the road and one of his elite guards has taken a level 2 wound to the head; pretty serious. Aleksander rolls Per/Tactics. His Tactics skill is 7 and his Perception is 5. He rolls only one success, but that is all he needs. The Seneschal informs him that his guard is about to flee. Aleksander wants to stop him, so he calls out inspiring words to the man, and rolls WP/Leadership, or 6 dice TN 5. His guard's WP is 4, so Aleksander will need 4 successes to inspire the man to stay.

Running Followers

So you've decided to allow followers in your game, but who will run the followers and how many will be allowed? Most often, the Seneschal simply takes on the roles of the most important or unique NPC's and relegates the rest to the background. This approach allows the character to interact with his men on a personal level without overtaxing the Seneschal. The main benefit of playing

the most important followers is that good players will start to see them as people and not as expendable resources. Such important followers will often have their own SA's (the Oath SA is particularly applicable here), and will provide a variety of role-playing opportunities and even the possibility of spiritual attribute changes for the characters.

Another method is to allow the player to run his own followers, but for the Seneschal to keep direct control over the morale and loyalty of the men. This takes some of the responsibility from the Seneschal and places it into the player's hands. It may also breed caution and role-play on the part of the player as he carefully considers when – and where - his character is likely to place his men in danger. If a player abuses his followers too much, the Seneschal may make them flee or turn on the character(s). The only real disadvantage of this method is that followers rarely gain any life of their own and may start to become nothing more than targets to soak up wounds.

Optionally, these two methods can be combined. The Seneschal maintains control of important and unique NPC's while the player takes the role of the rest of the followers. This compromise gives life to the followers while relieving the Seneschal of the burden of tracking a lot of extra characters.



Animal Companions

Kurtz smiled broadly as he surveyed the carnage before him. Five enemy warriors lay either dead or dying. He was certain that this was due largely to his faithful mastiffs. Some of the party had been wounded as well, and two of the dogs were licking at minor cuts that would need to be tended later, but they were all alive. The outcome could easily have been worse.

Once again, the dogs had saved their lives, and he could not help but feel he owed them a debt of gratitude. Kurtz reached into his belt pouch and pulled out three strips of jerky.

"Hey now!" What are you doing with that meat?" Jaran, the little thief, growled. Jaran had still not learned admiration for the mastiffs, in spite of the fact this was the third time they had turned the tide in the companions' favor.

"I'm rewarding them for saving your hide and mine." Kurtz replied, continuing to smile. He pointed at one of the injured attackers. "Look there. Fenris bit and held that one's sword arm even though he took a slash to the foreleg. If I recall, the Pict was about to skewer you, but instead you finished him with a quick thrust."

"Sure," Jaran began, "but the food is..."

"For whatever I decide it is for," Kurtz growled sharply, "unless you would like to hunt for your own food from now on?" The big woodsman glanced at his dogs and then back at Jaran, raising his eyebrows slightly. "Look at that one," he continued on, now angry, "Zeus tore out the Archer's throat before he could shoot one of us."

"And don't forget her", Lyssa said, pointing her dagger at a downed Pict as she strode up between the two. "Your Thor bowled her to the ground and then latched on to her arm. It was an easy shot to finish her after the dog's attack."

"But the meat is for us!" Jaran protested.

"There is meat-a-plenty in the stewpot every night. Now come on Jaran, and leave Kurtz to care for our friends", Lyssa chided as she began to walk away. "Phillip will cook our dinner once we move away and find a safe camp."

Jaran glanced at the dogs and shrugged, then moved off to join Lyssa and Phillip. Kurtz tossed a strip of meat to each of the dogs, and scratch behind the ears of each one in turn.

"Good boys," Kurtz said heartily. His dogs had saved his life more than once, and he intended to make certain they could do so again. "Heel!" he barked as he started after his companions. The three dogs obediently fell in beside him. Almost as an after-thought, he reached into his pouch and pulled three extra strips of meat. Kurtz glanced at Jaran's back for an instant before he tossed the meat to the dogs. Very good dogs indeed.

Men are not the only type of follower found in good sword and sorcery literature. Animals are often chosen as worthwhile companions in the books and movies that inspire our games. Heroes with animal companions are a staple of popular literary and Hollywood fiction, such as the Beastmaster with his panther, ferrets and eagle. For the animal handler, animals can be the impetus for interesting and unique spiritual attributes. For the Seneschal, a character's animal companions open up numerous plot twists and story arcs.

Adding animals to a group of characters can be difficult, requiring extra effort on the part of both the player and the Seneschal. The ideas in this section of the article are intended to expand on the information given in *Of Beasts and Men* and *The Riddle of Steel*. In order to assist both the player and the Seneschal, this section includes expanded and new material on acquiring, training, and using animals in your games. It also includes optional additional factors that can affect animal morale.



Animals with a Taste for Blood

Most dog handlers will tell you that a dog will develop a taste for blood if exposed to it too often. This creates a potential risk for the handler and his companions as the animal may turn on its owner during times of stress or when seriously injured. To some extent, this is true, and most handlers would never expose their dogs to human meat, or to fresh blood. This was also true in the middle ages.

It is a modern myth that dogs were never allowed to taste blood. War dogs and arena dogs couldn't help but taste blood when a victim was attacked. In addition, there were times when it was desirable to give an animal a taste for blood. War dogs in particular could be exposed to human blood in order to make them more aggressive and more likely to latch onto a human foe. Dogs used in an arena for gladiatorial sport, would be exposed to the taste, and then starved to make them more likely to attack their human victims. In more modern times, the South African police allowed criminals to be 'live bait' for making their dogs more aggressive. Pit Bulls used in pit fights were sometimes given blood for the same reason.

In game terms, allowing a War dog (or any other animal for that matter) to feed on human flesh or blood makes the character's life a little harder. Once the animal gets a taste for blood, it is going to be much harder to control when it is hungry and you are the only visible source of food. On the other hand, as long as the character has firm control and he doesn't starve the beast, a taste for flesh or blood can make the animal more aggressive in combat. How hungry to keep the animal is a very fine line. A dog trained to accept the taste of blood gains a +1 CP when slightly hungry. It also gains a bonus die for morale to avoid fleeing. This represents the frenzied effect that the taste of blood has on the animal. At the same time the dangers of such an animal are increased: If the character fails an attempt to keep an animal fighting it will often become enraged – mindlessly attacking opponents and resisting any attempt to heel or control it. If the character botches an attempt to keep an animal fighting, the fleeing animal will attack the character immediately.

So, is it desirable to give a dog blood or even human flesh? Most of the time, it isn't, but there are situations when it could be. As Seneschal, it is really up to you. It all depends on whether your player wants a companion or a killer.

Acquiring an Animal Companion

There are two common methods for acquiring animal companions. The first and most common method is to purchase an animal. Both the main rulebook (TROS, p. 205) and *Of Beasts and Men* provide many examples of animals that characters can purchase, along with their average statistics. The Seneschal should assume (unless the description or table says otherwise) that the prices given are for animals of average health with marginal training. Animals of higher or lower health or with better or worse training may also be purchased.

Animals with poor health should have a low HT or TO. If a character wishes to purchase an animal with poor health, reduce the purchase price by $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the listed value. Superior animals generally have a high TO or HT, but other increased attributes are also possible. Animals with superior health are sought after by menageries, fighting pits and eccentric nobles who are willing to pay a high price to acquire them. Because of their popularity with the wealthy, extremely healthy animals demand a more substantial investment – multiply the listed cost by a factor of 2-3.



Characters who insist on finding an animal in the wild are essentially trading the high cost of market animals for the alternate expense of time and effort spent training them. Animals captured in the wild require extensive work on the part of an animal handler, and are not normally useful until months or even years after the PC obtains them. Finding someone else to train an animal reduces a PC's personal investment of time, but increases the cost of the animal without reducing the time required for training. On the upside, capturing an animal in the wild can introduce a wide variety of choices to your players, and may help add some exotic or unique animals to the game.

However, your players choose to obtain them, the quest to find and introduce

Similarly, animals with poor or no training should have reduced fighting proficiency and combat pools. There are advantages and disadvantages—discussed below—to purchasing an untrained animal and training it personally. An untrained animal will normally demand $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ the price of an average animal of the same type. A highly trained animal, on the other hand, should have a higher than average proficiency and combat pool. Such animals often are trained in dozens of commands and abilities, and are a far better investment than average examples of their breed. Well-trained animals bring in 2 to 3 times the price of average specimens.

The second method of acquiring an animal companion is capturing it in the wild, raising it, and training or paying someone to train it.

animal companions can be the seed for an entire series of adventures. Now all you need to decide is which kind of animals can be used as companions.

Suitable Animals

There were a wide variety of animals used by people in the middle ages. Not all of them were suitable for companions in a fantasy game, but for those who wish to keep a little realism in their stories, a little imagination can turn any of these animals into interesting companions. Animals of all types were used in a variety of ways, some of which we no longer adopt. There were very few animals kept as 'pets' as we now think of them, instead they were trained to fulfill a utilitarian purpose. A few examples of historical animal use are:

- Horses: Draft animals, Riding, Battle
- Dogs: War Dogs, Herd animals, guard/protection
- Raptors: Hunting, messengers.
- Ferrets: Hunting Rabbits, Rats, and other vermin
- Cheetah: sometimes used as hunting animals and pets by the Sumerians, the Egyptians, and the Mongols.
- Puma: The Incas domesticated the Puma as pets and hunters.

This list is a good start on giving you ideas for historical animals for your characters. A little research or just lateral thought can provide many more interesting possibilities (see the sidebar on Geese, below). The real key to picking historical animals as companions is to decide what the character wants to gain from the animal, and then choose an appropriate match.

Of course, *The Riddle of Steel* is a fantasy RPG, so there is nothing that says you have to stick with historical uses for your animals or even historic animals. There are an infinite variety of

choices that can add new life to any campaign – perhaps you want to war train a red-tailed hawk or train weasels to steal for your character. For a little variety, use the following examples to spark some ideas on exotic companions for your group:

- For Horses: substitute some fantasy staples: unicorns, pegasi and or really big dire-wolves.
- For Dogs: hyenas, jackals, lions, tigers, or even bears.
- For Raptors: you might choose make a raptor magical and intelligent.

The only real limit to adding exotic companions to the game is how realistic you want your game to be, and how imaginative you are. Substitute any reasonable animal with similar statistics and you have an interesting story hook to play with.

Once you have decided what kind of animals you are going to allow, the characters have to decide whether they are going to train them.

Optional Training System

Untrained animals are more affordable, but require training in order to be useful. Even trained animals will require constant practice and training to maintain their skills and recognition of commands. Usually, the training will take up an hour or two a day, and it is assumed to take place between the actions of the story.

Most animals will be bought already trained, but what if, for instance, you want to teach your arctic-wolf companion to climb a ladder? What if a player decides his character wants an untrained or partially trained animal; either to save money or because a particularly attractive exotic is available?

Such situations require the buyer to pay to have a professional train his new companion or undertake the training on his own. The first option is by far the simplest, as training is often difficult and time consuming. However, there

Geese in the Ancient World and Middle Ages

One unusual use of animals was the use of Geese as domestic “guards”. Domestic geese were kept in villages, not just for food or for their feathers, but to keep watch. In Rome and later in Medieval Europe geese were used to mark the night watch with their repeated cackling. The Chinese also prized the goose for its utility as a watch animal. Pliny the Elder even wrote that Geese on watch warned the Romans of an attack by Gaul. Historically, the goose’s utility as a guard animal was enhanced by its ability to smell man better than any other domestic animal. Geese have a Per score of 6, and are considered to have the Alert Major Gift (see p. 17), giving them a TN of 4 on perception rolls to detect intruders.



Expanding Animal Handling

The Core rules use Animal Handling and Herding to cover all animals. This makes for a smooth system and quick resolution. However, in real life, the skills and techniques used to train a dog, a horse and a hawk for instance are somewhat different. If you are using this option, each type of animal could be taken as a Specialty of the Animal Handling skill (see Skill Specialties, p. 34). Alternately, at the Seneschal's discretion each type of animal might need to be taken as a separate skill (Animal Handling: Horse; Animal Handling: Dog; Animal Handling: Raptor and so on.)

are rewards and benefits for a character who trains his own animal.

Animals trained by professionals use the same commands as all other animals of the same type. They are also trained to listen for any commanding voice. Ordinarily, this isn't an issue, but for a character facing an opponent who is skilled with animals, it could be. Opponents can call out verbal commands to confuse or even stall and misdirect the animal. This can be deadly for both companion and master. Having the character train the animal allows the player to specify commands that are unique and unknown to anyone else. It also means the character can teach the animal to key in on one voice, or at most a handful of familiar voices only. Not everyone will want to deal with the training, but for those who do, these quick and simple training rules should help you out.

In order to teach a new command to an animal, make an Extended Animal Handling skill check (using WP). Each roll represents one week of effort spent training the beast (for at least a few hours a day). The total number of successes required is 15 + the animal's WP, less its Wit (wild animals are naturally harder to train; use

a base of 25 instead of 15). A substandard result means that the animal has learned the command but will occasionally forget it or fail to respond to it. Animals can learn a number of commands equal to triple their MA score.

Beast	Successes required
Standard/ Domestic Animals	15 + (Animals WP) – (Animals Wit)
Wild Animals	25 + (Animals WP) – (Animals Wit)

Galen wants to teach his new Dog to seize and takedown an enemy (using the takedown maneuver found on OBAM p. 29). Galen describes his intentions to the Seneschal, and makes an Extended WP/Animal handling: Dog check. Galen's WP is 5 and he is a Competent Dog Handler, so he will roll 5 dice against TN 6, with each roll representing a couple of days effort. His mastiffs have WP 4 and Wit 4, so he will need to accumulate 15 successes to train them. Because they have MA's of 3, he can teach them up to 9 unique commands.

Animal Companion Morale

There are times when the Seneschal determines that it is likely an animal will flee combat. This material has been updated from *Of Beasts and Men* (OBAM, p. 26). All animals will make a standard WP test with a difficulty as determined on the following chart (depending on the animals training and/or condition) or flee as soon as they receive any wound to the head or face (especially the snout), any level 3 wound anywhere else, or any three (or more) lesser wounds.

These rules are intended to give the character more control over his animal companions in combat. Two factors can influence animals when they are about to flee: The character's treatment of the animal and the character's animal handling skill. Whenever a WP roll is required to keep an animal from fleeing, consider the following factors and add to or subtract to from the animals WP.



Animal Quality / Condition	WP Test Difficulty
Untrained / Indifferent / Defensive / Badly Outnumbered	4
Marginally Trained / Mildly Hungry (and not badly outnumbered)	3
Trained / Very Hungry / Aggressive (maybe slightly outnumbered)	2
Superbly Trained / Famished / Extremely Aggressive	1
Animal is in a pack that outnumbers opponent(s)	-1 (minimum 1)

These guidelines are meant to simulate the rapport that develops between an animal and its handler. There are real world examples of K-9 officers, both police and military, continuing on when seriously or even fatally injured. This certainly goes against the animal's natural instinct, and shows what keeping good rapport and training can overcome.

Of course, every animal handler is trained to recognize and know the factors that will cause his companion to break and run. In battle, a Per/Animal Handling check is made to recognize that the animals' morale is flagging. The character may then attempt to use verbal commands to keep the animal from fleeing the battle. If the character wishes to do this, roll

WP/Animal Handling. The character must achieve a number of successes equal to the Animal's WP to keep the animal in the fight.

Our friend Galen is in a fight with some bandits. He just made a Per/Animal handling roll and the Seneschal tells him he notices one of his dogs has just taken a level 4 wound and failed a WP roll to avoid fleeing. Galen wishes to keep the animal in the fight for just a bit longer, so he calls out encouragement to it and rolls WP/Animal handling. He will need at least as many successes as the beast's WP score. Unfortunately, Galen only rolls 3 successes when he needed 4. He just has time to see his dog run yelping from the melee before turning back to see an axe heading for his face...

