

PAUL "WIGGY" WADE-WILLIAMS

HELLFROST

• SUPPLEMENT •

HEROES & VILLAINS

● INTRODUCTION ●

The population of the winter-wracked northern lands is not particularly high, but it is varied. Commoners and nobles, mages and clerics, healers and warriors, merchants and thieves, wise men and fools, heroes and cowards, all walk the frozen realm.

Most have mundane dreams. They want to feed their families, earn enough money to pay their taxes, avoid being killed by some horrible beast, serve their lord loyally, survive another winter, and, when their time comes, die a peaceful and painless death.

But those the Norns have touched have greater goals, often affecting many lives. Some crave base things such as wealth and power, others desire revenge for actual or perceived wrongs, seek to unlock the mysteries of the world, complete a grand quest, slay monstrous beasts, defeat fell cults, be praised and renowned for their glorious actions, or simply make the world a better place. These are the men and women who, while they may not be the subject of skalds' tales, will feature in them, for their destinies are intertwined with those the Norns have fated to be true heroes.

This supplement contains over two dozen NPCs, both villainous and benevolent, ready to be dropped into any *Hellfrost* campaign or used as player characters.

STAT BLOCKS

Every NPC has an associated stat block. These have all been designed using the rules for creating Novice player characters with no advancements. These stat blocks, combined with the write ups, are intended to show players the wealth of possibilities that *Hellfrost* presents. As fully-fledged characters complete with stats and background, they can also be used in convention games you might be running.

For GMs intending to use the characters as NPCs, we strongly suggest the stat blocks be modified as desired to suit the Rank, playing style, and strengths and weaknesses of the party they will interact with, as well as the individual GM's campaign.

For those of you who have never created an NPC in *Savage Worlds*, the best advice we can offer is, Don't panic! Unlike many other systems, where NPCs must be created using the same rules and restrictions as player characters, *Savage Worlds* has a much simpler approach—just give them the abilities they need to fulfill their role and you're done! That's right, you just pick the Traits, Hindrances, Edges, spells, and gear you want them to have. You don't have to count advances, balance them against the heroes, or meet Edge requirements (although some rationale as to how a character with Agility d4 learned Acrobat and Improved Frenzy should be kept in mind).

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GREYSER DOOMWALKER

Race: Saxa; **Hometown:** Crystalflow Confederacy; **Occupation:** Song mage; **Patron Deity:** None (though he makes sacrifices to both Nauthiz and the Norns).

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Knowledge (Area: Helgioland) d4, Knowledge (Area: Nordmark) d4, Knowledge (Area: Seithrby) d4, Knowledge (Area: Sutmark) d4, Knowledge (Area: Vestmark) d4, Knowledge (Folklore) d8+1, Knowledge (History) d6+1, Notice d6, Song Magic d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d6

Charisma: +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Apprentice (Minor), Bad Luck, Vow (Minor: recover idol)

Edges: Arcane Background (Song Magic), World-Wise

Languages: Anari, Auld Saxa, Saxa, Trader

Powers: *Boost/lower trait, stun, warrior's gift*

BACKGROUND

Greyser was born in Scathmoor, where he attended the Three-Notes Academy, learning the art of song magic. Raised on tales of great heroes, he was struck by the desire to adventure, to see the world, and to leave his mark in legends. He joined up with a small band of adventurers seeking glory in the foothills of the Sigil Peaks, where an old temple had been discovered by silver miners.

After driving out the small tribe of orcs who had taken up residence, the adventurers began to explore the ruined structure in earnest. The hand of fate guided them to a hidden chamber deep beneath the crumbling structure, wherein lay a small golden idol in the shape of a coiled sun dragon.

That night, while his comrades sat around the campfire discussing the value of the idol they had taken from

the crypt, Greyser slept a troubled sleep. Nightmares plagued him until dawn, filling his mind with images of clashing armies, terrible monsters ravaging towns, and citizens suffering from famine and pestilence.

As the sun rose, he pleaded with his companions to return the idol to its resting place, lest doom befall them all. They met his pleas with mockery and laughter, dismissing his cries as the ravings of an old woman. Greyser hastily collected his belongings, bade his friends farewell, and departed for Chalcis. Three days after he crossed the border, Silverdale was swallowed by mist.

A decade later he found himself in Vestmark when the orcs began their conquest of the southern lands. He was visiting Seithrby when Aethling Cuthwulf and his warlike kin invaded. He departed Ostvik shortly before the lizardmen's vast armies lumbered out of the Great Swamp and began their siege. He was exploring Nordmark when the king's return sparked a bloody civil war. He had passed through Watchgap Fort just days before a goblin army attacked. He vacated the Freelands' settlement of Dunross just a day before it was overrun by an army of rats. Wherever Greyser has walked since helping steal the idol, death and misery have followed in his wake, though not always to such notable and catastrophic degrees.

Greyser fervently believes he is cursed for his part in removing the idol, a curse that can only be lifted by finding the golden dragon idol and placing back on its plinth. Unfortunately, he has no idea if his former companions managed to flee Silverdale before the mists blanketed the land. That his presence in areas that subsequently suffer some disaster could be nothing more than coincidence has never crossed his mind.

DESCRIPTION

Weather-beaten by a life on the road and on the run from his fate, Greyser looks (and feels) a decade and more older than his 47 years. His long hair is gray and bedraggled, his skin sallow, and his sunken, pale green eyes have a haunted look. A worried look mars his features, creasing his brow into deep furrows. His shoulders are permanently slumped, as if he carries on them the weight of the world. Greyser's heavily-patched and frayed clothes are the rugged garb common to adventurers. Around his neck he wears holy symbols of Nauthiz and the Norns. Across his back is strapped a battered lute, while dangling from his belt is a short sword.

MANNERISMS

Greyser is of an extremely nervous disposition. He constantly fiddles with his holy symbols and rubs his lips with his long, bony fingers.

Whenever he encounters strangers he asks of news from lands he has just departed, always asking if there have been any wars, plagues, or other disasters. Should he hear bad news, he mutters over and over that it was his fault, rebuking himself for going there and bringing catastrophe on the citizens.



MAGE-BARON DEVAN VEIGHT

Race: Frostborn; **Hometown:** The Magocracy; **Occupation:** Heahwisard; **Patron Deity:** Maera.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Heahwisardry d10, Hrimwisardry d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Notice d4, Persuasion d10

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Arrogant, Elderly, Heat Lethargy, Outsider, Stubborn

Edges: Arcane Background (Heahwisardry), Frigid Form, Noble, Winter Soul

Languages: Anari, Classical Anari, Saxa, Trader

Powers: *Arcane, bolt, fear*

BACKGROUND

Born the third child of a minor Magocratic family beholden to House Haldir, Devan is a frostborn. His father is said to have gazed upon his newborn son, a creature of his blood but not his race, for long minutes before proudly proclaiming him a true scion of House Veight.

Bullied by his peers for his frostborn heritage, Devan, who was never physically strong, quickly learned to manipulate others into fighting his battles.

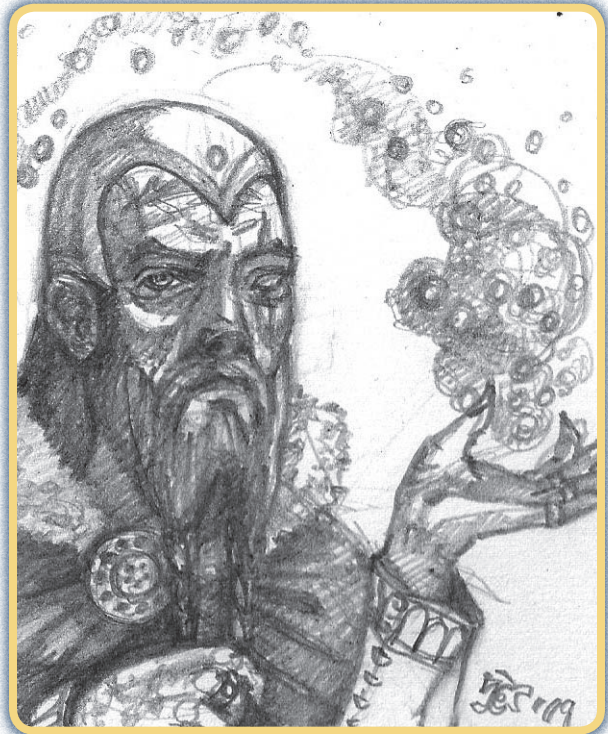
The nobleman has made it his life's goal to locate one of the missing staffs of the mage-princes. In the innocent days of his youth he traded thoughts of his tormentors for dreams of gifting the staff to the ruler of Haldir, whose family had fallen from power centuries ago. Such an act would earn him widespread recognition, noble titles, wealth beyond imagination, and perhaps even marriage into the ducal line.

As he grew to maturity and fully grasped what the staffs represented, his aims changed. Yes, he would still locate one of the missing staffs, but now he would present himself as its rightful owner, claiming the title of Mage-Prince and becoming founder of a new principality. His name would live on forever through his descendants, the future Mage-Princes of House Veight.

After completing his Staff Day rite, Devan was awarded the title Mage-Knight and given lordship over a small agricultural village. Never one for the endless politicking of court and caring little for the workload involved in running a village, he placed a steward in charge of his holdings and set out into the world to begin his quest.

For nigh on 40 years he has wandered the length and breadth of the continent, following up every rumor that might lead to the discovery of one of the precious staffs. So far he has had little success, though he has grown wealthy from plundering ruins, and gained much arcane knowledge and power. But not even the gods can halt the tide of time.

Now an old man, Devan has but few remaining years to complete his lofty goal. Each day of failure wearies his soul further, and what began as a noble quest has become an all-consuming ambition.



DESCRIPTION

A frostborn in his 60s, Devan's skin is wrinkled and weather-worn, more gray than blue-white, and his hair is turning dark. Only his eyes, piercing blue, show any signs of youth.

As a member of the nobility, Devan likes to dress the part. His shirt is made from silk imported at great expense from the Jade Empire, his ornately embroidered jacket is white leather, and his trousers are soft kidskin. Whatever the weather, he wears a sable cloak trimmed with ermine and mink. Devan also believes in publicly displaying his wealth, primarily to remind people they are dealing with a nobleman. His cloak clasp is a silver disc emblazoned with the holy symbol of Maera and studded with small moonstones. On his fingers he wears rings of gold and silver, many of which are alchemical devices. Atop his head is an iron skull cap covered in beaten gold and adorned with a single moonstone. Even his staff is conspicuous—a length of ash tipped with yet another moonstone, this one the size of a child's fist.

MANNERISMS

Devan is a typical member of his culture—arrogant, haughty, and self-obsessed. He rarely engages in conversation with those he considers his inferiors, though he regularly issues them orders. He expects these to be carried out without hesitation. When he feels an underling has spoken out of turn he looks down his nose at them, raising one eyebrow in questioning disdain. Having suffered persecution based on his race, he prefers to judge others by their actions, not their looks.



VIKY AP-BAVOR

Race: Anari; **Homeland:** Aspiria; **Occupation:** Lorekeeper; **Patron Deity:** Hoenir.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Investigation d8+2, Knowledge (Folklore) d8+2, Knowledge (History) d8+2, Notice d6, Streetwise d8+2

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: All Thumbs, Clumsy*, Loyal, Orders

Edges: Connections (Lorekeepers), Investigator, Lorekeeper, Scholar

Languages: Anari, Classical Anari, Selari, Trader

BACKGROUND

Viky was left on the step of the local temple to Eira as a young child. Her parents told her they were just going to the shops, but she hasn't seen them since. The clerics took the girl in, intending to train her in the ways of medicine. Alas, it quickly became clear that the girl was a walking disaster. Everything she touched seemed to break, she frequently spilled jars of herbs, dropped hot food on patients she was supposed to be feeding, and soaked bed-ridden patients she was meant to be sponging down. Things only got worse during puberty, for she grew into a lanky, flailing young woman. Although physically inept, Viky had an astute mind. She was always keen to learn, soaked up information like a sponge, and could recall facts as if she were reading a book.

Deciding she was more of a menace than a help in the hospital and dispensary, the clerics nurtured her intel-

ligence, finally suggesting she might find an apprenticeship with the Lorekeepers more to her liking.

As in the temple, her clumsiness quickly proved a major liability. Dozens of ink-soaked manuscripts, several injuries with a knife while sharpening quills, a collapsed stack holding fragile scrolls, and three major fires later, the Lorekeepers decided Viky should become a field agent tracking down forgotten lore rather than stay on as a copyist or librarian. Elated at the unexpected promotion, Viky packed her satchel and set out into the world.

She spends her time locating old ruins that might contain lost lore and convincing adventuring parties to let her join their ranks. She has little interest in gold and gems beyond what she needs to survive, and few adventurers place much value in musty tomes and crumbling scrolls written in archaic tongues.

DESCRIPTION

Viky is forever gasping, cringing, shrugging, and frowning, which is unfortunate, for her freckled face is attractive when she can keep it still. Her light brown hair is usually stained with ink or smeared with candle wax, as are her clothes. She prefers simple clothes of plain colors, as they are easier to clean and cheaper to replace. She wears a waterproof satchel containing her scrolls slung across her back. In her hand she clutches a staff, which serves as both a walking stick and a weapon (and sadly extends her reach for creating accidents).

MANNERISMS

Viky is an accident waiting to happen. Although intellectually focused, her arms seem to have a mind of their own, constantly swaying without any apparent conscious control and waving hither and yon as she emphasizes points of fact. Those who know her try never to leave anything breakable, spillable, or flammable within arms reach. Those who don't know her quickly learn.

After a life of being rebuked for knocking things over, dropping them, fetching the wrong item, or touching things she shouldn't, Viky has become meek and apologetic. On a bad day, every other word she utters is "Sorry." Her confidence grows only when discussing her specialties, but so does the animation of her limbs.

*NEW HINDRANCE

CLUMSY (MAJOR)

The character is a walking disaster. A natural roll of 1, or a modified roll of 1 or less, on an Agility or Agility-linked skill roll (regardless of Wild Die) is treated as a critical failure. If the Wild Die indicates a success, then any disaster occurs after the success has been handled. For instance, she may successfully strike a foe with her staff, only to then knock her opponent's lantern into a bed of dry straw, setting it alight.

CAPTAIN SABAT INUSUNU

Race: Saxa; **Hometown:** Midmark; **Occupation:** Sea captain; **Patron Deity:** Neorthe.

