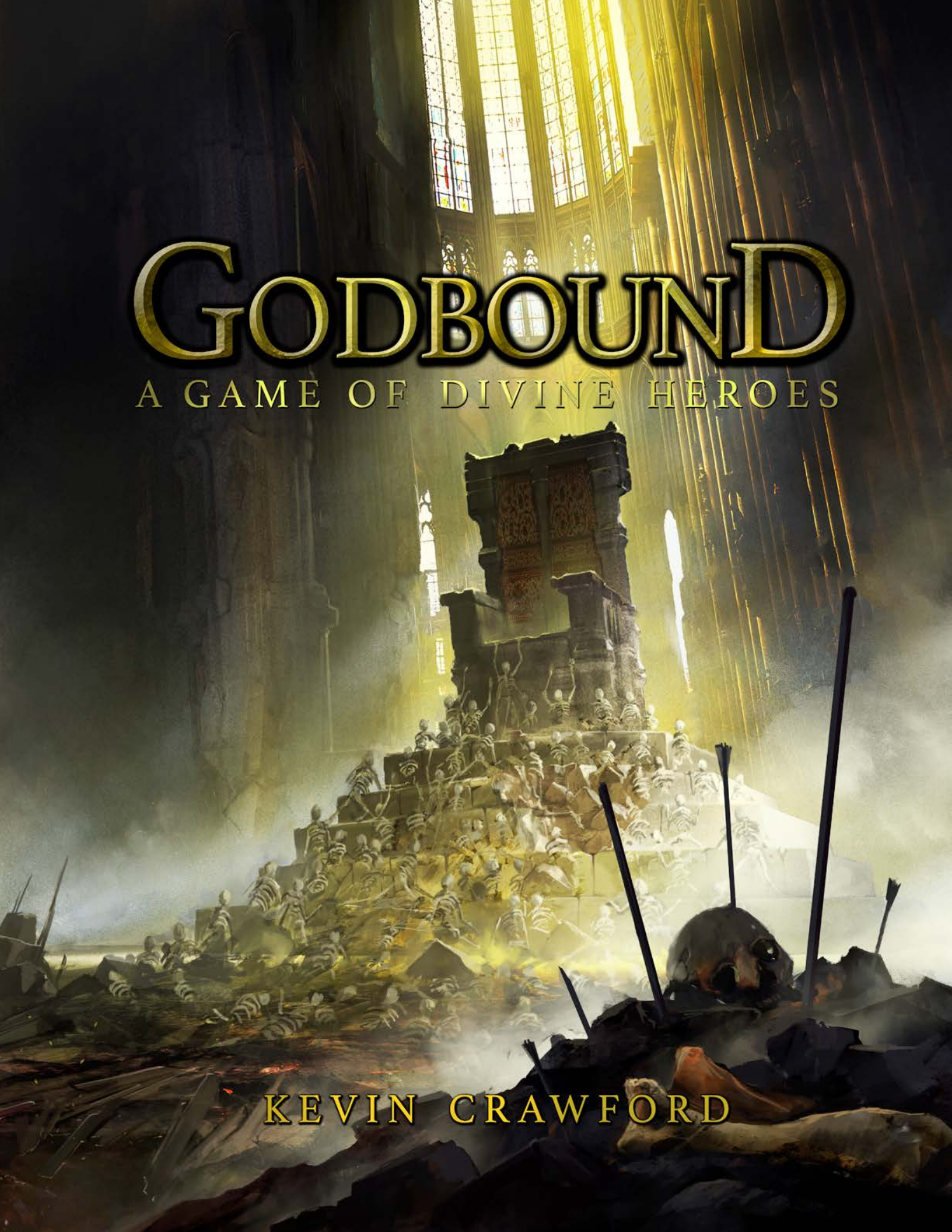




# GODBOUND

A GAME OF DIVINE HEROES

KEVIN CRAWFORD



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Written by Kevin Crawford

Cover by Jeff Brown

Cartography by Maxime Plasse

Character sheet by Craig Judd

Art by Jeff Brown, Christof Grobelski, Aaron Lee, Joyce Maureira, and Tan Ho Sim

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# NEW GODS AWAKEN

Heaven has fallen. The world is broken. The Throne is empty.

More than a thousand years ago the Former Empires ruled in glory. Wonders beyond imagining littered the nations of that ancient age, even the least of men and women living with the luxury of a Bright Republic oligarch. Hunger, sickness, ignorance, pain... all the blights to which mortal bodies are heir were banished by the marvels of the Former Empires.

The agent of this mercy was the might of theurgy, the terrible High Magic uncovered by restless scholars of the old realms. With the secrets of theurgy at their disposal, sages were able to lay impious hands on the very levers of creation, manipulating cosmic powers far beyond the birthright of mortal humanity. The deep powers of the Creator were at their disposal at last, ready to glorify their kindred and exalt their causes.

And they had many causes. Bereft of material want, the Former Empires found other reasons to struggle. It was no longer enough to have a full belly and healthy children. The newfound might of theurgy would help them bring righteousness to neighboring realms that disputed the wisdom of their ways or the justice of their laws. Evil and corruption would be purged at last, and all the grieving sorrow of their misguided or malevolent neighbors would be healed by the light of their glorious truth.

Of course, every one of the Former Empires had its own truth to uphold. Their people wanted for nothing, but their material wealth simply left them to crave more intangible things. It was not enough that a neighbor was willing to keep the peace; the neighbor had to *agree* with them, had to submit to their laws and their ideals. And if this submission made their former neighbors into new subjects of their rulers, was it not a fair reward for a valiant pursuit of justice?

No one knows how long the wars tore open the nations of the old world. Some say they lasted centuries, others think it was only a few years before the ancient theurges sought to end matters. There would be no more fighting. The theurges would use their arts to ascend to Heaven, and there put their causes before the One. God alone would determine the true way that humanity was to live.

The angels fought desperately to keep back the invading theurges, but they were too few to withstand the human sorceries. A hundred-odd armies marched at the theurges' sides, great engines and terrible war-beasts grinding the celestial legions before them. Countless mortals perished, but the angels were driven back at last, forced to flee from Heaven and seek refuge in the fires of Hell below.

The triumphant theurges approached the holy heart of Heaven, the Throne of God where the creator of all would answer at last. And yet when the great doors were opened, when the thousand Names were spoken, when the burning wings of angels no longer veiled the sanctum, the Throne stood empty before them. God was not there.

The theurges scattered in confusion and wrath. Some were bitter, and swore that the Creator was never there at all, and that the One was merely a trick of angels. Others wept in terror, crying out that their impiety had led to God's abandonment of them. Most, however, saw not an emptiness, but a possibility. If God was no longer on the Throne, was there not room for another?

The Last War below did not cease, but it changed. Throughout the Former Empires, theurges and theotechnicians labored to forge new gods, Made Gods, fabricating them from shards of plundered

celestial engines and stolen artifacts from the house of God. Unimaginable power was poured into these hollow shells. Holy exemplars of their nations' ideals were enlisted to embody this force or fuel the golem-gods they created, and in time these Made Gods strode forth.

The destruction they wrought was incalculable. God after god stormed the halls of Heaven, searching for more power in its crumbling engines and broken wonders. They fought each other on earth, churning up nations, and battled each other in Heaven's gardens, breaking loose shards of the celestial city. As they scavenged the celestial engines, the world began to crack beneath them, the Former Empires splintering into scattered realms that drifted away from each other in the darkness of Uncreated Night. A few reckless Made Gods even attempted to seize the Throne itself, but their sacrilege left only their bones. They were not prepared to usurp the place of God.

There was no last battle. There was no ultimate struggle that marked the end of the Last War. There was only a slow winding-down over centuries as the Made Gods died. Some perished from the perils of Heaven, slain by vengeful angels or destroyed by powers they did not understand. Others were killed in battle, slaughtered by rival Made Gods or undone by the energies of mighty mortal weapons. A few simply became lost, trapped or hidden away in a shard of broken Heaven, far away from their home and their people. The Made Gods are gone.

Now there are only the heritor nations, the crumbled fragments of the Former Empires eking out a meager existence in the far-scattered realms. The wonders of the former age no longer function, and the theurgy that once shook Heaven is now a brittle, capricious art wounded by the very destruction it caused. Kings and commoners alike must live in a world that no longer welcomes them.

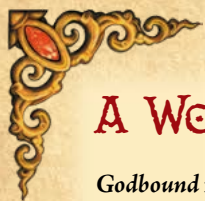
Every year, things grow a little harder. The celestial engines among the shards of Heaven are often broken and always ill-kept, now that the angels have fled. Seasons grow uncertain and nature grows whimsical or malicious. Sickness comes at strange times and monsters are birthed in hidden places. Sometimes the skin of the realm puckers and splits, a Night Road erupting into the realm from some fathomless depth of Uncreated Night. Creation unwinds slowly, but without halt.

But there is a new thing in the realms. Ordinary men and women are being touched by ancient power. The lost Words of Creation are igniting within the flesh of common humans, imbuing them in a stroke with the power that once required a Made God's shell to contain. It started only a few short years ago, but these "Godbound" are said to be the blessed by the descending fire of the fallen Made Gods. Their holy workings and celestial bindings are falling free from their dead husks, and descending to the earth to catch on mortal souls.

Heretics of the Unitary Church whisper that it was a plan of God that it should be so, that these Godbound will redeem the sins of their ancestors and restore the world that was broken. Others say that they are merely cursed ones, damned to relive the terrible Last War that destroyed the Made Gods before them. Yet in the present hour they are only men and women who have been given something more.

You are Godbound. You have inherited the holy fire. Whatever your past life, however meager a soul you may have been, the light of the Words has found you. Your world is slowly fading and the beasts of its twilight hour are rising up from the dust. Your people cannot hope to stand against them.

Will you be their savior, or will you be their epitaph?



# A WORLD OF GLORY AND BLOOD

*Godbound* is a game of demigod heroes facing the sorrows of a broken world. You and your *Godbound* companions work together to achieve your shared ambitions, whether those ambitions are for seas of shining golden coins or dreams of a world redeemed from its slow decay. There are countless troubles and terrors in the scattered realms of the former world, but you and your allies have the power to defy them all.

## WHAT DO YOU DO IN GODBOUND?

A *Godbound* hero faces the world in the company of their *pantheon*, a group of fellow divinities bound by chance or fate to be together. You may not always like your pantheon-mates, but together they provide strength and a breadth of power that no single demigod can match. They will be your allies against the myriad dangers of the fallen world.

*Godbound* drive back the creatures of night. They defeat monsters and renegade gods that no mortal could hope to overcome. They dare the terrible Night Roads to reach the broken shards of Heaven or the seething flames of Hell, there to mend the damaged engines that support their home realm or plunder its riches out from under the shadow of angelic wings.

*Godbound* are defenders of their people. However humble the village or hard-pressed the nation, a single *Godbound* hero can spell the difference between glorious prosperity and utter destruction. Many *Godbound* have innate powers that can make the most wretched mud-hut hamlet into a thriving hub of peace and prosperity, if only they and their allies can hold back the forces that would want to devour such a tempting morsel.

*Godbound* forge agreements between warring nations or spark crusades of righteousness against dark powers. They speak with the fire and force of divine will, and mortal warlords and emperors fear their anger. Even when a *Godbound*'s own gifts cannot solve the problem at the heart of a conflict, their strength can force a resolution.

*Godbound* build wonders. The decaying celestial engines have spoiled many old marvels, robbing them of the reliable natural law they required to function. *Godbound* can renew these old miracles, building incredible edifices, magnificent vehicles, or wondrous weapons of a former age. A *Godbound* of the Word of Artifice can provide crackling electrical service, hot running water, and spirit-driven brass labor automata to his humble farming village, if only given enough time and divine Dominion.

*Godbound* rule nations. When pacts and promises are not enough, when the people cry out for a glorious divine ruler to protect and sustain them, the *Godbound* can rise to the call. Perhaps these new demi-deities are not always so wise as they may hope, and perhaps not all are given to noble use of their powers, but a god-emperor can do much without fear of reproach. How many can stand aside when a suffering people beg them for their leadership?

Ultimately, your *Godbound* hero does *whatever you want*. Even as novice *Godbound*, even as a hero new to your powers, you can stand against the mightiest mortal heroes of your realm. You can work miracles by your raw will, or mold the natural laws around you in obedience to your divine Words. There is no greater authority to command you. There is no God on the Throne to tell you what is right and what is wrong. There is only your will, and your choice, and the world you wish to make. Together with your allies you will shape a realm fit to your desires, or you will be destroyed by the unnumbered legions that rise up to thwart your holy will.

## HOW DOES GODBOUND PLAY?

*Godbound* is based on an "Old School Renaissance" rules chassis strongly inspired by the classic gaming books of Gary Gygax, Dave Arneson, Tom Moldvay and Zeb Cook. There are a lot of contemporary systems in currency, and many of these systems are great fun at the table, but the classic OSR framework is one understood and readily playable for millions of players worldwide.

This is crucial, because *Godbound* is a game meant to be *played*. *Godbound* supports a "sandbox gaming" style of campaign from the very start. In a sandbox game, the Game Master, or "GM" sets up an interesting world for the player characters or "PCs" to encounter, and then lets them encounter it in whatever way they choose. The book you're holding provides the example realm of Arcem to serve as a template, but your GM can easily choose to brew up their own with the guidelines and tools in this book, or pluck a favorite fictional setting from other media to use for your game.

As a *Godbound* hero, your job is to dig into that world and start working your will on it. There will be threats aimed at you, it's true. Especially as you start interfering with the plans of powerful entities and thwarting the will of other demi-divine powers, you'll find them striking back with all the resources at their command. But at the game's heart, it's a game about your hero and the changes they choose to impress on the world. For good or ill, there is no judgment and there is no judge. There is only you, your pantheon-allies, and the dreams you have for your own world.

Great works are not accomplished lightly, of course. To achieve mighty ends, you'll need to delve into forgotten ruins to accumulate the resources and celestial artifacts you need to enact major changes in the world. You'll need to fight back parasite gods, theurgic Eldritch, Uncreated monstrosities, mortal legions, and other nameless enemies that seek to thwart your ambitions. You'll need to find ways to solve problems with something less than a blaze of divine fury, because a more direct solution would smash the very structure you're trying to preserve. To be a god is a difficult thing.

As your hero grows in experience and familiarity with their powers, they will open new vistas. A novice *Godbound* still has cause to be wary around mobs of angry mortals, but a veteran wielder of the Words can sweep away armies with their wrath. More importantly, you'll be able to dare the perils of fallen Heaven and risk raids on the flames of Hell, dueling fallen angels to snatch back the souls of the unjustly condemned or claim celestial salvage from the broken engines of long-vanished realms. Perhaps you will even summon up enough power to forge your own Paradise, a refuge-realm where the souls of your faithful can find safety against the constant downward draw of Hell.

The world can be as you would make it, if you are willing to pay the price. Not all *Godbound* will want to leave such a mark on creation, of course. Some simply have no desire to mold the world in their image, loving only a life of excitement, adventure, and fearsome foes worthy of their divine fists. Others have doubts about their own righteousness, and are reluctant to impress their will on a world that might not welcome their idea of perfection.

You'll make these choices in the course of your adventures. With a GM to provide the backdrop and challenges for your heroes, and the players to provide the drive of ambition and grand plans, the game will provide you all with an excellent evening's fun.



## Using This Book

To play *Godbound* you'll need someone willing to be the GM and two to four other people who want to play *Godbound* heroes. The game can work well with more players, but the GM will have to be ready for the group to take on substantially bigger challenges with their wider array of powers and available might. A single *Godbound* hero and GM can also work for a session, provided both take care not to get into more trouble than a single demigod can handle.

You'll need a set of special gaming dice, preferably one for each person at the table. Role-playing game dice come as oddly-shaped dice; for *Godbound*, you'll need one 20-sided die, one 12-sided die, two 10-sided dice, one 8-sided die, four 6-sided dice, and one 4-sided die. You can get by with just one of each, but you may want more of a type if your powers use them a lot. If you've got a smartphone, you can also download apps that provide digital dice.

At many places in the book, you'll see notations like "2d10+2". This simply means "Roll two 10-sided dice, add them together, and add two to the sum". If you see "d100", that just means to roll two 10-sided dice and read them as a two-digit number, counting "00" as 100.

You'll need pencils and notebook paper for recording details and taking notes. You can copy or print the character sheets from this book, and you'll need one for every player. It's often useful for PCs to print out the pages that describe their divine Words, so as to more easily track their available powers.

You'll want a supply of tokens for keeping track of Effort committed by your heroes. A stack of pennies works if you have them to hand, as do poker chips, beads, or anything else that can be plopped down on a sheet of paper to track your power's current disposition.

## If You're Reading This as a PDF File

If you're reading this book as a PDF, there are some tricks you can do to change its appearance, either to make it easier to print out on a home printer or to make it better suit your reading preferences.

If you're reading the file on Adobe Acrobat Reader, you should find a "Layers" tab to the left. You can click on that to activate or deactivate display layers on this PDF. By turning off "Corner Pieces", you can eliminate the decorations at the corners of the pages. Turning off "Art" and "Background Paper" will eliminate the page backgrounds and any illustrations in the book, making it more economical to print it out on a home printer.

The "Maps" layer controls the maps in the Gazetteer section of the book. They're put on a separate layer, as you might not want most of the art in the book when printing it out, but still have need of the map illustrations.

Some PDF readers don't recognize layers, or don't allow you to manually control them. This seems to show up particularly often on tablet readers. If you want to sidestep this, load the PDF up in Adobe Acrobat Reader, deactivate the layers you want removed, and then "Print" the file to a new PDF. The resulting PDF will have only the layers you want to keep, and should show up properly on your PDF reader of choice.

Wherever you got this file, you should also have found a set of .mobi and .epub file versions that are formatted as plain single-column text. While not as aesthetically pleasing as the PDF file, these files can be much friendlier to an e-reader or to reader software often used by the vision-impaired.





# CHARACTER CREATION

## FORGING A HERO OF THE AGE

The first step towards greatness is to create your Godbound hero. This section will explain the rules for fashioning your newly-forged demigod and point out some matters to keep in mind when developing your character. Your hero is a budding demigod and possessed of incredible powers, but even they need to work well with the others in their pantheon if they're to prosper in this perilous world.

When building your hero, you'll want to talk to the GM and your fellow players to make sure everyone's on the same page about the game. The GM can provide details of the campaign setting that you'll be using, either the example realm of Arcem provided in this book, a homebrew world of their own devising, or an existing fantastic setting plucked from the wider gaming world. These details will help you round out the background of your hero and choose the goals that fit your idea of fun.

At the same time, you'll want to work with your fellow players to make a hero that fits in well with the rest of the player characters. While it's possible to play a one-on-one campaign of *Godbound* with just a single player and a GM, games that involve a full pantheon need to have demigods that at least tolerate each other. Their goals might not be in perfect alignment and their personal talents and niches might not be free of overlap, but the heroes need a reason to be willing to work with one another.

The pantheon forms much of that reason. While Godbound have only started manifesting within the past few years in most realms, it's not uncommon for small groups of them to find themselves thrown together by chance or destiny. These cells of demi-divinities are drawn together by the powers they have and the opportunities that present themselves to a unified pantheon, as together they can work wonders that any single Godbound would be sorely taxed to achieve. You and your fellow players are part of the same pantheon, and you should be able to work together with no more than a mutually-enjoyable degree of internal tension in the group.

One thing to be careful about when making your hero is the risk of divine apathy. It's crucial that your hero should have goals and ambitions in the world, whether those goals are a simple hunger for fabulous mortal luxuries, a higher ambition to redeem their conquered homeland, or a dream of ending a centuries-old war that's torn their

nation. Your hero is a demigod, and almost any feat is something they're capable of achieving with enough time, effort, and allied aid. It's fine to make a hero who's just all-around awesome, but that awesomeness needs to have a direction.

This is crucial because most *Godbound* campaigns are *sandbox* campaigns. The GM has built a setting with a great many conflicts, villains, heroes, sympathetic bystanders, long-standing afflictions, and fabulous rewards to be seized. They've brewed up a starting session to thrust the pantheon into a crisis situation to help you all warm up to the game and the setting. Beyond that, however, the game's progress is *your* responsibility. Your goals and your choices are going to be the things driving the game, and while the world will doubtless react to your decisions and have its own share of ambitious actors, the heart of the game is about the new world your hero is making.

Every part of a realm is subject to a Godbound hero's influence and decisions. It may not be *easy* to change something. It may take heroic exertions and terrible sacrifices to accumulate the power and resources necessary to enact some tremendous change. But even so, your hero and their comrades are the judges of last resort. There is no ultimate power above you to decree how the world must be made. There is no pantheon of greater divinities to punish you for a refusal to accept the world as it is.

This can make for its own kind of conflict. Your heroes will have enough to keep them busy in fighting rival Godbound, casting down parasite gods, struggling with human monarchs, and trying to maintain their integrity in the face of so many choices and temptations. Do they really want to add custodianship of the world to their duties? Are their ideas for the world really an improvement over what chance and mortal choice has wrought?

There will be disagreements about that, no doubt, even within your own pantheon. Different Godbound will have different ideas about what kind of world awaits their coming, and these disputes will have to be settled one way or another. Yet even after the work is done, even after the malevolent angels are banished and the seasons put aright and the starving fed from fields of divine abundance, are all things truly as they should be? The world was shattered once by the warring dreams of those who would be God. Will it be broken again?



# CREATING YOUR HERO

You can follow the steps here to create a newly-forged demigod. Less experienced players can read more about each step in the following pages, while those familiar with the process can just go down the list. The character sheet reproduced to the right is numbered to show you where each entry goes. You'll find blank and form-fillable PDFs included with the downloads for free and pay versions of this book.