On occasion, it might be necessary to urge an animal on. However, a character who keeps his wounded animals in the fight too often will soon end up with dead animals. As an option, the Seneschal may consider each time that a character keeps a seriously wounded animal from fleeing the combat to be an instance of poor treatment. Unfortunately, wounded animals behave differently than wounded humans. The consequences of attempting and failing to keep a wounded animal fighting can be deadly to both the animal and the character. If the character botches an attempt to keep an animal fighting, the fleeing animal must roll 2 successes on a WP check or attack the character.

Character's Actions	Modifier
Character gives companion constant verbal/ physical praise (role-play it)	+1 die
Companion receives food or other awards for success	+1 die
Companion well fed and groomed	+1 die
Other appropriate treatment at Seneschal's discretion (warm housing, blankets on the road etc)	+1 die per incident
Physical abuse of companion	-3 dice
Companion is underfed or malnourished	-1 die
Other poor treatment at Seneschal's discretion	-1 die per incident



Fine Weapons

In addition to the normal weapons listed in the TROS core rulebook and TFOB, TROS has rules for “Fine” weapons and armor. This article explores the availability of superior weaponry in particular, and attempts to work out a system to determine the rarity of “Fine” weapons based on type, origin, and other relevant factors. In addition, the possibility of encountering “Substandard” weapons is also considered within the same parameters.

The concept of “Fine” weapons is based on the premise that *all weapons were not created equal*. Much historical military kit was of comparable quality, but some individual articles of equipment were of superior workmanship, balance, metallurgical properties etc., while others actually were of shoddy workmanship, had poor balance, held a poor edge, etc.

For sake of clarity, this essay is based on historical examples. Extrapolation into fantasy realms may be easily done using the real world as a basis. Needless to say, the discussion of metallurgy in different cultures is by no means any kind of reflection upon the merits of that culture, nor is this a definitive academic analysis of metallurgy or the development of weapons around the world.

By Weapon Type

Perhaps first among the factors that could determine if a given weapon was of “Fine” quality was the class of weapon itself. Some types of weapon were literally the run-of-the-mill, with little variation between the best and the worst example within a given category.

Certain other specific types were more likely to be made of better than average materials or by better than average craftsmen, due to their use by exalted social classes or the religious or cultural values of a given society. One fundamental factor differentiating weapons was the materials of which they were constructed.

Wood, Bronze, or Iron weapons

Wood, stone, and even copper or bronze weapons were generally less likely to be made of “Fine” quality than iron or steel weapons. There was of course such a thing as superior and rare woods or types of stone, certainly, but within a given region and a given time, there was far less variation between one wooden or stone weapon and another than could be found with metal weapons and iron in particular. This is reflected in mythology and legends. Many iron weapons achieved fame and acquired personalities of their own in literature and mythology, from the tales of King Arthur, to Beowulf and the Viking Sagas, to the minstrel songs and chronicles of Roland and Charlemagne. There were also examples of famous and exalted non-ferrous and even non-metallic weapons in ancient history and mythology (the club of Heracles and Thor’s Hammer being just two) but for the most part, any weapon made of wood or stone was unlikely to be of such superlative quality and therefore fame.

Therefore, while exceptional examples did exist, for the most part staves, javelins, lances, clubs, slings etc. were poor candidates for “Fine” quality. Some wood hafted weapons were even designed with the idea that they would break after being used once or a few times in combat. The Roman Legionnaire’s pilum and the Medieval Knight’s lance are two such examples.



Staves

Bronze, brass or other copper alloy arms were more valuable than sticks and stones but did not impress the ancient mind to the degree of iron weapons. Bronze swords for example were simply cast from a mold and filed down to an edge and / or a point where necessary. Once a mold was made, dozens or hundreds of nearly identical copies of the same original sword or spearhead could be poured. Bronze weapons could be made very sharp but were relatively brittle and unlikely to last through multiple combats. Perhaps most important, their production did not include the incredible complexity and mysteries associated with smelting iron and forging steel.

The Riddle of Steel

The appearance of iron revolutionized warfare. The best iron weapons, those made with just the right amount of carbon content, were as hard (and therefore potentially as sharp) as the hardest bronze, as flexible as the most supple reed, nearly as strong as the toughest stone: Iron weapons bit into armor and shields, but did not break.

Iron also could be made from ore that was found nearly everywhere, unlike bronze that required very rare tin to be imported from far off backwaters like the British Isles. Iron in short, seemed to be an almost magical metal, and it was found in the hands of conquerors everywhere, from the Hittites to Celts and the Romans. As a strategic technology it had but one weakness: Iron was the hardest of all metals to master.

Iron does not begin to melt until it reaches the astonishing temperature of 2,500 degrees, but it will actually burn at 2,750 degrees. Heating the iron was hard enough with ancient technology, but that was only the beginning of the process. Iron intended for weapons could not be simply poured into molds like Bronze. It had to be beaten into shape with a hammer while in a semi-malleable (red-hot) state. Furthermore, to make weapon-grade 'steely iron' or steel, carbon had to be introduced into the iron.

Steel is a metal that exists in a very narrow chemical range, somewhere between functionally useless wrought iron (anything with a carbon content of under 0.4%) and functionally useless cast iron (anything with a carbon content of over 2.25%). Wrought iron is far too malleable to ever hold an edge, while cast-iron is far too brittle to be used for any weapon. Furthermore, tiny trace amounts of other elements such as silica and phosphorous are often necessary to produce certain desired effects in iron, but anything over a few percentage points of such 'impurities' makes it into useless slag. Of course once steel with suitable carbon content is produced and beaten into the desired shape, weapon manufacture requires perfect tempering, heat-treating and quenching - all difficult and subtle processes in their own right.

Somehow this vital mystery metal had to be tamed and controlled by people who lacked such basic equipment as a thermometer, were rarely literate, and never aware of the actual chemistry or physics which lay behind the properties they sought.

One example that highlights the confusion and superstition was the constant experimentation with secret quenching recipes. Many Medieval and Classical scholars believed that the key to forging the perfect blade lay in the formulation of secret potions for quenching the sword during the tempering process. Tempering is indeed absolutely key to the creation of a fine blade, and swordsmiths may use oil, sand, clay, or water to quench a hot blade, but there is no evidence in a modern context that traces of this or that substances within the water or oil make any difference. Nevertheless, in ancient times everything from rose water, to olive oil, milk, wine, and even urine was added to the quenching vat in attempts to get just the right temper on the blade.

The poorly understood processes surrounding the creation of a "steely iron" sword, the relative



longevity and value of such weapons, and the wide potential variety in ultimate quality, lent the production of iron and steel weapons certain superstitious, even mystical overtones (that we like to call *The Riddle of Steel*...)

The Sword

Blunt instruments, weapons considered peasants' weapons in feudal societies, and weapons which doubled as farm tools were all less likely to be made to "Fine" standards than those popular with the fighting classes. This did of course depend on the value system of the culture in question. For example, in most of Europe pole-arms were rarely even made with tempered blades, though they were sometimes nicely decorated. In Switzerland however, land of the popular militia where the knight's valor was not so celebrated, halberds were regularly made of tempered steel and some were undoubtedly of remarkable fighting properties, sufficient to be considered "Fine" weapons.

The most highly regarded weapon in most cultures in the World however was the almighty sword. In Europe, Arabia, Central Asia, China, and South East Asia, in Indonesia and Malaysia, India, Japan, and even much of Sub-Saharan Africa the sword in various forms was (and to some extent still is) considered the noblest and finest of weapons. As a result, swords were far more likely than any other single class of weapon to be made "Fine".

Other categories of weapons that were more commonly made to this standard include daggers, spears, and some axes. Poll-axes and halberds were the only pole-arms likely to be made to a "Fine" standard. Guns of all kinds, and the heavier

crossbows were also sometimes made of "Fine" quality, particularly hunting weapons designed for nobility.

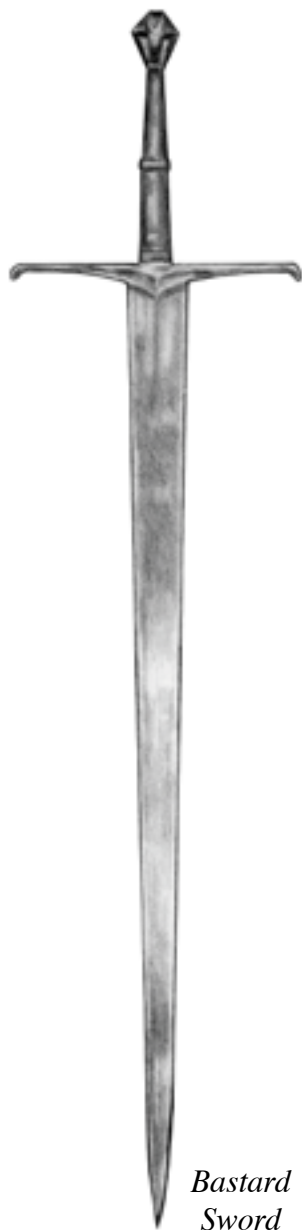
Region / Era

Some periods, like our own, saw weapons as well as other artifacts being mass-produced with large-scale production techniques, while in other periods the lone master artisan was solely responsible for their creation. In the former situation, weapons were more common and more likely to be of a uniform quality, neither poor nor outstanding, while in the latter, weapons were far more rare and valuable in general, and one was more likely to find weapons of truly "Fine" or even "Superlative" quality.

Early Europe

In certain cultures as well one may find "Fine" weapons more often than in others. Ancient Rome for example was a well-armed society with an extremely well-armed military, but one that viewed weaponry as a utilitarian means to an end. "Fine" weapons were certainly available to aristocrats, but the basic run of the mill serviceable but not superlative sword, dagger, spear and javelin were produced in such vast numbers as to make the frequency of finding "Fine" examples similar to that of finding a needle in a haystack.

By direct contrast, Celtic, German and early Nordic societies of the same general era valued and even fetishized weapons to such an extent that they were given individual names and considered literally sacred heirlooms. The Celts (and later Norse) barbarians in particular were actually more advanced than the Romans in terms of



*Bastard
Sword*



metallurgy, but they relied far less upon slave labor and lacked the ability or inclination for mass production. Therefore, only a small number of artisans created weapons for the entire society, and swords in particular were rare but often of the highest quality (ironically they were also fairly often of quite poor quality as well, there was no such thing as “quality control” among the barbarians...)

China

Other cultures had more a combination of these factors. In Ming Dynasty China for example, dao swords and sabers were made by the tens of thousands for use by the military, mostly of a uniformly good but not exceptional quality, (and a certain amount which were substandard). Jian swords, along with some dao, were also made in some numbers, usually of phenomenal quality, for high officials and aristocrats. A high proportion of these weapons would be considered “Fine”.

Dao Swords



The first iron swords appeared in China as early as 300-400 BC, but the Chinese standardized the use of steel swords rather later (arguably in the Han Dynasty, 206BC – 220 AD). Chinese metallurgy reached the very pinnacle of the art. Under different Dynasties and eras of Chinese history the quality of available weaponry fluctuated, falling off particularly toward the waning of Imperial power by the end of the Qing Dynasty in the 19th century. Weapons from the Song (960-1279) and Ming (1368-1644) Dynasty (particularly the former) were often of the very best quality. The cultural importance and high renown of the jian sword has been mentioned in TFOB, but some of the dao swords, particularly in the Ming Dynasty, were also of truly exquisite craftsmanship.

India and Persia

India was of course the land where ultra-high carbon “Damascus” or ‘wootz’ steel could be found. Wootz (the anglicized version of ukku in the languages of the states of Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh, a term denoting steel) was the most highly regarded and sought after ferrous metal in the pre-industrial world. This beautiful metal was produced in bars and billets that were traded around the world, from Toledo to Damascus, to China and even Japan. Wootz steel does indeed have some amazing properties, chief among which it is more flexible than ordinary steel, while being potentially just as sharp. It also has other properties which contribute to an almost magical reputation... one testament to the metallurgical genius of India is the “iron” (actually high carbon wootz steel) pillar still standing at New Delhi. This remarkable pillar was apparently constructed in the 3rd century AD.

Few iron artifacts last more than a few hundred years or so without becoming intensely rusted and corroded (most ancient steel swords from example date from the 15th century or later.) A similar pillar made of the most corrosion resistant modern chromium steel (i.e. “stainless steel”) might endure perhaps half as long in similar tropical conditions before becoming corroded at least on the outer layers. However, unlike wootz, stainless steel is far too brittle to be used for swords, and is also heavier, much harder work and holds a vastly inferior edge.

So clearly, the Indians knew a thing or two about metallurgy. Many of their weapons, tulwars and daggers in particular, were made of exquisite craftsmanship and were at the very highest standard of the bladesmith’s art. Thus, a relatively high proportion of them would be considered “Fine”. Of course, as in many areas, at the same time that weapons of superlative quality and beauty were being made, many much poorer quality knock-offs were also produced; excellence was not uniform.

India's neighbor Persia relied greatly upon Indian metallurgy (especially wootz steel) and contributed substantially to a cross-cultural exchange from their own advanced repertoire of swordmaking techniques.

Japan

Japan does not have as ancient a tradition of advanced metallurgy as China, India, or Celtic Europe, but they borrowed so successfully from every culture they encountered that they ultimately (rightly or wrongly) developed a reputation for advanced metallurgy and swordsmithing that today surpasses all other cultures.

It is known that steel swords were imported to Japan from China as early as 280 AD, and they were being made in Japan by the 5th century AD. By the Heian era (794-1184), the Japanese had developed their own types of sword, prominent among them a cavalry saber called the tachi. The Mongol invasions of Japan in 1274 and 1281 exposed some weaknesses in the tachi, and Japanese swordsmiths were able to take this valuable experience and refine their methods to create weapons which were at once finesse killers, and at the same time durable weapons suitable for total war. The Muromachi period (1394-1595) saw the development of the katana over the earlier and larger tachi.

Katana



By the Edo period, (1595-1867) sword quality had become more uniform. Needless to say, Japanese swords of all types were often of the very highest quality.

Renaissance Europe

The medieval period in Europe saw the rise of several key technologies. The first really important development was arguably a new

water-wheel in the 11th century that raised output of water-powered mills from 3 to 60 horsepower, allowing the automation of bellows and trip-hammers that vastly increased both the quality and quantity of iron production.

By the 14th century, Europe had advanced beyond the rest of the world in many key areas. Weapons were manufactured in huge numbers, but the production of the most exquisite masterpieces was also perfected and compared to earlier eras, widely disseminated (though the true sword producing centers were still concentrated in Central and Southern Europe, chiefly Germany, Bohemia and Italy).

Many weapons from the Renaissance and later periods in Europe, particularly swords, were of a level of quality which arguably surpassed the very best quality of any other part of the world at any time before or since. The extraordinary merit of these weapons is only now beginning to dawn upon the historical community for a variety of reasons, but it is nevertheless a fact. Michelangelo, DaVinci, Botticelli, and Shakespeare all had their peers in the swordmaker's art

Determining if a given Weapon is of Exceptional Quality

This roll can be made when a player finds, steals, or otherwise obtains an unknown weapon under unusual circumstances; a player or NPC makes a new weapon (see below), has a new weapon custom made for them, or is given a weapon under exceptional circumstances. One roll may be also made for each general weapon type to determine the quality of available weapons within a specific town or market.

First, consult the Weapons and Eras tables to determine number of dice to roll and the TN, based on weapon type, era, and region. Next, consider status of prior ownership and/or recent use and make any further adjustments necessary.