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

Skills: Boating d8, Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Knowledge (Area: The Seas) d6, Streetwise d6, Swimming d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: -1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Illiterate, Loyal, One Eye

Edges: Sea Legs*, Styrimathr

Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader

* See Region Guide #8

BACKGROUND

Sabat grew up on the coast of Midmark, the son of a humble fisherman. As a child he learned to gut fish and mend nets before taking his turn riding the perilous sea in search of its bounty. He had no need to learn his letters as a boy, and to this day has never bothered learning to read and write.

Although Midmark took no official action during the orc invasion of southern Vestmark, many captains saw the chance to make a profit ferrying weapons and warriors to the besieged city of Ostersund. Sabat enlisted as an oarsman on a snekke, not because he craved adventure, but because he felt it was his duty as a fellow Saxa.

For the best part of his late adolescence and early manhood, he sailed the treacherous Crystal Sound, battling orcs and sea monsters to keep the vital supply line open. Save for the loss of his right eye to an orc blade during a boarding action, he survived his tour unscathed.

Embittered by watching his comrades drown or be cut down by orc buccaneers, frustrated that while his comrades died the king of Vestmark did nothing to help liberate Ostersund, and seeing the financial rewards grow smaller and smaller each trip, Sabat resigned his post five years ago, having survived ten years on what had become known as the "Death Run."

Sabat's captain was hard but fair. Those who served him well were amply rewarded from the riches Vestmark offered the mercenaries, and the loss of his eye gained him a sizeable wergild payment taken from the orcs' plunder. A man of simple tastes and few needs, Sabat saved his wages while his shipmates squandered theirs on women and drink. When he left, he had wealth enough put away to buy his own knarr.

For several years Sabat and his crew operated as independent contractors, hauling cargo and passengers up and down the relatively safe waters of the Crystalflow. While he earned enough to keep his crew fed and his ship seaworthy, Sabat found life dull. Although loathe to admit it at first, the captain missed the fearful tension and constant threats that came with sailing the Death Run. Back then, he mused, he valued every minute of his life, for the shadow of death followed every ship that hoisted sail for Ostersund.



Sabat recently acquired an old map indicating the location of the fabled Isle of Maera. He plans an expedition to the island, but first he needs to earn enough money to buy a large ship and hire a stronger crew. To that end, he has begun engaging in smuggling, as well as ferrying passengers whose business they would rather keep quiet.

DESCRIPTION

Constant exposure to sun, wind, and salt spray has turned Sabat's skin the color and consistency of leather. The skin on his palms is rough and hard after a lifetime hauling ropes and pulling oars. His long hair and braided beard are sun bleached and wiry from salt spray. Sabat is missing his right eye. He is never seen without a pipe clenched between his teeth, though he rarely smokes.

His clothing is woven of heavy wool and treated with seal oil to waterproof it. During rough weather he dons a set of worn sealskin waterproofs. A dagger, encased in a sharkskin scabbard, hangs from his belt.

MANNERISMS

Life at sea is hard, and it leaves its mark on a man. Sabat always checks the palms of new crew and passengers, stroking the skin with his callused hands. Those whose skin displays trappings of hard work are met with a knowing nod, while those unaccustomed to physical labor are greeted with a disdainful look.

The veteran mariner is a man of few words, a trait he values in others. He judges those who wish to sail with him by their actions, not their boasts or flowery speech.

He is the master of his ship and dislikes others telling him his business. Those who disagree with him are casually told they have two choices—shut up or get off.

NICHOLAS AP-DANAIN

Race: Anari; **Homeland:** Heligioland; **Occupation:** Explorer, numismatist, and travel writer; **Patron Deity:** Hoenir.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Knowledge (Area: Freelands) d4, Knowledge (Area: Liche-Lands) d4, Knowledge (Area: The Magocracy) d4, Knowledge (Area: The Marklands) d6, Knowledge (Folklore) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d6, Streetwise d8, Survival d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Curious, Lame, Quirk (collects coins)

Edges: Connections (Cult of Hoenir), World-Wise

Languages: Anari, Heligi, Saxa, Trader

BACKGROUND

Born and raised in a popular Heligioland tavern, Nicholas suffered a childhood illness that left him crippled in one leg. Unable to play “huscarls and orcs” with the other village kids, he spent his days working for his parents, earning a few silvers cleaning travellers’ equipment and clothes. Believing he would never travel, he spent the evenings sitting among the tavern’s patrons, questioning them about their homeland and customs.

It was at this time he developed an interest in numismatics. Although the scield is the universal currency, each realm mints its own coins. Over the centuries since the scield was first adopted, each nation has minted many dozens of variations. While the other kids spent any coins they earned on sugary treats, Nicholas kept one of each, ordering them by realm and then by date. He developed something of a reputation in Heligioland, and adventurers would call on the tavern just to flick the youth an unusual coin to add his collection.



Shortly after his 14th birthday a cleric of Hoenir stayed at the tavern. He and Nicholas talked long into the night, the cleric filling his head with stories of lands the young man had never heard of. Knowing that no visitors from these distant lands would ever come to Heligioland, Nicholas decided he would go to them.

Despite his infirmity, Nicholas’ parents had never mollycoddled him or prevented him from doing what he wanted. Realizing that insisting he stay at the tavern would break his heart, they used what little money they had saved to buy their son a horse to help him on his travels. Although he regularly sends letters home, he has not returned to Heligioland in the better part of a decade.

After a brief foray into the Liche-Lands, about which he had heard much (and now never wishes to visit again), he headed south, passing beyond Hellfrost Keep into the warmer Hearthlands. Realizing he could never store all the knowledge he was learning in his head, he began recording his travels and findings. At first they were a travel journal, a shorthand list of what he had learned, but as time passed he began to write them up more formally, setting down the many customs and seemingly endless amounts of local folklore so that others might in turn learn from his experiences. Constantly in need of writing equipment and somewhere to store his journals, he quickly made many contacts among the cult of Hoenir.

Although currently still exploring the Hearthlands, Nicholas is keen to head further afield in the near future. While he is not suited to a life of active adventuring, his social skills, connections, and wide-ranging knowledge would make him a valuable asset to any travelers intent on exploring new lands.

DESCRIPTION

Despite spending his days travelling the wilds, Nicholas takes great pride in his personal appearance. His beard is well-trimmed, his hair always combed, and his clothes kept as clean as circumstances allow. He wears tough adventuring clothes—a thick woolen shirt, leather trousers, and knee-high boots. Over those he wears a reversible cloak; mud-brown on one side and gray-white on the other.

MANNERISMS

Nicholas suffers from curiosity, especially when it comes to local customs and coins. Although he has travelled extensively, he knows that while each realm has a unique identity so do the provinces and settlements that form them. He has little interest in wealth, though he always keeps an eye out for coins to add to his collection.

Years of dealing with strangers in the tavern prepared Nicholas for life in the wider world. He is a good judge of character, and adept at ingratiating himself with others. He is polite, an attentive listener, and knows just enough about the southern realms to put travellers at ease by speaking of their homeland in familiar terms.

STEFAN AP-PETO

Race: Anari; **Homeland:** Chalcis; **Occupation:** Paladin; **Patron Deity:** The Norns.

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

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d8, Gambling d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6

Charisma: -1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Curious, Habit (Minor: staring), Orders, Quirk (leaves thread on corpses)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Connections (Cult of the Norns)

Languages: Anari, Black Tongue, Trader

Powers: Boost/lower trait, *precognition*

Special: Due to his gift, once per session Stefan can elect to grant a +2 or -2 modifier to a single Trait roll made by a living creature within his line of sight. The modifier must be declared in advance of the roll.

BACKGROUND

A cleric of the Norns performing the Fate Day ritual is an omen. Stefan was attended by three clerics as he entered this world in utter silence. Each took the babe in their arms and whispered into his ear in turn.

Stefan was an odd child. He didn't talk until he was five years old, though it was apparent to all that he understood what others were saying to him. His first words were to his grandfather, a devout follower of Thunor—"The raven will knock thrice, and then you'll fly away with it." That night, a lone raven entered the house and tapped thrice on the old man's bed with its beak. He died shortly afterward of natural causes.

Throughout his youth he remained a quiet child, speaking only to reveal some cryptic glimmer of insight into the future. Perhaps not surprisingly, he had few friends. On his 10th birthday, a priestess of the Norns came to his parents' house and offered to train Stefan. His parents agreed without hesitation, for some of their neighbors were whispering the boy was mad, or worse, guided by an evil hand.

Stefan learned quickly, mastering the complex relation between free will and preordained destiny faster than his mentor believed possible. Throughout his training he remained largely silent, except when his mentor spoke of demons, golems, undead, and other creatures not bound to the Norns' loom. They presented Stefan with a conundrum he has yet to solve.

He understood that demons existed before Time, which began when the Norns first wove the threads of fate, and thus fell outside their jurisdiction. But it was the Norns who decreed that mages and necromancers would create soulless creatures, for without the threads being woven such acts could not have come to pass. After endless circular arguments he decided that whatever the truth, the abominations could not be allowed to continue their eternal existence. On his 13th birthday, Stefan took the holy vows of a paladin.



His relationship with his mentor ended a year later. One night, Stefan drew a single thread from his cloak and handed it to her. Grasping the meaning at once, his mentor thanked him, for he had given her a great gift—the time to make her final peace and prepare for her death. The following day, she was killed after being thrown from her horse. Since that day Stefan has wandered Rassilon, silently ending the existence of soulless creatures, and subtly guiding those with a great destiny toward their fate, for the will of the Norns cannot be ignored.

DESCRIPTION

Stefan prefers the full beard and long hair common to Saxa, rather than the neatly trimmed, clean-shaven look of the Anari. His chestnut brown mane clashes with his emerald green eyes. His eyes appear slightly dull and glazed, as if he is staring at some distant object. Otherwise well-kept, his cloak is heavily frayed, leaving the threads loose. The only ornamentation he wears is a leather bracer on his right arm embossed with a sandglass, and a silver brooch in the guise of a weaving loom.

MANNERISMS

Stefan has the unsettling habit of staring at people and smiling wryly, as if he knows something they do not. Combined with his taciturn nature, he comes across as slightly odd. When he does choose to speak, he is laconic, saying very little but imparting a lot of information. Unfortunately, he is prone to speaking cryptically, leaving others to discern the true meaning of his few words.

Each time he kills, he draws a single thread from the hem of his cloak and lays it on the corpse, a reminder that the Norns control a creature's destiny, and that all threads are cut at some point.



SKYLION

Race: Saxa; **Homeland:** Nordmark; **Occupation:** Huscarl; **Patron Deity:** Thunor.

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Riding d8, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Enemy (Minor: frost giant), Heroic, Loyal

Edges: Beast Master (Griffin)

Languages: Battletongue, Giant, Saxa

BACKGROUND

Named Torvald Cuthbertsunu at birth, the boy who would later become Skylion grew up playing with the scions of Nordmark's high nobility and royalty, including the current king. Torvald's father was a huscarl in the old king's household. A simple man of common stock, Cuthbert's service had nonetheless earned him the non-hereditary title of ridder.

Torvald killed his first man at 13. Following the king's untimely death, Cuthbert remained at his post, defending the royal place against rival claimants, and buying young Prince Geirmund time to flee to the west. His loyalty cost him his life. As the usurpers' armies battled for control of the capital, Cuthbert was felled by a sword. Without hesitation, Torvald, who was acting as a squire, snatched up his father's fallen spear and rammed it through the assassin's chest. Fleeing the rapidly unfolding civil war, Torvald found his way to the stead of Lendmann (now Jarl) Bard Styrsunu, an old friend of his father and a loyal

supporter of the rightful king. On hearing his tale, Bard ordered the lad be given martial training. Two years later, Torvald, having blossomed into manhood, took his place alongside the other huscarls beneath the fluttering banner of his old childhood friend, Prince Geirmund.

During the campaign, Torvald was part of a small band sent to hound elements of the usurpers' armies attempting to take refuge in the Thunor Range. Separated from his comrades in a blizzard, the young huscarl sought shelter in a cave. He quickly discovered it was a larder, wherein something monstrous kept griffin carcasses and a vast store of huge eggs (no doubt those of griffins, he surmised). Torvald's musings were cut short by a huge pair of hands—the blue-white hands of a frost giant.

Dragged before the giants' jarl, Torvald swallowed his fear, held his head high, and proclaimed himself a servant of King Geirmund, in whose lands and under whose authority the giants' dwelt. Angered at the youth's statement, the jarl ordered the proud warrior be thrown back to his king. As the giants moved to grab him, Torvald darted for the nearest escape route he could see—a chained griffin. Without fear he leapt onto its back, sliced through the chain with his sword, kicked its flanks, and held on for dear life as it shot out through one of the huge window slits in the giant' fortress.

Torvald flew to his liege's camp, whereupon he told the king his tale and presented him the beast as a gift. Geirmund gazed into the creature's eyes for long minutes before insisting his huscarl keep it. "I have no need of such a beast with a lion of the sky among my huscarls," he said. Thus did Torvald become known as Skylion.

Three years have passed, and the griffin remains with Skylion, serving as his mount in gratitude for the human saving its life. With the king distracted by the task of rebuilding his shattered realm, Skylion has taken it upon himself to help expand Geirmund's army in a way that will enable the monarch to dispatch troops quickly to any part of the realm. He is seeking worthy companions to return to the mountain and steal griffin eggs from the giants' hold. In a few years he hopes Nordmark will boast an aerial cavalry company, with him as its captain.

DESCRIPTION

Barely out of his teens, Skylion's body has never quite developed. His facial hair is soft and downy, the mark of an adolescent, forcing him to keep it short. He wears his hair equally short, claiming that long hair is too easy for an enemy to grab. The only scar he bears from his time on campaign is a broken nose.

MANNERISMS

Skylion comports himself with dignified bearing, but is never condescending or arrogant. His speech is formal and stilted, the mark of a man used to dealing with the nobility, yet who does not rank among their number, and who holds a special place in society to which he has yet to become accustomed.

LADY ADELINE AP-BOVERT

Race: Anari; **Homeland:** Aspiria; **Occupation:** Reluctant adventurer; **Patron Deity:** Eostre Plantmother.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Heraldry) d4, Notice d6, Riding d6, Taunt d8, Throwing d6

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Clueless, Stubborn, Wanted (Minor: by her father—he has hired investigators to track her down)

Edges: Noble*

Languages: Anari, Classical Anari, Fey

* Grants Charisma bonus only. Given +1 Skill point to make up for the loss of income.

BACKGROUND

Lady Adeline is the only daughter of a wealthy Aspirian vintner. Her family holds the title Count-Baron by dint of his impressive vineyard.

She was a troublesome child, prone to temper tantrums if she didn't get her way, constantly demanding attention, and refusing to lift her finger and perform anything even resembling manual labor (such as tidying away her clothes or combing her own hair).