1. Roll or assign your hero's **attribute scores** to determine their innate strengths and weaknesses. If you want to roll them, roll 4d6 six times, dropping the lowest die each time and adding the other three together. The higher the roll, the stronger the hero in that quality. Assign these six scores to the attributes in this section in any order desired. If you'd rather just assign an array, put these numbers in any order: 16, 14, 13, 13, 10, and 8.
2. Record your hero's **attribute modifiers**. Usually, you don't apply your whole score to a relevant die roll. Instead, you just apply a bonus or penalty. If your attribute score is 3, your modifier for the attribute is -3. For scores of 4–5, it's -2, for 6–8 it's -1, for 9–12 it's +0, for 13–15 it's +1, for 16–17 it's +2, and for a mighty score of 18, it's +3.
3. Note down your hero's **attribute checks**. For each attribute, subtract it from 21 to find that attribute's check score. Whenever your character tries to accomplish something that would tax even the prowess of a legendary hero, you need to roll 1d20 and roll equal or higher than this check number. Particularly difficult tasks might apply a penalty, while a relevant Fact might grant you a bonus, or even make the effort an automatic success.
4. Decide three **Facts** about your hero and record them here. A Fact is an important truth about your hero, one that shapes their past and abilities. One Fact should be about where they came from, one Fact should be about how they acquired the skills they used to survive before awakening to their divine power, and one Fact should be about some sort of important relationship or organization they're involved with.

Each Fact doesn't need to be more than a sentence or two long. Facts help you when you make relevant attribute checks. Whenever you're making an attribute check to do something your Facts would make you good at, you gain a +4 bonus to the attribute check roll. In some cases, you might not need to make a check at all where a less pertinently-experienced hero would need to roll. Facts don't modify hit or damage rolls.

If you're playing a campaign in the realm of Arcem, check page [95](#) for a quick description of the nations of that place and some ideas for your hero's background. If you're playing in some other setting, talk with the GM and choose a concept.
5. Pick three **Words** from those described in the Divine Powers chapter. These Words describe your hero's divine powers and Godbound might. They should express something meaningful about the character's personality and favorite approach toward dealing with problems. Ultimately, though, a Godbound's Words are emanations of *their* nature. Your hero controls their Words and decides how they manifest their powers.

6. Record the special abilities your bound Words grant you. Every Word gives a special power to the Godbound who binds it. Some of these are magical abilities, while others let you boost certain attribute scores. Don't forget to change your attribute modifiers and checks if you need to, or reshuffle stats if needed.
7. Spend six points picking **divine gifts**. You can pick gifts from your bound Words by spending one point on mastering a lesser gift and two points on mastering a greater one. You can master lesser gifts from outside your bound Words by spending two points apiece if you can explain how your own existing Words could create that effect. You'll find the gifts listed in the Divine Powers chapter, but don't forget to glance at page [29](#) for those gifts that every Word offers. Optionally, you can spend three points to bond yet another Word. You'll learn how to bind more Words and gifts with time and experience.
8. Record your **saving throws** here. For your Hardiness saving throw, measuring your resistance to exhaustion, poison, and bodily transformation, subtract the higher of your Strength or Constitution modifiers from 15. For your Evasion saving throw to dodge explosions, death rays, and other incoming hazards, subtract the higher of your Dexterity or Intelligence modifiers from 15. For your Spirit saving throw to resist mind control, curses, and magical sendings, subtract the higher of your Wisdom or Charisma modifiers from 15. Note that if both of your modifiers are penalties, your saving throws might actually be higher than 15.

When the GM tells you to make a saving throw, roll 1d20 and try to roll equal or higher than your saving throw score in that category. As a Godbound, you can always automatically succeed on an otherwise-failed saving throw if you have enough divine energy left to save yourself.
9. Choose your weapons from page [13](#), assuming you want to carry any. Weapons have a damage die and a relevant attribute, usually Strength for melee weapons and Dexterity for ranged ones. If a weapon is listed with two attributes, you can choose whichever is higher. Note down the weapons here. For the "+ hit" entry, mark down the relevant attribute bonus plus one. For the damage die, write down the weapon's damage plus your attribute modifier. Thus, if you had a Strength modifier of +2 and decided your hero carried a heavy two-handed hammer, you'd write down "+3" for the hit bonus and "1d10+2" for the damage.

Also note down your **Fray** die, which is 1d8 for most heroes. Your Fray die is rolled each round to damage lesser foes, and you can usually count on taking out one or two ordinary human enemies each round even without an explicit attack action. Major enemies are immune to your Fray die's damage, however, so you'll need to deal with them in a more direct fashion.
10. Pick a type of armor from page [13](#) if your hero is the sort to wear it. Armor lowers your **armor class**, making it harder to hurt your hero. Unarmored humans of no special nimbleness have an AC of 9, while better armor lowers the score, as do certain divine gifts that grant a better base armor class.

# Godbound

Name 16

Description \_\_\_\_\_

Goal \_\_\_\_\_

Level  Experience Points

## FACTS

Origin \_\_\_\_\_

Past Career \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Others 4

## RESOURCES

12-15 Total  Free

Effort

Influence  Earned per Month

Dominion

Wealth

## ATTRIBUTES

|              | Score          | Modifier       | Check          |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Strength     |                |                |                |
| Dexterity    |                |                |                |
| Constitution | <span>1</span> | <span>2</span> | <span>3</span> |
| Wisdom       |                |                |                |
| Intelligence |                |                |                |
| Charisma     |                |                |                |

## SAVING THROWS

|           | Base | Mod            | Armor Penalty | Final Save |
|-----------|------|----------------|---------------|------------|
| Hardiness |      |                |               |            |
| Evasion   |      | <span>8</span> |               |            |
| Spirit    |      |                |               |            |

## HIT POINTS

Maximum

Current HP 11

## ARMOR

AC

Type 10 Shield \_\_\_\_\_

Description \_\_\_\_\_

Saving Throw Penalty ☐ Hardiness ☐ Evasion ☐ Spirit

## WEAPONS

Base Attack Bonus

| Description    | Attribute | Attack Bonus | Damage |
|----------------|-----------|--------------|--------|
| <span>9</span> |           |              |        |

## FRAY DIE

## DAMAGE CHART

| Roll (per die) | Damage |
|----------------|--------|
| 1 or less      | 0      |
| 2-5            | 1      |
| 6-9            | 2      |
| 10 or more     | 4      |

## WORDS & DIVINE GIFTS

| Words          | Committed Effort |
|----------------|------------------|
| <span>5</span> | <span>6</span>   |

| Divine Gifts   | Committed Effort |
|----------------|------------------|
| <span>7</span> |                  |

- Armor does hinder the wearer, though, and the heavier the armor, the worse the hindrance. If you wear medium armor, pick one saving throw category: Hardiness, Evasion, or Spirit. You suffer a -4 penalty on that type of saving throw roll as the armor tires you out, slows you down, or attracts negative spiritual powers. If you wear heavy armor, pick two saving throw categories to penalize. Light armor and shields don't apply a penalty.
- Once you've chosen your armor, if any, subtract your Dexterity modifier from your armor class. Even a Dexterity penalty can't make it worse than AC 9, however.
- Write down your hero's **hit points** here. Hit points are a measure of a Godbound's nearness to defeat. If you run out of hit points, your hero is gravely wounded or incapacitated by their foes, and can no longer act. If you're hurt again while at zero hit points, your hero will perish.
  - A new Godbound has eight hit points, modified by their Constitution modifier. You can recover lost hit points by resting. A full night's sleep will restore any you've lost.
  - Note down your hero's **Effort** score, which is 2 unless you've taken gifts that increase it. Effort is the measure of your Godbound's available divine energy. You commit it to use certain gifts or succeed on failed saving throws, and you get it back when the gifts are no longer needed or you have some time to rest.
  - Effort is the fuel of a Godbound's divine powers. If all your Effort has been committed, your hero is at their limit.
  - You start the game with 0 **Wealth**. Your Godbound usually has the money or abilities to get whatever minor goods and services they wish, but if you want to buy real estate, own ships, throw huge parties, or otherwise spend lavishly, you're going to need to find properly gleaming mounds of Wealth.
  - You also start the game with 0 **Experience** and **Dominion** points. Your Experience total increases as your Godbound overcomes worthy challenges and works meaningful changes in the world. Once you get enough experience, your hero will gain new powers and hardihood. Dominion measures the Godbound's available divine authority over creation and their power to create large-scale changes and wonders in the world. You'll earn this through overcoming challenges, and spend it enacting your will.
  - Your Godbound starts with 2 **Influence** points, unless you've taken gifts that increase this total. Influence measures your hero's capacity to sustain projects and changes with their own personal attention. You can use Influence in place of Dominion to make a change, but as soon as you take back your Influence points to do something else, the situation falls back to its normal baseline.
  - Write in your hero's name here and decide what they look and act like. Take a moment to think about how it looks when they're using their divine powers, and how they might act toward their pantheon-mates, the masses of ordinary people, or their own eventual worshipers. Avoid making heroes who are loners or troublemakers toward their own comrades. While a little intra-group tension can be an interesting spice, the best campaigns usually involve making an enormous amount of trouble for people who are *not* your fellow heroes.
- Lastly, write down your Godbound's current goal right here. They might want to use their new abilities to avenge themselves on a formerly-untouchable tormentor, or do some great work to benefit their people, or simply want to accumulate impractically large amounts of gold and companions of negotiable virtue. You can change your goal whenever it makes sense to you, but you should always have at least one of them to help direct your demigod's legendary deeds.

# ROLLING ATTRIBUTES

To begin creating your PC, you start by determining your divinely-gifted hero's **attribute scores**. These are six scores ranging from 3 to 18 that represent your PC's natural aptitudes. A score of 3 is very low, and like a crippled-legged god or recklessly foolish divinity you might have that inability echoed in your Godbound's future legend. A score of 18 is as high as a Godbound or human can reach under ordinary circumstances, though special gifts might imbue your PC with truly superhuman capabilities.

- **Strength** measures your PC's powers of physical brawn. Strength improves your hero's ability in melee combat and allows them to exert force without the aid of their supernatural powers. Your Strength modifier affects melee hit rolls and damage rolls.
- **Dexterity** is your PC's agility and precision of motion. It improves your hero's ability with ranged combat, their talent for acrobatic maneuvers, and their aptitude at dodging dangers. Your Dexterity modifier affects your armor class and the rolls made for ranged and light-weapon attacks and damage dice.
- **Constitution** is the raw hardihood of your Godbound and their ability to keep functioning when hurt or exhausted. It influences a hero's hit points, which determine how much punishment they can take before they collapse. Constitution modifiers are applied to your maximum hit points.
- **Wisdom** is both the perceptiveness and judgment of a hero, aiding them in noticing details, discerning truths, and making sound appraisals of a situation. Your Wisdom modifier is used only rarely, for certain divine powers or your Spirit saving throw.
- **Intelligence** reflects the hero's raw intellectual capacity and their gifts of memory and logic. Many tasks of education or mental aptitude tax a Godbound's intelligence. Intelligence modifiers are also relatively rarely used, but might apply to your Evasion saving throw or powers that rely on your hero's sagacity.
- **Charisma** is the raw force of personality exuded by the hero and their ability to instinctively command the obedience and reverence of others. Those with low Charisma might be ugly or easily ignored, while those with high Charisma seem to be natural leaders and worthy of respect. Your Charisma modifier is applied to the reaction rolls made to determine how strangers respond to your hero, and might also be applied to the attack and damage rolls of powers based on your presence or force of will.

To generate these scores, you have a choice of two methods. For the first, you roll 4d6 six times, dropping the smallest die each time. You then assign these totals to the attributes as you wish. The chance to roll very well is balanced by the chance to get a rather unimpressive set of scores, but the main strength of a Godbound lies in their supernatural abilities, and it is possible to boost some scores later based on the Words and gifts you choose.

If you prefer not to use the random method, you can simply assign the following scores to your attributes in any order desired: 16, 14, 13, 13, 10, and 8.

| SCORE   | ATTRIBUTE MODIFIER |
|---------|--------------------|
| 3       | -3                 |
| 4 – 5   | -2                 |
| 6 – 8   | -1                 |
| 9 – 12  | No Modifier        |
| 13 – 15 | +1                 |
| 16 – 17 | +2                 |
| 18      | +3                 |

## ATTRIBUTE MODIFIERS

Once you've rolled your attributes, you need to note the **attribute modifier** that goes with each. This modifier is added as a bonus, or subtracted if a penalty, to certain rolls and scores. If your attribute changes later on in play, you should change the modifier as well.

## ATTRIBUTE CHECKS

When your Godbound tries to accomplish something that would tax even their heroic capacity, they must make an **attribute check**. The check number for each attribute is equal to 21 minus the attribute score. To succeed in an attribute check, the player must roll equal or higher to the check on a roll of 1d20. A natural roll of 1 will always result in failure or some unfortunate complication, while a natural roll of 20 is always a success.

An attribute check may be modified by bonuses or penalties. If your hero has a Fact relevant to their effort, they can add +4 to their roll, while feats that push human limits might suffer a -4 penalty, with truly heroic challenges applying as much as -8 to the die.

## SAVING THROWS

As a last step in rolling your hero's attributes, you need to note down your **saving throws**. When your Godbound is faced with some dire peril that requires their hardiness, determination, or swiftness, they might be asked to make a saving throw to resist the worst of it.

To make a saving throw, you roll 1d20 and try to roll equal or over the requisite saving throw's score. A roll of 20 always succeeds on the save and a roll of 1 always fails.

Your **Hardiness** saving throw is equal to 15 minus the better of your Strength or Constitution modifiers. You roll a Hardiness save against sorcerous poisons, damnable plagues, hideous transformations, superhuman rigors of exertion, and similar physical trials.

Your **Evasion** saving throw is equal to 15 minus the better of your Dexterity or Intelligence modifiers. You roll an Evasion save when leaping away from a crashing idol, ducking a fan of hurled knives, or diving behind cover to avoid a tremendous explosion.

Your **Spirit** saving throw is equal to 15 minus the better of your Wisdom or Charisma modifiers. You roll a Spirit save when fighting off sinister enchantments, defying mind control, or resisting magical effects that aren't more applicable to one of the other two categories.

It may be that your Godbound has a modifier penalty in both attributes, in which case their least-bad modifier *increases* the saving throw. Fear not; your hero's saves improve as they advance in experience, and you'll have the chance to improve your attribute scores when you choose your Godbound's special powers. At great need, a desperate Godbound can also draw on their powers to negate a failed save.

## DETERMINING FACTS

Now that you know your Godbound's basic aptitudes, you need to decide three **Facts** about him or her. A Fact is simply a sentence or short phrase that indicates something important about your hero. When you attempt attribute checks for which a fact is relevant, you gain a +4 bonus on the roll. Facts don't stack, so if you have two qualities that both might improve the roll, you still only gain a +4 bonus. Facts only apply to attribute checks, not hit rolls or damage.

Alternatively, some Facts might allow you to do things or call on contacts automatically that other heroes could accomplish only with difficulty, if at all. For a newly-made PC, most of your Facts will have to do with your character's prior life before they became Godbound.

**Your first Fact should be about your origins.** Where was your hero born? What society shaped their attitudes and choices in life? If you're using the realm given in this book, you might choose a specific nation or city as your place of origin, while GMs running a campaign in their own realm might offer a different selection of possibilities. Your hero will naturally be familiar with the land of their birth, speaking the native language and aware of the figures of power and influence there. They may also have their share of old grudges toward the locals.

**Your second Fact should be about your hero's past profession.** How did they earn their living, or was it necessary for them to labor at all? Were they the wealthy scion of an Oasis State spice-merchant, or were they a savage Howler raider from the Golden Wastes? Did they learn the hard lessons of war in a Patrian legion, or were they a wandering healer devoted to the arts of the Merciful Hand? Their life may have changed drastically when they became Godbound, but old lessons and old ties endure.

**Your third Fact should be about a relationship your hero has with some organization, religion, or other group.** Perhaps this is a hostile relationship, as you find yourself hunted by the assassins of the guild you left without permission. It might be a bond of blood, as your kinsmen are still loyal to you back in your home city. This fact might shape your present interactions, granting you bonuses to influence friendly allies or a deep knowledge of the vile cult that you've fought for years. It might also allow you to automatically call on contacts or allies in the organization, though not all might be able to help.

There may be other truths about your Godbound, but these three Facts are the most important and meaningful ones. As you pick them out, you should also think about your character's awakening as a Godbound hero. Sometimes this moment of revelation comes in the teeth of a terrible crisis, where only divine power can save the hero or something they cherish. At other times, however, the newfound power comes quietly and without warning, simply infusing an ordinary man or woman who cannot hope to guess what drew the strange blessing.

Sometimes Facts can be used to purchase special knowledge or abilities. The low magic traditions described in the Divine Powers chapter are one such, and your GM might have other special backgrounds accessible to those with the right Facts. Facts used to acquire these abilities are very narrow and specific; "I am an archmage of the Academy of Clear Thought", for example, or "I was a Surcessant Knight of Ancalia before its fall". If the GM allows such purchases during character creation, these special abilities usually take up the Fact used to describe the hero's past profession. Learning these knacks with Facts earned by leveling is also possible with the right allies.



# CHOOSING WORDS AND GIFTS

The remarkable powers of a Godbound are expressed through the *Words of Creation*, portfolios of authority over the elements of the world. The spiritual shards and strangely-refined fire of the Made Gods have congealed about the souls of the Godbound and granted them authority over the very fabric of reality. Low magic toys at the edges of the world and theurgy manipulates its deep laws, but the power of the Words can forge reality as its wielder desires.

There are numerous Words included in this book, though more exist. Each one addresses one of the fundamental qualities of the world: Fire, Night, Time, Beasts, and other archetypal elements of creation. Each has its own realm of authority, though some overlap in their effects; both Fertility and Health can grant healing, for example, while Night and the Sky both know secrets of swift flight. Each Word describes the extent of its potential abilities.

Your hero is bound to three of these Words. Choose from those listed here, or work with the GM to devise your own Words of Creation. You will have the ability to bond with further Words as you gain power and experience, though not without cost. Each Word grants a special ability to those who bind with it: an improved attribute, a natural power, a special immunity, or some other grace.

You should also think about your hero's relationship to their powers. It might seem that a Godbound of Fire should be hot-tempered and restless, or a Godbound of Death be morbid, but this is not necessarily the case. A Godbound's Words are *theirs*. They leave their mark on these powers as much as the powers mark them. Their innate personality and beliefs are expressed through their powers, in ways that make sense to them. A Godbound of peace might have the Sword Word, but express it in the form of impenetrable defensive gifts that let them stride a battlefield untouched. A Godbound of seemingly opposing elements such as Fire and Sea might be an intrinsically conflicted person, or they might just understand their powers as facets of their own complexity, with flames in one hand and floods in the other. Your hero's powers are subordinate to your hero's own will and personality, and you should express them as seems best to you.

## CHOOSING GIFTS

While the Words allow a Godbound to exert their will in brief, potent miracles, most Godbound soon learn how to perform certain miraculous feats regularly and easily. These are *gifts*. A miracle of raw force can mimic a gift, but not so efficiently and easily, and so Godbound prefer to master their favorite supernatural powers in a more convenient form.

Gifts are in two degrees of power: lesser and greater. Lesser gifts usually affect only the Godbound or their immediate surroundings, while greater gifts can work marvels on entire cities or perform tremendous feats of power. Even a novice Godbound has mastered a few of these gifts as an intuitive part of their bonding.

You have six points to spend on your gifts and binding new Words. Lesser gifts cost one point, greater gifts cost two, and binding an additional Word costs three. You may only learn gifts from Words you have bound, with one exception; you can spend 2 points to learn a lesser gift from another Word if you can explain how your own powers are creating that effect. Someone with Alacrity might buy the Sword gift *Thirsting Razor*, for example, and explain it as their own incredible speed leveling ultra-accurate blows. It's up to the GM to decide if a given gift's explanation fits well enough to allow its purchase.

## THE WORDS OF CREATION

|                   |                                                   |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Alacrity</i>   | Agility and swiftness in motion                   |
| <i>Artifice</i>   | Building, repairing, and destroying objects       |
| <i>Beasts</i>     | Command and transformation of beasts              |
| <i>Bow</i>        | Ranged combat and impossible accuracy             |
| <i>Command</i>    | Leadership, rule, and enforced obedience          |
| <i>Death</i>      | Undead, death, and the dying                      |
| <i>Deception</i>  | Trickery, stealth, illusion, and lies             |
| <i>Earth</i>      | Stone, strength, soil, and obdurate hardness      |
| <i>Endurance</i>  | Tireless vigor and scorn for injury               |
| <i>Fertility</i>  | Plants and growth both unnatural and normal       |
| <i>Fire</i>       | Heat, smoke, light, fury and lust                 |
| <i>Health</i>     | Vigor, healing, and the command of disease        |
| <i>Journeying</i> | Swift, unhindered travel over far distances       |
| <i>Knowledge</i>  | Knowledge both mundane and supernatural           |
| <i>Luck</i>       | The having and giving of luck good and bad        |
| <i>Might</i>      | Raw strength and its use in tremendous deeds      |
| <i>Night</i>      | Darkness, sleep, night-passage and dreams         |
| <i>Passion</i>    | Emotion, devotion, grudges, and yearnings         |
| <i>Sea</i>        | Water, seas, rivers, sea-beasts, and purification |
| <i>Sky</i>        | Weather, lightning, flight, and winds             |
| <i>Sorcery</i>    | Initiation into theurgic spellcasting             |
| <i>Sun</i>        | Light, vision, truth, heat and banishing          |
| <i>Sword</i>      | Melee combat and unarmed struggles                |
| <i>Time</i>       | Prophecy, postcognition, and time-weaving         |
| <i>Wealth</i>     | Money, prosperity, and abundant goods             |

## CREATING NEW WORDS AND GIFTS

The Words of Creation offered here and the gifts listed in the following chapter are by no means exclusive. Different campaign settings or character concepts might call out for different Words. If you and the GM are comfortable with the system and would like to create your own Words and gifts, that is entirely possible. General guidelines for creating new powers are given on page 28.

You don't need to change the mechanics of a power in order to make it suit your needs, however. Sometimes, it's entirely sufficient to just change a Word's name and tweak its special effects to make it fit your concept. A Godbound pledged to the Desert might have gifts and abilities identical to those of the Word of Fire, except described as withering heat, freezing cold, or parching dryness. They might not be able to work miracles of consuming flame, but they could call forth marvels that involve lethal dessication, sandblasting, or mirage-like illusions.