Weapon Quality Determination

Table 1: Weapons

Type of Weapon or Circumstance	TN	Die Bonus for table 2
Staff, Club, Pike, Lance	9	-
Javelin or light Spear	9	+1
Horse Bow, Recurve or Light Crossbow	8	-
Longbow or Compound Bow	8	+1
Halberd, Sparth Axe, or Poll Axe	9	+2
Any other Axe, any Mace or Flail	9	+1
Huscarl Axe, Bhuj	8	+1
Hewing Spear or Balanced Spear	8	-
<i>Any Hafted or Missile Weapon not listed</i>	9	-
Norse Sword or Jian	6	+2
Tulwar / Shamshir	6	+1
Katana, Long Sax, Tachi, No-Dachi	6	-
Dao, Rapier, Sidesword, Cut & Thrust	7	+2
Bastard Sword, Claymore, Schiavona	7	+1
Pallasch, Saber, Schwizersabel, Arming S.	7	-
Sax, Dussak, Cutlass, Messer	8	+2
Gladius, Roman Spatha, Pugio	8	+1
Large Dagger, Jambiya	8	+1
<i>Any other Sword or Dagger not listed</i>	8	-
Arbalest, Heavy Crossbow or Gun (any)	8	+2
<i>Wootz or Damascus steel</i>	-1	-
<i>Pattern Welded steel</i>		+2

Finally, add any situational or SA modifiers to dice pools that are deemed appropriate and make the roll.

If the result is equal to or greater to the number of successes needed (as shown on the Era's table), it is a Fine weapon. If the result is three or more successes over this number, it is of Superlative quality (i.e. a Fine weapon twice over.)

If the number of successes was less than the minimum listed in the Era's table, the weapon is of inferior quality and must be considered a "Substandard" weapon. One attack or defense TN is at +1, or one damage modifier is at -1. If there were zero successes, the weapon must be considered an "inferior" weapon (two factors are at -1).

The modifiers listed above are only guidelines. Feel free to add more or less based on circumstances or even the players SA's. Some further circumstantial modifiers might include:

- The weapon is wood but was obtained on a pacific island such as American Samoa or New Zealand, where rare hardwoods are available and wooden weapons are held in high regard: -2 to TN.
- The weapon was given as a gift: 0 to -2 to the TN (depending on who gave the gift)
- The weapon was purchased at a traveling fair run by a notorious group of gypsies: +2 minimum successes required



Table 2: Eras

Region & Era (Earth and Weyrth equivalents listed)	Number of Dice	Successes Needed	Minimum Successes
Renaissance Europe (Cyrinthmeir)	10	7	1
Medieval Europe (Stahl)	9	7	2
Dark Ages Europe (Sarmatov, Magyarfold, Picti)	10	8	2
Iron Ages Europe, non Roman	10	8	3
India / Persia (Svarastra)	9	6	2
Ming China (Vhedij, Krym-Kanaan maybe)	10	8	2
Arabia or Indonesia	10	7	3
Japan (Tengoku)	9	6	1
Imperial Rome (Seat of the Xanarian Empire)	8	6	1
Ottoman Turkey / Byzantium (Otamarluk)	10	9	1
Anywhere else	8	7	3
Personal Royal weapon	+4	-	-
Personal Nobles weapon	+2	-	-
Just used in battle	-	-	+2

- The weapon was found in an ancient barrow or tomb: +4 die pool, +2 minimum
- The weapon was found in a region known for fine weapons (in the towns of Solingen, Germany or Toledo, Spain during the Renaissance, for example): -2 TN or +4 die pool.

A bastard sword is taken from a room in an inn in 15th century Bavaria. The period/era is the European Renaissance, which means 10 dice are rolled of which 7 successes are necessary for the weapon to be considered Fine. The weapon type adds one dice to the pool total (raising it to 11), and establishes the TN as 7. Thus 11 dice may be rolled, of which 7 must be 7 or higher for the weapon to qualify as "Fine". If no successes are rolled, the weapon will be of substandard quality.

A Jian sword is presented to a player in Vhedij by a low ranking government official whose life he saved during an ambush on a caravan. The region / era is Ming China/ Vhedij. The die pool is therefore 10 with 8 successes being required. The weapon

indicates 2 bonus dice to the pool and a TN of 6. The weapon is a gift and a family heirloom but the gift giver is not of great status so no bonus is conferred on that basis. 12 dice must be rolled of which 8 must be 6 or better for the weapon to be "fine". If fewer than 2 successes are rolled, the weapon will be substandard.

Finally, a sixth century Saxon warrior traveling cross country witnesses a battle taking place between a Norse raiding party and the local Fyrd. The Norse are repelled and the Saxon force chases them to the beach where they seek refuge in their longboats. Advancing into the field, the observant warrior finds a sword lying in the grass, which he quickly picks up and runs off to the woods to examine. This is Dark Age Europe (10 pool, 8 Successes needed), and it's a Norse Sword that is TN 6 and +2 pool. The weapon has just been used in battle, which raises the minimum to 4. 12 Dice are rolled of which 8 must be 6 or more for the weapon to be "fine", but if fewer than 4 successes are rolled, the weapon will be "substandard".



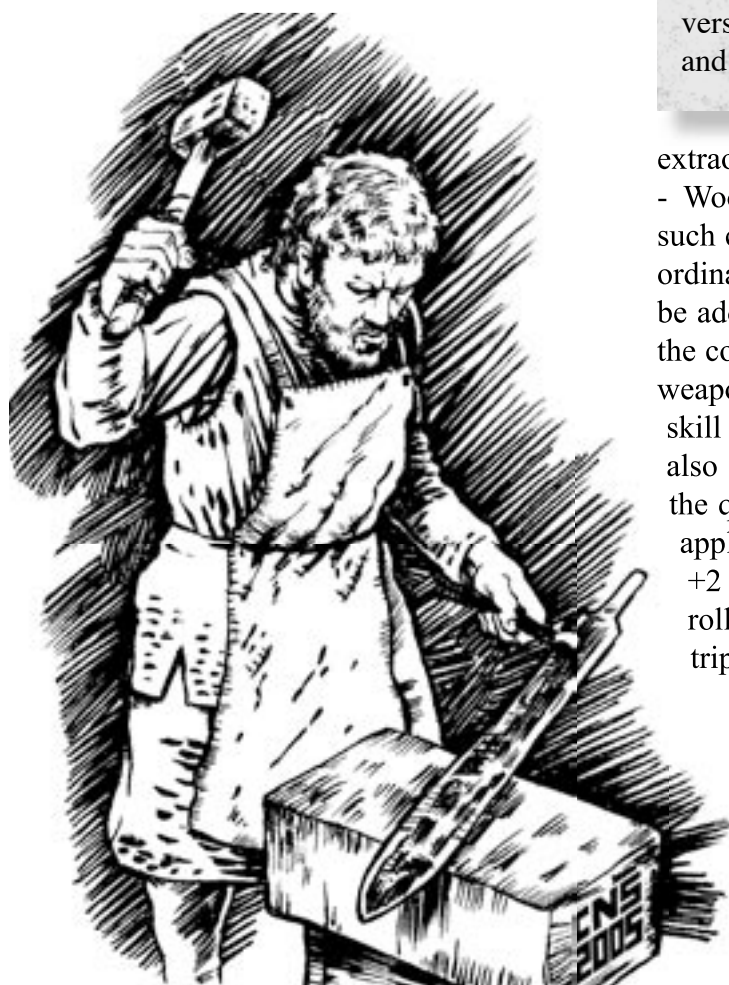
Considerations for applying weapon bonuses

Obviously, attack or defense TN's below 5, and damage over ST+2 for single-handed swords, or ST+3 for anything other than a pole arm or a doppelhander are unrealistic and excessive. If you have a Fine weapon of a type that already has a Strike TN of 5, apply the -1 to another type of attack, to the Defensive TN or to the Damage instead. Similarly, it makes no sense to add a +1 to a weapon that already does ST+2 or ST+3 Damage; add the bonus to Strike or to Defense.

In any case, even with Superlative quality weapons the same bonus cannot be added to the same weapon characteristic twice.

Crafting Fine Weapons

Characters wishing to construct weapons should consult the Extended Crafting rules on p. 33 of this book. The availability of materials of



Crafting Weapons from more Primitive Materials

As noted on p. 92, weapons fashioned from earlier materials such as stone, copper and bronze are a great deal harder to fashion to superior or exceptional quality. To represent this, the Seneschal can optionally specify that weapons fashioned from these "lesser" materials require a higher number of successes per crafting roll to be considered Fine or Superlative. Instead of 3+ successes on every roll indicating "Fine", weapons made from these materials require 4+ successes per roll, and "Superlative" results are only achieved by obtaining 6+ successes per roll rather than the usual 5+.

This rule also applies to weapons that are so simple, it's difficult (or near impossible) to conceive of "Fine" or "Superlative" versions. This includes clubs, staves, spears, and the like.

extraordinary quality should be determined - Wootz steel is perhaps the most desirable such commodity, and costs up to 500% that of ordinary steel. Other high quality materials may be added at increased expense (up to 200% of the cost of an ordinary example of this type of weapon), and these may confer a bonus to the skill die pool at the Seneschal's discretion. As also noted in the Skills section on p. 30-31, the quality of the tools and facilities can also apply a modifier to the die pool, from -2 to +2 per roll, as can taking extra time for each roll (+1 die for double the time; +2 dice for triple).

The Smith must make his Extended Skill roll, with each roll representing a variable length of time as shown on table 3 below. The number of successes required to complete the weapon being crafted depends on the size and complexity of the weapon,



as shown on table 4. If the crafting roll result is Superior (all rolls have 3+ successes) then the weapon is “Fine”, and if the crafting roll result is Exceptional (all rolls have 5+ successes) then the weapon is Superlative. Conversely, if the result is Substandard then the weapon forged is, of course, Substandard.

Table 3: Weapon Manufacture times

Weapon	Time per roll
Simple wooden weapons; knives	1 day
Bows, Daggers, Hafted Weapons	3 days
Swords	5 days

Table 4: Successes required for crafting rolls

Weapon	Successes required
Small/Simple weapons (daggers, knives, clubs etc)	16
“Average” weapons (most swords, maces, etc)	20
Large/Overly Complex weapons (Katana, Longbow, Doppelhander)	24

Hamish MacTavish is a Scottish weaponsmith who is attempting to fashion a Claymore as a gift for his clan chief. Referencing table 4, he finds that the number of needed successes will be 20. Hamish is a Journeyman Weaponsmith (TN 5) and he has a Wit of 6, but because he is working with good quality materials and tools, his Seneschal gives him +1 on his die pool, so he will be rolling 7 dice against TN5. (If he had somehow managed to find a billet of Wootz steel for the sword, the exceptional material would of given another 1-2 dice, for a total of 8-9 dice against TN5.) Each roll represents 5 days of work. Hamish will need to accumulate 20 successes, and if he gets at least 3+ on every roll, the weapon will be of Fine quality (or Superlative if he somehow manages 5+ on each roll), but if he fails any rolls, the weapon will be Substandard. If Hamish wants to be even surer of making a quality weapon, he can double or triple the time for each roll to gain extra dice. Hamish takes 5 rolls to accumulate 20 successes, thus he has labored for 25 days (or 50, or 75 if he took extra time over the crafting). Additionally, every roll had at least 3 successes in it, so Hamish has successfully created a Fine weapon, which is likely to be in his chief's family for generations (or stolen at the next battle...)



Book Three:

For the Seneschal

Book 3

"Find it! Spread out and search every clearing or copse! It's got to be here somewhere!"

The crowd surged through the forest, beating at bushes and thrusting burning brands into dark caves or cliff overhangs. None of them knew what their quarry was, only that it looked like no person they had ever seen, and that it had snatched a young girl from the village.

Moving through the trees, despite the seriousness of the situation Marcus couldn't help but smile. This scenario had been played out so many times in the past, but always with him on the other side of the conflict. This time, he and Biter were part of the crowd, rather than its target. The creature they sought had been only briefly seen, a huge hulking green-brown figure, moving swiftly through the trees with the screaming girl bundled under its arm. Although Marcus was still not any kind of expert with his sword, he and Biter had had cause to fight together several times over the years and they were an effective and deadly pair.

The search took several days. Many of the groups searched during the sunny hours and returned to base in the evenings, but Marcus and Biter were used to living off the land and sleeping rough, so they remained in the wild, finally tracking the odd figure back to a deep cave in one of the densest parts of the forest.

They came upon the cliff just after nightfall on the third day. A faint flickering light heralded a burning fire within, and, cocking his head, Marcus could just hear the cries of the trapped girl within. He moved stealthily through the undergrowth toward the murky cave with Biter on his heels, realising just too late that the surrounding wood was too si-

lent. Instinct made him leap aside just as his mind registered a potent earthy stench and a small tree flew through the air above his head. Rolling to his feet, Marcus spun to confront his foe.

It stood nearly nine feet tall, a mottled greenish brown color that blended uncannily into the leaves and bushes around it, making it indistinct and hard to focus on. The creature's large head was covered with warts and protrusions, and its mouth was open in a fierce grin. Marcus struggled not to gag on the putrescent smell emanating from it as it spoke.

"Man thing, you should not have come" it warbled. "She's my bride now". Chortling, it moved forward, hefting its tree club menacingly.

With a snarl, Biter leapt on the creature's back, digging his inch-long fangs into its neck and shaking. Marcus took a deep breath, drew his blade, and charged. He chopped at the creature, his blade bouncing off its thick rubbery skin. He struck again and again, finally scoring several deep slashes across his abdomen, but then staggered back, watching horrified as it tore Biter from its back and threw him against a tree. The dog slid down the tree in seeming slow motion to collapse in a still, crumpled heap at its base. With a wordless shriek of anguish, Marcus leapt in and drove his blade deep into the creature's exposed neck wound.

The creature dropped like a stone. Marcus jumped over its body, cradling Biter's limp head in his lap, crying softly and muttering over and over "It's OK, Marcus is here. Marcus is here, my friend."

Behind him, the creature chuckled evilly as its life fled it. "Marcus, is it? As you have slain me, so do I curse you, Marcus," it choked...





Concept Based World Building

Most authors follow one of two methods in world building: story-centered or character-centered. Story-centered world building involves writing a story then building the world around it while character-centered world building begins with the characters then designs a world fit for them. Neither option works particularly well for those of us looking for a setting to role-play within, however, as the world must be fit for many stories and diverse characters. Instead, Seneschals and groups who like to design their own custom campaign worlds may like to try this method – we call it Concept Based world building.

Developing a Sample World

As we progress through this section, we will develop a sample world using each step, to give you an idea as to how some of those decisions might be made.

Step 1: The Concept

Before you even sit down behind a keyboard or pick up a pen, you need to define what the concept is for the world you are going to design. The central concept can be something as simple as a time period or setting or even a magic or belief system. It doesn't particularly matter what you choose, as long as you can define it well enough that you could explain it to the most neophyte player in your group. For most FRPG's this is the biggest "do or die" after the actual rules. What you decide here will shape the way your entire world functions from geography to politics. For example, you may want to play a game that explores social conflict and class warfare, and as such, the obvious central concept is class division – the

entire campaign world will then be designed around this concept and you would revisit the concept in each of the following steps.

Sample World Step One

For our example central concept, let's focus on that idea of class struggle. The idea of the "haves" and the "have-nots" struggling in front of the backdrop of economic revolution can be rife with stories of conflict and intrigue. The obvious inspiration for that is the industrial revolution in 1800's London, but just for an added wrinkle, let's make it more of a medieval setting using those concepts.

Step 2: Realism

The question here is not only a choice between high or low fantasy, but also whether you care how close to the rules of the real world your world will be. Good fiction has to encompass two sorts of realism: Internal and External Realism. Internal Realism is a measure of how well a world follows its own rules, while External Realism determines how closely the world follows the rules of our own reality.

External Realism

If you want your world to adhere closely to our own, your job will be both more difficult and direct than if you choose a looser adherence to the rules of reality. First, you should find a parallel to our own world you can use as a model. For the Class Division concept we discussed above, you might London during the industrial revolution. If your desired central concept involved warfare on an epic scale, you could instead look at the crusades or the Napoleonic wars.

The advantage of high External Realism is that it is easy to build a bridge for your players to cross over from our reality into yours. As cynical humans, it's easier for us to suspend disbelief when we can relate to the subject.



Sample World Step Two

Our social class conflict-centered setting will have very high external realism and therefore high internal realism. We are modeling it after real-world England but within the boundaries of a medieval/fantasy setting, perhaps just pre-industrialization.