Her father, a patient man, but one with finite limits, began searching for a suitable husband as soon as his daughter turned 12. While Adeline had fanciful notions of marrying a handsome baron, her father favored an economic union that would join his vineyard with that of another lesser noble.

Adeline did not meet her intended husband until the night before the wedding was due to take place. Sneaking out of her room, she peered through the door of the grand hall as her father welcomed his future son-in-law. Adeline's heart almost stopped, for there stood not a handsome young man with strapping muscles, but a bloated pig of a man, with greasy locks and beady eyes.

She ran to her mother, pleading with her to call off the marriage, but it was to no avail. Distraught, she fled to her room in tears and bolted the door. No one noticed her absence until an hour before the ceremony was due to begin, when guards, sent to escort her to the temple, had to break down the door. Adeline was gone. Unwilling to marry her father's choice, the young girl had packed a bag, stolen a horse, and fled into the night.

A year later, Adeline is still on the run from her father, who lost a lot of face (not to mention a profitable business partnership) when his daughter absconded.

Adeline has drifted across the continent, tagging along with numerous adventuring parties for safety and as a means of earning a crust. She is desperate to find a husband, one that ticks all the boxes on her list of what an ideal mate should be—titled, rich (preferably very rich), handsome, and totally attentive to her every desire. Adeline would actually make someone a fine wife, if she grew out of her childish ways, that is.

DESCRIPTION

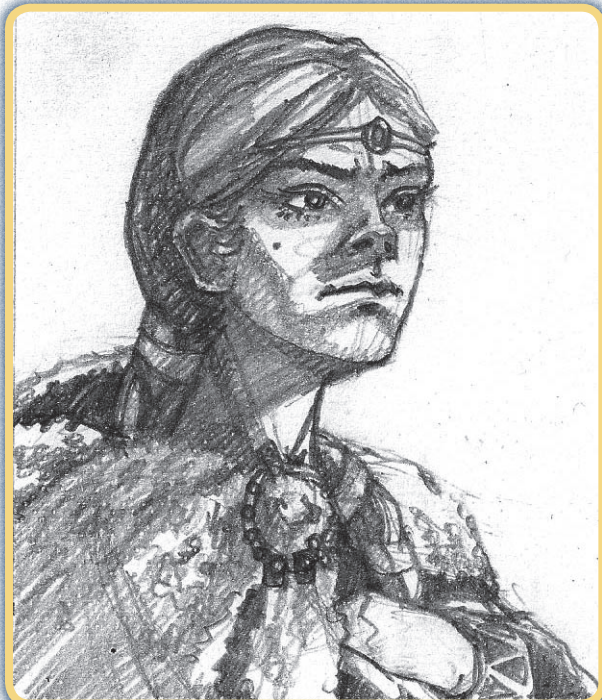
An attractive girl with hard-lined features, Adeline tries her best to keep herself presentable, no easy task given her current lifestyle. She wears her auburn hair pulled back and tied in a single braid. Her large, blue eyes are the only soft features on her face. She highlights them using a mixture of wood ash and berry juice.

Years spent trudging through the wilderness have ruined all her decent clothes, leaving her nothing but the sturdy and unattractive garb common to adventurers. She wears a thin silver circlet adorned with a single bloodstone across her brow, and a silver cloak clasp fashioned to look like a coiled grapevine. Each "grape" is a deep purple alestone chip.

MANNERISMS

Although 16 and legally an adult, Lady Adeline remains a spoiled child. If she doesn't get her way, or if ordered to do something she finds disdainful, she crosses her arms, furrows her brow, purses her lips, and stares intently. Pushed too far, she breaks into tears and fits of sobbing. Even when forced to comply, she does so reluctantly and half-heartedly, hoping that someone will take pity on her and relieve her of her duties.

She constantly whines at every little thing she finds displeasing—her clothes are dirty, the ground is too hard, her food isn't cooked properly, no one is treating her with the proper respect her title deserves, and so on. The only time she stops is when she is asleep. Despite several years on the road, she remains totally clueless about life outside the nobility.



MITCH WULFRICSUNU

Race: Saxa; **Homeland:** Angmark; **Occupation:** Eager torch bearer; **Patron Deity:** Freo
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8
Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d4, Stealth d4, Survival d4, Tracking d4, Throwing d4
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 6
Hindrances: Inept (Major)*, Loyal, Overconfident
Edges: Luck, Scavenger
Languages: Orcish, Saxa, Trader

BACKGROUND

Mitch wanted to be an adventurer for as long as he can remember. Growing up in the bustling port of Leirvik, he would listen to adventurers' tales and the poems of skalds with wide-eyes, slack-jaw, and undisguised admiration. Such was his fondness for heroic stories that he neglected his studies and sought reports of heroic endeavors while his peers were learning a trade. Before he knew it, Mitch was an adult. With no particular skills of note, he had little hope of earning a living as anything other a laborer. But Mitch had a plan—he was going to be a famous hero!

At the age of 17, Mitch finally managed to convince a band of would-be heroes to take him along on their next adventure, accepting a position as torch bearer and pack mule in return for a half-share of any spoils.

The party headed north into the western Icebarrier, where rumors indicated there stood the remains of a old temple abandoned during the Blizzard War. The trip was an unmitigated disaster. Ill-prepared, the adventurers lost two of their number during a blizzard. The survivors managed to locate the crumbling temple, only to discover it was now inhabited by orcs. Driven by gold lust,

the party began their exploration. They emerged a day later, marginally wealthier than when they entered, but only because another three party members had died.

On reaching civilization, Mitch immediately began to tell the story of their "heroic" exploits against a fearsome foe. He expected cheers and handshakes, perhaps even some praise, but all he received was jeers and mocking laughter. It was an ignominious start to his adventuring career, but Mitch vowed to keep trying.

He has since served a dozen adventuring groups as a torch bearer, two as a full member, and explored countless ruins. Although his exploits have gone unnoticed by the world at large and his pockets remain empty of coin, Mitch's enthusiasm remains as great as ever.

Despite nearing middle age, Mitch still spends his days hanging around taverns in the hope of finding more adventuring work. He's not fussy whether he's hired as a lowly torch bearer or as a full party member, so long as he can earn a crust and prove how useful he is. He hasn't achieved his dream of becoming famous yet, but he remains confident it won't be long before the right opportunity comes along.

DESCRIPTION

A man in his late thirties, Mitch has a thick red beard and a shock of auburn hair. His blue eyes glitter like diamonds at the thought of adventure and excitement.

Mitch owns a lot of equipment, believing it is best to be prepared for any eventuality, no matter how remote it might seem. Most of his gear is second-hand or scavenged from corpses.

MANNERISMS

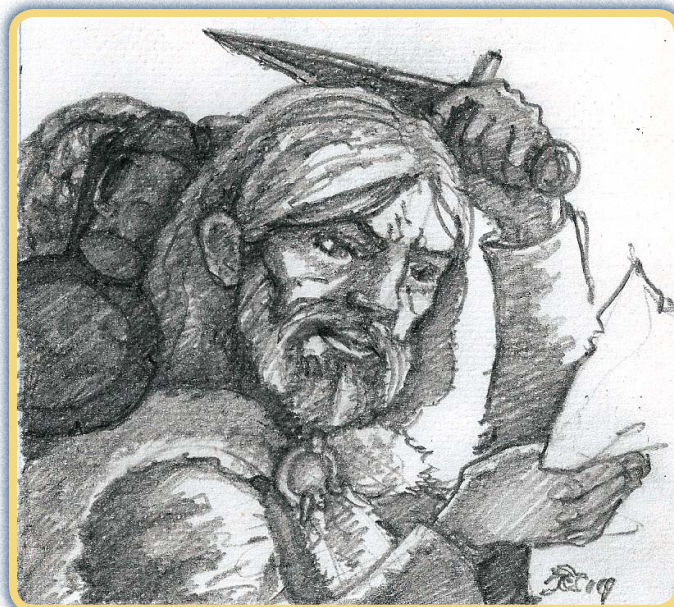
Mitch visibly brims with exuberance and confidence. He is always the first to volunteer for any task, gleefully ignoring that he might not be the best suited. Possessed of indomitable spirit and stamina, he is always pushing to continue on for another hour when others want a rest, to give battle when others favor prudence, and to stand when others elect to run.

Nothing has yet managed to dampen his spirits—he handles criticism with furious nodding, and rebukes fly over his head. Even when things go horribly wrong, Mitch sees it as just another opportunity to shine. More annoying than all this is his constant, cheerful whistling.

*NEW HINDRANCE

INEPT (MINOR/MAJOR)

For some reason the character isn't as skilled as others. He might be lazy, stupid, a slow learner, or just raised in isolation. The hero receives 2 fewer Skill points with the Minor version and 4 fewer with the Major version. Points earned from taking this Hindrance cannot be spent on Skills.



BERNARD

Race: Anari; **Homeland:** Freelands; **Occupation:** Paladin; **Patron Deity:** Scaetha.

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

Skills: Faith d6, Fighting d8, Knowledge (The Withered Lands) d4, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Taunt d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Death Wish, Habit (Major: alcohol addiction), Orders, Yellow

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Connections (Cult of Scaetha), Liquid Courage

Languages: Anari, Black Tongue, Trader

Powers: *Smite, weaken undead*

BACKGROUND

To see Bernard as he is now, one could be forgiven for believing the stories about his past exploits are fanciful fabrications of imaginative skalds.

Bernard was 11 when he first encountered the cult of Scaetha. A band of grim-faced, dour warriors turned up at his village one morning and began mustering the militia. A small undead force had left the Withered Lands, and the village lay in their path. Too young to fight, Bernard watched the preparations through the window of his home, marveling as the holy warriors set men to work building defenses and prayed for strength in the coming battle, displaying no emotion as what might be their last few hours on the mortal realm passed.

His admiration for them grew greater still when, during the fight, the village militia fled in terror, leaving the small band of paladins standing alone. Although several were cut down, the rest remained resolute, eventually winning the day through a combination of faith and steel. Bernard knew then that it was his destiny to become a paladin of Scaetha.

At the age of 13 he was apprenticed to the local temple to begin his training. Many clerics argued against his appointment, claiming he had never tasted the fear of death expected of candidates. Bernard forced them to eat their words, for he showed no signs of fear as he was shown mangled corpses and the aftermath of battles, nor did he quail when told of the fearsome powers of the undead. Bernard took his holy vows at the tender age of 15, entering the order of paladins a year later.

His service has taken him to the most feared lands on the continent. He braved the bleak, haunted Liche Lands, casting his gaze upon the divine seals on the Liche Priest's tomb. He spent two years fighting frost wights alongside the garrison at Icedale. He ventured into the Withered Lands more than once, searching for clues to the disappearance of the feared liche Angtharinox, and bringing the second death to many fell horrors that lurked in its gloomy expanse. His name is still spoken of reverentially in the cult, for among the many undead he has slain, none were as great or as feared as the vampire warlord Blackfang, who Bernard bested in single combat



on the steps of an accursed temple of Hela deep in the heart of the Withered Lands.

But the years spent faithfully serving the goddess of death took their toll on Bernard, insidiously gnawing away at his faith and his spirit. He witnessed many friends die fighting for an endless cause against legion enemies. He experienced first hand the gut-wrenching horrors and twisted malevolence of the Withered Lands, carrying the burden of fear the realm generates on his soul.

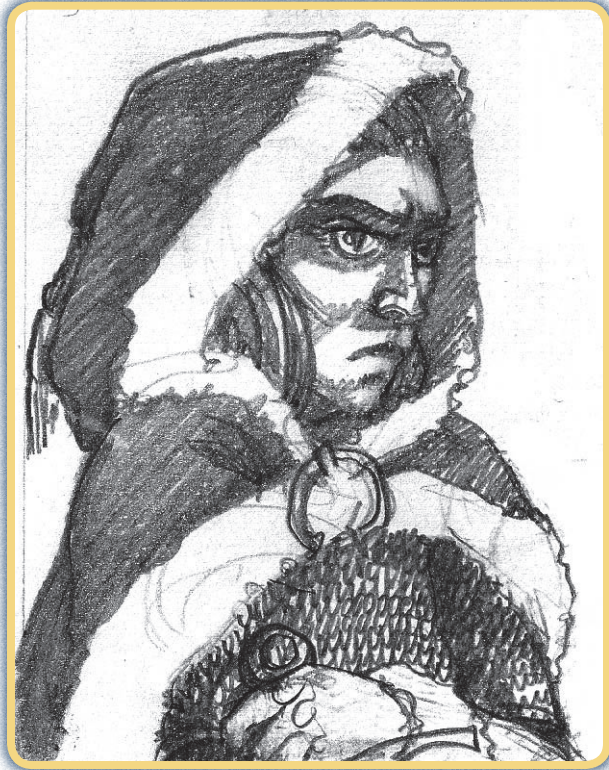
His slide into abject despair was as gradual as it was total. A stiff drink before battle, excuses to avoid entering haunted lands, reluctance to lead the charge. For the last two years Bernard has wandered the lands, trying desperately to avoid his holy duties. When he must fight, he seeks courage in hard liquor. In times of peace, he drinks to forget the death and horror he has witnessed.

DESCRIPTION

Years of heavy drinking have left the paladin with ruddy cheeks, a red nose, and deep bags under his sunken, bloodshot eyes. He frequently goes months without trimming his beard or hair, and his personal hygiene is poor. His breath reeks of cheap, strong alcohol.

MANNERISMS

Bernard has lost his nerve and is in serious danger of losing his faith. Once a proud warrior, he now avoids eye contact and physical confrontation, hiding his shame and trying to erase the memories of his past in a bottle of cheap grog. He is morose and morbid at the best of times, but grows increasingly worse the more he has to drink. Where once he would have led, he now prefers to shelter behind his comrades' shields.



WOOD WARDEN ELLENEIRLIR

Race: Hearth elf; **Homeland:** Angarion; **Occupation:** Wood warden; **Patron Deity:** Eostre Plantmother.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Druidism d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Tracking d6
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
Hindrances: All Thumbs, Bloodthirsty (Minor version affecting only orcs and those who despoil forests), Orders, Phobia (Minor: Claustrophobia), Small
Edges: Agile, Arcane Background (Druidism), Connections (Wood Wardens), Forest Born, Low Light Vision, Natural Realms, Wood Warden
Languages: Fey, Hearth Elven, Orcish
Powers: *Barrier*, *beast friend* (+2 to cast), *entangle*, *voice on the wind*

BACKGROUND

Elleneirlir's parents died when she was young, ambushed by orcs while gathering herbs. She displayed no emotions during the funeral rites, took no comfort in the well-meaning condolences offered her, and shed not a single tear during the mournful dirges. Instead, she stared impassively as her parents were laid to rest.