If your concept fits a slightly different take on a cosmic reality, you might just work with your GM to make these tweaks and let your hero wield familiar powers under a new name.

## WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT

Your PC has on their person or available nearby whatever equipage or belongings might be appropriate to their background and situation. Any Godbound can lay hands on weapons or armor to suit them given a little time, but if there's any question as to whether or not they own something or have it on them, just consult their situation. If they are prepared for a particular undertaking or role, such as delving into a lost Night Road, or acting as a roving spice merchant, or infiltrating a palace to poison a malevolent god-king, they have whatever equipment might be expected for the task in whatever quantities seem reasonable. Special equipment such as magical items or celestial artifacts are always tracked separately.

Particularly grand purchases that don't fit their existing Facts must be purchased with **Wealth** points. Sailing ships, real estate, grand celebrations, legendary carousing, the bribes of high officials, the outfitting of mercenary bands, and other major expenditures fall

under this heading, while pettier purchases can simply be assumed, as Godbound have many means of acquiring what they need. As a newly-fashioned Godbound, your PC has not yet earned any Wealth worth the name, but will doubtless rectify that shortcoming as soon as possible.

The availability of equipment and possessions will depend on the character's surroundings. If the pantheon is lucky enough to have a Godbound of Artifice along, they may not lack for anything conceivable to the artificers of the realm. Other groups will have to make do with the talents of the local craftsmen or their own scavenging.

Most nations in a realm will have technology no more sophisticated than Renaissance Europe at best, with many impoverished lands lacking even that. Gunpowder weapons are unknown in most realms, and only through rare artifices, diligent excavation, or special enchantments can more advanced gear be acquired by a hero.

## ARMOR

Amid the flashing blades and thunderous bolts of combat, a little steel is welcome between a warrior's skin and an enemy sword. Armor improves the wearer's **armor class**, making them more difficult to hurt in a fight. The lower the armor class, the better. Armor class is modified by the subject's Dexterity modifier, with a bonus lowering it and a penalty raising it. A hero's armor class can never be worse than 9, even if they're unarmored and exceptionally slow.

Wearing armor comes at a cost, however. It pinches, burdens, and has unfortunate occult impurities. If you wear medium armor, apply a -4 penalty to a saving throw roll of your choice; maybe your hauberk slows you down, hindering your Evasion, or maybe it's just heavy on your shoulders, and harms your Hardiness, or maybe the light, flexible alloy it's made of is a dangerous conductor of curses, penalizing your Spirit save. You can choose whichever saving throw you prefer, but can't change it for that particular suit of armor afterwards. If you wear heavy armor, choose two categories to be penalized. Shields and light armor inflict no penalties.

| Type   | Base AC  |                                     |
|--------|----------|-------------------------------------|
| None   | 9        | Skin or clothing                    |
| Light  | 7        | Leathers or hides                   |
| Medium | 5        | Mail or light plate. -4 to one save |
| Heavy  | 3        | Heavy plate. -4 to two saves        |
| Shield | -1 bonus | No save penalty                     |

## WEAPONS

Rather than provide a lengthy list of armaments that are all largely identical in murderous function, weapons in **Godbound** are broken down into a few basic categories. Light weapons are small or light implements of death such as knives, short blades, rapiers, clubs, brass knuckles or the like. Medium weapons are one-handed swords, maces, spears, or similar tools. Heavy weapons require two hands, and are greatswords, battle axes, mauls, and huge clubs. Ranged weapons are bows, crossbows, and the magnetic rifles of the Bright Republic, though smaller one-handed ranged weapons roll a 1d6 for damage.

Each type of weapon has a damage die and one or more attributes associated with it. Wielders add that attribute's modifier to their hit roll and damage roll with the weapon. Where two attributes are listed the wielder can use the better of the two. Weapons used as part of a magical attack granted by a gift can use whatever attribute seems most appropriate to the way they are being wielded.

| Type      | Damage | Attribute |                        |
|-----------|--------|-----------|------------------------|
| Unarmed   | 1d2    | Str / Dex | Punch, kick, bite      |
| Light     | 1d6    | Str / Dex | Dirk, club, rapier     |
| Medium    | 1d8    | Str       | Sword, spear, mace     |
| Heavy     | 1d10   | Str       | Greatsword, maul       |
| 1H Ranged | 1d6    | Dex       | Pistol, javelin, knife |
| 2H Ranged | 1d8    | Dex       | Bow, rifle, crossbow   |

Thrown weapons and pistols have a maximum range of 40 yards. Bows and crossbows can reach up to 300 yards, and magnetic rifles can fire at targets up to 500 yards distant. High-tech weaponry is largely non-functional outside the Bright Republic.

For dual-weapon wielders, treat their paired weapons as a single two-handed weapon doing 1d10 damage and using either Strength or Dexterity as the attribute that modifies their rolls.



## FINAL TOUCHES

Your Godbound is almost complete. Only a few more scores need to be written down, and then your fearless demi-divinity can go forth to face the fallen world.

**Record your maximum hit points.** Your hit points are a measure of your toughness and determination. When they hit zero, your Godbound is either dead or defeated. Your maximum hit points equal 8 plus your Constitution modifier. You restore all lost hit points after a full night of rest, safety and relaxation. Certain forms of magic can also heal them, but usually require you to Commit Effort to benefit.

**Record your armor class.** This is a measure of how hard it is to hurt your Godbound, and the lower it is, the better. Your base armor class equals 9, modified by Dexterity. Gifts might grant you a naturally lower armor class, as does armor. There are several types of armor available to your hero; pick whichever suits your hero's wishes and past experience. Choose any saving throw penalties the armor might inflict.

**Record your maximum Effort.** Effort is your Godbound's ability to invoke their gifts and miracles. Wielding their mightier powers may require them to "Commit" it, dedicating a point of Effort to the effect as long as it is maintained. Powerful effects might force them to Commit it for extended periods of time, even if the power itself lasts only briefly. You begin with a maximum of 2 points of Effort, plus any gained from gifts you've selected that grant bonus Effort.

**Record your maximum Influence.** Influence is used to work changes on the world. New characters start with a maximum of 2 points.

**Record your attack bonus and the details of your preferred weaponry.** For a newly-minted Godbound, your attack bonus is +1. You may choose weapons from the types listed on the prior page. Also note down your hero's Fray die of 1d8, the use of which is explained in the next chapter's Combat section.

You might have special gifts that grant your weapons unusual might or special qualities. These divine gifts override the natural damage dice of the weapon and allow you to use any appropriate attribute to modify its hit and damage rolls, even non-physical attributes.

Note down your preferred weapons with their attribute modifiers included. Thus, if you are a nimble Godbound of Deception with a Dexterity score of 16, a Strength of 8, and a light shortsword to hand, you would record a total attack bonus of +3 and a damage roll of 1d6+2 when wielding it.

## CHOOSING A GOAL

The very final step for your character is to choose a goal. Your hero is Godbound, and while they may not yet be a titan of divine might, even a novice hero is capable of incredible deeds. Overthrowing tyrants, bringing peace to war-torn lands, uplifting the poverty of a nation, or breaking some villainous custom in a people are all goals that might absorb a Godbound's interest, to say nothing of the pleasures of a simple pursuit of raw personal power.

It is very important that every hero have a goal. The campaign realm lies open before them, and without goals it can be hard to decide what your group ought to try to accomplish. Try to ensure that your PC's goal is compatible with those of the rest of the group, or at least not in active opposition to their aims.

Some PCs might let their goals stand in abeyance for a time as they help their pantheon-mates accomplish their own ends. This is perfectly fine. The purpose of goals is to motivate the group to adventure and bold action, and if adventure is happening then the job is done well.

## SPECIAL CHARACTER CREATION CASES

The character creation rules given here are meant to cover the most common campaigns and character concepts. Your group might be running a slightly different game, perhaps using the themed Godbound or mortal heroes described in the deluxe version of the *Godbound* core rules, but a few common tweaks are worth mentioning for groups with a special case or two.

At the GM's discretion, a PC can start with a minor magic item that fits their concept. In particular, a set of *regalia armor* as described on page 183 can give a hero a decent armor class without sacrificing the visual style of the PC. Such small tokens are no real balance concern, as it's so easy for Godbound to create or obtain them during play.

Starting with a full-fledged artifact is also possible, but usually requires that one of the PC's Facts be related specifically to how they got the artifact. This Fact is usually largely useless in other ways, and is probably so narrow it almost never applies its bonus to an attribute check. Such starting artifacts should cost no more than eight Dominion points to create, though if the artifact is imagined as some key element of the hero's legacy, the GM might allow them to increase its power over time by spending Dominion, perhaps at double what the original creation would cost.

Some players will want to play supernatural creatures or mighty beasts, such as liches, dragons, or the tremendously gifted heroes of transhuman realms. In most cases, this can be accomplished simply by choosing the appropriate Words to represent the creature's abilities. Thus, a player who wanted to play a dragon in a game might choose the Fire, Endurance, and Might Words and spend two gift points on picking up *Sapphire Wings* from Sky. The player might later invest in getting the Wealth word to represent the tremendous hoard he's managed to gather and the inexhaustible riches he's stored away.

GMs should also be ready to let PCs define the details of their gifts and abilities. As a rule of thumb, if the power still has the same effect, the player should be allowed to describe it in whatever way suits them. A dragon PC with the Wealth Word might buy both *Divine Wrath* and *Corona of Fury*. The former could be described as a breath weapon of molten gold that sublimates moments later, while the latter might be a snap of the beast's jeweled wings that sprays a cloud of corundum shards at the enemy and leaves only worthless fragments behind. While showy, the actual mechanical effects are the same as the default power, so there's no danger to game balance.

Some concepts might also call for an ability that just doesn't seem to fit with any of the Words listed in the book. The PC might not need more than one or two of these abilities, and so there's no call to create an entirely new Word. Instead, the GM should just write up the power as a one-off lesser gift of no particular Word and let the PC buy it for two gift points. Note that if the power is so strong that it would more properly be a greater gift, it might be too strong to add without obliging the PC to bond an appropriate Word. The ability to buy greater gifts is one of the perks a PC gets for expending their limited Word picks on a particular set of powers. Allowing characters to just dip in and take the strongest powers of other Words can cause balance issues, so the GM should think carefully before allowing it.

## BUILDING CASSANDRA CORVO

Dee's decided to join in on a game of Godbound and is sitting down to make up her character. She decides she wants to play a sorceress of some kind, a sophisticated scholar-patrician with magical gifts who has only recently come into her powers as a Godbound. The GM has told her that the campaign will be set in the realm of Arcem and that she should feel free to pick any origin from that place, so she turns to page 95 and glances over the various nations. The city-states of Vissio look interesting, so she turns to page 89, reads up a little about them, and decides that a Vissian patrician's daughter is a good place to start with her character. The name list for Vissio provides some inspiration, and she names her heroine Cassandra Corvo.

Dee doesn't much enjoy random attribute generation, so she decides to use the default attribute array to describe Cassandra. She decides that Cassandra's not remarkable in her physical talents, but she's strikingly intelligent and charismatic. She puts her 16 in Intelligence, 14 in Wisdom, 13 in Charisma, 13 in Dexterity, 10 in Constitution, and 8 in Strength. She notes down her attribute modifiers for each score, and subtracts each score from 21 to find her attribute check targets.

Dee knows that Cassandra comes from a wealthy Vissian patrician family, so she makes that her first Fact; "Vissian daughter of wealth and privilege." But she wants Cassandra to be more than just a diletante daughter; she wants her to be a daring scholar of antiquity. She writes her second Fact accordingly; "Learned scholar-explorer of ancient architecture and cultures." The third Fact is hardest. It should be about a relationship or tie she has, but she's not sure what possibilities exist in Vissio. The GM advises her that she can just make something up, so she decides that Cassandra is a member of the Vissian Antiquarian Society, a loose fraternity of explorers, ruin-robbers, and scholars who rove far in search of secrets. Her third Fact is thus, "Member in good standing of the Vissian Antiquarian Society."

Now Dee needs to pick three Words to describe the supernatural gifts that awoke in her when she became Godbound. She knows she wants Cassandra to be a sorceress, so she picks Sorcery for one. Knowledge fits her status as a scholar, and for the third, Dee chooses Deception. Cassandra knows the byzantine paths of Vissian politics, and lies and chicanery come easy to her. She notes down each Word's special abilities, using Knowledge to raise her Intelligence to 18. She pauses when she gets to Deception, though, as that 8 in Strength doesn't really sit well with her. She doesn't imagine Cassandra being particularly weak of arm. She decides to move that 8 into Charisma and then use Deception's Word ability to raise it to 16. The other stats are shuffled slightly, leaving Wisdom at 14, Constitution at 13, Dexterity at 13, and Strength at 10.

Six points go into Cassandra's gifts. For Sorcery, she spends two on *Adept of the Gate* and *The Subtle Eye of Knowing*. Deception gets three points for *Deceiver's Unblinking Eye*, *Liar's Flawless Grace*, and *Shadow Play*. Lastly, Knowledge gets *The Best Course*. Cassandra hasn't got much knack for combat, but in an emergency she can use miracles to emulate combat gifts like *Divine Wrath*, or trigger Deception gifts like *Walking Ghost* to escape the scene.

Now that she has her final attribute scores, she can write down her saving throws. For Hardiness, it's 14 thanks to her Constitution modifier, for Evasion it's 12 because of her high Intelligence, and for Spirit it's 13 due to her Charisma modifier. For weapons, she only carries a knife up one sleeve and some hardened throwing spikes in her hair. They're both light weapons that do 1d6 damage, +1 for her



Dexterity modifier. Their hit bonus is +2, including her +1 base bonus and +1 for Dexterity.

Dee considers armor next, but it's hard for her to imagine her scholarly adventuress walking around in a mail shirt. She asks the GM for permission to have a pair of enchanted bracers as *regalia armor* from page 183, emulating normal light armor. The GM agrees that it's fine, since it's merely a style point to let the bracers spark with a crackling blue shield to block incoming weapons. With a base armor class of 7, her Dexterity modifier of +1 is subtracted to give her an armor class of 6. Because the bracers are light armor, there's no saving throw penalty.

The last steps are just a matter of writing down some scores on her sheet. Her maximum hit points are 9, accounting for her beginning 8 plus her Constitution modifier. Her Fray die is 1d8. Her maximum Effort is 2, as is her Influence, and she has no starting experience points or Wealth. While she comes from a prosperous family, she's clearly spent most of her finances on her expeditions.

Because Cassandra is an Adept of the Gate, she also needs to pick four theurgic invocations of the Gate to start with from the list on page 63. She decides to pick ones that fit Cassandra's likely needs; the *Beacon of Celestial Purity* to maintain her patrician immaculateness, the *Kiss of the Crane* as an offensive spell, the *Seal of Regnal Dominion* to sway weak minds, and the *Trumpet of Far Utterance* to talk to her allies from afar. More spells can be discovered in time.

Lastly, Dee needs to decide what Cassandra's goal is when she enters play. She thinks back on Cassandra's recent awakening as a Godbound, and decides that a heroine as young and curious as Signorina Corvo is still exploring her wondrous newfound gifts. She'll look for the biggest mysteries and most perilous places and try to pry out their truths... if nothing else is particularly demanding her attention. Her goals may well change over time as she becomes more involved with great matters in Arcem, but for now, this motivation is enough to give her an initial push.





# THE RULES OF THE GAME

## FACING A WORLD OF ADVENTURE AND PERIL

*Godbound* is a traditional old-school game in many respects. Those readers who've been gaming for years are very likely to recognize almost all of the mechanical concepts that follow in this section, and it shouldn't take you long at all to get up to speed. A quick-reference page is provided on page 23 which you can print out to keep at the table. If the players all keep track of their own gifts and powers, you shouldn't need much more to run a session of *Godbound*.

Experienced players of older games are advised to read the combat section *very carefully*, however. *Godbound* uses a different system for determining the damage of a blow in combat, and if you don't take note of it, your combat results won't make sense.

### WHAT THESE RULES COVER

This section includes guidelines for combat, the outcome of difficult feats attempted by heroes, and attempts at resisting the malevolent power of evil magic, vile poisons, and unfortunate circumstances. Readers will also find the rules for improving their hero's capabilities through experience and mighty deeds.

These rules are sufficient to cover the great majority of situations a hero might find themselves encountering, but they're not exhaustive. A GM should always be ready to step in and make a spot call on an effort, or apply modifiers to a roll when it seems appropriate. It's better to make an adequate ruling on the spot and then sort out a future policy after the session's over than it is to spend five minutes digging through the book mid-scene in search of the perfect ruling.

### WHEN RULES AREN'T NEEDED

A GM needs to remember that *Godbound* heroes operate on a somewhat different plane than traditional old-school dirt farmers-turned-adventurers. *Godbound* aren't untouchable paragons of blazing perfection, it's true, but there are a lot of problems and situations that just do not hinder them the way they would a more conventional RPG protagonist. There are times when an ability check or a combat round that would make perfect sense in another system is altogether unnecessary in *Godbound*.

*The PCs are demigods.* Whenever the GM looks at a situation or adjudicates something the PC is trying to accomplish, this fact should be kept front and center in their minds. It's perfectly fine to make an

apprentice pigherder with a spear roll a Dexterity check to navigate a slippery log over a roaring river. It is somewhat less appropriate to demand the same roll from a Divine Blade Queen.

By the same token, when that pigherder tries to stick his spear into a generic knife-waving bandit, a hit roll makes perfect sense. If the Divine Blade Queen wants to end the petty ruffian, the only question is how exactly she wants to disject his constituent parts. She is a goddess of Stab. *Stab will happen.*

In the same vein, it is important to remember that most other NPCs are *not* demigods. Most people, even most petty monsters and ordinary vile beasts, are simply not going to be able to stand up to the *Godbound*. Low-level demigods might need to show some respect to mortal heroes and prowling monsters, but veteran *Godbound* are going to be able to sweep aside most mortal resistance with minimal effort. The player should be spending their time describing how it is they succeed in the contest or drive their trifling foes before them.

Does this mean that the heroes should progress in undisturbed majesty to the crown of all their desires? Of course not. It just means that the GM ought to respect their innate heroism and maintain a reasonable world, where most people are not suited for opposing bearers of the Words of Creation. There are plenty of horrific demi-divine foes to make even the mightiest *Godbound* sweat, and their impact on play will be all the more significant if it's obvious that only the PCs are equipped to deal with threats like them.

### IMPORTING RULES FROM OTHER GAMES

As an OSR-style game, *Godbound* is implicitly compatible with a huge range of other fantasy RPGs. Many of these other games offer additional content or special-case rules for handling certain situations. You might have your own favorite system already, and want to import some of its quirks into this one.

Assuming you're familiar with your gaming group's tastes, this is an excellent idea. *Godbound's* mechanical systems are light and simple enough that GM can easily reach in and start tweaking things to fit their own group's tastes. You may want to play a session or two of the game "straight" beforehand, though, just to be sure you understand how the parts work in play. Once you feel comfortable with it, however, you should feel free to modify it to suit your own best preferences.



## ATTRIBUTE CHECKS

Attribute checks are rolled when a hero attempts something that tests the limits of even their prodigious abilities or when their efforts are being opposed by some worthy opponent.

An attribute's check target is equal to 21 minus the attribute score. To make an attribute check, roll 1d20 and compare it to the most relevant attribute's check number, adding +4 to the roll if they have a Fact that would help them with the task. If the roll is equal or greater than the score, they succeed. If the roll is lower, then something happens to complicate the situation and it doesn't work out as they desire. Godbound almost never simply *fail* at something they try to do, but it might take too long, work as unanticipated, or add some fresh complication to the situation.

A natural roll of 1 on a check is always a failure, while a roll of 20 is always a success, assuming success is at all possible.

If the Godbound is being opposed by someone, then both the Godbound and their opponent make rolls, and the one who succeeds by the largest margin wins the contest. If the opponent hasn't got attribute scores recorded, the GM should just pick an appropriate score.

Some checks might be modified by the situation or the difficulty of the tasks. Feats that would tax human capabilities might take a -4 penalty to the roll, while penalties of up to -8 might be applied for tasks that seem only marginally possible for a human being. Completely impossible feats require the use of a gift or miracle to achieve.

## SAVING THROWS

Can a hero throw off the venom that even now gnaws his heart? Can she dive clear of the massive jade pillar as it plunges to the earth? Is he able to resist the mental influence of the Uncreated abomination? To find out, the hero must roll a saving throw. Some dark powers or grave perils might explicitly allow a saving throw to resist their effect, while at other times the GM might choose to allow one.

To roll a saving throw, the hero must roll 1d20 and compare it to their most relevant saving throw type. If the roll is equal or higher than the saving throw score, it's a success. A natural roll of 1 is always a failure, and a natural roll of 20 always succeeds.

**Hardiness** is used for tests of their physical endurance and bodily integrity, and is modified by the better of a PC's Constitution or Strength modifiers. **Evasion** is for challenges of agility and quick response, and is modified by the better of a hero's Dexterity or Intelligence modifiers. **Spirit** saves are made for magical threats or mental influences that don't fall under one of the other headings, and are influenced by the better of a hero's Charisma or Wisdom modifiers. When in doubt, the GM picks a type for the saving throw.

PCs have a base saving throw in each category of 16 minus their character level, minus the highest applicable attribute modifier. Thus, a first level hero with a Constitution modifier of +1 and a Strength modifier of -1 has a Hardiness saving throw of 14.

Monsters, non-player characters, and other creatures also may attempt saving throws if necessary. Most foes will have their saving throws listed in their combat statistics, but if a GM needs to determine a score in a hurry, they can just count it as 15 minus half the creature's hit dice, to a minimum of 5 or better to save. Creatures exceptionally suited or unsuited to resisting a type of peril might gain a bonus or penalty to the score ranging from -3 to +3.