On the downside, you may need to do a lot of research into the era or society you wish to emulate. Inconsistencies or any other factor that draws your players out of that suspension of disbelief must be carefully managed and controlled.

Internal Realism

If you instead want to develop a world less cemented in the “real world”, you will need to focus more on internal realism. Start considering the rules that will dominate your world. Using the class division central concept you may wish to consider what effect multiple sentient races could have on the class concept and divisions. Will a magic intensive world affect those divisions? Will it be a simple case of have versus have not, or a question of degree? This is especially true of many minor details common in standard fare fantasy RPG’s. If you have double-ended swords and axes and your economy prices things in terms of thousands of gold pieces, you need a good explanation as to where characters store the several *tons* of currency they need to buy that sword or why they haven’t lopped their own legs off with that unwieldy weapon.

Less intensive research is required for less realistic worlds but you must have a good



eye for detail. You need to keep to your own rules and establish the hows and whys of the fantastic elements.

The key thing to remember is that a truly captivating world will exhibit excellent Internal realism and at least enough External realism that players can relate easily to it. What we need to decide is the extent to which we will focus on that realism.

Key Rule # 1: Ask yourself if it makes sense. If your answer is no, stop and go back and try again!

Step 3: Time Frames and Eras

The time frame for your setting is crucial. This



is a decision that needs to be made early in the process as it will influence every level of world creation. Most typical fantasy RPG's focus on the Middle Ages or Early Renaissance. Particularly, when you are concentrating on high External realism, be specific in your period. Are you aiming for early feudal Japan or more of the Meiji Revolution era? If you are designing a world with lower External realism, this decision is not as vital, but pick a time range that you are comfortable with. Feel free to mix and match, but be aware that you will need to explain the differences later on – if a section of your world is using firearms and practicing democracy while everyone else is still marching around in plate mail and wielding war hammers, you will need to consider those differences.

Sample World Step Three

We have already decided that our sample setting will somewhat mirror England during the very early stages of (or just before) the industrial revolution.

Step 4: Homework

Nothing can foul up a setting intended to have a high level of External realism more than weak research. Be assured that your players will, without fail, find something to “nit pick”, either because you have neglected a seemingly minor but ultimately important detail, or simply because they know the era, culture or setting better than you do. Do your homework and you will be blessed with a much richer and more consistent setting.

Now that you have picked a central concept, defined your levels of realism, and picked a period, you can start raiding your local library or scouring the Internet for real life examples and parallels in our world. For our sample class struggle concept, we will probably

Sample World Step Four

Getting research material is no problem. Heading over to the local library, we can find books on British history, life in the 18th century, and contemporary works like Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*. We can also hit the net and search among the numerous web pages of English history to find reference material. Trade and industry as well as political history will serve us well. Since history is a progression of events rather than a snap shot in time we had best look at the preceding hundred years in order to get a good idea of how things came to be the way they are in our setting time frame. We also need to consider how the fantasy elements (another sentient race) and the slower pace of technological development may alter the setting.

want to pick up some literature from the early industrial revolution in England. For a more fantasy-based concept, you could look up some of the classic works of fantasy and fiction (Grimm's *Fairy Tales* or *Lord of The Rings* are good places to start). This step is for both gathering inspiration and preparing to work out details.

Fleshing out the Guts of your World

The next vital principle of world building is Consistency. However good the concept is, it can be spoiled by a lack of consistency. After every step, ask yourself “Does this make sense? Is it consistent with everything else?” If it isn't, isolate the problem and make the necessary changes.

The following steps do not need to be followed in precise order, but there is a logical flow involved. Feel free to move things around but above all follow the first principle of world building!



Key Rule # 2: Always consider consistency. Does this fit with everything else?

Step 5:

Geography

Nothing shaped the development of earth as much as its geography. Most political, military and religious developments were influenced or impacted by geography. Start to define your world's geography. Draw a map; mark out seas, rivers, plains, forests, mountains and islands. Remember your concept and define your geography according to it. Consider country borders – if you want wars to be infrequent, break up nations with mountains or islands, or place the country between weak or friendly neighbors and oceans. On the other hand, multiple borders, open flat land, and rich and powerful neighbors can create a setting primed for great and frequent conflict.

You can start adding cities now or you can wait until later. If you do start placing cities think of a few important details now:

Water

A major population center must have access to a good supply of fresh water to maintain itself. Lakes and rivers are great assets to a civilization and if you look at most of the major cities in our world you will see how centered on water they are.



Food

All nations and cities must be able to feed themselves. A city high in the mountains will not be focusing on farming, and an arid environment will not be growing rice.

Money

How does your population make a living?

Defense

Many cities evolved out of the need for defense. How does the land favor defense? Think of hills, rivers, plateaus and so forth that create natural defensive positions.



Sample World Step Five

Geography will be simple; since we are modeling the setting on England in the 1840's (albeit with a medieval technology level), we can liberally steal from the real world for our setting. Since we want to at least appear original to our players, it might be best to make a few subtle changes. Let's have a mighty empire run from a series of large and prosperous islands off the coast of the mainland continent. Our main country will consist of three closely packed islands with river ways and fresh water plentiful in the central landmass of each island. The largest of the islands, rich in open plains with ore rich mountains and valleys in the north and trading cities in the south will be the home of the capital city. The smaller islands will be rich in ports however as the geography lends itself well to sheltering harbors and excellent river ways. The islands' locations also make them an ideal stopover location for traders' shipping.

Economically our setting will thrive off money made from trade and their much-desired manufacturing (large scale blacksmiths, tanneries, tailors, etc.) production.



Step 6: People

Now that you have your geography, you can start looking at who your inhabitants are. Consider your central concept and all the preceding steps when deciding who your people are. How would the geography and concept affect their culture? Nomadic people will favor open plains and militaristic people will be more common in areas with few natural defensive borders.

Consider population density; this will be a big factor in how your society will work and function. Economics, religion and politics will all reflect from how many people your world has, how they are divided, and where they live, not to mention how closely packed together they are..

Below are sample population densities for typical population centers in Medieval-like

periods. These numbers are not scientific but designed to give you an idea of rough figures to use on the fly.

- * Villages can range from 20 to 400 people.
- * Towns can range from 300-2,500 people.
- * Cities tend to be from 2,000-10,000 people,
- * Big Cities (on the scale of London or Paris) range from 10,001-75,000 people,
- * Huge cities (on the scale of Constantinople) 75,001+ people.

If you have a good reason such as advanced medicine, extreme wealth or overpopulation, feel free to expand these numbers and of course do the opposite following a famine or other shortage of some important resource (or something really nasty like the plague).

In general, the bigger the population, the greater



Sample World Step Six

Our people will be largely homogenous. Culturally they will be a very prideful folk and very set in their ways. They will believe in a sort of natural aristocracy that comes from their history of strong monarchies and will follow harshly the ideals of their strong work ethic. Wealth represents good standing with god and thus hard work will serve them well. Since the setting is just pre-industrialization, most people will be starting to live in urban areas and population will be dense. There will be more people on the island than it would rightly be able to contain were it not for healthy trade. The population density will lead the people to be avid explorers and colonizers as the cramped spaces leave little room to grow and become wealthy on their own. As land is the key ingredient to any means of production and productivity leads to wealth, those that can afford it will be seeking new holdings in various colonial lands.

their dependence on trade and outside resources, and the more specialized the population tends to be. In other words, dedicated artisans are more common in dense population centers while small towns tend to be largely agrarian with the occasional much sought-after specialist.

Step 7: Culture and Religion

The next step is to decide on what your population is like and how their culture is a reflection of or a result of their views of the higher powers. From your concept, decide how crucial these factors will be; is your world more homogenous with a single dominating culture or does it contain many competing cultures? How about religion? Is there one dominating faith or many faiths? Think of the consequences of each possibility – are the people tolerant of their differences or is there a great deal of conflict and friction between cultures and/or religions?

If your religions are prominent, this would be a good time to stop and define them. Write up the names and tenets of the faiths and think about



Sample World Step Seven

As we decided earlier, the people would strongly believe in their work ethic. Their religious ties to the church in the mainland were severed many generations ago and in its place, they have a state run church. The church believes that one's place in the hereafter is determined not by allegiance to a hierarchical ecclesiarchy but through hard work, personal management, and success in this life. The god of this church created man to reign over all of creation and man will be judged by how well he handled this stewardship. Also part of the dogma is the idea that men were not created equal but in fact, there is a natural aristocracy that arises. Some men are destined to be greater, wiser and more profitable than others and the task is to recognize what role in life god has for you and to live that role to its fullest. It is okay to graduate from one role to the other through success and hard work or through inheritance but to actively reject one's role and struggle against it is anathema.



As the church is state run, the head of state is also the head of the church and is surrounded by his council of bishops who in turn control and administer the church in its various localities.

Nominally, every citizen is a member of the state church. In secret, many of the lower classes hold to the continental faith and worship in secret. There is even a cardinal-equivalent in hiding in the capital city who preaches deliverance from the heretical leaders of our fictional setting. If discovered, these hidden worshipers must be called to recant in public or they will be deported to the mainland.

their histories. How did they evolve and how have they come to be where and what they are. How have these facets of the faith affected the culture and vice versa? If there are conflicts, how did they develop and over what points of doctrine or history?

Step 8: Government

Once you have defined religion, culture, population and geography, you can begin to work out how your world's countries operate. The most common government types are Theocracy (leadership through

religious mandate), Monarchy (leadership by a hereditary ruler), Oligarchy (leadership by a small minority of the population, usually due to wealth or social status but usually not elected), Democracy (leadership through population mandate via election) and Dictatorship (leadership by a powerful figure, usually taken militarily) and/or Tyranny (dictatorship but he's even nastier). You can throw in some variants such as Tribal (leadership usually through age seniority), Aristocratic (leadership by right of birth, nobility et al), and Feudalism (leadership through land rights and ownership) for good measure although there are obvious overlaps.



Look at your concept and the rest of the world you have created and start deciding the type of general governments in different regions. Now take those assignments and start adding some details. Is the monarchy feudal or imperial? Is the democracy direct or representative? Who has the power really and how is it balanced? How does power move and transition? How stable is it? Etc.

Be sure that the social divisions you created earlier mesh with the government system you have chosen. A system with distinct class divisions, particularly hereditary classes such as nobility, will work with constitutional monarchies and even some parliamentary systems but the nobles' power will be limited harshly. Look at the modern UK for an example – although there is a monarch and a House of Lords, the House of Commons is the real power. Democracies with full suffrage will likewise not support a ruling class for very long or very well. Next, examine the level of development and the economy of your state. Agrarian and sparsely populated regions will likely have no more government than absolutely necessary. Tribal and village councils will be mostly autonomous. They may meet for moots and annual gatherings to discuss major matters but that's about it.

Lastly, define how long a type of government has been in power, what are its upsides and downsides? Who likes it and who opposes it? Why? How has it changed recently? How is it likely to change? And of course, who are the major players? Define these people in as much detail as you need. Give them motives, histories, flaws and ambitions. Make them seem real to you and your players. Even if your players never meet these individuals they will play a vital role in the way your world grows and changes and the more you know about them the more your players will find your creation believable.

You could even start drafting a few of the major laws consistent with this government type. A real world country that parallels your creation

Sample World Step Eight

The government is nominally a monarchy but a powerful chamber of lords holds the king in check. Nobles and aristocrats control the chamber and as long as their wealth is greater than a certain level, they can vote on all matters the king puts before them. They can also nominate and admit new members to their midst if they meet the wealth requirements set forth. All changes to the rules of admittance must come from chamber and be approved by a supermajority of the chamber.

The king's power comes mostly through his role as head of the church. He can dictate in all matters of the church be it doctrine or policy. He also has a great deal of power domestically as the chamber of lords cannot initiate any type of legislation, as that is the sole right of the king. The king is also unfettered in his role as commander of all military forces.

The current form of government has been in power for nearly 280 years. Prior to that, the chamber of lords assembled only for coronations and the raising of new lords. King Harald III gave the chamber its current powers by royal edict upon his deathbed. Many believe that he was certainly mad at the time but the king's word is law. Remarkably enough, the current power structure has worked well enough that no monarch has moved to reclaim his previous powers since Queen Constance II tried and failed 180 years ago.

Men and women can both be the monarch, but only men can serve in the chamber of lords.

As one might expect, the lower classes don't think much of the current power structure but have no political resource as both their faiths and the current powers that be oppose any changes in the system.



Sample World Step Nine

The King's royal mint and central bank coin the currency. The currency uses the gold standard and gold remains the primary backing for all finance and trade. The banking system is well developed, although communications lags tend to make inter-bank record keeping very difficult. Trade works by barter or currency and often in combinations thereof.

We already established that industry and trade are the sources of wealth but let's be a bit more specific. Our fictional nation is specialized in refining ores and is especially dominate in rare trade goods. This nation controls the trade routes to the far south and has several colonies in spice and silk producing lands. The colonies bring vast amounts of wealth to the homeland.



could be useful for guidance as to what would be appropriate. Remember to reference the religious details you developed earlier – many of Earth's laws originate from religious foundations.

Step 9: Economics

How does your world pay for itself? This is a two-part step. First, define the nature of the currency system in use. Link it to the history, geography and politics of your world. Would certain countries use the same currency thanks to a common background? Is the currency coined or printed? Is the barter system used? Who defines the currency and what backs it (if not coined)? The currency should reflect the banking technology and structure of the area and world. A low-tech agrarian state will likely use coined currency of precious metal or barter while a high-tech society with sufficient means for banking and security may use notes and bills. Advanced technical societies (typical of the Sci-fi and sci-fi/fantasy hybrid genres) could

very well use a simple electronic currency. In addition, backwards tribal cultures like Odeon in Weyrth may just use teeth.

Next, how does that state, region, country, and world make money? This is vital. Think of the major and secondary resources and industries of the area or region, as well as the culture and geography of the area. Flat temperate lands will be great at producing farm goods, husbandry, and textiles. Mountainous regions may be rich in ore deposits and have mining and smithing as their primary industries. Ports, waterways, and major passes will encourage trade. Higher technology levels and transportation methods will encourage greater degrees of specialization while low transportation and technology will require production that is more varied.

Now think about three important questions. What does this state/region/world have (in material goods and wealth)? What is it missing? How can



it use what it has to get what it is missing? The answers will help to define whether the country is seeking trade with its neighbors, conquest, or searching for a better way to make do with what it has. Refer back to your population, culture, geography, and government details and make sure you are still consistent.

Step 10: Technology Level

What is the general technological level of your world? Is it a general middle-ages level (like many RPG settings) or is it earlier - perhaps your world has never managed to emerge from the Dark Ages or it may in fact still be way back in the Bronze or even Stone age (which would make for a very interesting setting). Conversely, you might decide that your world has a renaissance-level technological level, or perhaps it is at a similar technological level to America during the Civil War, modern day, or maybe even futuristic? Perhaps there is a mix of technological levels - some more advanced societies use that advantage to gain beneficial trade agreements, or even just to dominate and enslave the lesser technological cultures.

You will also need to decide what forms of weaponry, armor, equipment and “trappings” are available given the technological level you have chosen. If your setting is the Bronze Age, then all weapons will be made of bronze, which is more brittle and soft than iron or steel (reduce all damage ratings by -1 across the board and all cutting ATN’s go up by +1 point as well). Early medieval settings tend to feature large and heavy weaponry, which grew lighter and more precise as technology approached the industrial revolution era. If the setting is later than “typical” fantasy, you might want to include gunpowder weapons, mines and even crude grenades; even later settings again would de-emphasize melee weaponry but gunpowder weapons would feature even more prominently. The “timeline” of armor found in *The Flower of Battle* (TFOB, p. 11) will give you some ideas as to what forms of armor

were available across many time periods, and many of the individual weapon entries in that book give approximate time periods for their use as well.