The orphan was adopted by her father's brother, a wood warden captain. His duties left him little time for his niece, though he loved her as his own daughter. For her part, Elleneirlir remained aloof, refusing to display

any affection in public or private. Although she had intended to become a druid like her mother, she began the journey down a different road. While the other children played after their druidic studies, Elleneirlir practiced archery alone, firing arrows at target dummies with a cold stare until her young muscles ached.

Upon reaching adulthood (30 years old) she declared her intention to join the wood wardens, something her uncle took with a mixture of pride and concern, for he saw behind her eyes the desire for bloody vengeance rather than the desire to protect the forest from all harm. Despite his misgivings, the ancient laws forbade him from refusing her, so long as she passed the final test—slaying an orc warrior. After years of theoretical and practical exams, Elleneirlir departed her village to claim her right to wear the hallowed badge of the wood wardens. She returned a week later and dumped the heads of three orcs at the captain's feet.

Now 80 (approximately 25 in human terms), Elleneirlir remains a wood warden. Her desire to slay orcs and protect the forests has carried her beyond the leafy borders of Angarion, though she returns every decade without fail to lay a single flower on her parents' grave.

DESCRIPTION

Elleneirlir is very short for an elf, standing barely five feet in her socks. Combined with her slight build, she is almost girlish in appearance. Although attractive, she wears her face as a stern mask, betraying emotions only with her large brown eyes.

Her clothes are typically elven, well-made yet durable, and colored to blend in with the vegetation of her forest home. Over her armor she wears a heavy, fur-lined, waterproof cloak of green and brown hues. An iron brooch fashioned in the wood warden symbol—a cluster of oak leaves growing from a stylized sun disc—fastens the cloak just below her angular chin.

MANNERISMS

Elleneirlir lives behind a serious mask, keeps people at arm's length emotionally, and prefers her own company. Time has not healed the pain she felt at the loss of her parents. She is afraid to open up to others in case she cries, something she sees as weakness, and refuses to form close bonds in case those she cares about die. She says little, preferring not to waste her breath on meaningless small talk. Her inability to speak any human tongues only reinforces her self-imposed isolation.

Having spent much of her life either outdoors or in the natural environment of an elfhome, she becomes nervous and agitated if confined. This only affects her when underground or in small stone buildings. That she is suffering is noticeable only by her constantly clenching fists and wide, darting eyes.

She hates being called Ellen, and refuses to answer to that name under any circumstances. The only thing she hates more is orcs, creatures she shows no mercy.

ARMOS THE BLACK

Race: Saxa; **Homeland:** Heligioland; **Occupation:** Bandit paladin; **Patron Deity:** Ellanhere (minor goddess of canines in her Dargar aspect).

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

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Survival d6, Tracking d4

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Arrogant, Greedy (Minor), Mean, Wanted (Major: in Heligioland)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Beast Master (war dog), Followers*

Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader

Powers: *Beast friend* (canines only), *fear*

Special: In return for taking an additional Major Hindrance, Armos has been allowed to take an extra Edge because it rounds out his backstory. Only his main hound, covered by the Beast Master Edge, is replaced if killed.

BACKGROUND

Armos the Black began life as a lowly serf. Orphaned by disease, he was taken into the household of a minor nobleman and set to work looking after his master's hunting hounds, a particularly vicious breed of war dog. Frequently beaten in order to remind him of his place, Armos' took brutal vengeance on the younger and weaker servants.

For all his faults, Armos' master allowed the youth to study with the cult of Ellanhere at the local Eostre temple. This was no act of generosity intended to improve his servants' lot in life—the training intended purely to boost the efficiency of the hounds. But Armos' soul was tainted by anger and violence, and he was easily swayed to the darker path of Dargar, god of mindless violence and lord of wolves. In secret he dominated his master's hounds, besting each of the creatures in physical combat to become the pack's top dog.

One summer day, while accompanying his master on a hunt, Armos and the nobleman became separated from the main group, having raced ahead with the hounds. Their quarry, a large boar, gored one of the valuable dogs before escaping into the dense undergrowth. Armos' lord took his frustration out on his servant, striking him repeatedly with his riding crop and accusing him of incompetency. Something in Armos' soul snapped.

With a cruel laugh he casually ordered the snarling hounds, already driven into near frenzy by the smell of the blood of one of their own, to attack. Cowered into obedience by the paladin, the dogs brought down man and horse. As his master screamed for mercy, Armos watched, a look of feral excitement on his face as flesh and muscle was ripped from bone. Hearing the horns of the other hunters, Armos fled into the wilds, taking part of the dog pack with him.

Armos could easily have escaped punishment for his crime—there were no witnesses, and his master was

renowned for his cruelty to his dogs. It was an accident waiting to happen. But Armos had no wish to return to a life of servitude—he was a free man at last, the master of his own destiny, and lord of loyal servants.

Unwilling to bow to others ever again and driven to prove his superiority, the former huntsman took to banditry. For years he has plagued the hinterlands of Heligioland, preying on the weak and killing without conscience, yet never backing down from a fight with a superior foe. Such is his reign of terror that the disparate communities have worked together to raise a substantial reward for Armos' capture.

DESCRIPTION

Tall and lean, Armos has a feral look about him. His dark brown eyes are cold and hard, with a gleam not unlike those of a wolf seeking prey. His mouth is permanently set in a cruel sneer. Several deep scars run across his face, trophies earned in proving his superiority.

MANNERISMS

Mean, greedy, and excessively violent, Armos keeps his dogs, and those few bandits willing to work with him, in line through fear and intimidation. Any follower who steps out of line or exceeds their authority is given a swift and brutal reminder who is top dog. Due to his clerical vows, his hounds are only rarely beaten. Unlike most bullies, Armos does not back down if threatened by a stronger creature. Instead, he seeks to dominate it, for he knows that a moment of weakness would cost him the support of his hounds, an act which could lead him to become the next victim of their powerful, snarling, saliva-stained jaws.



MAARIT VADDA

Race: Finnar; **Homeland:** The Unclaimed Lands; **Occupation:** Protector of the wilds; **Patron Deity:** Eostre Animalmother.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Healing d6, Knowledge (Craft: Jewelry) d6, Notice d4, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Clueless (regarding civilization), Delusional (Minor: thinks her bear can talk), Small

Edges: Beast Bond, Beast Master (polar bear)

Languages: Finnari, Orcish, Trader

BACKGROUND

Born to a nomadic Finnar tribe in the High Winterlands, Maarit thought her destiny was to follow the ways of her ancestors—learn a useful trade, get married, and sire children. But the Norns had other ideas, and their will cannot be refused for long.

Like most young children she was given the task of tending the reindeer herds while they grazed, watching for predators, keeping the valuable beasts from eating poisonous moss, and such like. On the day her life fate was set in motion she was in the Great Forest, chasing down a calf which had strayed from the herd.

As she crept up on the lone animal with lasso in hand, arrows whistled from the vegetation, striking the calf dead. Shocked into inaction, she stood helpless as a band of orcs burst into the clearing. She had barely mumbled a prayer to Eostre, asking that her death be quick, when a mother polar bear accompanied by a young cub charged

into the orcs, swatting them with its gigantic paws and cleaving through their limbs with its powerful jaws. No orc survived the encounter, but neither did the mother bear. As it lay dying, its blood staining the snow pink, Maarit whispered another prayer to Eostre, this time thanking the bear for its aid and wishing it a speedy journey to the next world.

After covering the carcass in snow to hide its scent from predators, she scooped up the cub and carried it back to her tribe's camp. Hunters collected the dead bear, for its bones, sinews, and furs were invaluable to her people—Finnar never waste usable animal parts, considering it disrespectful to the beast's spirit and an affront to both Ullr and Eostre.

Fully aware the cub would die if abandoned, Maarit adopted it, naming it Luminen (Finnari for "Snowy"). The young Finnar and Snowy grew to adulthood together, forming an inseparable bond. Despite being a wild beast by nature, Snowy showed no aggression toward the girl or her tribe, except in defense of Maarit or when ordered to drive away wolves.

On her 15th birthday, having proven herself an adult, Maarit approached her parents and declared she had received a vision from Eostre, informing her she was to become a protector of the wilds, an itinerant wanderer whom the gods would guide to those in need of assistance. As is normal when a Finnar decides to find his own path in life, Maarit's family gifted her what they could—a spear, a short bow, leather armor, a saddle (Maarit being small enough to ride Snowy), a small felt tent, a month of food, and a sledge to carry her belongings.

Maarit has spent the last two years roaming the High Winterlands with Snowy, aiding those she comes across. She never stays in one place for long, for the Unclaimed Lands are vast and there are many in need of succor.

DESCRIPTION

Maarit stands 5' 2" tall, small for her people. Whereas most Finnar are lean, she is of thin build, which only serves to make her look even smaller. Her brown hair and eyes are almost the same color as her weather-beaten, sun-tanned skin.

She dresses in simple yet effective winter clothing made of reindeer hide. Her fur belts and the lining of her cloak are made from the fur of Snowy's mother. She wears a lot of jewelry, all of it homemade from silver or bone, and studded with tiny gems.

MANNERISMS

Maarit is initially shy around strangers, though she quickly warms to them and opens up if they prove friendly. Generous by nature, she often gives people she encounters gifts of homemade jewelry, both to brighten up their day (and appearance) and because it makes her feel good. She is under the delusion that Snowy can talk, and spends a lot of time consulting with him, something others find a little odd.



ARTURIUS AP-ALEVAN

Race: Anari; **Hometown:** Shattered Moor (Seithrby); **Occupation:** Priest and explorer; **Patron Deity:** Kenaz.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d4, Faith d8, Fighting d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Selari)* d6, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Stealth d4, Survival d6
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Anemic, Cautious, Delusional (Minor: believes the Selari knew a great secret), Orders
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Connections (Cult of Kenaz)
Languages: Anari, Frosttongue, Selari
Powers: Deflection, light
** Covers folklore, heraldry, history, law, religion, and so on for the extinct Selari culture.*

BACKGROUND

Although he claims Seithrby as his birthplace, Arturius was a young child when his parents fled to Shattered Moor ahead of the advancing army of Aethling Cuthwulf. His family settled in Far Reach, where his father, a smith, quickly set up a forge.

A sickly child highly susceptible to the cold, Arturius spent his days huddled around the forge for warmth, listening to the rhythmic clang of metal on metal and the stories of adventurers, frequent patrons of his father, who had explored the Shattered Moor. It was from these heroes he first heard of the Selari, whose culture dominated the northern lands before the Blizzard War.

Arturius joined the cult of Kenaz at the age of 14, drawn by the heat of the temples and the desire to rid the world of the Hellfrost, which he blamed directly for his many ailments. Considered too sickly to become a paladin, he was ordained as a priest and placed in charge of the archives.

Although he craved a more active role, the library was warm and comfortable, and Arturius grew to enjoy his sedate life. Once again he came across references to the Selari. According to the records their lands were deliberately targeted by the Hellfrost armies, their civilization laid to ruin, their culture exterminated. What, he mused, singled out the Selari for such devastation?

Over the next few years he painstakingly pieced together fragments of lore, studying what little knowledge existed regarding the Beacon, Cave of Shadows, and Tomb of the Golden Kings, and accidentally uncovering the location of numerous lesser sites previously forgotten, and unexplored for centuries. He came to the conclusion that many of the major ruins fit together like the pieces of a child's puzzle, linked in some inextricable way to form a bigger picture.

To his dismay, he realized that studying books would only lead him so far to solving the riddle. Although still subject to bouts of sickness, his superiors saw the wisdom in his argument that the Selari ruins must be ex-



plored, mapped, and studied first hand. Several believed as Arturius did that the Selari may have possessed, or had at least had knowledge of, a means to defeat the Hellfrost, a secret that cost them everything.

Arturius has spent ten summers, a short season this close to the Icewall, studying the Selari ruins. During that time he has unlocked much forgotten lore, though he admits he is no closer to discovering the true secret of the lost culture. He is always willing to accompany adventuring parties headed onto the Shattered Moor, trading knowledge of the location of unexplored ruins in return for protection and help mapping them and recording their ancient texts.

DESCRIPTION

Arturius has a long, straight nose, high cheek bones, an angular chin marked by a distinct cleft, and a wide, thin mouth. He dyes his long hair orange, and wears it swept back from his forehead. His fingers are long, tapering to finely cut nails. His frame is thin, lingering sicknesses preventing him from gaining weight.

His dresses in the red and orange colors common to his cult, favoring a thick wool shirt and trousers reinforced with leather on the knees when adventuring. A heavy fur-lined cloak wards off the cold, held in place by a gold brooch resembling two curling tongues of flame. A single gold ring adorns each hand, each engraved with Kenaz's holy symbol.

MANNERISMS

Whereas many clerics of Kenaz have a fiery temper and are quick to leap into action, Arturius prefers to think long and hard before he acts. A sickly man, he is frequently wracked by fits of violent coughing, and shivers even in warm temperatures.



WILHEIM MAERSCALSUNU

Race: Saxa; **Hometown:** Vestmark; **Occupation:** Murderer and vengeant; **Patron Deity:** Dargar.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Tracking d4

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: All Thumbs (gnarled hands), Ugly (partially lupine face), Vengeful (Major), Wanted (Major: Bernard Kunungrsunu, paladin of Sigel)

Edges: Fleet Footed

Languages: Beastspeech, Saxa, Trader

** In return for taking such a horrendous fate and an additional Major Hindrance, Wilhelm has an extra point spent in his attributes.*

BACKGROUND

Wilhelm Maerscalsunu lost everything during the orc invasion of southern Vestmark. One day he had a loving wife, children, a comfortable home, the next he had nothing save a gaping hole in his soul. Grief rapidly turned to anger.

He voluntarily enlisted in the army, becoming renowned for his zeal in slaying orcs, but no amount of orc blood could mend the hole. He began torturing orc captives, inflicting injuries and torments so barbaric that even his battle-hardened comrades could not stomach the sight. Few would serve with him, and he was eventually ejected from the army.

His desire for vengeance had become all-consuming,

gnawing away what little humanity remained. He prayed to the gods to grant him the power to enact his revenge. No god answered, but something did.

One stormy night, Wilhelm was approached by a strange, dwarflike creature. It said it had heard the human's prayers, and that it knew a ritual, one so ancient, so dark, that it had never been carried out to its full extent. On the first night of the Deorcmonan, Wilhelm must kill an innocent with his own hands at the hour of moonrise, rip out its heart, and consume it raw before the next sunrise. Thirteen times the ritual must be carried out without fail or the magic would end, and the ritual for naught.