## WHEN NOT TO USE ATTRIBUTE CHECKS

Not everything a Godbound tries to accomplish should require an attribute check. If a hero has a relevant Fact, then most activities related to that Fact should be automatic successes. A Godbound from the nomadic Howler tribes shouldn't be rolling attribute checks for riding tricks or handling beasts unless she's trying something truly ridiculous, and a hero with a Fact relating to their membership in an organization shouldn't need to roll Charisma checks just to contact group members or get ordinary favors from them.

Don't use attribute checks when the hero is invoking their gifts or the miracles of their divine Words. If a hero invokes a miracle, the miracle just *works*. The hero's powers will always succeed unless some other Godbound, worthy foe, or remarkable force is interfering.

Don't use attribute checks when the hero is trying to do some mortal feat that is in line with their associated Words of Creation. A Godbound of Earth trying to pick up a heavy rock or knock down a stone pillar with a hammer will succeed. A Godbound of Fertility won't have problems midwifing a child's birth. The only time a check would ever be needed for such things is if some worthy supernatural opposition is trying to make it hard.

Do use attribute checks when the hero is trying to do something outside their Words or specialties that a normal human could theoretically accomplish, but that would be a challenge even to a hero.

## GODBOUND AND SAVING THROWS

Some gifts and other special powers only function on foes of equal or fewer hit dice than the wielder has levels or hit dice. Others automatically afflict weaker creatures, but allow stronger ones to make a saving throw to resist them. Against these gifts, Godbound are always treated as worthy foes, as if they had more hit dice than the user, even if they would otherwise be susceptible.

Godbound and other major supernatural foes can also summon reserves of strength in moments of dire need. If they fail a saving throw, a Godbound can Commit Effort for the day to convert it to a success. A hero might be forced to drop the Effort committed to defensive gifts in order to do so.

### SAVING THROWS ARE A PRIVILEGE

Many otherwise-dire powers come with the chance to save in order to resist them. Instant-death poisons, bodily transformations, being digested into cursed blue slime, or falling prey to the whispered mental influence of an Uncreated abomination might all grant the hapless victim a saving throw. Similar save-or-lose powers created by a Godbound hero's miracles should also grant the chance to save rather than instantly lose the conflict.

The exception to this guideline is when the power targets a single lesser foe. If a special ability or power is aimed at a single creature with equal or fewer hit dice than the assailant has levels or hit dice, they probably don't deserve a saving throw. Godbound and other mighty creatures can summarily defeat such minor opposition with little or no chance of failure.



# Advancement

A Godbound gains power through mighty deeds and the exertion of their will upon the world. They require both practical experience of the world and the chance to work their desires upon it before they're ready to master new gifts.

Godbound earn **experience points** for accomplishing worthy goals. These goals must somehow tax the Godbound's abilities; overthrowing the mortal tyrant of an important city-state might be a serious challenge to a pantheon of low-level Godbound, while it would be little more than an afterthought to a group of major demigods. Conversely, toppling the god-king of an entire blasted realm might challenge the powers of the greatest of Godbound. The GM has guidelines for deciding how many experience points a feat should be awarded.

Godbound gain Dominion points through the performance of mighty deeds, the worship of their cult, and the assimilation of certain celestial relics. These Dominion points are then expended to create permanent changes in the realms they inhabit, or even to forge their own Paradise in the chaos of Uncreated Night. A Godbound who has not expended enough Dominion has yet to truly embrace their regnant will, and must work greater changes before they are ready to ascend.

## Gaining a Level

Once a Godbound has earned enough experience points and spent enough Dominion on their projects to qualify for a new level, they immediately gain the benefits of advancement.

- Their attack bonus increases by 1.
- Their maximum hit points increase by 4, plus half of their Constitution modifier, rounded upward.
- Their maximum Effort and Influence increase by 1.
- Their saving throw scores each decrease by 1.
- They add a new Fact related to their adventures or deeds.

Once they've made these changes, they can spend 2 more points on additional gifts from the Words they know. Lesser gifts cost 1 point, and greater gifts cost 2. They can also save up the points for later purchases, or for gaining access to a new Word for 3 points. At the GM's discretion, heroes can buy lesser gifts from other Words for 2 points each, if they can explain how their own powers can create the new gift's effects. Once they bind a new Word, any earlier single gifts in it that they bought at extra cost get the extra fee refunded.

At the GM's discretion, during ordinary play they might be allowed to immediately spend saved points to master gifts they invoke with their miracles. Such a purchase would represent the sudden mastery of the power they find within themselves.

The table provided here ends at level 10. It may be possible for Godbound to ascend past this level of power, but heroes of this degree have the might of a true divinity, one capable of working wonders and rewarding the faith of their followers. A GM who wishes to explore greater degrees of celestial authority is encouraged to develop their own gifts. Even those heroes who do not exceed 10th level can still earn Dominion and expend it on their aims.

| LEVEL | EXPERIENCE<br>REQUIRED | DOMINION<br>SPENT |
|-------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1     | 0                      | 0                 |
| 2     | 3                      | 2                 |
| 3     | 6                      | 4                 |
| 4     | 12                     | 10                |
| 5     | 24                     | 22                |
| 6     | 48                     | 38                |
| 7     | 72                     | 57                |
| 8     | 96                     | 76                |
| 9     | 130                    | 95                |
| 10    | 170                    | 124               |

## Gifts of Apotheosis

Godbound are prototypical divinities, and the might of the gods themselves gradually blooms within them as they grow in power. The Apotheosis Word represents this gradual ascent, and its gifts automatically accrue to Godbound who reach certain levels of power.

For some campaigns, the GM may choose to ignore the Apotheosis Word. It might not fit the focus of the game, or the players may not be interested in forming or tending a flock of believers. Some Godbound might not want to bother with such things, and that's a perfectly acceptable choice.

These churchless Godbound are free divinities, and get a certain amount of Dominion automatically each month as they husband their own celestial powers. The amount of Dominion they gain each month is one point, starting at second level, plus one more for each three full character levels. They do not receive any of the usual gifts of the Apotheosis Word and cannot have worshipers. A free divinity may form a church, and a Godbound with followers may abandon them to become free, but doing so is at the GM's discretion, and may require a mighty deed to arrange this change of status.

For other Godbound, though, the following gifts are obtained automatically on reaching certain levels.

| LEVEL | GIFTS OF APOTHEOSIS                                 |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | —                                                   |
| 2     | <i>Receive the Incense of Faith</i>                 |
| 3     | <i>Sanctify Shrine</i><br><i>Smite the Apostate</i> |
| 4     | <i>Hear Prayer</i>                                  |
| 5     | <i>Perceive the Petitioner</i>                      |
| 6     | <i>Mark of the Prophet</i>                          |
| 7     | <i>Attend the Faithful</i>                          |
| 8     | <i>To Bless the Nations</i>                         |
| 9     | —                                                   |
| 10    | —                                                   |



# COMBAT

Godbound wield tremendous powers of destruction, but even ordinary men and women can struggle for their lives with blade and bludgeon. Mighty heroes might lay out lesser foes in bloody windrows, but enough determined and death-ready rabble can put fear in even a demigod's heart.

## THE COMBAT ROUND

Combat is measured in rounds of approximately six seconds. Player characters always act first during the combat round, unless they've been ambushed or surprised. In such cases, the ambushing group gets a full round of actions before the victims can act. After the heroes have acted, the other participants act in whatever order the GM might choose.

During their turn, a combatant can move their full movement rate and take a single action. Normal humans have a movement rate of 30 feet, while other creatures might be swifter.

A combatant's action for the round might be an attack, the use of a special power or gift, a second turn of movement, or anything else that takes about six seconds to accomplish. Minor acts such as drawing a weapon, dropping an object, or speaking are considered free actions and don't take up a combatant's round.

Once everyone has acted in a combat round, the sequence starts over from the beginning.

## ACTIVATING GIFTS AND MIRACLES

Godbound can use their gifts and miracles freely out of combat, assuming they have enough free Effort to activate the power. In combat, things get more hectic.

Instant gifts can be used at any time, whether or not it's the Godbound's turn. They can even be used in response to an enemy's attack. Dropping a gift's effects to free up Effort also counts as Instant.

On Turn gifts can be used only during the Godbound's turn, though they can use as many of them as they wish and can afford to trigger. Action gifts count as the Godbound's action for the round, and so only one can be used on any given turn.

Offensive miracles that harm a foe or dispel their self-buffing gifts count as actions. Other miracle use counts as an Instant effect.

## ATTACKING A FOE

To hit with an attack, the assailant rolls 1d20 and adds their attack bonus, their relevant attribute modifier, and the target's armor class. If the total is 20 or more, it's a hit. A natural roll of 1 always misses and a natural 20 always hits. Most assailants get only a single attack for their action, but some beasts or sublimely-skillful combatants can make multiple attacks in a single action.

A combatant in melee who moves away from a foe without spending their action disengaging draws an instant free melee attack from all nearby foes. Some gifts allow a hero to avoid these passing blows.

## ROLLING DAMAGE

If an attack hits, the assailant rolls their weapon's damage die and adds the relevant attribute modifier. For Light weapons, this is the better of their Strength or Dexterity modifiers. For Medium and Heavy weapons, this is their Strength modifier, and for Ranged weapons it's Dexterity. Supernatural weapons or effects use whatever attribute seems most appropriate to the effect.

This damage roll is then compared to the table below, and the given amount of damage is suffered by the target. Against Godbound foes, this damage is subtracted from their hit points. Against other opponents, this damage is taken by the target's hit dice.

| DAMAGE ROLL | DAMAGE TAKEN |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1 or less   | None         |
| 2 – 5       | 1 point      |
| 6 – 9       | 2 points     |
| 10 or more  | 4 points     |

If the attack does more than one die of damage, they are all count separately. Any modifier is applied to only one die of the attacker's choice. Thus, a blast that does 5d8 damage a target would do from 0 to 10 points of damage, depending on the results of the dice.

If the damage a PC does is more than enough to kill the target, the overflow can be applied to any other target in range of equal or worse armor class. Thus, if there are four identical one hit die peasants in melee and the hero rolls a 10 on the damage die of his two-handed sword, all four would be killed in a single brutal round. This overflow effect does not apply to area-effect damage that is inflicted on everyone within an area. Only PCs inflict overflow damage, not NPC foes.

Some powers inflict damage dice "straight". Such dire dice do their natural result in damage points, without using the table.

## FRAY DICE

A hero has a Fray die representing their casual blows, minor exertions of divine power, and general fearsomeness. Each round of combat they can roll their Fray die on their turn, even if they're occupied doing something else. Most heroes have a Fray die of 1d8, though some gifts can increase this. No attribute modifiers apply to this die.

The Fray die is compared to the damage chart, and that many points of damage can be inflicted on a single *lesser foe* in sight. A lesser foe is a creature with equal or fewer hit dice than the hero has levels. Thus, if the hero rolls a 6 on the die while fighting the four peasants mentioned above, two of them would be killed out of hand by the overflow damage. If fighting a *worthy foe* with more hit dice or levels than the Godbound has levels, however, the Fray die is useless against them.

## MORALE

NPCs aren't always enthusiastic about fighting demigods. Most creatures have Morale scores ranging from 2 for arrant cowards to 12 for mindless or fanatical foes. When the foes are given some reason to flee, they roll 2d6; on a roll higher than their Morale, they retreat, surrender, or otherwise stop fighting. The death of an ally is usually enough to provoke a Morale check in ordinary people, as is the further loss of half their allies or a display of fearsome supernatural might.

## DEATH AND DYING

Foes brought to zero hit dice are dead, unconscious, or subdued at the assailant's discretion, if a choice is plausible. Most mortally-wounded creatures take a few rounds to die; medical attention during that time might save them on an attribute check by the healer. Godbound brought to zero hit points are gravely wounded and helpless, and die from further harm. If left for dead, they regain 1 hit point an hour later.



## DIVINE FURY

When pressed to the brink of death a Godbound's desperation can drive them to tap unknown reserves of celestial power. If brought to zero hit points, a Godbound may choose to enter a *divine fury*.

The Godbound immediately gains hit points equal to half their maximum, rounded up, and bonus Effort equal to their level. They are immediately freed from any magical effect that is binding or constraining them, whether mental or physical, and for the duration of the fury they cannot be controlled or bound by magic.

The maximum duration of the fury is equal to the Godbound's level in rounds. At the end of that time, the Godbound becomes utterly helpless for five rounds. All of their gifts become inactive, they can take no action, and they automatically fail all saves. If any foe capable of harming them is still present they can be killed automatically by a single attack. A Godbound brought to zero hit points during or immediately after a divine fury dies instantly and cannot be revived; their spirit is too weakened by their exertions to be restored.

A Godbound's fury depletes deep reserves of power. Once they have exhausted their reserves, they must gain a new level of experience before they can rage once again. NPC Godbound normally cannot enter a divine fury, as they've already expended theirs during some past moment of crisis.

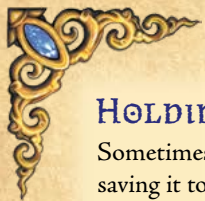
## HEALING AND RECOVERY

Heroes who survive a fray can regain lost hit points with rest. A full day of recuperation in a safe, reasonably comfortable place will restore all lost hit points for a Godbound. For a creature of lesser stamina, a full day's rest will restore one lost hit die. Some Godbound may be able to rest comfortably in circumstances impossible for others.

Godbound regain all committed Effort each morning, whether or not they've had the opportunity to rest. They might elect to leave some Effort committed if they've got a long-lasting gift they want to maintain, but Effort spent on activating miracles or day-long expenditures all comes back.

Some magical spells or other supernatural effects can restore lost hit points or cure lingering maladies. If used to cure diseases, neutralize poisons, lift curses, or otherwise remove afflictions from a subject, these powers require no extra expenditure. If used to cure hit point damage, however, the recipient must Commit Effort for the day. Such magical healing taxes the reserves of the one being healed, and if they cannot or will not Commit the Effort to receive it it does no good. If used on a creature with no listed Effort, assume that the entity can benefit from such healing once per day.

Magical healing rolls cure that many hit points of damage. If used on a creature with hit dice instead, it heals that many hit dice of injury.



## HOLDING ACTIONS IN COMBAT

Sometimes a hero might want to hold their action for the round, saving it to respond to some impending peril. If the PCs know that the angelic tyrant is going to vomit a stream of molten gold on them, for example, the PC with the Wealth Word might want to wait and offensively dispel the attack rather than merely protect their own person with a defensive dispelling.

If a PC wants to hold their action until later in the round, they may do so. They describe what they're waiting for and what they intend to do when it happens. If what they're waiting for doesn't happen by the end of the round, then they waste their action.

A PC can hold for a general sort of event, but they can't just wait arbitrarily until they're ready to act. It's up to the GM as to whether or not a particular set of conditions are adequately specific.

## CONFLICTING GIFTS

Most gifts are absolute in their effects; they simply work. Sometimes a target will get to make a saving throw to resist, but a gift's effects are usually automatic and inexorable. Sometimes, however, the GM might find the PCs and the opposition using two gifts that clash in their effects.

Defenses trump attacks. If a gift protects against something or inflicts some hindrance on an attack, the defensive gift applies regardless of the source of the attack. Thus, the Sword Word's *Unerring Blade* gift is still probably going to miss against Alacrity's *Untouchable* defensive gift.

For other clashes, roll an opposed attribute check using the most applicable attribute and any relevant Facts. The contestant who wins by the largest margin wins the contest. In the case of a tie, the PC wins. If two PCs tie in their struggles, they can flip a coin. If the NPC doesn't have listed attributes, the GM should just pick an attribute check number that makes sense, given the NPC's nature and prowess.

## DEFEATING FOES NON-LETHALLY

An enemy reduced to zero hit dice or hit points isn't necessarily dead or mortally wounded. If the assailant doesn't want to kill the target and the method they're using to attack can reasonably be non-lethal, then the attacker can just declare the target stunned or subdued.

It's up to the GM as to whether the attack could plausibly be pulled for a non-lethal result. A Godbound with the Sword Word could probably wield a chainsaw in a nonlethal way, while a more pacifistic deity probably shouldn't try to subdue people with a greataxe. Neither of them are advised to try subdual with the Red Sword of the Bleeding Emperor or a *Divine Wrath* bolt from the Fire Word.

Some attacks might be assumed to be nonlethal unless otherwise desired, such as ordinary tavern fisticuffs or sparring duels.

### HIT DICE AND HIT POINTS

In other old-school games, hit dice are usually rolled to determine a foe's hit points. In *Godbound*, this is not the case. A foe can take a number of points of damage equal to their hit dice before perishing.

So why use hit dice at all? Why not give everybody hit points? Because when importing creatures and content from other old-school games, it's easier to just record the creature's hit dice and give it an attack bonus equal to that number. Hit dice also underline the difference between mere NPCs and heroic PC demigods.

## INSTANT DEFENSIVE MIRACLES

While the full details of defensive and offensive dispelling are explained on page 26, it's important to understand what dangers can be dispelled and what dangers can't. Regardless of the type, defensive miracles always require the defender to Commit Effort for the day.

Combatants can defensively dispel as an Instant action. They can only dispel powers and gifts for which their own Words or abilities offer a reasonable counter, and the player has to describe how they're using their own Words to block or diffuse the incoming peril.

Only powers that directly affect the target can be dispelled. If the enemy uses a gift or ability that boosts their own abilities, such as giving them faultless accuracy or imbuing a blow with tremendous strength, this gift can't be dispelled defensively. The attacker is buffing themselves rather than targeting the victim directly.

Only the dispeller is protected from the incoming effect. A gout of corrosive darkness might be defensively dispelled by a hero with the Sun Word or averted by one with the Night Word, but only that hero is spared the effect. His comrades next to him are affected normally.

Normal physical attacks or environmental hazards cannot be dispelled. Someone with the appropriate Sword or Endurance Word might use a miracle to mimic an Instant defensive gift against an incoming blow, but they cannot simply dispel an oncoming axe to the head. Heroes who want to slaughter a powerful supernatural foe are often better off boosting their own weapon attacks rather than trying to wear it down with *Divine Wrath* gifts that it can successfully dispel.

## COMBATANTS WITH MULTIPLE ACTIONS

Very powerful enemies may have more than one action a round, with some having two, and the most tremendously potent having three. If you are using the deluxe *Godbound* rules with the guidelines for mortal hero PCs, these exceptional mortals might also have extra actions each round.

Each of these bonus actions can include both movement and a normal action. Thus, a combatant with +10 to hit and a 30' movement rate could use both actions to strike twice and move up to sixty feet in one round. If the combatant gets multiple attacks per action, they can make their full attack sequence with each action.

Creatures with special powers must usually use up an action in order to employ them. Thus, if some fearsome foe had three attacks at +12 to hit and two actions in a round, it could use one of them to slash thrice at a foe and another to trigger a special ability. In some cases, a creature might have an On Turn or Instant gift or power, and these abilities may be used just as often and in the same way as PCs use them.

While it is possible for heroic mortals and supernatural foes to get multiple actions per round, there are very few ways for a Godbound hero to do so. The Word of Alacrity has a few costly powers that allow an extra action, but there are no easy or inexpensive ways for a divine hero to act more than once per round.

This is intentional, and GMs should keep this in mind when coming up with their own gifts and magical artifacts. Godbound have tremendous flexibility and durability compared with mortal heroes or monstrous foes. If a Godbound can reliably get more than one action a round, it's all too easy for their pantheon to overwhelm the opposition with a torrent of divine miracles and thunderous blows. Major enemies need their bonus actions to help even out great disparity in actions per round between them and an entire pantheon of Godbound. If the PCs have them too, it can easily become an arms race.

# QUICK RULE REFERENCE

## ATTRIBUTE CHECKS

An attribute's check target is equal to 21 minus the attribute score. To make an attribute check, roll 1d20 against the most relevant attribute's check target. Add +4 to the roll if the hero has a Fact relevant to their efforts, and apply a penalty if the task is pushing the limits of human or heroic ability. Penalties shouldn't normally exceed -8. If the roll is equal or greater than the check number, the check is a success. If less, something goes wrong or an unexpected complication arises, as Godbound very rarely simply fail at their efforts.

Don't roll attribute checks for divine gifts, miracles of the Words, or tasks that fall within a hero's Facts or Words. Such efforts will always be successful barring outside interference from a worthy foe.

## SAVING THROWS

Roll 1d20 against a hero's most relevant saving throw type: Hardiness for physical challenges, Evasion for tests of agility and reaction, or Spirit to resist magic or mental influence not covered by another category. If the roll is equal or greater than the score, the saving throw is a success. A natural 1 always fails, and a natural 20 always succeeds.

Medium armors apply a -4 penalty to one saving throw category of the wearer's choice. Heavy armor applies it to two categories. Godbound and major supernatural foes who fail a saving throw may Commit Effort for the day to count it as a success instead.

## COMMITTING EFFORT

Godbound must Commit Effort to use many of their powers. Effort committed for the day or for a scene may not be reclaimed earlier. Effort committed for shorter durations may be reclaimed at any time, whether or not it's the hero's turn. A hero who wishes to use a powerful offensive gift or miracle might thus choose to reclaim the Effort they're using to sustain a defensive ability, or may choose to abandon the Effort they've committed to a gift in order to throw up a sudden defense.

A divine miracle require heroes to Commit Effort for the day. If the miracle mimics a gift that also would already require a day-long commitment, two points must be committed instead.

All committed Effort is returned with each new morning, though the Godbound might leave some Effort committed to gifts they want to continue using.

## USING GIFTS AND MIRACLES

Outside of combat or other time-sensitive situations, gifts may be used whenever the Godbound desires to do so, granted they have enough free Effort to commit to them.

During combat, Godbound may use Instant gifts at any time, whether or not it's their turn to act. On Turn gifts may only be used during their turn, but they do not count as actions and as many of them may be used as the Godbound wishes. Action gifts count as the hero's action for the round, and so only one can be used.

Miracles normally count as Instant, though attacks, offensive dispellings, environmental changes, and other external effects count as the invoker's action for the round.

Some gifts are Constant. These powers are always in effect, though some have additional effects that can be triggered by Committing Effort. Doing so is an Instant action unless specified otherwise.