Weapons and armor aside, what other forms of technology are available in your game world? It’s fun to mix and match, here - after all, gunpowder could have been discovered on Earth centuries before it actually was (the technology was available far earlier than its adoption, and even after its discovery it was a long time before anyone thought of using it to make weapons). Maybe your world has discovered gunpowder very early and many of its cultures are unable to fathom it as anything but magic. Perhaps your world is in the “dark ages” era, but someone has invented steam-powered machinery - how does this affect the way of life (and other technological developments) of the rest of the world and its cultures. If you’re thinking of including magic (see step 12, p. 113 .) you need to think about the implications this will have on technology - why would anyone bother inventing a bridge if it’s easy enough to cast a spell that creates a floating roadway across a chasm?

Sample World Step Ten

We have already decided that our sample world is a just fractionally pre-industrial medieval setting. Drawing on the late medieval/early renaissance period, we decide that heavy armor has gone out of vogue (it is considered crass to wear anything heavier than chain) and most weapons are light and fast - rapiers, sideswords and the like. Gunpowder has been invented but is not in common use yet, as it is still vastly expensive and thus only a plaything for the rich. The centre of the empire has very early renaissance technology, but the colonies are still very much medieval as the wealthy industrialists in the centre of the empire are keeping their advancements to themselves for now.



High Fantasy Worlds

Most of the earlier steps should fit both low and high fantasy worlds but the following steps were designed specifically for higher fantasy worlds and genres’.

Step 11: Races and Monsters

Assuming you want to have multiple sentient races in your game, you need to start thinking of a few important questions. What are they? How are they different from humans? How did they come to be? What are their advantages and disadvantages? How integrated or separated from your world’s society are they? If they are an integral part of your society, how has their presence affected the way it works? Are they the majority or a minority? Why? How do they view the world around them? Are they culturally different? Technologically? What are some common stereotypes? And most importantly, why aren’t they the only race around? Having different sentient species competing for the same resources usually means someone is going to eventually lose out. If you have many races, you need to explain why they are still distinct and separate entities and at least think about how and why several different species managed to evolve into sentience without one dominating the others (perhaps they didn’t evolve; maybe magic and/or advanced technology was the cause?)

Above all, think about the frequency and distribution of the races. Are they like Tolkien Elves (separated from humanity but populous enough to appear often,) or are they more like Weyrth’s elves (separate and very rare?) Maybe they are like the dwarves of Discworld and so common you have to watch where you step when walking the streets of Ankh Morpork. Decide how the frequency and distribution of the various races will affect the world you defined so far. Remember the tendency people exhibit to distrust that which is different while at the same time craving

that which is exotic. Will dwarven smiths run out the human craftsmen of your state? If so, how will the humans feel about it? Will the government care about this? These questions, if addressed properly, will deepen your world and add a layer of believability and internal realism.

Sample World Step Eleven

Monsters are relatively rare but become more numerous as you move further away from the main continent. The far colonies still struggle with unusual beasts and creatures. Most seem to have no more than base animal intelligence but some have proven quite clever. The beasts mirror our own world’s fauna with slight changes intelligence and viciousness. Some of the critters in the colonial provinces object to the use of their territory by man and have developed an animosity towards humans.

There are not a lot of variations in race in the classical fantasy setting although there is a population of small, pale skinned and hairless people to the far south in the spice producing regions. Extremely primitive and godless in the eyes of the colonists, these indigenous people are subjugated to menial tasks and base labor as the colonists strive to civilize these barbaric people. What no one but they realize is that they possess a rare and potent power, magic. Their unusual appearance is a direct result of their dependence on the arcane for survival.

Although most numerous in their homeland, these indigenous people, called “Dirts” in the tongue of the colonists (for the way in which they appear covered in filth after even the most basic labor due to their pale complexions), have been transported to the mainland as servants. The upper classes often use them as status symbols. It is considered fashionable to prove how well one can civilize and domesticate a “Dirt.”



Step 12: Magic

Again, the important questions concern frequency and distribution, but this time we need to add a third crucial variable: Potency. Define how powerful magic in your world is. Can it blow up continents or is it more subtle and sublime? Is it very distinct in its application or does it run the range from spot-on-the-wall magic all the way to flinging about the powers of the cosmos? The general potency of magic will likely affect the balance of power, technology and culture of your realms.

As for frequency, you need to consider the ramifications inherent in common and even semi-common magic. Common magic will generally be less feared, more standardized, and more relied upon than rare magic. Greatly common magic will replace technology and often alter the developmental paths a culture may take (why develop gunpowder when it's easy to buy a fireball grenade?). Define how the magic impacts military and economic power too, as mages will be valuable assets in war and business. If magic is rare, consider the cultural and religious impacts. Will the odd mage be feared or respected? Are they in positions of power? What are the laws that bind or affect them?

As for distribution, it is simply a matter of defining who has it, who can have it, and who has the most of it. Once you answer these questions, you need to check to ensure that the rest of your world is consistent with the logical impacts of the distribution of magic. For example, if one country has a preponderance of magic you need to address how they relate to their neighbors and how they differ from everyone else.

One final element to consider with magic is its cost. Magic, for it to be really worth something to a good story must usually have a hook, cost or catch. Consider your favorite tales of magic and the cost of using it was. Sometimes the cost is physical, such as TROS magic's aging

mechanic; other times it may be more social or spiritual. For further options on the price of magic, see *Sorcery and the Fey*.

Sample World Step Twelve

Magic is so rare that it only exists confined to the sub-species known as Dirts. They possess a rare shamanic magic that can alter the probabilities of various events. Dirt Shamans can actually expend their inner energy to alter the odds to favor them. They manipulate chance through ritual and charm, which explains how their lands are considered cursed by the colonists living there and Dirt servants are considered good luck charms.

So far, few believe that the Dirts possess any form of real magic as all their effects can be dismissed as chance and luck. The net effect is that their rituals and fetishes are dismissed as barbaric rituals while at the same time having a Dirt as a servant is considered a good luck charm.

Alternatives to Concept Driven World Building

Two alternate methods of world building, favored by many on the Driftwood staff are "outward-in" and "inward-out" based world design.

Outward-In World Building

Outward-in world building is similar to concept-based world building in that it starts with a general idea and then begins to fill in the details. Unlike concept based world building, you need not need a central theme. Instead, begin with the world at large and whatever general ideas you may have. Start defining each of those details previously mentioned until you get down into the gritty details of the local village. Each of the rules of thumb and the step above



still apply. Here though, you define each continent and country first before you start getting into each individual city, town and village.

Many of the details for outward-in world design will often define themselves because of key rules one and two. As you strive for consistency and internal realism, many details will likely fall right into place.

Inward-Out World Building

Inward-out world design is, as you can likely guess, the process of starting with the specifics and then working your way out to the generalities. Start with a village, town or city and then work your way out through province, region, country, continent and then world. This requires a greater eye towards key rules one and two than you may suspect. As you will be spelling out all the effects first, you need to retro-decide what the causes were. Pay attention to the reasons behind the details as you expand out and be sure that they are consistent throughout the whole development process.

The advantage of this method of world creation is that it is the least amount of work. If your campaign starts in a small village, then all you really need to define is the village. Later, as the characters leave the village and begin to explore the countryside you develop that region, perhaps adding a few nearby towns and cities. Over the course of the campaign,



you will flesh out more and more details, moving ever outwards as you come to need to know “what’s over the next hill”. In this way, internal realism can be trickier to maintain, but the advantage is that you don’t need to do a lot of work for countries and regions that your characters may never travel to or have anything to do with. At the same time, the areas they are in will be the ones you have spent the most time developing, thus they will be the richest in detail.



Norse Trolls

Norse Trolls are creatures of darkness and great evil. They are ugly, misshapen monsters, vaguely humanoid in appearance with sparse hair and warts covering their tough hides, which range from a light green to dark grey. They are tall, averaging between 8-12 feet (depending on age and type), with a huge build and massive limbs. They possess great strength: a troll can tear a man's arm from his socket with ease. All trolls have clawed hands that function for both fighting and digging. Their fangs can inflict savage wounds on their prey. While not immortal, some trolls have plagued a village for several generations, and are considerably longer lived than the race of man. It is not uncommon for some of the greatest of the trolls to live for centuries.

Most trolls live in caverns within a domain they consider their own. This is usually five to twenty miles of land in the surrounding area, and will sometimes be near a structure or fortification that the Troll has laid claim to. They will fiercely defend their territory against any trespasser who would dare enter their domain, no matter how innocent the intention. While it is not common, trolls may hunt outside their territory (particularly when taking a human bride) as long as they can either get back to their den before daybreak, or know another cave they might be able to rest in during daylight hours.

Trolls are almost always solitary creatures, as few can stand another's presence for any length of time. Occasionally, a small band of 3-5 trolls will form for short periods, but this is rare. Sometimes a mother and child will live near or within the same hunting grounds, but always in separate dens.

Trolls are carnivorous, and particularly like the taste of man - woe to any village that a troll has claimed hunting rights to. Trolls particularly

enjoy the taste of human children, which they consider a delicacy. Some trolls capture women to take as their wives due to the scarcity of troll women. Such offspring are always male trolls, which mature to adulthood in about 12 years. The birth usually results in the death of the human mother.

Trolls are known for their cruelty. If they are able to, they will torture their prey for some time before finally devouring it. In some cases, they have terrorized a community for years for the smallest infraction upon their territory, such as a hunter taking game from the troll's domain.

While not normally magic-using creatures (female trolls can prove an exception to this), trolls have the ability to call down curses upon their slayer (should his name be known to them) or upon anyone who would dare break the conditions of a Troll-Oath. Trolls can also cause blights to the territory in which they claim, causing the land to become barren. See troll curses on p. 117 for more information.

While many people consider trolls "stupid", this is simply not the case. While a troll does not possess the reasoning abilities of a human, they are incredibly clever, using cunning and guile to make a fearsome foe. Many would-be troll slayers are outwitted by the very prey they seek to destroy.

Sometimes trolls can be reasoned with, and a deal with a troll is a deal that will be kept, but to the letter of the agreement. Negotiating with a troll can just as dangerous as fighting one – they will use their cunning to their advantage and strike a deal that is usually well within their best interests. Any deal with a troll will require an oath, with the person swearing to abide by the terms of the agreement or suffer the ill effects of a troll curse.

Female Trolls tend to be larger and much more vicious than their male counterparts; it





is said that some can actually use magic, and their troll curses are more powerful. For some reason, female trolls seem to be quite rare or quite unwilling to take male husbands, which can then force male trolls to go out and seek human brides.

Trolls have a terrible fear of sunlight, as exposure for any length of time will turn a troll to stone. Even brief exposure will disorientate a troll, and trolls usually flee in fear of any type of bright light. They are also known to hate and fear God. Supposedly, the sound of church bells can drive them off, and they are uncomfortable on holy ground.

Some greater trolls are famous for their superb metalworking skills, particularly weapon-crafting. While rather plain in appearance, these items are always fine or superior items, as anything less is beneath contempt to a troll and will be destroyed and forged anew. On occasion, trolls have traded their works with men, and some even take commissions.

Common Traits of Trolls

Troll Sight

Trolls possess powerful vision, which can pierce the veil of darkness. They can see in total darkness as if it was an overcast night.

Sunlight

Sunlight is the bane of trolls. Direct sunlight will permanently turn a Troll to stone in a matter of seconds. Mere exposure causes Shock 4 +1 per round until it reaches the creature's Health total. At that time, the creature will turn to stone, never able to trouble the earth again. Rumor has it that by some foul means some trolls are immune to the stone-turning effect. These superior trolls still suffer a -3 dice penalty to all actions performed in direct sunlight.

Hatred of God

Trolls generally hate God and organized religion. Simply mentioning any form of faith is likely to throw a troll into a rage. Any character with the Faith Spiritual Attribute will get its full benefit when invoking it against a troll in combat.

Quick Healing

Trolls have amazing regenerative properties. A Troll will heal 1 pain level per hour of resting until he is completely healthy. Fire damage heals at 1 pain level per day. Any limb severed will not regenerate. Should such a wound be taken, an EN roll must be made with a Difficulty (number of successes required) equal to the severity of the wound inflicted. Success indicates that the troll recovers from the wound quickly (but the limb does not regenerate), while failure indicates that the wound is too severe for the troll's quick healing powers to help and heal normally (and without proper treatment, can prove fatal).

Vulnerability to Fire

Trolls are known to fear fire, and with good cause. A troll's toughness is reduced to $\frac{1}{2}$ its normal value when suffering fire damage.



Clever

Norse Trolls are very clever, and should be roleplayed as such. They will use surprise, set ambushes, and use treachery all to their advantage against their enemies.

Troll Cleverness

Most trolls in role-playing games are considered mindless brutes, incapable of any serious thought. This is not how most trolls are referred to in typical Anglo-Saxon and Norse mythology – these were clever, devious creatures, with some even possessing high degrees of craftsmanship. Play this to the hilt when role-playing trolls and your players might be in for a bit of a surprise....

Troll Stench

Trolls emit a powerful, pungent odor that will frighten animals and cause humans to become uncomfortable in their presence. When introduced to troll stench for the first time, most people become nauseated, suffering a -3 dice penalty to all actions (less 1 die per success on an EN Test).

Troll Craftsmanship

Some greater trolls are extraordinary craftsmen when working metal, usually weaponsmithing. Such trolls are Grandmasters (TN 4+), and are generally more intelligent (+1 MA), then their brethren.

Troll Curses

Trolls are famous for their ability to invoke curses. They can wield these curses to cause blight to the environment within their territory, causing the land to become barren (lakes with no fish, crops that fail year after year, animals that sicken). Trolls may also curse an individual. Depending on how successful the Troll is, the target will acquire a minor or major flaw (usually mental in nature, but could even be physical at the Seneschal's discretion)

determined by the Seneschal. There are two circumstances in which a troll can curse an individual:

The first way is by breaking a Troll-Oath. Any person entering an agreement with the troll (for those foolish enough and perhaps brave enough to do so) must swear an oath. A Troll-Oath is an agreement between an individual and the troll. A troll will never break a Troll-Oath he has sworn upon, but will follow the Oath exactly to the letter, attempting to pervert it to his advantage whenever possible. The troll will name the curse he intends to afflict the target with should the oath be broken (the curse may be a minor or major flaw, at the troll's discretion). If the target breaks his agreement, the Troll immediately makes a Curse test against a TN of 7. If the curse is successful, then the target is automatically hit by the curse with no resistance roll – by agreeing to the oath in the first place he has already elected to forego any attempt at resisting the curse.

The second way a troll has the power to curse someone is through a Death Curse, although in this case the troll must know his slayer's name. The Troll makes a Curse test against a TN of 7.

Suggested Troll Curses

As stated, if a troll successfully curses a character, he will acquire either a Minor or Major Flaw (depending on the circumstances and the troll's Margin of Success). Here are some examples of possible afflictions the troll may bestow upon the target. Again, these are only guidelines; any Flaw is potentially appropriate, at the Seneschal's discretion. All Flaws are described on p. 23-28.

Addiction, Bloodlust, Compulsion, Greed, Lingering injury (the location injured by the troll during their confrontation), Overconfident, (the character did kill a troll, after all) Phobia, Rage, Sleep Disorder, Tormented, Berserker.

If successful, the target must make a resisted Willpower test against the troll. The troll adds a number of dice to the roll equal to the success total on the Curse roll. If the target succeeds, he is unaffected. If he fails and the Troll's Margin of Success is 2 or less, the target acquires a Minor Flaw. If the Margin of Success is 3 or greater, the target acquires a Major Flaw.

Troll curses remain for life, although there are a few ways to remove of them. Cursed characters can try to somehow get the troll to remove it (which usually involves killing it, or perhaps entering into yet another bargain...), buy it off with SA's, or find a priest that can exorcize the curse (at a TN of 8 using the Voices and Visions Miracle rules found on p. 80).

Troll Breeds

There are several breeds of Troll, each detailed below:

Deep Trolls

Deep trolls in underground cavern labyrinths, venturing towards the surface to feed. Deep trolls tend to have a dark grey complexion, and are 8-12 feet tall on average. They are the most typical of the troll races and are the most commonly encountered.