When the final heart, which must be that of a blood relative, was eaten, Wilhelm would become a remorseless killer, a creature immune to physical harm, a fiend driven only by its burning desire for vengeance. The ritual would involve certain physical changes, for no human could host the power the ritual granted. It would also make Wilhelm a wanted man, for the gods of light would seek to end the ritual before it could be completed.

The strange creature departed before sunrise, leaving Wilhelm alone with his thoughts. For two weeks he mulled over the creature's words and the actions he would have to take to earn his revenge on those that had taken everything he held dear. On the first night of the next Deorcmonan, Wilhelm stepped onto a road from which they could be no turning back.

Three months have passed since that dark, moonless night. Three hearts have been consumed. Wilhelm still has a long way to go, but each passing month, each terrible meal in his stomach, he feels his power, and his desire for vengeance, growing ever stronger.

DESCRIPTION

Wilhelm stands on the dark border between man and beast, for his form is now neither one nor the other, but some terrible hybrid. His hands, which are concealed beneath gauntlets, are gnarled, the fingers stubby, covered in dark, wiry hair, and tipped with rough claws. His jaw extends from his face in a short, canine muzzle, his mouth filled with jagged teeth. Further changes are no doubt yet to come before the unholy ritual is finished.

He keeps his gruesome visage concealed beneath a tightly-wrapped scarf and a long, wolfskin cloak, revealing it to no one.

MANNERISMS

Wilhelm has been driven down a path of utter darkness by his burning lust for revenge. It has consumed his soul, and now it is consuming his flesh and his mind. He desires only the completion of the barbaric ritual, and lets no man stand in his way. Although still human, his voice is changing. It is now deeper, harsher, more guttural, and he is prone to snarling and growling when angry. His appetite has been replaced by the longing for raw flesh, and he isn't fussy as to what species.

ULF BENQTSUNU

Race: Saxa; **Hometown:** Midmark; **Occupation:** Huscarl; **Patron Deity:** Rigr.

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

Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6+2, Streetwise d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Illiterate, Loyal, Vow (Minor: Find King Orr)

Edges: Alertness

Languages: Auld Saxa, Battletongue, Saxa

BACKGROUND

The son of a huscarl, Ulf was trained to fight and wear armor from an early age, developing a fine physique and excellent reflexes. His induction into the king's huscarls was a formality, for his father was a loyal servant and that Ulf was his father's son was obvious to all.

He had served for four years before his father volunteered to follow King Gust Surnirsunu into the High Winterlands. Night after night for three years he stood watch over the main gate to the king's palace, patiently watching for the return of his father and his liege. It was at this time he took Rigr as his patron, for his duties as watchman were long and arduous.

Worry and long hours on sentry duty began to dull his fighting edge. To take his mind off his father's disappearance and ensure he remained in fighting shape, he volunteered for a tour in Ostersund, braving the perilous journey across the Crystal Sound to the besieged city. He had intended to remain there for just a year, but when no word of his father's return reached him he decided to remain where he could best serve the Saxa people.

On hearing that the king's son, Orr, had come of age and was ready to accept the crown, Ulf, by now a veteran warrior renowned for his tenacity and courage, returned to Midmark to pledge allegiance to the new king and resume his duties as a loyal huscarl. But no sooner had Orr taken the throne than he planned to head north in the hope of discovering his father's fate. Ulf requested permission to accompany the king, as his father had done to his liege. The young lord refused, for he had heard of Ulf's devotion in maintaining long vigil during Gust's absence. Orr publicly praised his huscarl, stating that he would feel safer knowing he had men such as Ulf watching over his lands while he was away. Ulf protested, as was his right, but it was to no avail.

Thus Ulf resumed his vigil for a second time. Two years passed without sign or word of the king and his entourage. Ulf vigilance stretched far beyond the palace, for he had many friends among the huscarls of the nobles. Although he knew no specific details, he knew of plots against the queen—the nobles would not stand for another absentee king. The huscarl approached the queen, informing her of the dissension, and asking permission to track down Orr—dead or alive, he must



return to Midmark to settle the succession and thwart any possibility of a civil war.

Although reluctant to lose a trusted ally in perilous times, she granted Ulf permission, seeing wisdom in his words. In order to speed up the search Ulf appointed other huscarls to venture north in different directions. He has been on his quest for almost a year, and while he has discovered nothing concerning Orr's fate, he remains dedicated to his endeavor.

DESCRIPTION

Ulf carries himself tall, for he is a proud Saxa from good stock. He wears his straw-blond hair long, and braids his impressive beard into two strands. His eyes are dark green, the color of a storm-tossed sea. His dress is a little archaic, for Midmarkers have been slow to adopt new ways. His gear is traditional for a huscarl—spear, medium shield, armored shirt, and a helm. Although old (it being handed down from his father), it is in immaculate condition.

MANNERISMS

A staunch Midmark Saxa traditionalist, Ulf looks upon and treats Anari as second-class citizens. He refuses to learn their language, or meet them halfway by learning Trader. He lives by the code of his ancestors, prizing confidence, courage, honesty, loyalty, and piety above all other traits. Although he appears relaxed, he is always alert, noticing and noting small details that may be useful later. He is always the first to volunteer for sentry duty in the middle of the night, using this time to honor Rigr, his patron, and plot the next step in his quest.

THE HAND OF MAERA

Race: Anari; **Hometown:** The Magocracy; **Occupation:** Assassin; **Patron Deity:** Niht.

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

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Healing d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Black Sheep, Magic Forbiddance, Wanted (Minor)

Edges: Arcane Hand*, Arcane Resistance

Languages: Anari, Classical Anari, Trader

* *She has no Connections or Orders due to being an ex-member of the organization.*

BACKGROUND

No one knows the name of the Arcane Blade, nor where she was born. Indeed, beyond the fact she is a woman, she is a total mystery to those seeking to catch her—and that's the way she intends things to stay.

Born Jenni of House Wadehoff, a minor Magocratic family allied to House Wyse, it quickly became apparent that she possessed absolutely no magical talent. The cult of Maera was summoned to investigate the child. After lengthy examinations, they deduced she had absolutely no ties to the threads of magic, being unable even to use alchemical charms. Furthermore, so great was Maera's curse that the girl was resistant to magic.

Shamed by their daughter's curse, her parents gave her to the cult of Maera, washing their hands of the taint to their weak yet proud bloodline. As far as the other houses were concerned, the child was stillborn, earning Jenni's mother much sympathy among her peers.

Plucky, obedient, and yet also with a free spirit, Jenni

was eventually spotted by a nobleman from House Darovia. On hearing she could work no magic, he purchased the child to train as an Arcane Hand, knowing that she would have no interest in stealing his secrets. Better still, her resistance to magic would make her less susceptible to enemy attacks, and would save him the arduous task of empowering her with spells.

Jenni served as a secret bodyguard, her true identity as an Arcane Hand known only to her master and mentor. Her master had many enemies, perceived and real, and in addition to her regular duties he employed Jenni as an assassin against his rivals. She thrived on the danger, becoming a cold, merciless killer.

Her master was a cruel lord, fond of punishing his servants for any infraction. During a feast, where Jenni was acting as a serving girl, she accidentally spilled a goblet of wine on her lord's robes. He reacted swiftly and harshly, blasting her with magic. Her curse saved her life, though the attack left her badly scarred.

That night she enacted a bloody revenge, plunging a dagger into her master's heart. She disguised her crime and faked her own death by torching the manor, knowing full well the authorities would never bother checking for the remains of the servants.

Masterless, trained as an infiltrator and killer, skilled at interrupting the spell workings of mages, and capable of resisting their offensive powers, she chose to become a full-time assassin. Calling herself the Hand of Maera, she is both valued and feared by the Magocratic nobles, hunted both to hire and capture. She only accepts contracts on mages (through a network of agents) and charges a high fee. Such is her reputation for success that it is a price those who need rid of their enemies happily pay.

DESCRIPTION

Beyond an approximate height and weight, the nobility of the Magocracy have no accurate description of the feared assassin, for she wears a black face mask and long leather gloves when working her trade.

Beneath the mask is a woman with two large scars cutting across the left side of her face. Despite her injuries, she is not an unattractive woman. Indeed, the scars give her a strange beauty. She wears her raven-black hair long and unbraided, a simple black headscarf keeping it out of her gray eyes. When not on a mission, she dresses in whatever style is unlikely to draw attention. She may wear the drab garb of a peasant woman while walking the market, only to waltz through a court in the extravagant robes of a nobleman's servant the next.

MANNERISMS

The Blade switches her demeanor as often as her outfits, adopting whatever mannerisms suit her current disguise. Her true demeanor is one of calculating, icy cold calm. No matter how she is acting, she is constantly analyzing the situation and plotting two steps ahead.



ROBERT AP-FORTAIT

Race: Anari; **Hometown:** Coglelund; **Occupation:** Priest; **Patron Deity:** Hela.

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

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d4, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d8+2, Knowledge (History) d8+2, Persuasion d4, Streetwise d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Anemic, God Cursed (Eira), Orders, Phobia (Reflective surfaces)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Connections (Cult of Hela), Scholar

Languages: Anari, Black Tongue, Classical Anari

Powers: *Sanctuary, zombie*

BACKGROUND

Robert was born to a life of privilege. His father was a prosperous Coglelund merchant, a man with the ear of Prince Leon and who enjoyed great status. With vast sums of money at his disposal any path in life might have been open to him, but the Norns had dealt him a cruel fate, a fate that would lead him down a dark path.

Robert was a sickly child, always thin and constantly afflicted by illness. The shadow of death fell over him several times, and it was only by sheer force of will the boy survived to adulthood. His parents spared no expense in hiring healers, but all gave the same diagnosis—the boy was incurably ill and would die an early death.

Apprenticed to his father's mercantile business, Robert began training to be a merchant. His parents hoped he would become a cleric of Var, but the Norns once again had plans of their own. Frustrated after yet another serious bout of sickness, Robert went to the local temple of Eira, demanding a healer cure him of his blight and offering a sizeable fee as reward. On being told to his face there was no cure (something his parents had kept from him), Robert lashed out, striking the cleric dead. With his dying breath, he cursed the youth, vowing that Eira would no longer protect him from death.

Robert's father managed to cover up the incident with a huge donation, but he disowned the angry young man for bringing shame to his family. Penniless, Robert left Coglelund, vowing to find a cure without Eira's help.

It was in the Freelands, while seeking shelter from a storm at a gloomy temple of Scaetha, that he first heard of the Liche-Priest and his immortal servants. He at once knew what he must do to survive—he would become an undead. Robert had no wish to become a mindless skeleton or a vampire forced to feed to survive the ages; he wanted the ultimate prize—to become a liche!

Knowing that only the cult of Hela would possess the secret rite necessary to become such a powerful immortal, he methodically tracked down a cell of cultists. He joined their unhallowed ranks, quickly rising to the position of priest. Although he now worshipped the goddess of undeath in name, he had little true devotion to her



long-term cause. The cult served a purpose, and any fell ceremonies he participated in were stomachable because they were a means to an end.

Unfortunately for him, the ritual required to become a liche had been long lost. Indeed, no new liches had existed since the time of the dreaded Liche-Priest. Undeterred, for he had not expected instant success, he began scouring the ruins from that era, vainly hoping that one of the diabolical undead lord's minions had left a record somewhere. Not much of a warrior, he relies on adventuring parties for support, offering them his wisdom in return for their swords. He claims to be a historian searching for relics capable of defeating the soon-to-be-released Liche Priest.

DESCRIPTION

Robert's poor health has left him gaunt and pale, an image of walking death. His hair has turned prematurely grey and is rapidly thinning. Only his eyes, bright green pinpricks shining from his shrunken flesh, display any vibrancy. He is clean shaven, as is the Anari custom.

He disdains bright clothing, having discovered it only accentuates his deathly pall. Now he dresses in drab greys, the traditional colors of a scholar. He wears a plain gold ring on his right hand.

MANNERISMS

Apart from the fire burning in his eyes, Robert comes across as a typical scholar—slightly dull, studious, and dedicated. He has a growing fear of reflective surfaces, for his skeletal appearance is a constant reminder the shadow of death stalks him. He visibly shakes and breaks out in a cold sweat on seeing one. Embarrassed by his condition, he puts these uncontrollable panic attacks down to his ailment.



AUDE AP-HERNAUDIN

Race: Anari-Saxa; **Hometown:** Helgioland; **Occupation:** Hearth Knight; **Patron Deity:** Sigel.

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

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Healing d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Survival d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Bad Eyes, Cautious, Loyal, Orders

Edges: Connections (Hearth Knights), Hearth Knight

Languages: Anari, Frosttongue, Orcish

BACKGROUND

Aude comes from a long-line of Hearth Knights, though she is the first woman from her family to enlist.

The youngest of five daughters, Aude was always a tomboy, much to her father's delight and her mother's dismay. While her sisters mastered cooking, weaving, and running a household, skills vital to securing a good husband, Aude would watch her father training in the training lists, mimicking his moves with a wooden stick while battling imaginary orcs and giants.

She would walk with him while he patrolled the indomitable walls of Hellfrost Keep, where the family lived, fetching him bowls of steaming soup and mugs of warm ale from the kitchens to keep off the chill. She was popular with the knights under her father's command, whom she served similarly, becoming something akin to an adopted child to those knights without families.

Sensing that his youngest child would never make anyone a good wife, and regretful the gods had not seen fit to bless him with a son, her father began to train the

growing child. While the girl wanted to wield weapons, her father first built up her physical and mental stamina, instilling in her the belief that a healthy body and mind was key to winning any battle, not strength of arms. During his days off, he would take her into the wilds, instructing her in building shelters and hunting.

Aude was just 11 when her father, an experienced Sword Captain, led a patrol out of Hellfrost Keep to hunt down a band of orcs marauding the western border of Helgioland. He returned laid over the back of his horse, slain by cowardly archers while leading the charge. While his family and peers mourned his passing, Aude grieved hardest of all, for she out of all her family was closest to him. She had lost not just a father, but a role model.

Aude's mother tried to steer the girl toward finding a husband, or at least learning a worthwhile trade that would serve her well in the future. But Aude made it abundantly clear she intended to follow her father's footsteps and join the Hearth Knights, shouting down her mother by claiming that not to do so would break the family tradition of serving the illustrious order, an act which would dishonor their ancestors.