## COMBAT ROUNDS

Combat is measured in rounds, each one about six seconds long. Player characters always act first unless surprised or ambushed, in which case the ambushers gain a full round of action before the victims can respond. After the PCs have acted, NPCs will then act in whatever order the GM would prefer.

On their turn, a PC can move up to their full movement rate of 30 feet for a normal human and take a single other action. This action might be an attack, activating a gift, invoking an offensive miracle, moving their movement rate a second time, or anything else that can be done in about six seconds. Actions such as drawing a weapon, dropping an object, or other such minor acts can be done as free actions.

## HITTING AND ROLLING DAMAGE

To hit a target, the attacker rolls 1d20 and adds their attack bonus and the target's armor class. If the total is 20 or more, it's a hit. A natural roll of 1 always misses and a natural 20 always hits.

The attack bonus for a player character is equal to their level plus the attribute modifier appropriate to their weapon. For most melee weapons, this is Strength, while ranged weapons use Dexterity. Light weapons use the better of either modifier. Attacks using supernatural powers, gift-imbued weaponry or divine marvels use whatever attribute seems most pertinent to the effect.

To determine the damage the target takes, roll the weapon's damage die and add the relevant attribute modifier. Compare the result to the table below to find out how many points of damage are inflicted. Godbound take this damage from their hit points. Other enemies subtract the damage total from their hit dice.

If an attack happens to deal multiple dice of damage, each die is counted separately, and any modifier is applied only to one die of the attacker's choice. Thus, a bolt that does 5d6 damage will do between zero and 10 points of damage to a victim.

If a hero does enough damage to kill a target, the excess can be applied to any other foe within range of equal or worse armor class. Thus, if a Godbound's sword strike does 4 hit dice of damage to a veteran warrior with 2 HD, the blow kills the veteran and can also cleave apart his comrade standing beside him, assuming his armor is no better. This overflow does not apply to area-effect attacks that deliver damage to each target in a zone. Only PCs do overflow damage.

| DAMAGE ROLL | DAMAGE TAKEN |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1 or less   | None         |
| 2 – 5       | 1 point      |
| 6 – 9       | 2 points     |
| 10 or more  | 4 points     |

## FRAY DICE

Godbound are dangerous foes, and can harm lesser foes automatically each round with their 1d8 Fray die, representing casual blows and minor exertions of divine power. They may do so even if they use their action for other purposes that round. They may roll the die and apply the table's damage to a single foe with equal or fewer hit dice than the Godbound has levels. Overflow applies normally if the target dies.





# DIVINE POWERS

## CELESTIAL GIFTS AND MIGHTY THEURGIES

Every Godbound is blessed by certain divine Words of Creation, ones related to the divine fragments they bear. Simply possessing this connection is enough to grant the hero the ability to call forth miracles related to their powers, but they are also able to refine certain gifts from these Words. These gifts are miracles that have been sufficiently practiced and refined so as to be easy for the hero to invoke. The gifts listed here are simply examples and guidelines. A hero might develop numerous unique gifts of their own with the agreement of the GM.

### EFFORT

Both gifts and miracles are powered by *Effort*. A hero's Effort pool represents a blend of divine power, personal will, and the physical energy necessary to wield mighty forces. A beginning PC has 2 points of Effort and gains one more every time they advance a level. Ordinary creatures normally have one point of Effort and no abilities which require it, though heroic or supernatural foes may have a larger reserve.

Gifts often require that Effort be *Committed* to them in order to use them. Usually, Effort is Committed only as long as the power is in use. A gift that allows flight, for example, might require the user to Commit Effort. They would have to spend a point of it from their pool in order to fly, but could reclaim the Effort as soon as they no longer needed the ability. A lingering curse on a foe might also require Effort, with the blight lasting as long as the hero leaves the Effort committed. Reclaiming Effort is instantaneous and may be done at any time.

Some gifts require that Effort be committed for longer periods, such as for a scene, or even for a full day. A *scene* simply means for however long the current event is happening. A fight is usually one scene, as is an infiltration of a house, a debate at court, the pursuit of a fleeing enemy, or other such action. Most scenes last no more than fifteen minutes, though longer ones exist at the GM's discretion. At the scene's end all Effort committed for that scene is returned. Effort committed for a scene or for a day cannot be reclaimed early.

Effort committed for a full day returns each morning, with or without rest. This lengthy commitment is usually only for the most impressive gifts or the wielding of unrefined miracles. Most of these powers create a single sudden marvel that might last only a moment, but the Effort remains committed until the hero can rest for an evening.

### GIFTS

Gifts are refined miracles, either honed by long practice or an expression of intuitive understanding. Like miracles, gifts are enormously potent, and conventional sorcery cannot overcome or dispel them. Thus, an illusion created with a gift of the Word of Deception cannot be dispelled by mortal magic or revealed by mortal divinations.

Gifts come in two degrees of power: lesser and greater gifts. Lesser gifts are extremely potent, but tend to affect only the hero and their immediate surroundings. Larger-scale effects are possible, but are usually more subtle, or involve sensing or communicating.

Even those heroes without a connection to the Word can learn versions of its lesser gifts, provided they can explain to the GM how they're shaping their own Words to create the effect. In some cases, this might be so appropriate that the GM allows them to buy it as a gift of their existing Words, while in other cases the effect might be so different that the GM disallows it entirely.

Greater gifts are the pinnacle of the Word's powers, refining the raw energy of a miracle into a marvel that can be used more readily by the hero. Greater gifts can affect entire towns with devastating blights or munificent blessings, or render the hero an unstoppable juggernaut to lesser foes. Only a hero who is bound to the Word can master its greater gifts.

Gifts have four types of activation: *Constant*, *On Turn*, *Action*, and *Instant*. Constant gifts are always functioning and require no Effort to activate them, though some may have additional uses with Effort. On Turn gifts can be activated at any time during the hero's turn and do not count as their action for the round. Any number of On Turn gifts can be activated or deactivated at once, provided the hero has enough Effort to fuel them. Action gifts must be activated on the hero's turn and count as their action for the round, thus only one can be used on any given round. Instant gifts can be activated at any time, even in response to an enemy's attack or action, or after dice have been rolled for an attack or saving throw. Many defensive gifts are Instant, allowing the hero to swiftly respond to a threat.

Gifts last as long as Effort remains committed unless specified otherwise in the text. Thus, if a blessing says that Effort must be committed for a scene, its aid lasts a full scene unless the gift says differently.



## FOES AND SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Many gifts have effects that are only applicable to targets with equal or fewer hit dice than the hero has character levels. Such targets are known as *lesser foes*, whether friendly or hostile. Thus, a newly-formed Godbound at the first level of experience counts all creatures with one hit die as lesser foes, which includes the vast majority of ordinary men and women. NPCs use their hit dice to determine whether or not their enemies count as lesser foes to them.

**Godbound are never lesser foes**, even if they have fewer levels than their assailant has hit dice or levels. Their supernatural force is so great that the gifts that would ordinarily brush aside a minor enemy or control a weaker creature cannot affect them so easily.

Many gifts or miracles work automatically on lesser foes, or have effects that weaker enemies can't possibly resist. **Worthy foes** are those enemies with more hit dice than the Godbound has levels or the NPC has hit dice. Many gifts either don't work on worthy foes or allow them to make saving throws to resist the worst of their effects. Godbound are always worthy foes.

Powers that grant a saving throw allow the victim to realize that something unnatural is happening to them if the saving throw succeeds and they have some acquaintance with supernatural powers. Thus, a mind-affecting gift of the Word of Command might be recognized as an unnatural effect if the victim saves against it. If it fails, the bewitched target would be oblivious. Of course, even if the victim realizes something strange is happening they may not be able to connect it with the Godbound or realize its true purpose.

Those gifts that apply to the Godbound and their companions usually apply to no more than a dozen people in total, plus any mounts they might be riding. The companions need not be immediately adjacent to the Godbound, but must be in the same general area. Some gifts may allow the Godbound to affect larger numbers of allies.

Some gifts allow the wielder to use them as a weapon. The hero may use the gift to empower their unarmed attacks or use it to mantle a physical weapon they are using. Some such gifts can even be used at range, allowing the Godbound to hurl bolts of energy or conjure damaging effects on the target. If a weapon is sheathed in the gift's power, it gains the gift's basic damage if that is higher than its own, but retains any magical benefits or powers that the weapon might possess.

The hero can use any attribute that seems plausible to modify the weapon's attacks or their unarmed use of such a gift. A hero who uses a miracle of Command to empower their weapon, for example, might choose to use Charisma as their relevant attribute for hit and damage rolls, with conquered foes being reduced to stunned awe before them. Weapons sheathed in an elemental gift's power may be treated as elemental damage or physical damage at the wielder's discretion.

Some gifts allow the hero to inflict their Fray die on other foes. Unless specifically noted otherwise only lesser foes can be harmed by a Fray die. Thus, creatures of greater hit dice than the hero has levels are normally not affected by such gifts.

Some gifts grant an "invincible defense" against a particular threat. This leaves the PC entirely immune to all harm from that source, even those attacks that might penetrate conventional immunities and wards. This immunity extends to include the hero's possessions, clothing, and any mount they might be riding at the time.

Some gifts or foes roll a damage die "straight". This means that when you roll the damage die, you don't compare it to the damage table, you instead read its face value. Thus, a 1d10+2 blow read straight will do from 3 to 12 points of damage.

## MIRACLES

Sometimes a Godbound wishes to exert their powers in a way that doesn't match a particular gift they possess. They can do so, but these miracles are more draining than the easy proficiency of a gift.

To use a miracle, the hero first chooses an effect, describing the way in which they use a Word to bring about the desired result. If the effect seems reasonable and relevant to the GM, they may then commit Effort to invoke the miracle. Effort committed to a miracle remains committed for a full day, even if the miracle's effect is brief.

- A miracle can mimic the effect of a gift of that Word, usually lasting no more than a scene. Subtle curses or blessings might be allowed to last longer at the GM's discretion. Full details of the effects that a miracle can produce are explained on page 27.
- A miracle can suppress another gift, if some explanation can be made of how the Word could counter the effect. For example, if a hero wished to temporarily nullify a Night gift of a villainous foe, they could use their Sun gift to explain how their purging radiance melts away the enemy's shadows. The enemy's gift ends immediately as if they had voluntarily ended it, and they can't activate it again until the miracle-worker's next round of action. This suppression is automatic, but applies to only one hostile gift at a time. Offensively dispelling a foe's powers this way counts as the hero's action for the round, but defensively dispelling a gift being used directly against the hero is an Instant defense. Gifts that augment attacks or buff the wielder can't be defensively dispelled.
- A miracle can dispel mortal magic or undo mortal curses if a plausible explanation can be made as to how the Word would apply. Unlike with hostile gifts, this dispelling is permanent.
- A miracle can make some impressive effect or dramatic change in the immediate vicinity, out to a few hundred feet. This change is very temporary, but the consequences of it might linger. Such changes can apply penalties to foes for a scene's duration, or inflict about one hit die of damage to enemies around the hero, but such freeform divinity cannot instantly slay consequential foes. Lesser foes might suffer penalties such as the loss of a round's action or a -4 hit or saving throw penalty for the remainder of the fight. Worthy foes would get saving throws to resist such effects.

As a general rule of thumb, a miracle can do anything a gift can do, but can't do it for as long and requires a longer commitment of Effort to do it. Miracles should not produce long-lasting effects, and most of them should create only a single dramatic, temporary change or result.

Miracles can be performed at any time and usually count as Instant effects. If a miracle is being used as a weapon or other harmful effect, it counts as an Action gift and can only be used on the Godbound's turn, in lieu of their usual action. Offensive suppression of a target's powers counts as an action, but defensive negation of a power being used against a hero can be done as an Instant reaction. Thus, a Godbound of the Sea who wanted to extinguish a fire angel's flaming shield would have to do it as their action for the round. If the angel then hurled a ball of searing light at the pantheon, the Godbound could Instantly use a miracle to negate its effect on them, though their nearby allies would still be scorched. If there's ambiguity in the situation, the GM decides whether a dispelling is offensive or defensive.

# WHAT CAN MIRACLES DO?

Given the flexibility of the Words, it's inevitable that players are going to want to throw out convenient marvels in play. The GM can consult this quick list of guidelines to help judge the acceptability of any particular divine feat. When rounding levels, round up.

Each of the guidelines below assumes that one Effort is Committed for a day to conjure the miracle. Spending more Effort to get a "bigger" miracle isn't possible. However, if the Godbound is mimicking a gift that already Commits Effort for the day, the miracle requires two Effort to be committed to trigger it.

## HURT ONE TARGET

On a single target, the Word can inflict a 1d8 die of damage per level or two hit dice of the user, up to a 10d8 maximum. There is no saving throw against this damage. Any Word can be used for this, but doing so counts as a Smite action, and so can't be done two rounds in a row.

## HURT SEVERAL TARGETS

When blasting a group of targets in sight, a miracle can inflict a 1d6 die of damage per two levels or hit dice of the character, with a 10d6 cap. This can usually catch a single group of enemies within sight range, but if there are allies mixed up and the Godbound wants to spare them this wrath, then the targets get an appropriate saving throw to resist the damage. As with hurting a single target, such a blast counts as a Smite action.

## GAIN ARMOR OR DEFENSES

If a Word doesn't have an Armor Class-boosting gift already listed, the hero can improvise by explaining how their gift is protecting them. Their natural Armor Class becomes 3 for the duration of the scene, modified by their Dexterity but not by armor or shields.

If the Godbound is trying to gain immunity to a particular negative environmental effect or type of attack, it has to fit the Word. A Godbound of Fire who wants to fireproof his allies could reasonably do so, but a Godbound of Command who wanted to do the same would be out of luck. Such defenses last for only one scene for narrow immunities, or one attack for weapon immunities or like generalities.

## RESIST AN ATTACK OR EFFECT

Most Words can't just negate an attack unless it fits with the theme of the Word; Sword can be used to negate melee attacks, Bow can stop ranged attacks, Endurance can shrug off almost anything physical in nature, Knowledge can block mental damage, Fire can block freezing winds, and so forth. This resistance can be triggered as an Instant effect, even after the attack hits, but it only lasts for a single attack.

The same principle applies to resisting other supernatural effects; the miracle can negate their effects on the Godbound if it fits the theme of the effect. Note that a Godbound can always Commit Effort for the day to count a failed saving throw as a success, whether or not their Words fit the peril.

## HINDER OR WEAKEN AN ENEMY

Weak blights can affect a group, perhaps inflicting a -4 on hit rolls or on saving throws. Strong blights can affect multiple lesser foes or single worthy foes, and might halt movement, force hit and damage rolls to be made twice, or even cost a round's actions. Most strong blights should allow an appropriate saving throw to resist them.

## MAKE SOMETHING

A miracle can conjure an appropriate object or entity. The Godbound can call up enough to outfit their companions if need be, though the objects shouldn't be larger than a wagon and should fit the Word used. Sword could call up armor, Fire could conjure a torch or bonfire, Journeying could summon riding horses, and Artifice or Wealth could conjure almost anything. These objects last as long as they're needed, usually no more than a day. Conjured entities are usually useless as combatants, but are completely loyal to their Godbound creator.

If a conjured entity is meant to be a useful combatant, it should have about twice as many hit dice as the Godbound has levels, up to a maximum of 10, an armor class of 5, a hit bonus equal to its hit dice, two attacks, and a 1d8 damage die for each attack. Full details of summoned creatures are on page 162 of the bestiary chapter.

## MIMIC A GIFT OF THE WORD

A hero bound to a Word can invoke its gifts as miracles. This is less efficient than actually mastering the trick but it gives a Godbound a great deal of flexibility with their powers. A hero can use a miracle to mimic the effect of any gift of the Word. Such mimicked gifts last no longer than a single scene, even if Constant. If triggering the gift would normally Commit Effort for the day, two points are needed.

## CHANGE SOMETHING

A miracle can produce a change in line with the Word. These changes are usually permanent if they involve a natural process, while impossible transformations usually don't last more than a day.

Unwilling lesser foes don't usually get a saving throw against this transformation. Worthy foes can make an appropriate saving throw to resist the alteration, usually Hardiness if it's a physical change or Spirit if it's mental. If the change would kill or totally incapacitate a person, roll it as if it were a damage-causing miracle. If the damage rolled wouldn't be enough to kill the target, the miracle's not able to change them that drastically, either, and no harm or damage is done.

## CREATE A WALL OR ZONE OF DANGER

Miracles to create a wall of fire, seal a victim in a stone block, or otherwise create a hazardous zone take one round to form. If victims in range move out of the zone that round, they take no damage. Otherwise, damage is usually one point per level per round in the zone.

## SOLVE A PROBLEM

Some heroes will want to use their powers to just brush away an immediate problem. This can be done in most cases, but these solutions will usually only be temporary in nature. This might be fine for the hero's purposes, but if they want to make permanent changes to a situation they'll need to put in more effort to change the fundamental factors involved.

## SHOW OFF

If the effect really doesn't have any combat benefit, lasting material effect, or solve any immediate problem, the GM should just allow it. The effect might have a benefit in impressing onlookers or making the hero's life easier, but if they're just throwing around their powers as minor expressions of divinity, you might not even charge them Effort. There's no point in being a proto-god if you never get to show off.



# CREATING NEW WORDS AND GIFTS

It's normal and expected for GMs or players to want to develop new gifts or entirely new Words for the Godbound of their campaign. A player might have a character concept not suited by the existing choices, or have an idea for a particular special ability they want their hero to possess. It's not difficult to set up these new arts, but there are a few general guidelines a GM will want to keep in mind when designing new gifts and Words.

## CREATING NEW WORDS

Any divine portfolio could conceivably serve as the seed for a new Word. Even very specific purviews can serve as the basis for a Word, such as the tutelary god of a particular city, or the patron deity of a particular type of art. Alternately, a Word might focus on a particular mode of some larger power, such as the god of sea travel rather than one of the general Sea.

There is no "niche protection" in Words. Just because one of them allows certain tricks doesn't mean that no other Word should be able to do the same thing, albeit perhaps in a different way. Don't worry about overlap in abilities.

Instead, make sure that the Word isn't too general in its application. It should be *about* something, and that something should be specific enough that a single Word can't accomplish everything that the hero might possibly want to do. For example, the Word of Command is extremely flexible about controlling the minds of other beings. It is unable to affect inanimate objects, however. A clever player's suggestion that they should be able to "command" these things by way of metaphor should be firmly denied, because that's just beyond the Word's purview and makes it too generally useful.

If you're creating a new Word for your campaign just to have it, you'll want to give it six lesser gifts and three greater gifts. Don't replicate universal gifts with these choices. If the Word can be used to deal direct damage, it should be different from a simple *Divine Wrath* copy. Maybe it does less damage but has a secondary effect, or perhaps it does more but requires a special circumstance.

If you're creating a new Word because a player wants to have it, let the player come up with the gifts. Presumably they have some idea of the sort of things they want their hero to be able to do, things that can't be easily done with the existing Words. They don't need to come up with the full nine gifts for the Word, just those that they want to have from the beginning or know they'll want to attain as they gain experience.

Give the new Word an intrinsic ability that fits its nature. Words that focus on an element or environment should grant immunity to its inherent dangers. Others might boost an ability score to 16, or to 18 if the score is already that high. If that's the case, consider allowing the Godbound to choose from two thematically-suitable ability scores so as to give them a little variety in their choice.

Word abilities are a good place to put those knacks or tricks you'd expect to be intrinsic to every Godbound bound to the portfolio. Be careful not to simply make the ability a weaker version of some gift in the Word, because that cheapens its uniqueness. It's possible to create a gift that amplifies or improves the Word's natural ability, but this gift should require that the Word be bound in the first place.

Actually creating a Word's gifts can be a little tricky. How can you tell when a gift is a good one that won't disrupt the campaign or prove too weak or limited to ever be used?

## CREATING NEW GIFTS

Start with the existing gifts as cues and examples. Indeed, you might just lift them entirely if the Word you're creating is a blend of existing portfolios. A Word of the Moon, for example, might have several Night gifts on its list, along with new gifts that emphasize madness, wolves, silver, and the night sky.

When making gifts, use the existing ones as templates. If you're giving the Word a gift that allows a natural Armor Class of 3, you can see how other Words all offer a small side-effect benefit along with the armor class, and choose something to fit your new Word. In another example, gifts that increase the user's weapon damage die to 1d10 always have their own side-perk as well, because otherwise it's a limited improvement over simply swinging a very large weapon.

Gifts that are Constant should usually add new abilities or perks to the hero rather than simply adding a bonus to existing scores. A gift that just adds +4 to hit rolls is a boring gift, and worse, it's a gift that almost everyone with the Word will feel like they have to take, because it's so widely useful in every combat. Gifts that just increase numbers should be used very sparingly.

Gifts that are Instant should usually be defenses or action boosts of some kind. Instant defenses have the great advantage that they can be triggered after the peril has already happened. Because of this, don't hesitate to make them expensive to use; scene-long Effort commitments are a fair price for these defenses. Instant boosts or special effects for an attack can also be triggered after the attack hits or after the provoking situation happens, so they can also be dear to activate.

Gifts that are On Turn are usually boosters for an action, giving it some special effect or allowing the Godbound to do something unusual with their turn's movement or action. On Turn gifts have to be activated before the hero does something, so their costs should be less. Committing Effort for as long as the boost is in effect is a good choice, with exceptionally powerful boosts requiring a scene-long commitment that can't be taken back early.

Gifts that are Actions take up the hero's action for the turn, and so they should be something impressive. It might be a bolt of divine wrath, a translocation of allies on the field, a suppression of enemy powers, or something else useful enough to make it worth giving up a round's action to accomplish. Many of these gifts should have no Effort cost at all, because the character is paying with their action for the turn. If you don't want to see the hero spamming this ability too often in a single fight, make it Commit Effort for the scene. If this is a power that's notably stronger than usual, one that the PC should be reluctant to use lightly, it should Commit Effort for the day.