Deep Trolls are good Climbers (+2 Specialty Dice).

Forest Trolls

Forest Trolls live in caves in heavily wooded areas. Some are actually able move about on overcast days as the tree lines of the forest can conceal the light that can be perilous to them. Forest Trolls often act as wicked defenders of nature; should they discover anyone as much as carrying away dead wood from their domain they will track them back to their village at nightfall and exact its brutal revenge on the village as a whole. Forest Trolls are the shortest, standing between 7-9 feet tall. They have a greenish browning coloring,

which acts as a natural camouflage.

Forest Trolls are natural Woodland Trackers (+3 Specialty Dice). Their coloration facilitates camouflage (+2 Specialty Dice). Forest Trolls tend to use weapons more than the other races of troll; increase their weapon proficiency by +2 dice, but decrease their Claw, Bite, and Throw Rock proficiencies by 1 die each.

Mountain Trolls

These trolls reside in tall mountains, although they may be spotted away from (but near) their mountains in search of food. The strongest of the troll breeds, mountain trolls are particularly adept at throwing rocks and boulders at anyone daring to trespass upon the highlands they dwell upon. Mountain Trolls are the largest variety of troll, standing from 10-14 feet tall and they are light grey in color.

Mountain trolls are excellent climbers (+3 Specialty Dice) and expert rock throwers (+2 CP to thrown rocks).

Water Trolls

Lurking in underwater caverns in lakes, swamps, or near the coast, Water Trolls are known (even amongst the other troll species) for their cunning and cruelty. They also possess reasoning not found in the other troll races. They average 9-12 feet in height and they are brownish green in color.

Water Trolls are excellent swimmers (+3 Specialty Dice) and are more intelligent than their brethren (increase MA by +1).

Troll Statistics

We have presented three separate stat blocks for trolls below. The first is for lesser trolls (who tend to be the younger and weaker), the second is for typical trolls, and the last is for greater trolls (the oldest and most experienced). We have also included a Female Troll Template, which can be overlaid on top of any of the three stat blocks.



Lesser Trolls

Statistics:

ST	8	WP	4	Ref	4
AG	5	Wit	4	Aim	4
TO	8	MA	2	KD	6
EN	8	Soc	1	KO	10
HT	10	Per	4	Move	10

Combat Proficiencies: 6-10 (Hand-to-Hand), CP 10-14 (Claw DR ST+1, range Short; Bite DR ST+3, range Hand; Bite attacks have an activation cost of 2 dice)

4-10 (Various Weapons), CP 8-14

3-6 (Thrown Rocks), MP 7-10; Rock DR usually ST+2

Skills: TN 6-8 with appropriate environmental skills (Climbing, Tracking, etc)

Special: Curses 2

Lesser trolls represent younger or undeveloped trolls, but are still a very dangerous opponent for group of adventurers daring enough to challenge such a foe. Lesser trolls are the most prone of all the various types to actually band together with other (lesser) Trolls for short periods.

Typical Trolls

Statistics:

ST	12	WP	5	Ref	5
AG	5	Wit	5	Aim	5
TO	10	MA	3	KD	8
EN	10	Soc	1	KO	12
HT	10	Per	5	Move	13

Combat Proficiencies: 8-14 (Hand-to-Hand), CP 13-19 (Claw DR ST+1, range Short; Bite DR ST+3, range Hand; Bite attacks have an activation cost of 2 dice)

6-12 (Various Weapons), CP 11-17

5-10 (Thrown Rocks), MP 10-15; Rock DR usually ST+3

Skills: TN 5-7 with appropriate environmental skills (Climbing, Tracking, etc)

Special: Curses 3

This Stat block represents the typical troll

(if there can be such a thing) from the description.

Greater Trolls

Statistics:

ST	14	WP	6	Ref	5
AG	5	Wit	6	Aim	5
TO	12	MA	4	KD	9
EN	12	Soc	2	KO	15
HT	12	Per	5	Move	15

Combat Proficiencies: 12-18 (Hand-to-Hand), CP 17-23 (Claw DR ST+1, range Short; Bite DR ST+3, range Hand; Bite attacks have an activation cost of 2 dice)

9-15 (Various Weapons), CP 14-20

7-14 (Thrown Rocks), MP 12-19; Rock DR usually ST+3

Skills: TN 4-6 with appropriate environmental skills (Climbing, Tracking, etc)

Special: Curses 4

These vile creatures have lived for centuries and are always the largest size for their breed. Their experience has given them even more cunning and guile that they will use their best advantage when facing an adversary. To face such a creature and live to tell the tale is the stuff of legends!

Female Troll Template

(Apply this to any of the other Stat blocks)

Modifiers:

ST	+1	WP	+2
AG	+1	Wit	+1
TO	+2	MA	+1
EN	+1	Soc	-1
HT	+1	Per	Unchanged

Combat Proficiencies: Hand-to-Hand +1
Weapon -2

Throw Rock -3

Special: Curses +2

Female Trolls are considerably more dangerous than their male counterparts, and should not be



taken lightly. While having an outward disdain for their male counterparts, they do possess a strong maternal instinct for their young, and woe to those who would do her offspring harm.

Some female trolls may even have some talent of Sorcery, (usually 2-6 points spread between the Glamour, Conquer and Vision Vagaries) although this is quite rare.

Adventure Hook



Background: During last night's storm, a village girl has gone missing. Something tore the door off her house and her father was pushed aside and knocked unconscious by a hulking figure in the darkness. There are large footprints leading into the forest in mud the next morning. While local legends say a troll lives in a cave in the nearby forest, it has never before bothered the community. The village is in an uproar and doesn't know what to do. The reeve has held a meeting with the other elders of the community and gone to the local manor house knight, begging for the rescue and return of the girl.

Apparently, the neighboring troll has decided it is time to find himself a wife. Time is running out....

Player Involvement: The players are either:

- 1) Locals living in the village, (perhaps Peasants/Serfs of the local knight).
- 2) Passing through the day after the abduction occurs.
- 3) Retainers of the manor house knight who is the lord of the village.

What are the PC's going to do? Are they relatives of the girl? Perhaps one is betrothed to the young maiden? What will the lord do? Is the life of one girl worth the risk of the lord's other resources (i.e. his labor pool and his retainers)? If it is not, will the PC's disobey him to save the life of an innocent, particularly one that is so dear to them? What is the motivation of strangers just passing through – To do the right thing, or perhaps gain favor or rewards?

The Plot Thickens: Did the troll take the maid for a wife, or for another purpose? Can it be bargained with, or is force the only option? Could the abductor be a female troll looking for a nanny to watch over its child, or even just aid it with a mundane task such as teaching it a craft or lore? Was the abductor a troll, or has it been set up by another seeking to blame the creature for the girl's disappearance. Could she have run off with a boy in secret, or been carried off by force? What will the troll do when it is confronted? Is there even a troll or is it just a myth used to create a distraction?

This adventure hook makes a great introductory scenario to jumpstart a campaign, bringing a group of PCs from different backgrounds together against a common threat with many opportunities to get Spiritual Attributes involved.

If successful, what are the consequences? Are the PC's treated as heroes or exiled if they disobeyed their lord? What is next for our heroes?



The (In)Famous Caravan Adventure

The caravan adventure has been a long time favorite “introductory” adventure for us at Driftwood. We use it to show others the game and give them a small taste of *the Riddle of Steel*. It’s also often used at conventions and trade shows for the same purpose, and several of us like to use the Caravan Adventure (or minor variants of it) to kick-start long- or short-term campaigns. We do this because it gives the players a definite focus and immediate short-term goals for their new characters. The resolution of those short-term goals takes a session or two, by which time the characters all know each other well enough to continue “adventuring” together and start into the campaign proper (whatever it may be). Below, we will present the Caravan Adventure itself as well as some hints, tips and guidelines as to how to use it to start a longer campaign. The Caravan Adventure should take around 4 hours.

If you are planning to be a player in this scenario, don’t read any further. You’ll spoil it. Really!

Pre-generated adventures usually don’t work well in TROS because the fundamental nature of Spiritual Attributes, and the philosophies and goals of player-created characters can vary wildly and make pre-developed scenarios unplayable. For this reason, the Caravan Adventure uses pre-generated characters. Don’t worry – the players will still get to make their own characters if you’re planning a longer campaign. There are five pre-generated characters (sheets for which can be found from p. 130); if you have fewer than five players, first

drop Francisco. If you need to lose a second character, drop Haruk (but the adventure will need some re-tooling in this case – it’s really designed for a minimum of four!)

Stage One: Wagon’s Ho!

The first stage of the adventure is designed to bring the characters together, and to give the players a chance to get to know their characters and how the system works. Encourage the players to read through their character sheets and ask questions about anything they don’t understand. Ensure you take particular care to ensure that they have read their Spiritual Attributes and they understand the mechanics of how, when and why to use them.

This is also a good time to explain the basics of the die mechanics (tailoring the discussion depending on how experienced the players are



as roleplayers) and to introduce the scenario to the characters. If you are planning this adventure as a tie-in to the start of a campaign then you will probably want to adjust some of the details below to suit the campaign, or you can use them verbatim. The only really important factor (to the adventure at least) at this point is that players know that they are hired guards and drivers for an important caravan and they are to deliver its cargo to the destination unopened and unmolested, which should be a three day trip. The road is one not well utilized and they should expect to meet few if any other travelers on the way (even though they know as well as you do that's not what's going to happen...)

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The empire has fallen on hard times of late – political unrest and the threat of an impending invasion from the bordering nation of Gelure has led to the emperor pulling most of the militia forces from the regional cities and outposts back to protect the capital. The offshoot of this has been a rise in crime and banditry, particularly in the northern reaches of the empire where road travel, once entirely safe, has become somewhat more of a dangerous proposition. Shipping and sea trade in the northern sector has almost shut down entirely, due to fear of the Geluroise navy, and many of the smaller coastal towns and villages are beginning to suffer due to a corresponding lack of incoming trade goods and wealth.

This of course provides an opportunity for a wily business that is prepared to take a few risks. The Delmaine trading company, long an established and respected enterprise, has taken to running caravans of goods to some of the more distant towns; with the townsfolk in such desperate times and in need of food and medical supplies, valuables and trade goods have devalued and prices have risen. Even a single well-stocked wagon of goods can earn enough

money to pay its crew (and pay them well) and still make a tidy profit for the company.

The five of you have been hired to take a large caravan to the town of Harborside, on the northwest coast of the Xanarian Seat. The journey is expected to take 3-4 days each way, along with a couple of days in the town selling the merchandise, and picking up whatever valuables can be purchased at reasonable prices to bring back. Rinaldo Delmaine, the grandson of Steradian Delmaine the trading magnate is the driver and trader. It is his responsibility to handle the team, and perform the necessary negotiations when they reach Harborside. Francisco, his long lost and recently re-discovered brother travels as his companion and an extra lookout for the evenings. Geralt Nowead and Stefan Labon are old friends from the military who have taken to mercenary work to support their wives and families. They have signed on as guards and will accompany the wagon and protect it and its payload from bandits. Haruk Na'Salem is a foreigner from the far east, known for his skills as a tracker, scout and master archer. He will serve as lookout for the caravan, sitting in a raised seat behind the driver's bench and watching the surrounding countryside for any advance signs of trouble.

At this point, (if they haven't already) the players should read their character sheets and backgrounds. There's a good mix of skills, both combat related (Rinaldo is a renaissance-style fencer, Francisco is a thief and cat burglar, Stefan is a typical medieval sword & shield fighter, Geralt is a big-bruiser who favors close combat and grappling, and Haruk is an archer and eastern fighter) and non-combat related. This way the players will get to see many aspects of TROS combat and skill use, which should serve as a good introduction into the system. Most of the characters have good reasons to get along with and good reasons to strongly dislike other characters. Don't worry

about any conflict this may cause – the scenario is designed this way as a good way to promote roleplay between the characters so they can all learn about each other and about how their Spiritual Attributes fuel their actions. They're all going to die anyway, so it hardly matters if one corpse dislikes another.

Have the characters introduce themselves (in character) to each other before they are taken in to a meeting with Steradian Delmaine, the head of the company. Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

After having to wait for a short time, you are led in to meet with Steradian Delmaine, the head of the Delmaine trading company. "Rinaldo!" he booms, moving swiftly across the room to embrace his grandson. "You have a rare treat here, lads", he says turning to the rest of you. "Rinaldo here is my pride and joy and one hell of a teamster and trader. Take care of him, and we'll do well by you". He motions the five of you to sit and starts to discuss the caravan. "It's a very important – and secret – cargo that must reach Harborside within 5 days. You'll receive payment for the shipment there and you're at liberty to use half of the money to purchase whatever trade goods you think you will be able to sell at a profit once you return here to town. You'll receive your already negotiated salaries, plus ten percent of whatever profits you can make through the trade goods. Rinaldo is a dab hand at trading – stick with his instincts and you'll go far, right boy?"

"Now remember, the cargo is confidential, you're not to let anybody get a look at it and certainly not to open or handle any of it. You're being paid, and paid well to keep your mouths shut and your swords loose in their scabbards. You've got five days to reach Harborside, and then up to a week to get your trading done and return. Can I rely on you?"

Steradian will make each of the characters in turn (except Rinaldo) re-swear their allegiance before letting them go. He is friendly although he mostly ignores Francisco unless asked a direct question, and at all times, he dotes on Rinaldo. He will happily discuss the road, traveling conditions, and so on but he will not discuss the cargo and he will start to get annoyed if the characters start to ask too many questions about it. He will remind them that they have sworn to secrecy and he insists that they don't need to know what the cargo is – but he will assure them that it's nothing illegal and that it's vital for the war effort and of personal interest to the emperor (whether this is true or not depends on you, Seneschal – keep reading).

Stage Two: On the Road

This portion of the adventure is to let the players get into character. The first day of the journey is uneventful and should be used just to let the players explore their characters, try out a few things with their skills and other abilities, and so on. Read or paraphrase the following to the characters:

Early the following morning the caravan has been fully loaded and is ready to depart. Haruk climbs into the lookout seat while Rinaldo and Francisco climb into the driver's seat and Geralt and Stefan take their positions on the sideboards. Rinaldo pulls the caravan out into the street, and after an hour of heavy traffic, you pull out of the city and start on the long road to Harborside.

At this point, you should let the players/characters take over. Give them a chance to start playing in character and to talk to each other. They'll probably start off fairly amicable, as the uncertainty of the road ahead drives them together, although each of the characters has reason to dislike certain other characters (either through religious differences, personal



jealousy, and so forth) and this may start to come out as well. Don't let the bad feeling get too far at this point if you can avoid it – you want it to slowly simmer to boiling point over the next few game days of travel.

Don't let this stage of the adventure go on for too long, it's really just a chance for the players to "stretch their legs". Some of the players may wish to check out the merchandise in the cart. We've left it up to you as to what they might find, based on how you want the campaign to continue after the adventure ends; if you have no plans yet (or you're not going to continue a campaign afterwards) then there are some ideas at the end of the adventure as to what the characters might find. On this day or on either of the two following ones, you might introduce some or all of the following elements to engage the players/characters if things start to slow down.

- * The caravan comes across a trader caravan traveling in the other direction. This may give an opportunity for the characters to get into a little personal trading, or they may let Rinaldo take over the trading for them. The traders may be able to provide a little information about the road ahead – it's a quiet one but there are rumors of trouble in the foothills.
- * The characters come across some very faint tracks. If they decide to follow them (Haruk is particularly good at this) and they can successfully follow the tracks far enough, they will find a spot that overlooks the road they have just come down. The area is abandoned but there is an empty carrier pigeon cage nearby – was someone waiting for them?
- * Perhaps the group comes across some wandering monks of the Seven Vows of the Prophet. What are they doing here? More importantly, they greet Haruk with friendship and camaraderie but openly dislike and distrust Geralt and Stefan. Will anyone believe Haruk when he claims not to know them?