Aude expected no favors from the masters of the order, and she received none. Still, her father had prepared her well, and Aude quickly earned her right to spot the Shield Knight's sacred emblem. Her mother attended her passing out ceremony, but did so with tears in her eyes.

Now 16, Aude has served with the Knights for two years. She has gone on a few patrols and engaged in minor skirmishes against goblins, but she has yet to face a truly dangerous foe. In secret, she preys she never will, for although a capable warrior of stout heart and strong sword arm, Aude has no confidence in her abilities.

DESCRIPTION

Aude is pretty in a girlish way, and has yet to develop a full figure. Many people mistake her for a boy at first glance. Removing her helmet doesn't help, for she wears her dark brown hair cut short. Her blue eyes, a gift from her Saxa mother, and mouth are sorrowful even when Aude is enjoying herself. Her long sword, an heirloom handed down her mother's side, is never far from her hand, being a source of comfort.

MANNERISMS

Aude is a quiet, contemplative soul, fanatically loyal to her comrades yet more at home with her own company. Although a fully-fledged Shield Knight, she suffers from indecisiveness and a lack of confidence. She prefers to plan everything in minute detail so as to alleviate the chance of failure and stall having to make a decision that may prove the wrong one. Part of her problem is that she struggles to live up to her father's reputation, fearing that she will shame his memory. The other problem is her degenerating eyesight, a result of snow blindness she suffered as a youth that has left her extremely short-sighted.

AVHOLDT FLAMEHELM

Race: Frost dwarf; **Homeland:** Karad Marn; **Occupation:** Rune mage and healer; **Patron Deity:** Ertha
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Healing d6, Healing-Rune d8, Notice d6, Survival d6, Swimming d4, Throwing d6
Charisma: -3; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Habit (Minor: constantly fidgeting), Heat Lethargy, Insular, Overconfident, Slow, Stubborn
Edges: Arcane Background (Rune Magic), Low Light Vision, Mountain Born, Tough, Winter Soul
Languages: Dwarven, Frosttongue, Orcish, Trader
Powers: *Healing-Rune (boost/lower trait* (Healing and Vigor only), *healing, succor*)

BACKGROUND

Avholdt grew up the youngest son of a minor clan elder. With older brothers destined to ascend the seat of power or become military commanders, Bori was left to his own choice when it came to a career. He had initially wanted to be a warrior, but he lacked the typical dwarven fortitude, being something of a runt. Refused permission to enlist, he went around the problem by becoming a rune mage specializing in healing, intending on serving alongside the army should they ever be called to battle.

While researching something for his mentor, he stumbled across a reference to the moðsognar, the first race of dwarves created by Ertha. He told his mentor of his discovery, believing he had stumbled upon some great secret lost to his people. He was dismayed to learn that not only was knowledge of the first race known, but that the subject was taboo, never to be discussed. Bori maintained an interest in the subject, though he never informed his peers as to the nature of his research.

Avholdt was present sixty years ago when the orcs invaded his homeland. During the bitter retreat his wish to serve alongside the warriors came true, though it was one he quickly regretted. His head filled with stories of courage and honor, he found the reality to be a bloody, violent, soul destroying affair. He expected the mighty dwarf huscarls to wade through their foes, but instead he found himself dragging mangled and dead dwarves from the field of battle. For 20 years he labored, putting aside his feelings and carrying out his duties without question. But the day dawned when he could stomach no more.

Playing on his father's status, he gained audience with Thegn Rugnar. In front of the assembled noble council he raised the matter of the moðsognar, asking why the beleaguered dwarves did not seek the aid of their forebears. If the legends were true, he argued, then surely victory was assured. Better yet, he continued, with their help the dwarves could retake Karad Khan from whatever evil had befallen it. Thegn Rugnar flew into a rage, ordering the young medic to return to his unit and never speak such words again. Avholdt stood his ground.

Drawing his knife he vowed that he would find the moðsognar and enlist their aid, even if the thegn was too weak to do so. Before the huscarls could beat him senseless for his insolence, he hacked off great swathes of his beard, invoking the name of Ertha and vowing never to rest or regrow his beard until he had completed his quest and resorted his honor.

Promptly exiled, Avholdt has spent the past 40 years exploring the labyrinthine passages of the Underearth, desperately seeking a way to reach the hidden lairs of the first race. He is not above enlisting outside help, though he is careful never to reveal his true purpose, for even he has no wish to speak of the moðsognar to non-dwarves.

DESCRIPTION

Avholdt is highly unusual in that he has shaved his hair and beard, considered a mark of great shame among his people. He is underweight and generally unfit, something he has never been able to improve. He cares little about his general appearance, though as a physician he understands the need to bathe regularly. His clothes are scruffy, with worn elbows and knees. Frequently they are covered in caked on grime from one of his frequent subterranean expeditions.

MANNERISMS

Avholdt is filled with a nervous energy, a trait rare in dwarves. Whereas most of his kin are sedentary except when it comes to matters of war, Avholdt has to keep moving, even if that means drumming his fingers or pacing up and down. When discussing or working toward his goal, his eyes become those of a fanatic: wide, bright, and filled with an inner fire.





ORYZARIX

Race: Anari; **Homeland:** The Magocracy; **Occupation:** Arcanologist and priest; **Patron Deity:** Maera.

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

Skills: Faith d6, Fighting d4, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Streetwise d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Cautious, City Dweller, Greedy (Major), Orders (Cult of Maera & the Reliquary)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Connections (Cult of Maera), Connections (The Reliquary), Reliquary (Arcanologist), Rich

Languages: Anari, Auld Saxa, Classical Anari, Heligi

Powers: *Dispel, sanctuary*

BACKGROUND

Oryzarix, the son of a courtier of House Tharkness grew up around magic. Although he had absolutely no talent for the art, he found it fascinating, for it offered limitless potential. When he came of age he joined the cult of Maera, studying arcane lore and working alongside mages to better understand their art.

His studies brought the young cleric vast knowledge concerning relics. Oryzarix quickly fell under the spell of the enchanted items, desiring to possess one of the fabled items. After years of diligent research, Oryzarix uncovered his first minor item. A week later, a stranger called at the temple and asked audience with the cleric.

He told the young scholar he was an agent of the

Reliquary, and that he had an offer to present. He spoke at length to Oryzarix over dinner, telling him of the danger of relics, and how the Reliquary was devoted to protecting mankind from his own greed. Later that night the stranger offered Oryzarix membership in the order, for he had long been watched and displayed the talents necessary to serve as an Arcanologist. Furthermore, his status as a cleric of Maera would grant him access to the cult's libraries, wherein lay much arcane lore.

Oryzarix accepted without a moment's hesitation, though purely for selfish reasons. He had made it known to a few trusted heahwisards that he had found a relic, and they had offered him huge sums of money. Although the stranger's arrival had thwarted a sale, with the resources of the Reliquary at his disposal, he could unearth more relics.

A decade after entering the Citadel, during which time his service was exemplary, Oryzarix was granted rare status, being allowed to travel outside the walls without an escort. He does so as a cleric of Maera seeking to recover relics for the cult, never revealing his true allegiance or purpose. For eight years he has used his dual status to track down numerous relics. To begin with he called upon the services of the Reliquary to retrieve the relics and return them to the Citadel, at least in most instances. He kept a few relics back, quietly selling them to those who could his rates through a network of agents.

Oryzarix's superiors are becoming suspicious, for in recent years the Arcanologist has found very few relics. What they do not know is that he has unearthed as many as before. Grippled by gold-fever, Oryzarix has become a relic trader, caring nothing for their intended use or the morals of their new owner so long as their money is good. He has a secret sanctuary set up in a ruined fortress, from where he runs his illicit business.

DESCRIPTION

Tall and lean, Oryzarix shows little signs of impending middle age. His thick, light brown hair is long and thick, his chin clean shaven, his skin as smooth as when he was a youth. His fingers are long and thin, more like those of a skaldic musician than a scholar. His green eyes are serious, though there is a twinkle behind them.

MANNERISMS

A man bent on acquiring wealth beyond imagination, Oryzarix passes himself off as a humble priest, acting meek and mild, concealing with excitement when a true relic is discovered behind an air of mere curiosity. But once such a treasure is found, his mind begins scheming, plotting a way to acquire the valuable object.

Born and raised in the town of Tharkness and spending much of his young adult life in the Citadel, Oryzarix finds the wilderness a vast and frightening place, full of hidden dangers. He is extremely nervous and jumpy outdoors, prone to gesticulating wildly at rustling bushes and naively insulting those who live a rural life.

HESELBINE SHARP-TONGUE

Race: Saxa; **Homeland:** Royalmark; **Occupation:** Skald; **Patron Deity:** The Unknowable One.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Knowledge (Folklore) d8+1, Knowledge (Riddles) d8+1, Persuasion d6, Song Magic d8, Taunt d8

Charisma: +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Illiterate, Pacifist (Major), Quirk (Never takes anything seriously)

Edges: Arcane Background (Song Magic), Rich

Languages: Anari, Auld Saxa, Saxa, Trader

Powers: *Elemental manipulation, stun, voice on the wind*

BACKGROUND

Heselbine is the eldest of nine children. While his father worked to feed his brood and his mother tried her best to keep the house clean, their firstborn kept his siblings amused with stories. By the age of ten he was earning money as a storyteller, entertaining patrons in the village mead-hall with songs and tales learned from his elders. He attracted the attention of a passing skald. Seeing great promise in the young man, he paid for him to enroll in the prestigious Three-Notes Academy. Although upset to lose their childminder, his parents also rejoiced, for as a skald their son could earn a decent living and mingle in the higher echelons of society, perhaps even earning a position in a nobleman's court.

Heselbine proved an adept pupil. Although illiterate, he was capable of memorizing the key points of lengthy and complex tales and filling in the gaps around them with his own imagination. A rural peasant, Heselbine was bullied by his wealthier peers. While some might have ran away or resorted to violence, the young skald retaliated with his tongue, mocking his tormentors and making them the subject of ridicule. Quickly realizing that harmful words stung as painfully as weapons and that the injuries lasted much longer, Heselbine renounced violence, an oath he has maintained throughout his life.

His training complete, Heselbine set out into the world to play his trade. His jovial nature and happy-go-lucky attitude gained him work, while his vast repertoire of stories and quick imagination opened many doors. With a knack of relating heroic stories directly to his patrons, thus alluding to them having the same qualities as the heroes of old, he rapidly became a favorite among the Nordmark nobility. As a result, both his reputation and wealth swelled.

Although he lived a good life and wanted for little in terms of material goods, Heselbine wanted more than playing for generous patrons. He knew that while the stories of old could never be allowed to pass from memory, new tales of brave heroes overcoming terrible odds were also required, tales that related specifically to the troubles of here and now, not the bygone days of old.

Heselbine hires himself out as a chronicler, offering adventuring groups the chance to have their exploits recorded in song and verse for posterity. He refuses to lie about heroic deeds, but he is willing to goad would-be heroes into taking risks so as to make their story more interesting.

DESCRIPTION

Heselbine suffers from borderline vanity. His beard is immaculately trimmed, his long hair frequently washed and combed, tied back over his ears with a simple leather band, his nails cut neat and short, and his clothes always clean. Even his teeth are white and straight.

Patronized by the nobility and rewarded well for his entertainment, Heselbine is bedecked in expensive jewelry. A gold torc sits around his neck, a gem-studded brooch fixes his ermine cloak around his shoulders, and silver ring adorn his nimble fingers. His clothes, while wool and linen, are well-woven and stitched, worthy of any senior courtier or lesser nobleman.

MANNERISMS

Heselbine is a jocular and jovial chap, always cracking jokes and making light of serious situations. Fond of practical jokes, he claims to have an invisible lute, which he plays with exquisite skill. It is actually a clever use of the *elemental manipulation (air)* spell accompanied by accurate pantomime actions.

Possessed of quick wit and sharp tongue, Heselbine is never at a loss of words. Instead of rebuking others, he uses quips to satirize them, hoping to shame those who have a destiny into decisive action. A man of peace and a shrewd judge of character, he uses well-aimed words to wound his enemies.



EPOCHENRELLIAN

Race: Hearth elf; **Homeland:** Angarion; **Occupation:** Bladedancer; **Patron Deity:** Sigel.

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Healing d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Tracking d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: All Thumbs, Clueless (Outside of forests), Loyal, Vow (Minor: complete his quest)

Edges: Agile, Bladedancer, Forest Born, Low Light Vision, Natural Realms, Two Fisted

Languages: Fey, Hearth Elven, Trader

BACKGROUND

On the day Epochenrellian was born his parents received a visit from a cleric of the Norns, a rare event indeed, for hearth elves put little faith in the machinations of the triple goddesses, rarer still because the cleric was a human. As she cut Epochenrellian's cord and whispered his destiny into his ear, a beam of sunlight fell across the babe's face, bathing him in Sigel's divine glory.

Naturally graceful and as fluid in his movements as running water, Epochenrellian always wanted to become a bladedancer. As a child he neglected his chores and other duties, preferring to watch the warriors practice their deadly dances. At night, while his parents slept, he stole out from the house, flawlessly mimicking the complex moves with a pair of stout sticks.

No one was surprised when the young elf was awarded the twin blades of a bladedancer by his village's ruling noble. What came as a total surprise to the assembled crowd was that no sooner had the ceremony ended than members of the Shining King's personal bodyguards, the Brilliant Blades, strode into the village, locked their

blades around the panic stricken boy in a protective circle, and demanded Epochenrellian follow them.

Epochenrellian was marched to the capital and into the Shining King's palace, an honor few elves of even high noble status had been awarded in the past century. He expected to be greeted by the king's chamberlain, the king's spokesman. His heart nearly leapt from his chest when he was informed his audience was with the Shining King in person, for no one except the chamberlain had stood in the king's presence for nigh on 100 years.

To this day, he refuses to discuss the appearance of his liege with anyone. All he will say regarding the meeting is that the monarch spoke to him in gentle yet authoritative tones, telling the awestruck elf that Sigel had granted him a vision. The sun god told him that the "beacon must be rekindled," further instructing him that the "one who dances and cuts the dark" was ordained to act as his agent on this quest. Epochenrellian's name literally translates as the "dancer who slashes through the darkness."

Duty bound to obey his liege's commands, Epochenrellian did so with great humility, immense trepidation, and a healthy measure of abject terror. His task is but a few months old, and the elf warrior is still making his way out of the Hearthlands. Although the elves are famed for their knowledge of olden days, they know little of the modern world beyond their leafy borders, for the realms of other races are of scant interest to them.

Epochenrellian has no real idea where he must journey to fulfill his goal. He has heard word of a human culture of Sigel-worshippers known as the Selari, who he believes live far to the north. Visiting them seems a good place as any to begin.