Don't be afraid to have gifts that just *work*, with no saving throw or ability check involved. Against lesser foes most powers should be automatic in their success. Against worthy foes, a saving throw should be allowed, and some particularly overwhelming or conflict-ending powers might not work on them at all. Most major opponents have the ability to spend Effort to succeed at a saving throw, so even a save-or-die power won't necessarily bring them down too quickly, though it will wear away at their Effort reserves.

Lesser gifts should affect one situation in the Godbound's presence. They shouldn't have particularly lasting or far-reaching effects unless that's an intimate part of the Word. Greater gifts can have much more pronounced effects, ones that might last indefinitely or affect much larger areas than the hero's immediate surroundings.

# THE WORDS OF CREATION

The following are a list of some of the more common Words found among the Godbound. Others exist, and you might choose to design some of your own for particular heroes.

Every Word comes with an intrinsic benefit for those who bond to it. This is a natural ability that cannot be suppressed or dispelled, nor does it require Effort to use it.

The lesser and greater gifts provided under each Word are not meant to be exhaustive, but only an example of the sorts of powers that the Word might grant. Some Words also overlap in their effects; a Godbound of Wealth and one of Fertility might both be skilled at producing agricultural goods, for example. GMs who wish to design new Words shouldn't feel obliged to keep their powers wholly separate and unique.

Newly-made Godbound get six points with which to buy gifts from their Words, with lesser gifts costing one point and greater gifts costing two, while bonding a new Word costs three points. Every time they gain a character level, they get two more points with which to buy more gifts. They may save these points or spend them immediately.



## UNIVERSAL GIFTS

Some effects are common enough that any Word might manifest them. Rather than repeat them under each heading, they are provided here, all as lesser gifts.

### DIVINE WRATH

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort to the end of the scene. You smite a chosen foe within sight with the energies of the Word, inflicting a 1d8 damage die per character level. You are always immune to the wrath of your own bound Words, as are other entities that wield similar powers. As a Smite power, *Divine Wrath* cannot be used two rounds in a row.

### CORONA OF FURY

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort to the end of the scene. You hurl a torrent of your Word's energy at a group of foes, affecting all within a 30-foot radius of a target point within sight of you. Each victim takes a 1d8 die of damage for every two levels you have, rounded up. The fury can selectively spare allies within the area, but the victims then get an appropriate saving throw to resist the effect. You are always immune to the furies of your own bound Words, as are other entities that wield similar powers. *Corona of Fury* cannot be used two rounds in a row.

### EFFORT OF THE WORD

Constant

Your maximum Effort increases by one point. This gift can be taken once for each Word you've bonded, but each purchase after the first costs two gift points instead of one.

### INFLUENCE OF THE WORD

Constant

Your maximum Influence increases by two points. This gift can be taken once for each Word you have bonded.

### EXCELLENCE OF THE WORD

Constant

Choose one attribute score and raise it to 18. This excellence is usually colored by the Word that grants it; Fire that grants Dexterity might cause sparks to be left behind swift motion, while Earth that grants Wisdom might lend a ponderous and steady tint to your thoughts. This gift may only be taken once, regardless of how many Words your hero has bound.

## SMITE POWERS

Some gifts or miracles blast a target with a direct surge of divine fury, scouring them with the power of the gods. While impressive, a Godbound can't channel such energies continuously. You can't use a gift or miracle with the Smite keyword two rounds in a row, even if you're an NPC with multiple actions per round.

Gifts that augment an attack or deal modest damage to large numbers of foes aren't generally Smite attacks. Instead, the keyword is meant to keep players from pouring all of their Effort into continuous heavy blasts, rather than more creative combat.

# ALACRITY

The Word of swiftness and impossible grace, Alacrity grants miracles of haste to the hero who possesses it. Miracles of its power might involve completing a particular task in but moments, evading some otherwise-inescapable peril, or responding to an event before its enactor can even begin. Alacrity is not Journeying, however, and its movement tends to be restricted to a single particular place or a short distance rather than swift transit between far-flung locations.

Heroes with the Alacrity Word cannot be surprised. They may increase their Dexterity to 16, or to 18 if it's already 16 or higher.

## LESSER GIFTS

### ALL DIRECTIONS AS ONE

Constant

You can navigate vertical or overhanging surfaces as if they were flat ground. You can pass through rough terrain effortlessly. You have an invulnerable defense against being pushed or made to fall.

### FLICKERING ADVANCE

On Turn

Commit Effort to scene end. Instantly reach any location you can see with your unaided sight out to the horizon, which is usually about three miles away for a character standing on flat terrain. From a high elevation, the maximum range is ten times as far.

### MIST ON WATER

On Turn

Commit Effort to scene end. Until the end of your turn, you may ignore all solid matter with your movement, provided you end up in a location you can physically occupy. You can't affect the world during this impossibly fast dash but you have invincible defenses against all non-magical forms of harm. If you end up in a solid object at the turn's end, you're ejected from it harmlessly to the nearest empty space.

### THE STORM BREAKS

Instant

Before the first round of every combat or time-sensitive circumstance, you may Commit Effort for the scene to get one free bonus round before anyone else acts. Two heroes using this gift roll opposed Dexterity attribute checks to see who takes their action first.

### SWIFTER THAN THE SUN

On Turn

Commit Effort. Your movement rate is twice as fast as your fastest pursuer or quarry, to a minimum of 60 feet per move action. If chasing quarry that has divine gifts that allow them to outrace pursuers, the participant with more hit dice is faster, with ties resolved by a coin flip.

### WALK BETWEEN THE RAIN

Constant

Your natural AC is 3. You cannot be hit by anything not driven by a purpose unless you allow it; falling objects will never strike you unless some will to harm you set them in motion. Traps meant to hit an intruder have a chance to hit you. Armor and shields don't benefit you.

## GREATER GIFTS

### ALL-ENCOMPASSING PRESENCE

On Turn

Commit Effort. Twice during your turn, as an On Turn action, you can be anywhere within 100 feet of your current location provided you could conceivably move to that point under your own power.

### FASTER THAN THOUGHT

(Smite) Instant

Commit Effort to scene end when anyone visible declares an action. You get a free round's action and movement before they can perform their act. If their desired action is rendered impossible by yours, their action is wasted. As a Smite gift, this can't be used two rounds in a row.

### UNTOUCHABLE

Instant

Commit Effort to scene end to become tremendously difficult to hit until the start of your next turn. Physical attacks hit you only on a natural 20, even those attacks from foes that would normally hit automatically. As an Instant gift, you may use it after an attack roll.

## THE WORD OF ALACRITY IN PLAY

She is almost too late. The headsman's sword is already raised, the boy already pinned to the block. She is a hundred paces away, a churning crowd between her and the wailing child, but it is not distance enough to stop her. Before the sword can fall she is halfway down the far alleyway, a squirming young boy in her arms and the shouts of the magistrate's guards behind her.

*Eden invokes her **Faster Than Thought** gift as the headsman chooses to strike, gaining a free round's action for a point of Effort Committed for the scene. Another Committed Effort triggers her **Flickering Advance**, whirling her across the plaza in the blink of an eye. She scoops up the boy with her action for the round and runs with him, trusting to her **Swifter Than The Sun** gift to ensure that no mortal pursuer can catch her.*

Her shoulders ache and her arms are shaking under the weight of the struggling boy. She can carry him no longer, not even with the hooves of the magistrate's six swiftest riders thundering after her. Her numb hands grope for the knife at her belt, and the fire in her veins burns bright. The riders charge as horsemen. They halt as a tangle of carved meat, for Eden's knife cuts them faster than they can bleed.

*Eden hasn't got any uncommitted Effort left and she hasn't got any offensive gifts. She could abandon the boy and run, but she refuses to flee. Instead, she reclaims the Effort she committed to **Swifter Than The Sun**, returning to her normal speed, and Commits Effort for the day to invoke a miracle to duplicate the effects of Alacrity's **Corona of Fury** universal gift. Every horse and rider within 30 feet of each other takes a 1d8 damage die for every two character levels Eden has, rounded up. Against ordinary mortal soldiers, this is enough to slaughter them all in a moment.*



# Apotheosis

The Word of Apotheosis is a special Word. It cannot be selected as a bound Word by a Godbound, nor does it have any miracles of its own associated with it. Instead, it represents those special abilities suitable to a budding deity, automatically gained as they grow in might.

Many apotheosis powers apply only to *worshippers*. A worshiper is an intelligent being who knowingly and willingly pledges to worship a Godbound or other deific Word-bound entity, such as a parasite god or Made God. The worshiper may be coerced by circumstances or threats, but cannot be magically compelled or induced. A worshiper may be a servant of only one deity at a time. Those who pledge to a pantheon have their worship assigned to the member god most suited to their nature, whether or not the worshiper is aware of it. Worshipers can turn against a god, but they can't renounce their state. The most they can do is find a new god to accept their loyalty.

Gods always know whether or not a person is a worshiper of theirs, though they have no automatic insight into whether or not they are an *obedient* worshiper. They may reject a worshiper at any time, or accept a change of allegiance from another god's devotees. A god is not automatically made aware of a person's choice to worship them, though they can tell of that fact with a glance at the new worshiper.

Gods always have custody of the souls of their devotees. They may damn their faithful dead to Hell at their will, but otherwise, the souls of the dead hover unseen and sleeping in the presence of their god, or are dispatched to the divinity's paradise. A soul unsheltered by a paradise will fall into Hell if their patron deity is slain.

The only way to gain the gifts of apotheosis is through gaining character levels. They may be used as given, but the Word does not grant miracles, nor can miracles be used to mimic its powers.

## RECEIVE THE INCENSE OF FAITH Constant

Gained at second level, the Godbound becomes capable of receiving worship from mortal believers and can begin forming their own cult.

## SANCTIFY SHRINE Action

Gained at third level, the Godbound's worshipers can now sanctify temples and shrines to their deity. When properly consecrated, the Godbound can choose to perceive anything going on within their precincts, though they must intentionally choose to watch. They can target a gift or miracle at any person within the sacred grounds at the usual costs in Effort. Such a marvel is free the first time the Godbound so acts in a day, but each successive wonder requires the Godbound to Commit Effort for the day. Properly sanctifying a shrine requires rites and components costing Wealth equal to the Godbound's level, with increases in their level requiring additional expenditures. If the shrine is desecrated, it must be reconsecrated at the full cost.

## SMITE THE APOSTATE Action

Also at third level, the Godbound can instantly kill an offending worshiper or afflict them with some debilitating suffering appropriate to their Words. This torment lasts as long as the Godbound desires. If another god accepts the worshiper, however, the curse is lifted.

## HEAR PRAYER Constant

At fourth level, the Godbound is capable of hearing the prayers of their faithful. These usually are a subconscious sussurus of petitions, but they can specifically "listen" for particular topics or people if they wish, becoming alerted when those topics arise or those people address them. The Godbound can communicate with their faithful during their prayers, though this inward voice is subtle and does not compel obedience.

## PERCEIVE THE PETITIONER Action

At fifth level, the Godbound can see a particular worshiper and their surroundings with an action's focus, knowing everything about their immediate situation that the worshiper knows. This doesn't grant deep or subtle knowledge of the situation, but it's enough to make their current circumstances clear.

## MARK OF THE PROPHET Action

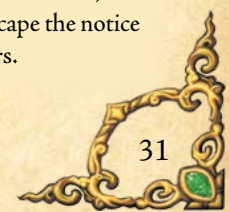
At sixth level, the Godbound can consecrate specific worshipers as favored disciples or high priests. One disciple may be chosen for each level of the Godbound, but only one high pontiff can be chosen. If you've access to the deluxe version of *Godbound* and the mortal creation rules, the disciples instantly become heroic mortals of a level equal to half their patron's level, rounded up and the high priest becomes a heroic mortal of the Godbound's level. Both usually take talents reflective of their patron's portfolio, including a gift or two. If the mortal hero rules are unavailable, treat the disciples as Skilled Mages or Major Heroes from the mortal section of the bestiary chapter, and the high priest as a lesser Eldritch. This consecrating process takes only a moment, but the consecration cannot be taken from the acolyte until they are dead, even if they later leave their god's service.

## ATTEND THE FAITHFUL Action

At seventh level, the Godbound can manifest before a praying worshiper, instantly appearing before them no matter how far away the divinity may be, even from a distant realm. This manifestation lasts no longer than a scene, however, before the Godbound returns to their original location and cannot use this gift again for a day.

## TO BLESS THE NATIONS Action

At eighth level the Godbound can selectively bless or blight the fortunes of a faction that contains a substantial number of their followers. If the faction has a number of worshipers present equal in number to a group of one Power size smaller, the Godbound can selectively add or subtract 2 from any action die roll they take. Thus, if a city of Power 2 had a Power 1 village's worth of faithful among them, they would be subject to the Godbound's influence. The Godbound must be aware of the effort the faction is making to influence the roll, but usually only the most subtle and secretive actions can escape the notice of such a large number of worshipers and their prayers.



# ARTIFICE

This is the Word of crafters, builders, and devisers of wondrous creations. Some Godbound express their affinity through a particular form of crafting, such as blacksmithing or shipbuilding, while others are patrons of a broader range of creative labor. Even focused artisans can use their powers generally, however. Miracles of Artifice involve the creation, command, repair, or destruction of physical objects.

Heroes with the Artifice Word can create any non-magical object a normal man can carry as a round's action, using whatever materials are to hand. While the ensuing creation may look odd, and any "foodstuffs" are inedible, it functions and lasts as well as a normal object of its type and usual substance. The hero's crafting efforts for a day count as 100 laborers per character level when an estimate is needed.

## LESSER GIFTS

### FAULTLESS REPAIR

Action

You can fix anything with the available materials and tools. Up to a 10 x 10 x 10 foot cube per level worth of objects or constructions can be made like new each round, provided it is not completely destroyed. Every form of rot, decay, damage, and corruption is fixed, even for perishables such as foodstuffs. If repairing magical or enchanted things, Effort is Committed for the scene with each use of the gift.

### COMMAND THE WHEELS

Action

Commit Effort. You can seize control of any visible vehicle, mechanism, door, or other object with moving parts up to the size of a small ship. If the item was created by you, there is no size limit on what can be controlled. While the Effort remains committed, the object will function exactly as if it were being manipulated, driven or piloted by you. Each new directive requires an action, and worthy foes can save versus Spirit to negate the gift for items they're using.

### HAMMERHAND

On Turn

Commit Effort. Every weapon or unarmed attack you use rolls at least a 1d10 damage die and is treated as a magic weapon. Against artificial constructs or inanimate things, this damage roll is read straight.

## THE WORD OF ARTIFICE IN PLAY

Lucius slides a thumbnail under the featureless red blotch of wax that seals the missive. The paper inside is unsigned, a dozen lines of unremarkable Unitary scripture inked out in a crisp hand. The Godbound's fingertip traces along a letter, feeling the almost-imperceptible groove of the quill, evoking in his mind a woman's face and the frisson of her intent. She meant this letter to trigger a plan... though what plan, Lucius cannot say. The wax seal is perfect again by the time he puts it down.

*Lucius uses his Mark the Maker gift to interrogate the note, identifying its author and the general purpose of its creation, even if he can't read the cipher. Faultless Repair ensures that the envelope is re-sealed perfectly.*

### MARK THE MAKER

Action

With an action's careful inspection, you understand the purpose and operation of any crafted object, magical or mundane. You also gain a brief vision of each person who substantially helped in its creation, and a short description of what they contributed to it.

### TEN THOUSAND TOOLS

Constant

Your natural gifts of creation are augmented. Instead of requiring a full round to create a portable mundane object, you may do so as an On Turn action, as part of whatever action you take. This object may be a permanent creation or allowed to disappear afterwards at your discretion. Your daily labor on projects is worth 1,000 laborers per level. This gift is of no use to a Godbound who has not bound this Word.

### TRANSMUTER

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and turn one 10 x 10 x 10 foot cube of material per hero level from one physical substance into another. Items being used or held by a creature cannot be changed. If the effect is used to somehow harm targets, they take a 1d6 damage die for every two character levels of the hero, rounded up. If the substance being created is rare or precious, Effort must be committed for the day. Extremely rare and magical substances cannot be created this way, though mountains of gold can be fabricated. See the Wealth Word for limits on the use of this newfound treasure, as it is all too easy to inflate a region's mundane economy into chaos.

## GREATER GIFTS

### THE MAKER'S EYES

Action

As an action, you may instantly perceive the area around any object you've created as if you were there, seeing and hearing all around you. If you Commit Effort for the scene, you may take one action with the object as if you were present to manipulate it. If you choose a specific location to focus on, you see through the nearest valid object.

### PERPETUAL PERFECTION

Constant

Everything you make is flawless and impervious to normal decay and use. Only intentional efforts at destruction have any chance of ruining them. The weapons and armor you create count as magical items, ones capable of harming supernatural foes and granting a +1 to hit and damage rolls for mortal wielders. You and other Godbound are too mighty to benefit from this hit and damage bonus.

### REVERENCE OF STEEL

Constant

Any clothing or armor you make for yourself gives you an AC of 3 with no saving throw penalties. When you make a suit specifically for another, any saving throw penalties are one class lighter; none for medium armor, and only one saving throw penalized for heavy armor. As an Instant action, Commit Effort for the scene to negate one hit you receive from a manufactured or crafted weapon.

# BEASTS

The Word of the animal realm, gifts of the Beast may be used on any natural or magical animal, though not creatures fashioned entirely of sorcery or impossible artifice. Most creatures of human intelligence do not qualify as beasts, though some exceptionally primal or savage entities might be treated as such. Miracles of the Beast Word involve adopting traits of animals, impressing these traits on others, full or hybrid shapeshifting, commanding beasts, or calling forth animals.

Some powers grant the user the full or partial shape of an animal, or allow them to transform another. If used as a curse, the hero may inflict the animal's intellect on the target or allow them to retain their own mind in their new shell. If used as a blessing or a personal transformation, the original mind is retained, albeit with an instinctive awareness of how to use the beast's natural abilities. Shapeshifting rules are described in detail on page 160. If using a creature's natural weaponry to attack, small but dangerous creatures use a 1d6 damage die, wolf- or bear-sized ones use a 1d8 damage die, and larger creatures use a 1d10 damage die. Thus, transforming mortals into fierce beasts wouldn't actually improve their prowess, but would only change their outward appearance and give them the natural locomotion of the beasts. While the gifts here don't address it, other miracles or gifts of the Beast Word might be able to grant special abilities or qualities of an animal's form for additional Effort.

Heroes with the Beast Word can speak to animals. Unintelligent beasts will always comply with requests that aren't unnatural to them.

## LESSER GIFTS

### DISTANT HOWL

On Turn

Commit Effort. You can communicate from afar with any animal whose location you know to within a mile. You can borrow their senses if they permit it. Animals who have spent at least a week in your presence can be reached wherever they are.

### EYES OF THE CAT

Constant

You have supernally-keen senses; you can see in perfect darkness, hear perfectly any noise within a hundred yards, and track by scent.

### LINK OF UNITY

Constant

You can bond with an animal, linking it as an extension of your spirit and allowing sense-sharing and communication. It uses its normal statistics, but its attacks are treated as magical weapons and its hit dice are twice your level. If it dies, it vanishes, but it can be summoned back by Committing Effort for the day. It can be teleported to your side for the same cost. Only one animal can be bound at a time, and humans bound with *Conquer the Beast Within* must be normal mortals.

### RED IN TOOTH AND CLAW

On Turn

Commit Effort. You have or can instantly manifest natural weaponry that does 1d10 damage and counts as a magic weapon. Against natural or magical beasts, these talons or fangs always strike against AC 9 as they effortlessly carve through the hides or scales of these foes.

## THE WORD OF BEASTS IN PLAY

The tribe is starving, and the Lomites have encircled the butte. She can get out whenever she wills it, but her people cannot follow. At the edge of the outcrop, she looks down on the gray gathered hosts and she raises her voice in a fluting song. The sky is speckled with wings as a thousand birds dive down to await her kindred's knives and fires. In the flurry of feathers and talons, who will notice one more hawk soaring away?

*Three Bright Chords reaches out with Scent the Prey to summon all the birds within a mile, flying them over the Lomite besiegers. Any hesitation the birds may have to serve as Howler stew-meat is calmed by a Lord of the Wild. Three Bright Chords uses the confusion to Commit Effort for the day and use a miracle to mimic Many-Skinned Mantle, the better to escape and seek aid among the scattered Howler tribes.*

### SCENT THE PREY

On Turn

Commit Effort to gain an intuitive awareness of the locations and types of all beasts within a mile radius. You may telepathically summon any of them to come to you as quickly as they can safely do so. Magical or intelligent beasts can refuse to come if they so choose.

### UNTAMED WILL

Instant

Commit Effort. While committed, no external magic or compulsion can make you do or feel anything contrary to your wishes. You may invoke this gift even after failing a save or being struck by a mental effect.

## GREATER GIFTS

### CONQUER THE BEAST WITHIN

Constant

When you defeat a foe in combat, reducing them to zero hit dice, you may choose to subdue them if using a non-lethal attack as described on page 160. Such a subdued victim revives with 1 hit die and forever afterwards is subject to your Beast gifts as if they were an animal.

### LORD OF THE WILD

Constant

Animals instinctively serve and obey you even to the death, carrying out commands as if they had a human intellect. Magical or intelligent beasts get a Spirit saving throw and cannot be commanded to act in a way that seems suicidal to them or completely against their nature.

### MANY-SKINNED MANTLE

Action

Adopt the shape of any beast or hybrid, natural or magical. Alternately, transform a visible living creature into a natural beast; Commit Effort until the end of the day to affect a worthy foe, who also gets a Hardiness save to resist. If used as a blessing a human target can end the change at will. Those cursed with a change can't be turned back by anything short of another gift or similar powerful dispelling.

# Bow

The Bow Word includes all divinities of ranged combat, whether with bow, hurled spear, pistol, rifle, thrown dagger, or a flung lightning bolt. Heroes with the **Omnipresent Reach** gift may not actually use a physical weapon at all, instead hurling bolts of some appropriate energy. Such bolts may do elemental damage if the hero is aligned with such Words, or they might be physical blasts of concussive divine force.