* The characters meet two young lads named Rolf and Pieter wandering the trade road by themselves, who engage them in friendly conversation. The lads claim to be wanderers and ask for passage to whatever the characters might be going. The lads are open and friendly, carry several skins of wine that they seem happy to share, and are wealthy enough to pass time in a little gambling. If the characters agree to take them along, the lads (who are really bandits) will appear to be friendly right up until day 2 when the characters come across the attack on the caravan, at which point they will join up with the bandits and attack the characters (use the Bandit statistics found at the end of the adventure).

* The characters come across a fallen tree that is blocking the path. Clearing it will require several hours of backbreaking exertion, or they can lose nearly half a day's travel by going back and taking a different fork on the road. If any of them investigate the fallen tree, they may discover that it appears it was cut down to intentionally block the road.

* Up ahead, the characters can see a body in the road. It has been mauled by wild dogs, and in fact, there are five large dogs still slinking around the carcass. If the players wish to investigate the corpse, they will need to scare the dogs off, but the dogs will simply hide in the surrounding wood and run out to attack anyone who gets close to the body. Statistics for Dogs can be found in the main rulebook or *Of Beasts and Men* (TROS, p. 223; OBAM, p. 39). The body is that of a young nun of the Three-Gods-Become-One faith. She was carrying a sealed letter that has been ripped and shredded by the dogs, and is coated with sticky blood which obscures the text. If the characters can somehow work out how to read the document, read them the following fragments *"...traveling by the west road, and carrying... ..not understand the importa... ..f they did, they would surel... ..o matter, it should take no more than five da... ..ll rewarded for the efforts of your men..."*



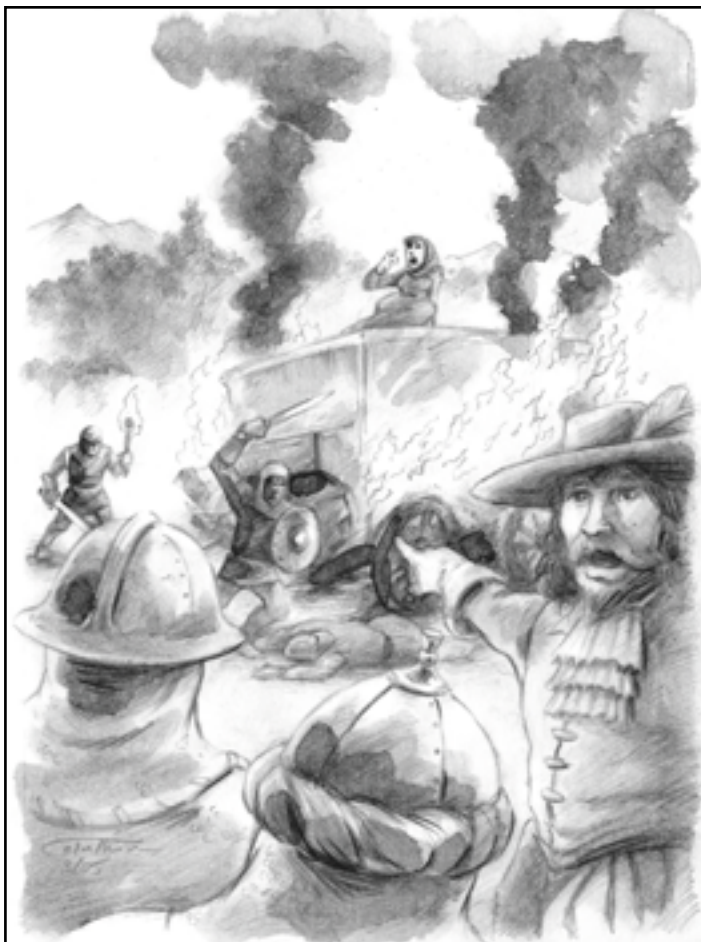
After the day has gone on long enough, tell the players that evening has arrived and it is time they should really be looking for a place to camp for the night. Haruk should be particularly useful here – his skill at hunting and tracking could not only find them a good spot but also some game for dinner perhaps. Additionally, Geralt and Stefan might want to scout the area to ensure that no bandits or wild animals are nearby. If he's in character, Rinaldo will probably just relax and leave all the work to the others; play this up if it happens, it'll make for great conflict. Rolf and Pieter (if they are with the companions) will try to avoid doing any work without being obvious about it, but will assist in whatever they are directly asked to help with. During the night, try to make the characters as paranoid as possible, but don't spring anything on them – yet...

Stage Three: A Chance Encounter?

Day two dawns. Having hopefully generated a little tension between the characters yesterday, today will give them a chance to bond together as they are forced to face a common foe, but by the end of the day the tensions will probably have returned and be even stronger than before. Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Day two dawns as calm and still as the previous day, it's cloudless and looks like it will shape up to be a fine one again. After a quick breakfast of cold meat and bread from the night before, you climb back onto your spots on the wagon to continue your trip...

Let the adventure carry on for a little while (perhaps introducing some of the ideas listed in stage two, above) and then read or paraphrase the following to the players:



Suddenly, Haruk spots smoke coming from ahead. The caravan spurs into action and heads towards the source of the fire. As you get closer, you can hear screaming, and the unmistakable sounds of steel clashing on steel!

Coming over the crest of a hill, you see a caravan currently under attack by a small group of bandits. A terrified young woman is trapped on the roof of the wagon, which is on fire and she is in imminent danger of burning alive! A number of bodies lie around the caravan - the bulk of her personal guard perhaps, and you can see that only two men remain, trying to protect her from five armed bandits!

See what the characters/players want to do. Emphasize that the woman is going to die if nobody helps her. As the characters rush forward

to help, the two defenders fall and the bandits rush to attack. If the characters don't look like they're going to assist the woman, have her defenders die anyway, and one of the bandits notices the characters and they run to attack. The caravan is too slow to outrun the bandits so the characters have to fight. If Rolf and Pieter are with the companions, they will give every appearance of preparing to assist, and then will turn on the characters at the last moment.

Statistics for the bandits are at the end of this adventure on p. 130-134. If the characters are on the ball (and Haruk isn't terribly unlucky), they should be able to bring down at least one of the bandits with bowfire before they can get into melee range. After this, it'll be a series of one-on-one combats, and these bandits are intentionally a little weak so that the characters should win easily. As the fight progresses, keep describing the screams of the trapped woman and the fire that is getting closer and closer to her so that the characters have to fight with some urgency to try to save her (which of course you should let them do just in the nick of time). The woman will be quite overcome by the flames and smoke and the characters will have no choice but to take her with them or stay with her at least for the rest of the day while she recovers (Geralt or Stefan might be able to help here with his first aid skill).

That evening, the woman will have finally recovered enough to talk to the characters, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

By evening, the woman has recovered sufficiently from the smoke and her injuries to finally talk to you. "I'm Syralise", she says, thanking you all for saving her life. "I'm supposed to be traveling to Harborside, my father is ill and I was taking him some supplies. I guess he won't have them now, but at least he can still have me, if I can get there somehow."

Syralise will try to get into the caravan because she knows what the characters are carrying (assuming this fits into your campaign, of course, see the wrap-up ideas at the end of the adventure). She tries as hard as she can to convince the characters to take her with them (this shouldn't be too hard), and she will feign weakness from her injuries and use that as an excuse to travel inside the caravan during the day, if she can swing that. She will also try to sow discontent between the characters by flirting with Haruk during the day on the caravan and wandering off with Stefan and Rinaldo in the evenings to flirt with them (she will ignore Geralt and Francisco entirely). Try to play this up so that the characters are almost ready to boil over at each other – making sure that they are guided by their SA's of course. Ideally, they won't break out into actual battles at this point, but you want them all going to bed angry at and wary of each other.

Stage Four: Attack!

This day should start out much like the previous one, although most of the characters are likely to be wary of each other, and/or trying to get Syralise's attention (perhaps Geralt or Francisco most of all). Try to promote the tension with some of the ideas from day one and have Syralise them one against the other with her flirting and attentions.

Eventually, one of the characters is likely to snap and attack one of the other characters. It may be jealousy over Syralise, it may be that Geralt has finally worked out the truth about Stefan and his wife; it could be religion based, etc. Let the conflict rage for no more than a round or two, before reading or paraphrasing the following text. If the characters don't start fighting amongst themselves, have them be ambushed anyway; it's just more satisfying if the attack breaks up an already existing fight!



All of a sudden, you are startled by battle cries, and an arrow thuds into the side of the caravan. Five enraged bandits leap out of the nearby bushes swinging spears and polearms, and a sixth stands nearby with a bow drawn and an arrow nocked – it's an ambush!

Encourage the players to fight back with everything they have. By now, they should be keenly aware of their SA's and how they might help in the battle (you can help things along by having Syralise threatened and remind whichever player seems closest to her that it's possible to change SA's on the fly). Hopefully, the characters will put aside their differences and fight together to beat back the bandit invasion – they have plenty of SA's that are not geared against each other that can

help. You can find attributes and notes for the bandits on p. 135.

Once the characters have beaten the first wave of bandits down to 2 survivors, the second wave will attack – 8 more men. Assuming they survive this, a further 10 will finally attack. The idea is to kill off all of the characters, but to do it slowly, giving them plenty of chance to fight the battle as intelligently as possible, to use terrain, height and whatever other advantages they can come up with, and to go down in a blaze of action and glory. Assuming they don't punch you in the face or throw M&M's at you (which happened at one convention, well, the M&M thing anyway), you'll leave your players breathless, keen to know "what happened next" and, yep, pissed off. And that's the perfect moment to spring a campaign on them...



Stage Five: The Saga Continues?

Assuming you want to continue the caravan adventure into a campaign, the best time to design characters is to do it at the end of the caravan session, when everything is fresh in the players' heads and they're still high on adrenaline and action.

Ideally, there will be many unanswered questions in the players' heads – what was really in the caravan? Who was Syralise? Why did the bandits attack them? Were they really bandits, given how prepared and well armed they were? Encourage the players to create new characters who are in some way related to the now deceased characters from the session. They don't have to each be related to their own characters of course, as long as all of the new characters have some reason to want to know what happened to the lost caravan and its five guards and drivers. This will give the new characters a reason to get together for the next campaign and give them something to investigate together (as they search for their missing loved ones, children, or maybe even people who owe them money). By the time they have done this, they should be well enmeshed together and ready to start the actual campaign.

So, what *was* really going on?

Assuming you're not planning to carry this adventure into a longer-term campaign (or if you just don't have any ideas yet), here are some possibilities to get you thinking about what may have been going on behind the scenes:

* The easiest explanation is that the cargo is some form of weaponry for use in the war. Either it's a shipment to aid the Xanarian troops (and in this case, perhaps Syralise is a Geluroise spy who is trying to find out what weapons the Xanarians have and maybe even steal them) or perhaps house Delmaine is aiding the Geluroise and

Unexpected Twists

Sometimes, even the most carefully planned adventures can surprise you. One time we ran this adventure, the player running the character of Stefan (who was not only new to *The Riddle of Steel*, but who was in fact totally new to roleplaying) just suddenly “clicked” on the whole concept of Spiritual Attributes and their place in the game. He fundamentally “got it” and from that moment on, he was a powerhouse. He played his SA's to the full, inking every possible advantage out of them. He faced down Geralt, and fuelled both his Oath (to protect the trade caravan) and his passion for Anna, selling them down to improve himself on the fly and increasing them again. Later, he fell in love with Syralise and he used the rules for rewriting SA's (see p. 52) to buy a Passion for her, which he used along with his Oath to protect the caravan to fight like a demon, selling them down to improve his attributes and proficiencies and earning them back up again through his actions and fighting. Against all the odds and against all of my plans for his horrible death, he survived the ambush on the caravan (although admittedly he did lose an arm and an eye in the process). The player decided to keep the character, and so fled in the face of a 4th wave of bandits I decided to introduce. Hiding in a nearby forest he met with a “Robin and his merry band”-style group of outlaws and he rallied them to go and save the caravan. The other players all designed characters who were members of the band of men and they, along with Stefan, returned and counter-attacked the bandits, saving the caravan (and, incidentally, Syralise, who the Bandits had not yet killed). The campaign then carried on from that point with Stefan the focal point. It's amazing how things like that can come out of left field and surprise you, and in the end it turned out to be one of the best campaigns I have ever run using the Caravan scenario as a genesis.



the shipment is really intended for them (Syralise may in that case be working for the Xanarian emperor and trying to find who is smuggling weapons to the enemy). Perhaps the Delmaine house is actually arming both sides of the war and sitting in the middle, growing fat on the profits...

- * Maybe the shipment is something mystical. If you're intending on introducing magic into your campaign, this could be a great way to foreshadow it. Maybe the hair stands up on the characters' arms when they get too close to the crates or it hums at night then they're trying to sleep and every morning they find dead rats, mice and rabbits in a perimeter around the wagons. Syralise could be a sorcerer trying to get

her hands on the goods, or she could even be a member of the inquisition, sniffing out supernatural items for disposal and heretics for burning.

- * The shipment might be some new form of grain, especially developed to grow quickly and give a larger-than-usual yield. Syralise might be a farmer's wife from a neighboring town who want to steal the special grain and get a head start on the competition. On the other hand, perhaps she wants to poison it...
- * Maybe it really is just a shipment of trade goods and maybe Syralise really is just a poor girl trying to visit her dear sick father in Harborside. Hey, you never know...

More unexpected twists

In one of our playtest sessions, Francisco managed to survive the scenario completely intact. How did he do that? He used his hatred of his brother and house Delmaine (i.e. his SA's) to fuel an attempt to convince the bandits to let him join them, and when they agreed, he turned on the other four characters and helped the bandits kill them. We think this was a brilliant development and one to be applauded – the player was playing his character as true as he could, and in a long-term campaign leading from the adventure there was now a nifty evil NPC bandit (who would have quickly become the leader, of course) who had reason to hate house Delmaine and anyone who happened to come by searching for evidence of the mysterious lost caravan and its occupants. On the other hand, some of the other players may have grumbled a little that one of the pre-generated characters had so much reason to turn against them and make it even harder for them to survive, so be alert that this is a possibility when playing the caravan scenario and keep it in the back of your mind.

Rogues Gallery

On the following pages you will find character sheets for each of the five caravan adventurers, following which is a series of statistics for the various bandits (and Syralise) who the players will encounter during the adventure. You should photocopy these character sheets and distribute them to the players at the start of the adventure.

Note – the caravan adventurers are more experienced than regular starting characters would be in TROS. This is to give new players a few more dice to play with to get a real feel for TROS combat and die pool management.



Stefan

Statistics:

ST	4	WP	5	Ref	5
AG	5	Wit	5	Aim	4
TO	4	MA	3	KD	4
EN	6	Soc	4	KO	6
HT	4	Per	4	Move	7/5

Combat Proficiencies:

9 (Sword & Shield), CP 14 (13 in full armor)

8 (Longsword), CP13 (12 in full armor)

Skills: (Soldier/Courtier)

Leadership 8

Intimidate 7

Riding 8

Heraldry 9

Strategy 8

Tactics 9

Battle 7

First Aid 6

Etiquette (court) 7

Persuasion 9

Ridicule 9

Games 8

Dancing 9

Diplomacy 9

Read & Write 7

Intrigue 8

Law 9

Sincerity 8

Appraisal 9

Forgery 9

Search 9

Spiritual Attributes:

Faith: The Three Gods become One (1)

Drive: To wine, to dine and to love (2)

Passion: Friendship Geralt (2)

Oath: Protect the caravan (see p. 49) (3)

Passion: Love for Anna (Geralt's wife) (2)

Stefan is tall and dark haired, with gray eyes. He has an intense smile that women are attracted to, and a friendly and easy-going manner.

Born the son of an impoverished farmer, Stefan was never satisfied with his lot in life and always wanted more. As a young man, he was popular with the other village children, and got along well with most of his peers and elders. He enlisted with the army because food was scarce and it was an opportunity to get regular food and some martial training, plus it would provide ample opportunity to meet many interesting women (and sleep with them). Stefan is a fairly simple fellow who sees most things in black-and-white. He's not unintelligent, but tends towards naivety at times.