DESCRIPTION

Slender and graceful, Epochenrellian has the gaunt, angular features common to his race. His mouth is thin, almost lipless, with down turned corners that give him a glum look. His fine, golden yellow hair falls to the middle of his back and is worn swept back in the traditional elf style, held in place by a thin gold band adorned with a sunstone. Two thin braids hang down in front of his ears. His bright green eyes are alert and attentive.

He wears green and brown leathers, favoring the mobility the lightweight and sturdy material allows over encumbering metal armor. His only weapons are a pair of thin bladed elven short swords, one of the traditional weapons of the bladedancers.

MANNERISMS

Epochenrellian is a natural hunter—always alert, and ready to leap into action at a moment's notice. He tries to maintain an air of seriousness, but like his kin he is fond of music and dance. He treats strangers with aloofness, sizing them up and waiting for their actions to reveal their true motives. He gives his trust only rarely, but when he does, he would die to protect his friends.



NEORIC AP-SAMUR

Race: Anari; **Homeland:** Blackstone Barony; **Occupation:** Resistance leader; **Patron Deity:** Thunor.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Lockpicking d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6
Hindrances: Heroic, Loyal, Wanted (Major: agents of Regent Blackstaff)
Edges: Noble (currently dispossessed)
Languages: Anari, Classical Anari, Trader

BACKGROUND

Life was good for young Neoric. The only son of an important Blackstone knight, he spent his youth hunting and feasting while learning the arts of politics and leadership. His life, like those of so many of the barony's citizens, changed 15 years ago.

His father was a loyal supporter of Baron Godwin. When the baron died, he was the first to speak out against Orol Blackstaff taking the title of Regent, claiming that it was the right of the College of Knights to guide the people until young Pendel came of age. Within weeks, Neoric's father was accused of sedition and arrested. A jury of his peers, hand picked by the Regent, sentenced him to death.

At the age of 17, barely old enough under Blackstone law to hold office, Neoric inherited the title of knight, becoming ruler of his family's extensive and prosperous lands. Although young, Neoric had sense to keep his tongue still, refusing to speak out against the man he privately accused of murdering his father, yet never once supporting the Regent's position or policies.

As Blackstaff's excesses grew and his stranglehold on power tightened, Neoric found it impossible to be an idle spectator any longer. In a defiant gesture he summoned the College of Knights to session, as was his right as a member, speaking out against Blackstaff and calling upon his peers to remove the tyrant.

But Neoric found no allies. Some of his peers were too afraid to speak out, for many of those who had done so had been arrested and their lands confiscated. Others were lackeys of the Regent, either seeking to benefit through loyalty or outsiders placed in positions of power by Blackstaff. Like his father, Neoric was arrested.

The young nobleman was popular with the masses, and Blackstaff hesitated in ordering his execution, fearing an uprising. Instead, he had Neoric cruelly tortured, hoping to extract a confession that would seal the rebellious nobleman's fate. Neoric suffered unspeakable torment for six months before the newly-formed Lord's Men rescued him and smuggled him into Ostmark.

Blackstaff used the escape to condemn Sir Neoric, claiming that an innocent man had nothing to fear. He declared his lands confiscated, installing a black-hearted lackey as the new ruler.



Since his liberation, Neoric has served with the Lord's Men, recruiting allies both in and around Blackstone, and using his contacts to acquire weapons with monies taken from the Regent's treasury shipments. Thanks to his fervor, his willingness to lead raids against the Regent's interests, and his former status as a knight he has become something of a figurehead.

DESCRIPTION

Neoric is of average height and build, though he carries himself with a quiet air of authority that demands attention. Most noticeable about him is a livid, red, jagged scar, a constant reminder of Regent Blackstaff's tyrannical rule, that runs down the left side of his face from temple to chin.

Neoric's once black hair is now streaked with premature grey, though his luxuriant moustache has lost none of its sheen. Although his scar is an identifying mark, he wears his hair swept behind his ears, displaying the ugly wound so others can see the truth behind his words.

Despite being dispossessed of his lands and wealth, he retains a fine set of clothes, for his honor and heritage have not been taken from him.

MANNERISMS

Although his life is imperiled, Neoric refuses to hide behind aliases. A man of immense honor, he speaks his name with pride, having no fear of the assassin's blade, for he believes his cause is righteous and just, and thus he is protected by Thunor. That said, he refuses to use his noble title until he once again rules his ancestral lands.

He speaks of his homeland with a mixture of passion and sorrow, making no attempt to disguise his love of his people and his hatred of Regent Blackstaff.



DARAN BEAR-ARMS

Race: Saxa; **Hometown:** Royalmark (outlawed); **Occupation:** Pugilistic paladin; **Patron Deity:** Tiw.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d6

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d10, Healing d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Survival d4

Charisma: -1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Big Mouth, Death Wish (find a worthy foe), Habit (Minor: always cracking his knuckles), Outlaw

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Berserk, Martial Artist (Pugilism & wrestling)

Languages: Saxa, Trader

Powers: *Boost/lower trait* (Spirit, Strength, Vigor, Fighting, Riding, Shooting, and Throwing), *smite*

** Daran commits a mortal sin if he ever uses weapons other than his fists or grapples. This includes offensive spells such as bolt or blast, even in alchemical devices. In return for this restriction, he has an additional Edge.*

BACKGROUND

After a difficult and lengthy labor that almost killed her, Daran's mother finally delivered a hulking baby boy. His enormous strength was evident from an early age, for even as a child he could carry weights that grown men struggled to lift. Although not the village idiot, Daran ran a close second, for what he gained in muscle he lacked in brains and common sense.

Unable to find a skilled apprenticeship, Daran became a logger, his strength allowing him to do the work of a team of lesser men. The hours were long, the work back-breaking, and the rewards pitiful, but Daran found the hard, laborious work to his liking.

One evening, Daran was in the mead-hall drinking

when strangers entered, seeking shelter for the night. On seeing the massive form of the lumberjack, they began to tease him in a light-hearted manner. Daran's kith and kin had long known to mind their words, for he had a temper as mighty as his physical strength. Daran pleaded with the men to stop, but his words only fuelled their taunts. Before anyone could warn the strangers to back off, Daran had lashed out with one of his immense fists, breaking the man's neck in a single blow.

Although much loved in his community, the locals had no choice but to put Daran on trial. He was found guilty and outlawed, never again allowed to return home. Collecting his few personal effects, Daran trudged into the wilds, still unsure what he had done wrong.

Months later he found himself enlisted in a temple of Tiw. An itinerant paladin had witnessed Daran beat three orc warriors to death single-handedly, and immediately recognized a soul blessed by the god of strength and war. Daran told the man of his exile, for he was an honest soul prone to speaking his mind. The paladin waved away his past, claiming that through training he could learn to master his temper and focus his strength.

With his prestigious strength, his mentors expected him to become a servant of one of Tiw's two-handed weapon sub-cults, such as the Tiw the Great Swordsman or Tiw the Pikeman. Instead, he opted to honor a little known aspect, Tiw the Pugilist, swearing a holy vow never to use any other weapon than his fists and grapples.

Although he is not entirely sure what the term means, Daran is an itinerant mercenary, wandering the land in search of work and the opportunity to test his strength and faith. Somehow he has convinced himself that Tiw has set him a challenge—to find a foe worthy of defeating him before he will be allowed into the Afterlife.

Daran has beat goblins, orcs, and ogres to death with his hands, suffering many injuries yet always emerging from battle the victor. Now beginning to wonder if he will ever encounter a creature he cannot defeat, he intends to head north in search of a frost giant, or maybe a dragon. Sadly, he has no true concept of the awesome might of these creatures.

DESCRIPTION

Standing well over six feet, barrel-chested, and with arms like tree-trunks, Daran is a hulking brute of a man. He wears his hair and beard long and shaggy, adding to his reputation for being more bear than man. His chest, shoulders, and arms are covered in thick black hair.

MANNERISMS

Daran has a fiery temper he is barely able to keep under control in normal circumstances, yet alone when truly riled. He takes any slight personally, reacting with punches before his brain has time to engage. Honest, innocent of the ways of treachery, and gullible, he is unable to grasp the concept of keeping secrets, making him something of a liability.

JASA ASH-HANDS

Race: Anari; **Homeland:** blah; **Occupation:** Elemental of the Convocation; **Patron Deity:** Kenaz.

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

Skills: Elementalism d8, Fighting d4, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (Folklore) d8*, Notice d6

Charisma: +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Shy (–1 Charisma), Stubborn

Edges: Arcane Background (Fire Elementalism), Attractive, Spell Finesse (Arcane: *bolt*)

Languages: Anari, Auld Saxa, Classical Anari, Trader

Powers: *Bolt, deflection, elemental manipulation (fire)*

* *Jasa has a –1 penalty to generic Folklore rolls, but +2 regarding stories of Angar Kindlefire.*

BACKGROUND

Jasa had an unhealthy fixation with fire even as a young girl. As a youth, she spent most of her time helping her mother around the hearth and watching the lowly charcoal burners at work, showing little interest in learning to weave or, as she matured, in the young men of her village. Her nickname, Ash-Hands, is not complimentary, yet it has stuck with her.

Jasa knew of the Convocation from the tales of skalds, and, upon reaching puberty, asked her father if she could join. Jasa's father was only too keen to be rid of the girl, for although she had a womanly figure she had few abilities that would make her an attractive wife. Furthermore, the Convocation did not demand any fees for tutoring, which pleased the simple farmer to no end.

Jasa learned well, but unfortunately, she quickly became distracted from her studies in following a legend. Said to be the greatest fire elemental who ever lived, legends state Angar Kindlefire achieved fantastic power. All fire elementalists agree that none of their ilk has ever come close to reaching his level of mastery. Almost a thousand years later, Angar is still regarded as one of the top five arkhwisards of all time—among fire elementalists he is regarded as the greatest ever arkhwisard. Driven by the desire to learn his secrets, the Convocation dispatched numerous expeditions to find his fabled workshop down the centuries. All returned empty-handed, though not without severe losses.

The Convocation lost interest after the Blizzard War, and the story of Angar Kindlefire's Workshop faded into myth. Jasa, though, believed the many stories. She admitted the passage of time had likely distorted the facts, but at their heart was a kernel of truth. Her fixation with the great arkhwisard led to her being mocked by her peers and chastised by her superiors, for the great promise she showed as a student was being wasted on futile research into a legend.

Even when Jasa uncovered documents written by Angar long believed lost, her fellow elementalists scorned

her for chasing a dream. Frustrated and driven by what she had learned, Jasa packed her bags and set off to find the lost workshop on her own.

DESCRIPTION

Jasa is an attractive young woman, with fine features framed by flowing auburn hair. Her eyes are the color of cold ashes, but glitter with energy. She could be a truly beautiful woman, but her downward gaze and nervous smile distracts from her natural allure.

Although she has no interest in marriage, she has received many gifts from would-be suitors within the Convocation. Her clothes are well-made and exquisitely decorated, her thick cloak is luxuriant velvet, a soft shade of red bordered with yellow that compliments her hair. All are decorated with glittering bloodstone and hearthstone chips. Seen from a distance, she has the appearance of a walking flame.

MANNERISMS

Bullied as a child because of her disinterest in the womanly arts, Jasa remains a very shy young woman. She is clumsy around the opposite sex, and tongue-tied around strangers. Only when speaking about the great Angar Kindlefire does she talk with confidence, though often she tends to babble unless stopped. Jasa also has a stubborn streak a mile wide, something her mentors have chastised her for more than once. Rather naive regarding the ways of the world, she expects people to behave as she does—with honor and honesty.



WAYAN

Race: Engro; **Homeland:** None (nomadic); **Occupation:** Priest; **Patron Deity:** Nauthiz.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Gambling d6, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Heroic, Loyal, Outsider, Quirk (Fiddles with his jewelry), Small

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Luck, Sneaky (Lockpicking), Spirited, Thief

Languages: Engrosi, Fingerspeak, Trader

Powers: *Bolt, boost/lower trait* (Agility, Climbing, Lockpicking, Notice, and Stealth only)

BACKGROUND

Wayan's father was a wainwright (a craftsman who made and repaired wagons), moving from village to village throughout spring and summer months in search of work. Although his skills were much in need, Wayan's father was never paid as much as human wainwrights, and he was always treated with an air of suspicion. A mischievous youth, Wayan did little to improve the engros' reputation for thievery, for he was always stealing small items. He had little interest in acquiring wealth, and his larcenous activities were a mixture of alleviating boredom and making up the difference in his father's wages.

Wayan saw inequality in wealth as a great injustice, unable to comprehend why those with wealth and material possessions did not share their riches and goods with others, as was the engro way. He began to steal more than his father was owed, leaving the excess outside orphanages and the houses of the poor in a bid to

try and balance out the injustices he felt made the world such a bad place.

Wayan was caught cutting the purse of a man he believed to be a rich merchant. The pale-faced engro, who expected a beating at best and the wrath of the law judiciary at worse, was shocked when the man robbed him of everything he owned, even down to his loincloth! His intended victim politely told the engro he could win his possessions back in a game of chance. If he lost, Wayan would have to work for the stranger until he stole enough to cover his losses. Angered at yet more injustice, Wayan nonetheless accepted. Nauthiz was with him that day, for he won back his few goods and made a small profit.

The man took the loss with good grace. He revealed himself to be a paladin of Nauthiz, and offered to train the engro in the finer arts of thievery. Idealistic, Wayan replied that he had no interest in personal wealth, and that he only stole to help the poor. When the thief stopped laughing, he informed Wayan that Nauthiz did not care what a thief did with his earnings, only that he stole from those who could afford it. Informing his father he had found an apprenticeship, the engro promptly joined the cult of Nauthiz.

Now middle-aged, Wayan is a fully trained thief and priest of Nauthiz whose morals would shock most other thieves. He steals only from the rich, giving all but the little money he needs to survive and appease his greedy god to those in need. In addition to his independent acts of burglary, Wayan actively helps those who have been unjustly taxed or robbed of their few possessions.

He never reveals he is a thief, nor that he has any intention of helping the victim. Instead, he acts as a concerned citizen interested in the victim's sorry tale. He then recovers the missing artifact, covering his costs by lifting other items from the victim's oppressor.

DESCRIPTION

Wayan is getting on in years. His weathered skin is showing more wrinkles than he would like and his hair is beginning to thin. His brown eyes are alert, shining with a mischievous gleam. He covers his balding pate with a headscarf, the traditional headgear of his people. One side is jet black and used only during missions, while the other is brightly colored.