Miracles of the Bow Word involve impossibly accurate damage delivered over enormous distances or the cursing and condemning of another's attempt at a ranged attack. Note that the benefits granted by gifts of the Bow apply only to projectiles and other weapons or bolts called forth by the gifts of this Word. They don't apply to other ranged attacks from other Words or to magic that just happen to be delivered at range, such as the *Divine Wrath* gift allowed to all Words.

Heroes with the Bow Word never run out of normal ammunition. They may instantly call ranged or throwing weapons they've used to their hands over any distance, and their ranged weapon attacks never harm any target they did not intend to hurt. Their ranged attacks always count as magical for purposes of overcoming defenses.

## LESSER GIFTS

### BAR THE RED DESCENT

On Turn

Commit Effort. You have an invincible defense against normal projectiles and can take no more than 1 point of damage per hit from magical ones. Only actual weapons such as arrows, bullets, spears, and trebuchet rocks are affected by this, not spells or magical effects.

### BOLT OF INVINCIBLE SKILL

Instant

You always hit an unaware or inanimate target, no matter how small or how far under cover it may be. Optionally, you may Commit Effort to the end of the scene to ensure that your current or next ranged attack does maximum damage and hits on anything but a natural roll of 1.

### The Word of the Bow in Play

In a distant castle there is a tower, and within that tower, there is an iron door. Beyond that iron door is a chamber, and in this chamber stand twenty strong soldiers. Beyond these soldiers there is a sanctum, where a wicked lord lies on his bed. And in this lord's chest there is an arrow, because neither distance, nor castles, nor towers, nor soldiers can guard a man's life from the arrow that Altan Khan shoots.

*Altan Khan avenged himself upon the lord with **None Beyond Reach**, learning of the precise location of the noble's bed and waiting for an hour when he would be asleep. **Bolt of Invincible Skill** ensured that he would not miss the sleeping man, and **The Inexorable Shaft** sent his arrows straight through the tower's stone walls. Despite his reach, Altan had to be certain to make his first strike count. If the noble had lived long enough to stagger ten feet from his bed, the archer would not have known his position well enough to strike from such a great distance.*

### FEATHERED TEMPEST

On Turn

Commit Effort. Against lesser foes, you always hit with ranged attacks. You can spread any overflow damage to any other targets in range subject to this gift.

### NONE BEYOND REACH

Instant

Your ranged attacks have no maximum range provided you can see what you're shooting at with your natural sight or know its location to within ten feet. This ability extends only to the same realm as the one you are currently inhabiting.

### OMNIPRESENT REACH

Constant

Your ranged weapons have a maximum range as far as your natural line of sight. Your missile weapons always do at least 1d10 damage and are treated as magical weapons. Even without a bow or gun, you may cast bolts of force or conjured weapons for 1d10 damage. The pistols and rifles of the Bright Republic work for you even in the absence of an etheric node's stabilizing effect.

### THE SEEKING FLIGHT

On Turn

Choose a visible target and Commit Effort to the end of the scene. Your ranged attacks seek them out regardless of range, treat them as AC 9, and completely ignore cover provided there is at least some path for your arrow to reach them.

## GREATER GIFTS

### THE INEXORABLE SHAFT

On Turn

Commit Effort. Your ranged attacks strike with tremendous force, always doing their maximum damage on a hit. Your projectiles can penetrate any thickness of non-magical materials in order to pierce the cover that shields a target, though their armor applies as usual.

### LORD OF THAT WHICH FALLS

Instant

Commit Effort. Redirect any ranged weapon attacks in your presence, with their attack roll applied against the new target. Worthy foes may only have their attacks redirected if they're shooting at you. Projectiles may be redirected at any target, though a single victim can be targeted by no more than one attack per round this way. Subjects who have also bound to the Bow Word are immune to this power, as are other divinities affiliated with the bow.

### RAIN OF SORROW

On Turn

Commit Effort. Against Mobs, the damage dice of your ranged weapon attacks are rolled straight and add your level. Thus, a 4th level Godbound firing a 1d10 weapon with a +2 attribute bonus would inflict from 7 to 16 hit dice of damage against a Mob. Against targets not grouped into a Mob, you may roll your Fray die against every applicable foe in sight each round.

# Command

The Word of Command speaks of obedience, leadership and rule. Godbound of Command can compel the submission of others to their will and the acceptance of their rulership, but they cannot touch the hearts of those they command. While enthralled subjects will carry out orders meticulously and rationally, they will not exert their own initiative unless they agree with the Godbound's desires.

Heroes with the Command Word may set their Charisma score to 16, or 18 if it's already 16 or higher. They may communicate with any intelligent creature, understanding them and being understood in turn. Their commands are always correctly understood, though obedience will depend on their eloquence or the use of their gifts.

## LESSER GIFTS

### GUARDS! SEIZE HIM!

Action

Up to a Small Mob worth of minions or a half-dozen individual retainers can be made to appear in the current location, provided they're within ten miles of the Godbound. Only formally-pledged followers of the Godbound can be summoned, and they can't be summoned to any place they could not practically reach under their own power. The summoned retainers appear wherever they would most logically enter, the Godbound's powers having caused them to hasten to answer the summons before it was even given.

### KNOW THE INNER TRUTH

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene. Understand the true motivations and intentions of any conversational partner, expressed by the GM in a few sentences. Worthy foes get a Spirit saving throw to conceal the truth.

### THE LIEUTENANT'S WISDOM

Action

Commit Effort before giving an order to a person or group in your service. While the Effort remains committed, you can spend an action to borrow the senses of any single member of the group or to communicate telepathically with any or all of them, and they can contact you. A subject can break this bond, but you are immediately aware of it. The effect ends when the Effort is reclaimed or the order is fulfilled.

### THE LINES OF RULE

On Turn

You can spot the true leader in any group or social context. In addition, you may Commit Effort; a group of NPCs who are lesser foes will instinctively obey you as if you were their superior or employer. If the strangeness of this is brought to their attention by circumstances or those unaffected, they get a Spirit saving throw.

### THE SOLDIER'S FAITHFUL HEART

Constant

A visible creature of equal or fewer hit dice than your level who freely pledges loyalty to you finds their oath totally binding. Only magical coercion can force them to disobey or betray you until you release them from the effect, even with suicidal or unnatural orders. This gift can't affect more than one hundred people per character level in total.

## A THOUSAND LOYAL TROOPS

Action

Commit Effort. A visible NPC immediately becomes cooperative toward you, doing for you all they'd do for a superior or employer. Those who are worthy foes get a Spirit save to resist this effect. The cooperativeness lasts even after the Effort is reclaimed, provided the compliance is not abused or wholly improbable.

## GREATER GIFTS

### BEARER OF THE SEARLET CROWN

Constant

Your legitimacy as a ruler is unshakable. You have an intuitive awareness of all publicly-known major events in groups or communities you rule or administer, and can communicate your will to your viceroys and officials at any time, though they cannot answer directly. You gain an extra free point of Dominion every month, though you can only spend these points on your own lands or ruled organizations. New Godbound don't start the game with any stockpile of points, however.

### INVINCIBLE IRON GENERAL

Constant

All NPC soldiers serving under you gain +1 hit die, a hit bonus equal to your level, and a Morale of 11. Your will is automatically known by all your lieutenants and you always know the location, condition, and general activities of all military units that accept your command.

### THRALL-MAKING SHOUT

Action

Commit Effort for the day and give a command. If directed at a group, all lesser foes up to a Vast Mob in number instantly obey anything short of a suicidal order or a command not to defend themselves from obvious peril, provided they are not already engaged in combat against the Godbound. Obedience to this single order lasts for the scene. If directed at a single target not already fighting the Godbound, anything can be demanded of them until the Godbound releases them. Worthy foes get a Spirit saving throw to resist the control.

## THE WORD OF COMMAND IN PLAY

She has an army the way that other women have fingers. She can feel them around her, a constellation of warriors awaiting her will. Here and there the hot prickle of engagement warms her senses; a moment's focus sends allies to these spots. The scouts she sent down the pass shimmer in her mind with an urgent request for her attention. She borrows their captain's eyes for a moment, seeing the Patrian legionaries crouched along the ridge line in a well-prepared ambush. An instant's focus halts her vanguard as she loosens her sword in its scabbard. This will be a matter for her personal attention.

*Min Xia's power as an Invincible Iron General grants an intuitive understanding of her troops and their activities, allowing her to control them perfectly from the rear. The Lieutenant's Wisdom that she applied to her scouts gives her more precise intelligence, and lets her borrow their senses directly.*

# DEATH

Death is known to all that is mortal, and this Word gives command over this inevitable fate. Its miracles avert or bring about death, reveal details about a death, rule the unquiet dead, or create restless undead.

Heroes with the Death Word may command undead in their presence as an action, ordering up to one Mob of any size. Greater undead get a Spirit saving throw to resist, and cannot be commanded to self-destruct. As an On Turn action, they also know the details of what, where, and how anything died or is dying within 100 feet of them.

## LESSER GIFTS

### KEEPER OF THE GRAVES

On Turn

You learn exactly where every corpse, undead or fragment of remains are within 200 feet and their identity in life. You can tell exactly how they died as if you had observed their death personally. If you Commit Effort you have an invincible defense against lesser undead.

### MANTEL OF QUIETUS

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene. To assail you brings death. Any lesser foe that tries to physically harm you suffers 1 point of damage before their attack is resolved, with Mobs taking a 1d20 normal die. Foes with multiple attacks per round suffer the damage only once per round.

### A PALE CROWN BECKONS

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. You can call up undead, summoning parts instantly from the nearest source if necessary. A single greater undead of hit dice no more than twice your level is called, or one Small Mob of 1 HD lesser undead is created for each three levels you have, rounded up. A corpse made into a greater undead must not have received funeral rites or been dead more than a month. The undead are loyal, but dissolve when you use this gift again. Summoned entities or Mobs can be preserved indefinitely for 1 Dominion point each.

### SCYTHE HAND

On Turn

Commit Effort. There is death in your gaze or your blade, which you may use as a magic weapon. It has a 1d10 damage die and a 200 foot range. This attack always does at least 1 point of damage against living creatures or undead, even if the hit roll misses.

### WHITE BONE HARVEST

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the scene. As an action, you may instantly destroy any hostile lesser undead in sight provided they are lesser foes. Other undead in sight suffer your level in points of damage, tripled for Mobs.

### WITHHOLDING THE MERCY

Constant

Those reduced to zero hit dice or hit points within 200 feet of you automatically stabilize or die as your wish. If you desire it, willing living creatures at zero HD or hit points around you may continue to act for as many rounds as you have levels before they unavoidably fall dead.

## THE WORD OF DEATH IN PLAY

Hengest walks through the necromancer's army and the pale bones of Raktian soldiers cringe away as he passes. Somewhere on the far shore of this sea of dead men, a thin woman in pale robes shrieks useless commands. The Godbound slings his axe at his belt and raises a hand limned in black radiance.

That hand drops in dismissal, and with it crumples the army around him. Their collapse blossoms outward from the Godbound, a steadily-expanding ripple of quietus as they drop in soft clatters of bone and rust. In moments, only the necromancer and the demigod remain standing on the field. She wails under Hengest's gaze and turns to flee, but a wave of his dark hand silences her as swiftly as it has her slaves.

*Hengest Committed Effort to **Keeper of the Graves** to gain immunity to the lesser undead of the necromancer's army. Once closer, he reclaimed the Effort and spent it on a **White Bone Harvest** instead, instantly destroying all the lesser undead in sight. His **Scythe Hand** gaze injured the necromancer only a little, but it was enough to leave her vulnerable to his **Reaping Word**, which killed her when she failed her Hardiness saving throw. Had she been a more powerful initiate of the secrets of the Black Academies, however, she could have Committed her own Effort to automatically save.*

## GREATER GIFTS

### NO RELEASE

On Turn

Commit Effort and choose a visible target. They simply cannot die until you reclaim the Effort. If reduced to zero hit dice or hit points they will be incapacitated for an hour before reviving with one hit point. If their body is destroyed or widely scattered, they will exist in a perpetual haze of blind agony until magic or restorative miracles are used to gather the corpse parts, or until the Effort is reclaimed. A Godbound cannot use this power on their own person.

### REAPING WORD

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and choose a target at any range. A gesture suffices if you can see the target, otherwise you must use a name they consider their own true name. Lesser foes drop dead and cannot be revived without your permission. Worthy foes require the Effort be committed to the end of the day and are allowed a Hardiness saving throw to resist. Furthermore, worthy foes must be injured in order to let Death reach them; even a single point of damage is enough.

### SUMMONS TO DAY

Action

Commit Effort for the day. Any normal mortal creature can be called back from death, provided the corpse is relatively intact, they have not received funerary rites or been delivered to a Paradise, and they have not been dead for more than a month. They revive with 1 hit die. Godbound and supernatural entities cannot be called back this way.

# Deception

The arts of Deception are those of stealth, illusion, and lies. A masterful trickster is skilled at detecting impositions as well as uttering them, and their miracles may have to do with revealing deceit as well as impressing it on the minds of others. Gifts of stealth and concealment usually apply as long as the hero is avoiding attention and acting discreetly. Violence, loud noises, and directly exposing themselves to guards or other vigilant sorts risks the loss of concealment.

Heroes with the Deception Word may raise either their Dexterity or Charisma to 16, depending on whether they favor stealth or lies. If either score is already 16 or higher, they may set it to 18 instead.

## LESSER GIFTS

### DECEIVER'S UNBLINKING EYE Constant

You can always tell when someone's trying to lie to you or deceive you. You can see through mortal illusions and disguises. This gift does not affect other Godbound with the Deception Word.

### A FAMILIAR FACE Action

Commit Effort to blend in with a populace or group. Assuming they're not actively vigilant for intruders, no one will bother you unless you wish otherwise, and you will intuitively know how to act, speak, and conduct business so as to avoid drawing attention. This blending works even with entities who look nothing like humans.

### LIAR'S FLAWLESS GRACE Constant

Your lies can never be detected as such by magic or other special abilities, including those of the Deception Word. Lesser foes will always believe them unless they are completely implausible, emotionally intolerable, or would oblige them to self-harm.

### PERFECT MASQUERADE On Turn

Commit Effort. Instantly appear as any humanoid you have seen. Only worthy foes or those with significant personal knowledge of the individual have any chance to make a Spirit save against the deception unless you do something egregiously out of character. You instinctively mimic voice, clothing, mannerisms, and expected habits of behavior.

### SHADOW PLAY Action

Commit Effort. You can create perfect illusions in sound, smell, and seeming, though they are intangible to the touch. The illusion appears anywhere within sight, can be up to 30 feet in diameter, and can be made to move and seem lifelike without further attention so long as Effort remains committed to them. Invisibility is not an illusion.

### VEILED STEP On Turn

Commit Effort. Lesser foes have no chance to detect you so long as you stay out of their immediate presence and don't draw attention. Worthy foes can try a Spirit save to resist when you are near.

## GREATER GIFTS

### CONVICTION OF ERROR Action

Commit Effort. All chosen targets present become convinced that one of their beliefs of your choice is actually a terrible lie that has been imposed upon them, whether it is the existence of a god or the fidelity of their spouse. Worthy foes get a Spirit saving throw. They may reconsider this conviction of error once Effort is reclaimed, but will do so only under great pressure of emotions or obvious facts.

### IMPENETRABLE DECEIT Action

You state something you believe to be false and Commit Effort. Everyone who hears you speak at that moment will believe it, though worthy foes get a Spirit saving throw. A saving throw is also granted if presented with proof to the contrary or the lie is emotionally intolerable to them. This belief will persist even after the effort is reclaimed unless clear evidence contradicts it or the lie is too painful to believe.

### WALKING GHOST On Turn

Commit Effort. You cannot be detected by lesser foes unless you attack them or otherwise draw blatant attention, even if you are standing right in front of the NPC. Worthy foes have a chance to notice you with a Spirit save if you go into their presence or they're actively searching for hidden foes. Attacks and loud actions always draw attention. Buying this gift refunds *Veiled Step*, if already had.

## THE WORD OF DECEPTION IN PLAY

Randolph would always remember the exact moment when he realized that the Councilor intended to betray him. He had been sitting at home, a good glass of Raktian tokay in hand and the daily news droning on the television set when he saw it, perfect and clear in his mind. All the "favors" done for the Councilor, all the little jobs that the Minister of the Interior couldn't be involved with personally, all the private outings and the disposable little Patrian girls he'd given him were nothing more than the polishing of a tool he intended to break.

Hadn't Randolph been responsible for cleaning up such loose ends before? Now he had become one, and it was only a matter of time until the Councilor ruined him as he had ruined so many others. He had to do something about it, and quickly, before the man realized what he knew. Maybe it was time to visit the Special Resources Department. One of the girls there had contacted him for work, and now he had it.

*Arabella found it simplicity itself to sneak into Randolph's mansion with the help of her Veiled Step. Once she was able to lay eyes on the man, the exertion of a Conviction of Error was enough to convince him that his master was not nearly so loyal to him as he'd thought. With the borrowed identity of one of the SRD's mercenary agents manifested through her Perfect Masquerade, it will be a simple matter to guide Randolph's inevitable revolt.*

# EARTH

The Word of Earth gives command over stone and soil, and evokes the hardness and obduracy of rock. Miracles of Earth revolve around stone, earth, strength, hardness, and durability, and can be used to grant brief marvels of these qualities to the hero or others. Metal can be destroyed or purified from ore by this Word, but it cannot be molded the same way in which raw stone or soil can be shaped.

Heroes with the Earth Word may set either their Strength or Constitution scores to 16, depending on whether they emphasize the strength of load-bearing stone or the hardness of solid rock. If the chosen score is already 16 or higher, they may set it to 18 instead.

## LESSER GIFTS

### EARTHWALKER

On Turn

Commit Effort. You and your companions may pass through stone or soil without need for breath. It requires an action to enter or leave earthen environs. This gift functions for both natural earth and worked stone, and can be used on soil of any consistency no thinner than mud. You can sense hollow spaces in the earth within 100 feet.

### JEWEL-BRIGHT EYES

On Turn

Commit Effort. While committed, you can see through earth or stone. With a moment's focus, you may look outward from any gemstone you've ever touched, regardless of where it is now.

### MOUNTAIN THEWS

Action

Commit Effort to the end of the scene. Perform one feat of impossible strength. This feat requires too much focus to be an effective attack, but you can lift, throw, or break almost anything you can lay your hands on, ranging up in size to a modest house or a small ship.

### OBDURACY OF STONE

Constant

Your natural armor class is 3, and you have an invincible defense against harm by stone, earth, or burial. You need not eat, drink, or breathe. Armor and shields do not improve this base armor class.

### REBELLION OF THE SOIL

Action

Cause one visible non-magical stone or metal object no larger than a house to disintegrate or collapse. You can collapse larger non-magical structures a piece at a time. The collapse can be destructive, inflicting 1d20 damage on all inside, or controlled so as to leave those within unharmed. Worn armor or items cannot be affected by this power.

### STONESPEAKER

On Turn

Commit Effort. You can communicate with earth or stone, seeing and perceiving everything it has witnessed at a certain time of your choice. Stones have no thought as humans recognize it, but they can perfectly relay all the sounds and sights that took place in their presence. You must specify a particular time to focus on, however.

## GREATER GIFTS

### BUILDER OF MOUNTAIN PEAKS

Action

Each round, create, modify, or destroy a stone or earth structure of up to 20 x 20 x 20 foot size within your normal line of sight. The structure can be elaborate, to the limit of your own creative skills. See page 27 for rules on trapping victims in walls or zones. You can create normal earth or stone as part of this process. Creatures made entirely of earth or stone within the area may be completely controlled, with worthy foes allowed a Spirit save to resist.

### FURY OF THE AVALANCHE

On Turn

The earth trembles and casts forth shards of stone. Commit Effort to wield these eruptions as a 1d10 magical weapon for as long as Effort remains committed. While the gift lasts, your Fray die may be applied to every lesser foe standing on earth or stone within sight.

### TREMORS OF THE WORLD'S HEART

Action

Commit Effort to the end of the day to cause a localized earthquake on a point within sight, flattening most buildings within a 300-foot radius and throwing lesser foes to their knees. Those toppled must spend their movement action regaining their feet. The full devastation to the surroundings requires about sixty seconds to complete.

## THE WORD OF EARTH IN PLAY

He rode the edge of the pasture at a walk and the wall rose up in his wake. Twice as tall as a rider and thick as a man's reach, its smooth gray surface was marked with the signs of his clan and the holy prayers of the lamas who served him. Every hundred paces he fashioned a tower where his people could stand watch, and framing the gate were a pair of stone prayer wheels so perfectly balanced that the little children laughed when he spun them with one finger.

The old men of the clan were uneasy when they looked upon the vast stone corral, but he had taught them not to protest when he waved the clan's herd into the enclosure. There would be no outriders tonight to keep strange hands from stealing the clan's cattle. The horsemen would do their guarding from the towers, however they might grumble at the thought of fighting on their feet.

In the morning he would melt the wall and the gate and the prayer wheels back into the earth, but tonight, there was not a clan on the Toban plains that could hope to steal a cow from the cousins of holy Altan Khan.

*Altan Khan uses his gift as a Builder of Mountain Peaks to erect the fortification. He can easily fashion anything that can be made from earth or stone, whether walls or houses or stone weapons, but if he wanted to make a structure a permanent Feature to benefit his clan, he'd risk some trouble from the traditionalists. The effect of using gifts to make Features for factions is explained on page 132.*

# Endurance

The Word of Endurance is one of hardiness, determination, and unflagging exertion. Its miracles can grant survival even in the face of certain death, strength when exhaustion would otherwise overwhelm, and resistance against unwanted sorcery or curses. A Godbound graced with this Word is fearsomely difficult to harm physically, but the Word cannot deflect mental or spiritual damage sources or compulsions, like a Knowledge *Divine Wrath* or a Command compulsion. As a guide, if it would involve a Spirit save then Endurance can't stop it. Its miracles can't extend immunities to others unless noted otherwise.

Heroes of Endurance need not eat, sleep, drink, or breathe, and may set their Constitution score to 16, or 18 if it's already 16 or higher.