Stefan wears a long-sleeved chain hauberk, a pot helm and chain leggings (-1 CP, -2 Move). He fights with a small banded wooden shield and a long sword, and greatly favors shield maneuvers during combat - especially Bind and Strike, Bind open and Strike, and Shield Bash (see p. 65).

Stefan and Geralt have been companions in arms for many years; they served together in the Xanarian Army, and were the sole survivors of a massacre that left their entire company slain. Since that time they have been close friends and companions, and have shared each others joys and woes. Recently however, Stefan has become enamored with Geralt's wife Anna (and she with him). He has been trying to keep this a secret from Geralt, but perhaps the time has finally come to have it out with him. Stefan is sure that Geralt will most likely roar and bluster for a time, but eventually, Geralt will forgive him – after all, they're friends, right?



Geralt

Statistics:

ST	7	WP	5	Ref	4
AG	4	Wit	4	Aim	4
TO	5	MA	3	KD	5
EN	7	Soc	3	KO	7
HT	5	Per	4	Move	9

Combat Proficiencies:

11 (Pugilism/Brawling), CP 15

10 (Wrestling), CP14

7 (Doppelhander), CP11

Skills: (Soldier/Laborer)

Leadership 6

Intimidate 6

Riding 6

Heraldry 8

Strategy 6

Tactics 7

Battle 5

First Aid 5

Teamster 7

Streetwise 6

Intimidate 5

Gambling 5

Craft: Smith: 5

Spiritual Attributes:

Faith: The Three Gods become One (3)

Oath: Protect the caravan (see p. 49) (2)

Conscience (1)

Passion: Love for Anna (his Wife) (1)

Drive: To avenge any stain upon his honor (3)

Geralt is a tall, hulking man with bitch black hair and eyes. He is muscular and well built, slow to anger but frightening when aroused.

Born the son of the village smith, Geralt was always destined to follow in his fathers footsteps, and spent much of his younger years training for that vocation. After the death of his family and the destruction of his village in a raid, he lost everything, and turned to the army partly hoping to have his revenge on the raiders, and partly because he had no other options left to him. During his time in the Army, he met Stefan, and the two became close friends after they both survived a massacre while they were battling bandits in the south. Recently, Geralt has become aware that Stefan has become interested in his wife Anna. So far, he has chosen to ignore the possibility, assuming that it could not possibly be true. But if Stefan should let slip any hint that it might be the truth, the friendship would very much be over and Stefan would need to watch his back.

Geralt wears leather armor – a leather Jack and Leggings, coif, boots and even gloves (with knuckledusters), and for extra protection he dons a Cuir Bouilli cuirass. He carries a great Doppelhander strapped to his back, but mostly favors closing the distance in combat and wrestling or grappling his opponent into submission.

Geralt is in no way unintelligent, but he does tend to see things in a simple light. Men are good or they are bad, people can be trusted or they cannot. Anyone who earns Geralt's trust will have it in spades for as long as they deserve it, but those who double-cross or backstab him will find to their cost that he does not take well to being betrayed.



Haruk

Statistics:

ST	5	WP	4	Ref	5
AG	5	Wit	6	Aim	5
TO	4	MA	4	KD	5
EN	3	Soc	5	KO	6
HT	5	Per	5	Move	6

Combat Proficiencies:

5 (Saber), CP 10

9 (Longbow), MP 14

Skills: (Entertainer/Woodsman)

Ridicule 5

Dancing 4

Intrigue 6

Orate 5

Musical Instrument (Lute) 5

Juggling 5

Games 4

Acrobatics 6

Acting 7

Disguise 6

Singing 5

Hunting 6

Tracking 5

Survival 6

Scrounging 7

Animal Guise 6

Herbalist 8

Orienteering 7

Sneak 8

Camouflage 7

Climbing 6

Swimming 5

Weather Sense 7

Spiritual Attributes:

Faith: The Seven Vows of the Prophet (4)

Passion: Hatred of Decadent nobility (2)

Destiny: To see the fall of the Three-Gods-Become-One (1)

Oath: Protect the caravan (see p. 49) (2)

Drive: To teach the heathens the one true faith (1)

Haruk is short and swarthy, a foreigner from the eastern lands. He does not suffer fools gladly and is hard to “crack” but once his friendship is earned, it is honest and lasting.

Haruk is a worshiper of the Seven Vows of the Prophet, an unusual person to find in the devout seat of the Xanarian Empire. A fugitive from the holy wars that shattered his homeland, Haruk fled to the West hoping to get away from strife, but has become increasingly frustrated with the lack of moral fiber and devoutness exhibited by the soft western worships of the three gods. Haruk is an expert archer and is well known for his ability to loose shafts very rapidly and his renowned skills as a point man and ranger.

Haruk wears a Leather long-sleeved Jack and pot helm, with leather leggings. He is proficient with a one-handed Dao Saber (TFOB, p. 149) that he always carries with him, but prefers to fight from the top of the caravan using his longbow and bodkin arrows (TFOB, p. 131). Standing on the top of the caravan does tend to make him a target for enemy archers, however, so he will not hesitate to jump down if he is being shot at too much.

Haruk is not shy about telling others (alright, preaching at them) about the Seven Vows of the Prophet, and is somewhat blind to the tension this can cause among the devout of other faiths. He strongly feels that the “decadent soft westerners” could benefit strongly by adopting worship of the Seven Vows of the Prophet and he dislikes those who grow rich or fat on the backs of others.



Rinaldo

Statistics:

ST	4	WP	3	Ref	6
AG	7	Wit	5	Aim	4
TO	4	MA	6	KD	5
EN	5	Soc	7	KO	5
HT	3	Per	4	Move	8

Combat Proficiencies:

8 (Case of Rapiers), CP 14

7 (Cut & Thrust), CP 13

Skills: (Academic/Courtier)

Ancient Languages 5

Read and Write 4

Orate 4

Research 6

Lore: History 5

Lore: Folklore: 6

Language: Xanarian 5

Language: Farrenshire: 5

Search 7

Etiquette (court) 4

Persuasion 6

Ridicule 5

Games 4

Dancing 4

Diplomacy 5

Intrigue 6

Law 7

Sincerity 5

Appraisal 6

Forgery 7

Spiritual Attributes:

Conscience (1)

Passion: Love for Francisco (4)

Oath: Protect the caravan (see p. 49) (3)

Faith: The Three Gods Become One (1)

Drive: To spend life in peaceful comfort while others do all the work (1)

Rinaldo is a slim and effete man, with smooth skin (he has never worked a hard day in his life) and long flowing hair. He is, quite simply, a fop. Life has been extremely good to Rinaldo – his family is wealthy and generous; no manner of pleasure or enjoyment has ever been denied him, and his over-indulgences with wine, women and drugs are the stuff of legend. Rinaldo likes nothing better than sitting back and allowing others to do the work for him (after all, it's their lot in life) although he has obtained some useful skill as a negotiator and barterer on the long caravan treks.

Recently, Rinaldo came into contact with his long-lost brother, Francisco, who he promptly hired onto the caravan so as to be able to keep him near.

Rinaldo wears little armor – a leather Jack and a pot helm are all he favors, as he likes to stay light and nimble. In combat, Rinaldo fights with two rapiers and is a dab hand with them. Fighting with such light weapons can occasionally cause issues when facing opponents with large and heavy weapons, but this is not something that he has ever encountered much, as most of his fighting experience comes from “civilized” dueling and prize-playing exhibitions. As a dandy, Rinaldo will treat the other members of the caravan as if they were his personal servants (with the exception of Francisco, who he truly loves) but he is intelligent to see the signs that this may be annoying others and will tone it down if they are starting to get annoyed (although it won't be long before he forgets and starts again, it doesn't take much to divert his attention away from such things).



Francisco

Statistics:

ST	5	WP	8	Ref	5
AG	5	Wit	5	Aim	5
TO	4	MA	4	KD	5
EN	4	Soc	2	KO	8
HT	4	Per	5	Move	7

Combat Proficiencies:

12 (Dagger), CP 17 (16 in armor)
8 (Throw Knife), MP 13 (12 in armor)
5 (Cut & Thrust), CP 10 (9 in armor)

Skills (Thief/Highwayman):

Panhandling 5
Traps 6
Streetwise 5
Scrounging 6
Sneak 6
Pick Pocket 7
Lock Picking 7
Climbing 6
Gambling 7
Breaking and Entering 5
Appraisal 6
Search 6
Orate 7
Teamster 9
Riding 7
Survival 7
Tracking 9
Body Language 9
Seduction 7
Persuasion 7
Sincerity 6

Spiritual Attributes:

Passion: Hatred of Rinaldo (2)
Drive: To befriend and then betray his brother, Rinaldo (3)
Oath: Protect the caravan (see p. 49) (2)
Destiny: To bring down the Delmaine trading house (2)
Oath: To the Xanarian thieves guild (1)

Francisco looks a little like his brother Rinaldo, but has lined and worn skin, and short unkempt hair (in contrast to Rinaldo's carefully cultured and pampered physique). He was abandoned at birth by his family, as he was born out of wedlock which is a very not-done thing in the upper aristocracy of Xanarian nobility. Growing up on the streets, he picked up all of the usual skills one finds there, including uncanny proficiency with a dagger and the ability to slip into and out of places with ease. Recently, Francisco was "discovered" by his younger (and born in-wedlock) brother Rinaldo, who quickly took him under his wing and got him a job with the caravan. Little does Rinaldo know, Francisco hates his family for abandoning him, and would like nothing more than to get revenge, first on his brother and later on the rest of the decadent family.

Francisco wears a Cuir Bouilli Jack (with flexible sleeves), leather leggings and plate tassets, along with light plate vambraces and mail gloves (-1 CP). He never goes anywhere without his Pugio Broad Dagger (TFOB, p. 136) and several knives, and he is astonishingly good with them. He especially favors whipping his throwing knives out of his belt and tossing them with his off-hand during combat (see the Strategy article on p. 62 for ideas on how to handle this during melee combat). Francisco is cunning and wily and will not reveal his true feelings for his brother until the optimal moment – he doesn't just want to kill Rinaldo (he could have done that any night while Rinaldo slept), instead he wants to destroy his brothers life and have Rinaldo know that he has been ruined and betrayed by his illegitimate older brother.



NPC Attributes and Notes

Bandits

(from day two, and from the first wave of the final fight)

Statistics:

ST	4	WP	3	Ref	4
AG	4	Wit	4	Aim	4
TO	4	MA	4	KD	4
EN	5	Soc	4	KO	6
HT	4	Per	4	Move	6

CP: 7-9 (polearms or spears, a few with longswords)

MP: 8 (one with a bow)

Armor: Leather Jack, Leather leggings, pot helm (no CP penalty)

Bandits

(second wave)

Statistics:

ST	5-6	WP	4	Ref	5-6
AG	5-6	Wit	6	Aim	5-6
TO	5	MA	4	KD	5
EN	5	Soc	4	KO	7
HT	5	Per	6	Move	6-8

CP: 11-14 (Longswords, Mass Weapons)

MP: 12 (at least 2 with bows or crossbows)

Armor: Leather Jack, Leather leggings, pot helm (no CP penalty)

Bandits

(third wave)

Statistics:

ST	5-6	WP	4	Ref	6-7
AG	6-7	Wit	6-7	Aim	6
TO	6	MA	4	KD	5
EN	5	Soc	4	KO	7
HT	5	Per	6	Move	6-8

CP: 12-15 (Longswords, Mass Weapons, Polearms)

MP: 12-14 (Several with loaded crossbows, 2-3 hanging back with longbows)

Armor: Chain short-sleeved Shirt, Leather leggings, pot helm (no CP penalty)

Syralise

Statistics:

ST	4	WP	4	Ref	4
AG	4	Wit	5	Aim	4
TO	4	MA	4	KD	4
EN	4	Soc	5	KO	6
HT	5	Per	5	Move	6

CP: 8-10 (depending on what the Seneschal wants to do with her and what her role in the adventure will be)

Steradian Delmaine

Statistics:

ST	3	WP	5	Ref	6
AG	4	Wit	8	Aim	3
TO	3	MA	6	KD	3
EN	4	Soc	6	KO	5
HT	4	Per	3	Move	5

CP: 8-10 (Rapier, although Steradian is an old man now and his fighting days are realistically over). If threatened, he can call for 6 house guards (use 2nd wave Bandit statistics) who can run in within 2 rounds to assist him



Afterword

I'm extremely happy and proud to be able to say that this is book four for Driftwood Publishing, and we're going even stronger than ever. The company is expanding, we're getting more books out into the hands of our fans, and the names Driftwood and The Riddle of Steel have become really well known in the RPG industry.

We had planned that the next book we released after *The Flower of Battle* (i.e. this one) was going to be *Sorcery and the Fey* – that's why there's a *Sorcery and the Fey* ad in the back of our last book.

You see, when we were developing *Sorcery and the Fey*, we had a collective epiphany among the Driftwood staff – TROS needed an update. It's been several years since we published the first book, and we've grown up a lot in that time. Some of the basic elements of the game (such as Skills and Character Creation) needed a little bit of a polish, and some other areas (most notably Spiritual Attributes) had evolved far beyond what even we thought they were when we published the original rules. While we were developing *Sorcery*, we found ourselves having to redefine some basic game elements to fit the way we – and our fans – like to play TROS, and we were spending far too much time redefining things to be talking about, well, *Sorcery and the Fey*.

So, that's where the idea for this book came from. The TROS Companion was designed to present updates to (and new options for) many of the original rules (particularly Skills, Character Creation and Encumbrance/Fatigue), along with a major re-clarification of Spiritual Attributes, and a few elements that folk have been requesting for years (such as a guide on good strategy in the melee system, and our first published adventure!). To round off the goodness, we've elicited submissions from some of our loyal fans and staff, so that we could

present some other nifty rules to you – *Prophetic Visions* by our own Jake Norwood, *Norse Trolls and the nifty Damage Variant* by George Thompson, *Fine Weapons* by our medieval arms expert Jean Hendri Chandler, *World Building* by Seth Pease, *Followers and Animal Companions* and by Shawn Michael Kelly. Much of this book is designed to be integrated into the original rules and whatever you may be using from our previous supplements, but we've tried to cut down on the book swapping too much by squeezing as much of the Gifts/Flaws and Character Creation information into this book as we could so you won't have to refer back-and-forth too much while you're playing.

Driftwood is certainly growing up. We've sped-up our release schedule greatly from the one-a-year we used to manage (although we're not the size of Hasbro yet, so don't expect miracles) and we have an exciting year ahead – *Sorcery and the Fey* will be released in the next few months, a *Gelure* supplement shortly after that, and then we have a couple of as-yet-secret projects that we really can't wait to publish. It's going to be an exciting time!

As always, this stuff is yours now, so use it as-and-how you like. We wouldn't be anything without our loyal fans, and we love hearing about how TROS is working for you, what you're doing with it, and what you're planning for it in the future. We encourage everyone to check out the forums at <http://www.trosforums.com>, where you can chat to other fans (and the Driftwood staff), keep us entertained with tales of your adventures and campaigns, and share any nifty rules variations or additions you may have come up with. Who knows – you might end up helping us write the next supplement!

Until next time...

Brian Leybourne
brian@theriddleofsteel.net





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ARMOR			
Armor	AV	CP Pen	Zones

POOLS

WOUNDS
BL <input type="checkbox"/>
Fatigue <input type="checkbox"/>
Pain <input type="checkbox"/>

PROFICIENCIES	
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

OFFENSIVE MANEUVERS	
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
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ADDITIONAL NOTES

WOUNDS

MISSILE WEAPONS				
Weapon	Prep Time	ATN	Range	Damage

DEFENSIVE MANEUVERS	
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

MELEE WEAPONS							
Weapon	Length	DTN	Cut ATN	Cut Damage	Thrust ATN	Thrust Damage	

THE RIDDLE OF STEEL



A Wealth of New Material for the Critically Acclaimed and Best Selling Riddle of Steel Roleplaying Game.

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