Wayan positively glitters in sunlight. Like many engro, he prefers to wear his wealth rather than conceal it. Each finger is adorned with a gold ring, large gold hoops hang from his ears, and he wears a gold pendant and a string of silver beads around his neck.

MANNERISMS

Wayan has a serious and playful side. His serious nature comes to the surface when listening to stories of injustice. During this time he twists the gold rings on his fingers, his eyes never leaving those of his "client." Only when engaged in larcenous activities does he begin to relax and enjoy himself.



HERESWITH THE BLIND

Race: Saxa; **Homeland:** Freelands (Aslov); **Occupation:** Priestess; **Patron Deity:** Eira.

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

Skills: Faith d8, Healing d8+2, Knowledge (Alchemy) d6, Persuasion d6, Survival d6, Taunt d8

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Blind*, Orders, Pacifist (Minor), Poverty

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles)*, Connections (Cult of Eira), Healer, Spell Finesse (Arcane: *healing*)

Languages: Anari, Engrosi, Saxa, Trader

Powers: *Healing, succor*

* During the Deorcmonan, Hereswith loses her Blind Hindrance and Arcane Background Edge. She is still subject to sins, though.

BACKGROUND

As a child, Hereswith was orphaned and taken in by the cult of Eira. Raised by the cult, she was trained as a healer and herbalist. The girl had little interest in caring for others, for she was selfish and vain by nature. Instead of learning about herbs, she preferred to play or flirt with the local boys, for she knew they found her attractive and she greatly enjoyed their attentions.

One day, a priestess of the Norns came to the temple seeking a cure for a minor ailment. Busy with tending the injuries of warriors wounded in a recent action against orc raiders, the healers ordered Hereswith to brew up the simple herbal remedy. Hereswith' mind was not on the here and now. She had arranged to meet a boy she fancied later that evening, and her thoughts were filled only with him. Distracted, she mixed the wrong herbs, creating not a curative tonic but a potent poison. The Norn priestess drank the mixture the girl offered her. Within seconds she was writhing on the ground, clutching her throat as the toxin began to destroy her organs. With her dying breath she cursed the careless healer, invoking the name of Maera with bitter fury.

Bound to carry out the curse, for it had been uttered in her name by one devoted to her, Maera struck the girl blind, transforming her eyes into milky orbs. Hereswith was distraught, for she could no longer gaze upon her reflection or see the look of admiration on the faces of her admirers. Considering her life pointless, she swallowed poison.

As she lay dying Eira appeared to her, asking her why she sought to end her life. The deity listened impassively as Hereswith's spirit spoke. When she had finished, Eira offered her a simple choice—devote herself to the goddess and tend the needs of the many sick, or perish and risk Scaetha's judgment. Hereswith gazed back along the thread of her life and saw that she had squandered her existence. She accepted Eira's offer.

Out of pity, Eira counted part of Maera's curse, decreeing that she would regain her vision during the four days of Deorcmonan, when Maera was distracted. Eira's



interference was not without cost, though—while she was sighted, Hereswith would not be able to call upon the goddess' aid.

Since that day, Hereswith has served Eira with total devotion, travelling the land and offering her services free of charge. Mostly blind, she has learned to treat men as equals, swayed not one iota by physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION

Except during the period of Deorcmonan, Hereswith's eyes are milky white, sightless orbs. Her face is calm and serene, a gentle smile perpetually on her soft, pale lips. When the moon is dark, her eyes are brilliant green orbs filled with sorrow. Her chestnut brown hair is unfettered and well-groomed, held in place beneath a plain, white headscarf.

She wears a simple white gown, adorned with two silver brooches. Around her head is a cowled cloak of midnight blue, its hem adorned with a Saxa knotwork design symbolizing the eternity of existence. She wears her holy symbol, a silver brooch studded with small bloodstones, as a cloak fastener.

MANNERISMS

Hereswith comports herself with a calm composure and compassionate manner. She is attentive to her patient's needs, soothing their worries with gentle words and allaying songs. She accepts offers of assistance with immense humility, yet holds no ill will to those who refuse to show her compassion. When others argue for violent action, Hereswith is the voice of reason, always seeking a peaceful solution to any dispute. When she has her sight returned, she cries often, for only then can she witness the terrible suffering men endure.



KNIGHT-SQUIRE ENPAZ

Race: Anari; **Homeland:** Vestmark; **Occupation:** Knight Hrafn; **Patron Deity:** Tiw.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Investigation d4, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4, Survival d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Loyal, Orders (Knights Hrafn), Orders (Marshal of Vestmark), Vow (Major: Find the Hrafn Banner and return it to Vestmark)

Edges: Command, Command Presence, Connections (Knights Hrafn), Knight Hrafn

Languages: Anari, Auld Saxa, Saxa

BACKGROUND

Enpaz has only vague memories of his father, though his mother spoke of him fondly. Enpaz was just four years old when the orcs surged out of the mountains and into southern Vestmark. His father, a proud patriot despite being of Anari blood, answered the king's call to arms. He died alongside his kinsmen in the Battle of Torn Ground.

The boy grew to manhood, and dutifully joined the army as his father had done. Enpaz's mother died of a broken heart shortly afterward, mourning for a dead husband and a son she believed would soon join him.

Death did not concern Enpaz, for Vestmarkers were accustomed to its constant presence. What disgusted him was the lack of strong leadership, for many of Vestmark's company commanders were nobles appointed for their status, not their talents. More than once he was punished

for issuing orders in direct contradiction to those of his superiors. Although his actions saved many lives, the nobility would not tolerate disobedience.

Fortunately, reports of his leadership qualities had filtered back to Marshal Theodred, commander of Vestmark's army. Sensing the boy would make a fine commander if properly trained, he withdrew him from active service, sponsoring his membership in the Knights Hrafn and personally vouching for his abilities.

It was during his training that Enpaz learned of the fabled Hrafn Banner, a powerful relic once wielded by the old Saxa kings. Although the war banner was captured and taken to Alantaris Isle by the Anari, legends claim it was smuggled back to the mainland before the Blizzard War. Although it had not been seen since the days of the Liche-Priest (at least according to one vague Saxa legend), the Knights Hrafn have long sought it.

On completing his train, Enpaz volunteered for every post that put him in charge of a Vestmark company, his desire to serve his country undiminished. Fortunately, he did not have to wait long to earn his first command. He served on the frontline for three years, earning many victories, yet constantly frustrated by the armies' inability to drive the orcs back from the border.

Although a loyal Knight Hrafn and an Anari, Enpaz's first loyalty was always to his homeland. He approached Marshal Theodred after a military briefing, telling his commander about the Hrafn Banner. Should it be found, Enpaz said, Theodred could lead Vestmark's army to victory, hopefully before the war ruined the country beyond salvation.

Dubious the relic still existed, Theodred nonetheless contacted the Knights Hrafn and extended Enpaz's contract with Vestmark for a further five years, ensuring the commander would have money to support him on his quest. Enpaz has packed his bags and is now ready to begin his long and no doubt arduous quest.

DESCRIPTION

Enpaz is 26 years old, though three years serving on the frontline have left him with the look of a man two decades older. His brown hair is already heavily streaked with gray, his eyes have a haunted, tired look, and his brow is constantly furrowed. Although an Anari, he has grown a short beard, knowing his men respect him for adopting Saxa custom.

MANNERISMS

Enpaz is a decisive and capable commander of men, totally lacking arrogance or vanity. He listens to advice from his underlings, and has no qualms about acting on sound wisdom. He is fanatically loyal to those he leads, acknowledging that some must die in order to secure the greater objective, yet never wastefully sending them into battle. When it comes to Vestmark he is very defensive, accepting no slander of its proud military, and refusing to accept that the battle is already lost.

AILINIL OF THE WILD

Race: Hearth elf; **Homeland:** Dreamwood (exiled);
Occupation: Druid; **Patron Deity:** Eostre Plantmother.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Druidism d8, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Alchemy) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6
Charisma: +0/-4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: All Thumbs, Bloodthirsty, Orders (Guardians of the Wild), Outlaw
Edges: Agile, Arcane Background (Druid), Forest Born, Hedge Magic, Low Light Vision, Natural Realms
Languages: Arboreal, Hearth Elven, Taiga Elven
Powers: *Armor, bolt, smite*

BACKGROUND

Ailinil has always considered herself blessed by Eostre. Plants she tended as a child always grew strong and tall, she skipped unimpaired through brambles, the thorny plants seeming to part for her, and the first time she became eligible to participate in the great Birthing Day ritual she was chosen as Eostre Queen.

That she chose to become a druid surprised no one, for she already knew the names and medicinal properties of every plant in her forest home and in lands beyond, despite never having travelled.

Her first excursion beyond the forest's borders was a pilgrimage to the Stone Forest. It was on this journey she witnessed the rapacious nature, for her mentor, an elder, recalled a time when large swathes of farmland were forested. Then she saw the village of Wudusmoca and the effects of its extensive charcoal burning industry. At that moment her heart broke and her soul withered.

On returning home she spoke passionately about the destruction of their homeland, but her people were not prepared to enrage the humans by acts of violence. One elf, a lesser noble, studied the girl intently as she tried to rally her cousins, smiling ever wider as her argument grew more toward violence.

Later that summer, while patrolling the edge of the forest, Ailinil spied a small band of humans hacking down mighty trees. Angered, she reacted with violence, shredding the flesh of the despoilers with barrages of magical thorns. By the time her fury had vented the humans were dead, their blood oozing into the thick, dark soil.

Ailinil's crime (the humans had permission from the local elf noble to harvest a few trees each year in return for certain favors) did not go unnoticed by the elven sentries. She was arrested, tried, and outlawed. As she made her way to the forest's edge to begin her exile, she found an elf noble blocking her path. He said he had followed her trial with interest, before asking whether she would kill again to protect Eostre's garden from despoilers. Her answer obviously pleased him, for Ailinil was offered membership in the Guardians of the Wild.

Since then she has waged a constant war against humans, leading brutal raids against small logging camps,

killing lone woodsmen, and torching wood mills and crop fields. No one who despoils nature without making suitable recompense is spared her fury.

DESCRIPTION

When in the bosom of Eostre's garden, Ailinil is a radiant beauty, her amber eyes wide and gleaming, her face split by a wide smile, her long blond hair flowing freely in the wind. To many, she is the ideal image of Eostre the provider. But her mood can turn in an instant, and with it her face. Her eyes narrow to catlike slits, her smile replaced by a stern grimace, her pale features darkening with near uncontrollable rage.

Ailinil dresses in simple but functional green robes. She disdains jewelry, favoring simple floral adornments to brighten her garb.

MANNERISMS

Ailinil has a dual personality. On the one hand, she is a caring child of the forest, displaying tenderness toward all plant life, tending sick and injured plants, and even singing to the trees. When in natural surroundings her face beams like that of a child seeing the wonders of the world for the first time.

Yet when presented with destruction of the forests or the growth of human civilization she becomes a calculating, sadistic, cold-hearted killer, slaughtering those who would despoil the forests without mercy, feeding the ground with their blood. When so riled she is the personification of the dark side of Eostre, the raging beast that lurks within the hearts of all mortals. She shows great intolerance and apathy toward all humans, though those who respect nature are spared her rage.





TAVOS BLADESINGER TOLARGGAN

Race: Tuomi; **Homeland:** The Borderlands; **Occupation:** Warrior poet; **Patron Deity:** Tiw.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d4, Knowledge (Folklore) d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Song Magic d8, Stealth d4, Taunt d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Habit (Minor: always talking about himself), Overconfident, Stubborn

Edges: Arcane Background (Song Magic)

Languages: Giant, Orcish, Trader, Tuomi

Powers: *Boost/lower trait, fear, warrior's gift*

Special: Tavos always plays up his own actions at the expense of others. If the party lets him recount their deeds, they suffer a -2 penalty to any Glory awards, while Tavos gains a +1 bonus.

BACKGROUND

Fascinated as a boy by the heroic tales told by skalds around glowing hearths, and seeing the rapt faces of the audience as the storytellers spoke carefully intoned words to bring their stories to life, Tavos decided at an early age that he too wanted to be a storyteller. Born to a humble family with no ancestors of any significance, he longed to be somebody, to have his name spoken of fondly for ages to come. Having memorized the core facts of many of the epic stories he heard in his youth, he easily found a mentor willing to instruct him in the time-

honored art. Although he enjoyed the traditional stories of his youth, he wanted to create new legends, thinking that through these we would immortalize his name.

As soon as he finished his training he set out into the world, joining adventuring parties as they sought out ancient ruins and deadly orcs. On returning to civilization he composed his comrades' exploits into new stories, carefully judging the meter to emphasize the deeds. He told his stories in taverns and to hosts who offered him hospitality, delighting as he watched their faces.

As the years passed, Tavos heard others speaking about the new tales he had created. Beaming with pride, he introduced himself to people, expecting them to marvel at his name. Instead, he received nothing but blank stares and shrugs. Tavos has learned a hard lesson—few of an audience could ever recall a single storyteller's name, though they could recall the names and deeds of the heroes they spoke about. It was then Tavos realized the stark truth—if he wanted to become famous he would have to stop telling tales about others and tell stories about his own brave deeds. In order to have tales to tell, he would need to perform heroic deeds, for no good ever befell those who claimed to be heroes and could not back up their claims.

Spending his meager wealth on some basic equipment, Tavos set out to build a glorious reputation. Despite a few successful (albeit it very minor) solo adventures, Tavos's tales have made little impact on his audiences. Now he intends to join an adventuring party and lead them to face a truly formidable foe, something worthy of praise.

DESCRIPTION

Tavos' appearance doesn't live up to his inflated opinion of himself as a mighty hero. His long, thin face is marked by permanent woad tattoos, but they are haphazard, self-inflicted markings, not the true tattoos of a Tuomi warrior. He is clean shaven, though his hair is long, unkempt, and dirty, as is the Tuomi way.

His equipment is equally ill-suited to his self-aggrandizement. His meager wealth has allowed him only a simple spear, a dented pot helm, a leather shirt, and a shield, hardly the trappings of a warrior hero.

MANNERISMS

The first word out of Tavos' mouth is usually "I." He constantly talks about his exploits, exaggerating them as much as he feels his audience can accept in order to try and boost his own reputation. He never lies, knowing that falsehoods have a habit of catching up with the liar.

He frequently yawns during adventurers' recounts of their endeavors, feigning disinterested in their pitiful adventures before leaping in with his anecdote of his own that surpasses the one he has just heard.

Headstrong and reckless, Tavos has yet to realize that true heroes are forged by *having* to overcome adversity, not by deliberately seeking glory.