## LESSER GIFTS

### AMARANTH VITALITY

Constant

Every fifteen minutes you heal one lost hit point per three character levels, rounded up, so long as you are still alive.

### BODY OF IRON WILL

Constant

Your natural armor class is 3. You are impervious to any natural environmental damage, such as that caused by extreme heat, cold, pressure, radiation, or vacuum. Such forces used as a weapon or hazard against you function normally. Armor or shields don't benefit this base AC.

### DEFY THE IRON

Instant

Commit Effort to the end of scene. Negate one physical attack or instance of bodily injury. This gift can't ward off mental or spiritual damage types, or magical effects that would normally provoke a Spirit save. This immunity extends only to one round worth of damage when facing an ongoing peril that does damage each round.

### ELEMENTAL SCORN

Constant

Pick heat, cold, lightning, or some other form of energy. You have an invincible defense against it in all its forms. As an On Turn action, you can Commit Effort to extend this defense to every ally within a hundred yards. You may take this gift more than once to gain immunity to other elements; a single Commitment can extend all your defenses.

### HARDER THAN THIS

On Turn

Commit Effort. Become immune to one physical peril or special attack as long as the effort remains committed. You can't adapt to weapons, gifts, or spells, but you can adjust to become immune to a dragon's breath, a basilisk's gaze, a beast's poison, or a volcano's caldera.

### UNTIRING INSPIRATION

Constant

Pick one Influence project you've undertaken. Add 1 to the Influence effective on it as you sleeplessly focus on the task. As an action, Commit Effort. All allies within 100 yards are perpetually refreshed, and not in need of rest, eating, drinking, or breathing.

## THE WORD OF ENDURANCE IN PLAY

She walked through fire, and her people walked behind her. The forest was an inferno, tall pines crackling into torches and the underbrush a sheet of shimmering flame. The wails of her terrified neighbors were lost in the explosive crack of shattering timber, but they were not burned, and they did not choke. The soldiers who had come to kill them were not so fortunate.

*Verity has yet to learn the gift of Elemental Scorn, but she Commits Effort for the day to mimic it, Committing an additional point to extend its benefit to her fellow villagers. If she'd mastered the gift she could maintain it indefinitely, but as a miracle it doesn't last more than about fifteen minutes. She needs to get her kindred across the stream before she runs out of Effort to Commit, or she and her neighbors will burn too.*

They'd burnt her when they caught her. There had been a Stifler there to ensure that she did not resist the fire again, his robe spotted by his last meal, his jaw slack and trembling with fear of his handler. The antipriest who had condemned her had accused her of treachery to her people and to Reason, and had consigned her to the stake to receive what she had so blasphemously defied. And so they burnt her, with the Stifler there to be sure she burnt, and they threw her ashes in the river. A week later she crawled out, twenty leagues downstream.

*Verity has recovered some Effort since her capture. She knows the Stifler will use his powers to suppress her gifts if she tries to defy the flame, so instead she invokes the subtle miracle of Undying. She burns, but without a Word-graced foe to deliver a final divine blow, she regenerates and hides until she recovers.*

## GREATER GIFTS

### FEAR NO STEEL

On Turn

Commit Effort. Your determination or supernatural hardiness allows you to shrug off the lesser harms of the world. You take 1 fewer point of damage from all incoming sources of damage, whether physical or magical. Optionally, Commit Effort for the day to become immune for a scene to attacks from lesser foes without magical weapons.

### UNBREAKABLE

Instant

Commit Effort to the end of the day. Until the start of your next turn, you have an invincible defense against any physical, tangible attack or spell effect. Mental and spiritual harms or damage are not deflected.

### UNDYING

Constant

While you can be brought to zero hit points, mutilated, or burnt, you cannot actually be killed except by the effect or aid of a Word-powered gift, divine miracle, or gift-enhanced attack. If not slain, you regenerate back to one hit point in an hour from your largest remaining piece.

# FERTILITY

Fertility for their lands and children for their families are two of the dearest desires of all common folk, and the Word of Fertility grants such blessings. But what it gives it may also take away, and the miracles of this power can also be used to blight land and curse lineages. Immediate miracles tend to briefly influence desire, sexuality, harvests, and blights, while the gifts of the Word can produce more lasting effects.

Heroes with the Fertility Word have perfect control over their reproduction and may set their Constitution score to 16, or 18 if it's already 16 or higher. They have an invincible defense against wooden weapons or objects, vegetal monsters, and plant-based toxins.

## LESSER GIFTS

### BIRTH BLESSING

Action

Instantly render a target sterile, induce miscarriage, or bless the target with the assurance of a healthy conception which you can shape in the child's details. You can also cure congenital defects or ensure safe birth. Such is the power of this gift that it can even induce a virgin birth. Resisting targets who are worthy foes can save versus Hardiness.

### A SECOND SPRING

Action

Commit Effort for the day. All allies in sight are refreshed, regaining vigor as if well-fed and rested and healing 1d6 hit points of damage plus the Godbound's level. Unlike most healing effects, recipients need not commit Effort to benefit from this blessing.

### SEEDS OF DEATH

On Turn

Commit Effort. You may induce cancers and killing growths as a 1d10 magic weapon with a 200 foot range, making attack rolls as normal. The first round's use of this power is imperceptible to onlookers and the victim, but the second and further rounds produce visible tumors and growths. Lesser foes will die of cancer 1d6 months after you use this gift on them, barring magical healing, even if you elect to do no damage with a hit.

## THE WORD OF FERTILITY IN PLAY

The knyaz had gold. He had land, and serfs, and a walled city for his own. He had a wife, and a daughter, and the friendship of his wife's father. But he did not have a son, and that is why his domain would be torn to pieces by his neighbors as soon as his weak heart failed. The healers said his wife would never bear another child and her father would be first for his blood if he put her aside for another.

Jakob would give her that son, strong and handsome and looking just like his father. He would give her that son and the hope of an unburnt city, and then the knyaz would see that a certain man died. Life for life, for the gods are fair.

*Jakob's Birth Blessing is far more potent than the best natal charms of sorcerers, and safer by far. If the knyaz forgets his bargain, Sever the Line can destroy his child in a blink.*

### A SENSE OF ASH

On Turn

Commit Effort. You sense all poisons, plagues, environmental damage, or curses on the land within sight. You gain an impression of the persons or causes responsible for them if they are not otherwise concealed by magic. You recognize diseased or disease-inflicting creatures on sight and can determine what plague afflicts them or that they inflict on others.

### TOUCH OF GREEN RESTRAINT

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Plants in a 50' radius around the chosen point in sight erupt to cling to foes. All enemies in the area must make an Evasion saving throw at the start of each round to throw off the vines and regain free movement, though they can still fight in place as normal or launch ranged attacks if they have them. Foes subject to your Fray die suffer it each round they remain bound. Those enemies who reach zero hit dice because of this may be either utterly immobilized or crushed to death at the Godbound's discretion.

### WITHERING CURSE

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Forty acres of plants instantly die and the land they were on is cursed to uselessness for a generation unless reversed by this Word's powers. Optionally, plants and living or cut wood can be reduced to ash as desired in a 50-foot radius. Wooden items held or carried by a bearer are not affected, though buildings or vehicles can be destroyed. Plant monsters suffer 1d12 damage per level.

## GREATER GIFTS

### CORNUCOPIAN BLESSING

On Turn

Commit Effort. Choose a container holding a non-magical agricultural substance; so long as the Effort remains committed, the supply will never run out, no matter how much is taken from the container. The container can provide up to ten tons of goods per day per hero level, provided its mouth is large enough to disgorge such amounts.

### SEVER THE LINE

Action

Commit Effort for the day and choose a target in sight. The target is rendered sterile and only a gift or similar power can undo it. All their children immediately suffer a 1d12 damage die, grandchildren suffer 1d10, great-grandchildren suffer 1d8, and so forth down to the fifth generation, which suffers 1d4. This curse only works once on any given target, and particular descendants may be spared by the hero.

### UNENDING ABUNDANCE

Action

Commit Effort for the day. The land you designate within a ten mile radius becomes impossibly fertile, crops erupting in mere hours and feeding any number of people within that area. If applied as a gift and not used as a one-off miracle, the persistent fertility counts as a beneficial Feature to any faction that controls the land, though it cannot be sacrificed in the case of a lost Conflict it was involved in.

# FIRE

Born of red flame, the Word of Fire grants powers of burning, melting, and destroying those things displeasing to the hero. It may also be used to shield allies from the fury of the flame, or undo the damage that fire has done to a person or object. Its miracles may also bring light to a place, or to conceal with veils of choking smoke. More subtle miracles may invoke Fire's ties to passions of fury and lust, enkindling these feelings in others or causing them to spread to others like the swelling of a growing flame.

Heroes with the Fire Word have an invincible defense against flame and smoke. They may wield fire as a magical weapon with a range of up to 50 feet and a 1d10 damage die.

## LESSER GIFTS

### CONSUMING GAZE

Action

An object in sight up to 20 x 20 x 20 feet in size is consumed in flame and turned to fine ash, even if normally non-combustible. Larger objects may take a few rounds to completely burn away. Objects carried by a person cannot be affected. See page 27 for rules on creating walls of flame or other zones of hazardous terrain.

### FIRESTORM

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Choose a point within sight; every chosen target within 100 feet of it is struck by falling flame for a 1d6 die of damage per level of the Godbound, with an Evasion save allowed to halve the damage taken, rounded up.

### FIREWALKER

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene. Instantly know the location of all flames within a mile. As an action, teleport and emerge from any larger than a candle flame with any willing companions in physical contact with you. You cannot move more than one mile total in any one hour.

### GIVE FORTH THE ASHES

Action

Unburn objects or creatures in a 20 x 20 x 20 foot cube each round, repairing damage and restoring the condition of burnt objects. Fire damage is healed at no Effort cost, but the dead are not raised.

### MASTER OF THE FURNACE

On Turn

Commit Effort. Shape and mold all flame within sight, directing or extinguishing it as you wish. As an action, set an unattended, inanimate object within sight on fire if it's flammable. Objects larger than a wagon can be ignited only in part.

### NIMBUS OF FLAME

On Turn

Commit Effort. You're surrounded by a halo of searing heat. Anyone who attacks you in melee combat takes 1 point of fire damage before the attack is resolved. Assailants can suffer only one such injury per round, even if they launch multiple attacks.

## THE WORD OF FIRE IN PLAY

There was but one woman on the dune between the sand prince's bandits and the spice caravan. The raiders came on at a run, howling in joyous anticipation, until their shouts turned to screams as the sand before them erupted into flames. The charge was broken, men reeling back from the fire when it leapt like a living thing, dancing before them in a wall of flame.

Some of the men bulled through it, screaming in terror and fury. The dunes had known the Cinnabar Order since the land was green, and if the witch was one of them she'd die from a sword-stroke like any fire wizard would. But it was when she spoke that they knew their mistake, even as their robes burst into flames on their bodies and their skin was charred black with the incinerating power of her words.

The Cinnabar Order served the fire. Red Atet was the flame.

*The bandits came on in a Large Mob, which is a particular way of describing a vast swarm of enemies, one explained on page 152. Against Mobs, powers that affect all creatures in an area work a little differently. Atet first used her Consuming Gaze to light the sand on fire, which gave her the flames she needed to form a wall of fire with Master of the Furnace. Once she'd ensured that the bandits couldn't swarm her, she let loose her Cinder Words, shouting to sear the bandits. Normally, her Fray die would do a 1d8 damage roll to all lesser foes within earshot, inflicting 0 to 2 points of damage depending on how she rolled. Against a Mob of lesser foes, however, it's rolled "straight", which means that Red Atet does 1 to 8 hit dice of damage with her shout every turn she uses it.*

## GREATER GIFTS

### BURNING REBUKE

On Turn

Commit Effort. Every foe that attacks you while angry or impassioned suffers your Fray die in fire damage before each attack is resolved, even if they have more hit dice than you or make multiple attacks. Normally, only mindless creatures or remarkably disciplined foes can remain calm enough to avoid the damage. Mobs suffer this damage straight.

### CINDER WORDS

On Turn

Commit Effort. Your voice scorches your enemies. Every lesser foe within earshot takes your Fray damage each round. You can ignite unattended objects with a word as a free action once a round.

### SEARING BLADE

On Turn

Commit Effort. You wield fire as a weapon, either limning a blade in it or using projections of it as a magical weapon with a 200 foot range and 1d10 damage die. Individual victims killed by this explode into flames, doing a 1d6 damage die to all desired targets within 20 feet. This gift's damage is always rolled straight against Mobs of lesser foes.



# HEALTH

Bread, children, and health; these things are ever in the prayers of the people. The Word of Health offers one of these at least, banishing illness and putting aright misdeeds of flesh. Miracles of Health can banish plagues and cure injuries, though gifts are generally needed for large-scale workings save in relatively minor feats of healing. Vengeful demigods of Health can also inflict the same plagues they might cure.

While potent, powers of healing often demand much from the reserves of those who would benefit by them. Some gifts require those healed to Commit Effort for the day to absorb the healing energies. NPCs and others without listed Effort scores can be assumed to be able to benefit from such healing once a day at most.

Heroes with the Health Word have an invincible defense against diseases and poisons, and can diagnose them instantly. They may set their Constitution to 16, or to 18 if it's already 16 or higher.

## LESSER GIFTS

### ENDER OF PLAGUES

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Cure all diseases and poisonings within sight. If the Effort is expended for the day, the range of the cure extends to a half-mile around the hero, penetrates walls and other barriers, and you become immediately aware of any disease-inducing curses or sources of pestilence within that area.

### FLESH MADE TRUE

Action

You are able to cure a target's maimings, blindings, poisons, mutilations, and birth defects by sight once per round. This does not heal hit point damage, but it can restore lost limbs and crippled functionality.

### INTRINSIC HEALTH

Constant

Your maximum hit points increase by 2 extra points per level, including levels gained before you took this gift. This gift can't be suppressed.

### MERCIFUL GAZE

Action

By your gaze on a target within sight, you can heal 2d6 plus your character level points of damage. The target must Commit Effort for the day in order to benefit from the healing, however. NPCs and other ordinary mortals normally can benefit but once per day from this gift.

### PLAGUEBRINGER

On Turn

Commit Effort. Your touch or successful weapon attacks cause a sickness of your choice. Worthy foes get a Hardiness save to resist. The sickness can be restricted to them or allowed its natural contagion. The disease appears within 1d6 hours and is at full effect within a day. Lethal sicknesses will kill within 1d6 days without a magical cure.

### VITAL FURNACE

On Turn

Commit Effort for the day. Instantly heal any hit points lost since the end of your last turn, provided the harm didn't kill you.

## GREATER GIFTS

### BURNING VITALITY

On Turn

Commit Effort for the day. Regain 1 hit point per round until at full health. Alternatively, you may Commit Effort for the day to heal 1 hit point or hit die in all allies within 100 yards and raise ordinary mortal beings from the dead with 1 hit die, provided they died within the past five minutes and are not completely mangled. Recipients need not Commit Effort to benefit from this healing.

### DEplete HEALTH

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and choose a target. They sicken, falling to half their current hit dice or hit points, rounded up. Worthy foes get a Hardiness save to resist. The lost hit dice return at the scene's end if the creature is not dead. This gift does not stack multiple times.

### LIFEGIVER

Constant

Allies in your presence automatically stabilize at zero hit dice or hit points provided their bodies aren't torn to pieces. As an action, Commit Effort for the day to revive an ordinary mortal creature from death if they've been dead less than a day and some part of their corpse remains intact. Godbound and other mighty entities cannot be revived.

## THE WORD OF HEALTH IN PLAY

The Buyer of Plagues stood on the bedar's deck, a merchant's slate in one hand and a piece of chalk in the other. The pirate captain lying on the deck was bound at hand and foot, the cable that tied his ankles snaking over the ship's starboard side. The Buyer smiled at the sobbing man, and spoke.

"My sister's navigator, Indah."

The six men on the port side hauled on the cable, and the pirate went over the starboard side with a shriek. The men on that side paid out the rope until its prisoner was somewhere under the bedar's keel, and then they began to sing.

Port and starboard heaved in rhythm, the old Kasirutan shanty singing of home and gold and foreign girls, sweating backs heaving to and fro as the pirate was sawed against the ship's keel and the broken shells of the barnacles beneath. They sang for twenty verses and had started a second time when they finally sawed through.

The port-side men had the bigger piece left when they pulled in the line. The Buyer stepped forward to kick it into a human shape again, and the first breath of the resurrected pirate chief was a scream.

The Buyer waved the crew toward a fresh coil of rope and chalked another mark on the tablet.

"My sister's bosun, Rakti..."

*The grace of the Lifegiver is inexorable, even when the subject would much rather not be revived. Unless a gift explicitly allows a subject to resist it, it takes inevitable effect.*

# JOURNEYING

The hero fares far with the Word of Journeying, which concerns itself with long travels and perilous paths. Miracles of Journeying involve swift transportation to a desired place, the sundering of barriers to the hero's path, and the avoidance of peril while on the road. Other miracles can seal or open existing Night Roads. Note that the gifts of Journeying apply to *travel* rather than simple movement. Gifts that speak of travel mean for the hero to be moving from one location to another destination rather than just running around in a single area.

Heroes with the Word of Journeying always know exactly where they are, never lose their way to a known destination, and may treat travel as if it were as restful and nourishing to them as sound sleep and a good meal.

## LESSER GIFTS

### DUST AT YOUR HEELS

On Turn

Commit Effort. You and those with you cannot be caught by pursuers as long as you keep traveling. Your group will always be moving faster than them regardless of their speed until you halt your movement.

### KNOW THE PATH

Constant

You always know the safest and easiest way to go to reach any location that is not kept secret from the world. Those who go with you also count their journeying to be food and sleep, allowing constant travel.

### MASTER OF THE KEY

Instant

You can instantly defeat any mundane trap, lock, tie, binding or seal. Commit Effort for the scene to overcome magical barriers, traps, and bindings within sight, including ones of a mental nature. You may do this even if the binding effect would otherwise render you helpless.

### OPENING THE WAY

Action

Commit Effort for the scene to create a hole in security, whether it's a guard suddenly wandering away from his post or a rift appearing in a magical barrier. The hole will allow you and your allies a clear path into or past a place and will last as long as is practical, no less than five minutes. This security hole is not usually large enough to allow unhindered movement *within* the location, only entry into it.

### SWIFT PROGRESS

On Turn

Commit Effort. You and all who travel with you move at double the usual daily rate of travel and can cross any terrain as if it were flat ground, even mountains or seas. None of you are ever harmed by the natural climate or other unsalubrious natural environment.

### UNTRIOUBLED PASSAGE

On Turn

Commit Effort. While you travel, you and those with you will never be hindered by chance-met creatures or bad weather. Worthy foes wandering in your path get a Spirit saving throw to notice you.

## GREATER GIFTS

### THE EXODUS ROAD

On Turn

Commit Effort. Your Journeying gifts can apply to any number of willing companions in sight, including whole armies or cities.

### THE HOUR OF NEED

Action

Commit Effort for the day. Up to a dozen allies within a week's journey realized you'd need them there at this time and will arrive this round if they were willing to come. This may induce some problems of causality, but the gift's power allows their arrival regardless.

### THE PATH OF RACING DAWN

On Turn

Commit Effort. You and those with you can fly or otherwise ignore terrain, moving at a rate of 100 miles an hour while journeying. You can cross shorter distances through the air, though the flight is not precise enough to serve in combat or other cramped interior spaces.

## THE WORD OF JOURNEYING IN PLAY

The castoff monsters of the Black Pyramid crawled in a carpet around her feet. They snuffled through wet slits and moaned at the moon above and clutched the sand-polished scepters of their noble ancestors, but none of them paid heed to the cowed shape in their midst.

*Untroubled Passage* protects the Quiet Daughter from notice by the wandering denizens of the sands. This protection lasts only while she is traveling to and from a place, however; once inside the Pyramid, she'll need to be wary of its guardians.

Sandstorms and dry seasons had effaced the old wards that once scarred the pyramid's stones. She laid a hand on the rock, feeling for a path through the degenerate spawn and the basalt slabs. The world fought her for half a breath and then fell silent.

The silence belled about her, pushing aside the spawn, opening a path through their teeming bodies and cutting a road through the sands. The Quiet Daughter walked the path the silence had made for her, circling the black stones until she came to the gnawed tunnel the creatures had made. It stood empty, with its guardians deserted and its silence perfected.

*The Quiet Daughter Commits Effort for the scene in order to invoke Opening the Way. This gift ensures that there will always be a way into or out of a location for the Godbound. Even when the path requires ridiculous coincidences or miraculous rifts in a barrier, the Godbound will have a path to take.*

The dust and the filth of the spawn stained the Quiet Daughter's sandals, but there were none to bar her. She drew her cowl closer against the stench. There would be more dangers within than the errant mistakes of the flesh-cults. The ancient Khamites had their secrets, and soon the Daughter would have them.

# KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is the Word of understanding. All that mortal scholars know is within the purview of this Word, along with secrets of the past and present. The Word of Knowledge cannot penetrate the veil of the future, but it can reveal almost anything of the present world. Deep mysteries of a campaign world cannot be pried loose, however.

Facts or events perpetrated by someone with the Word of Deception allow their enactor a Spirit saving throw to conceal events from the Word of Knowledge.

Heroes with the Knowledge Word may set either their Intelligence or Wisdom attribute to 16. If the score is already 16 or higher, they may set it to 18 instead.

## LESSER GIFTS

### The Best Course

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Gain one sentence of truthful information from the GM on the best way to accomplish your current desire or goal. New information cannot be gained with this gift until the existing information is acted upon or the goal is abandoned.

### The Best-Laid Plans

Action

Commit Effort for the day and lay out a plan. The GM announces the most relevant complication or threat to the plan's execution that you don't already know about. This insight can be drawn upon only once for any particular goal being pursued, with the GM deciding what constitutes a different goal.

### Excision of Understanding

Action

As an action, erase a visible target's knowledge of a language, an intellectual skill, or a particular topic or event. This can't erase spellcasting abilities or other powers, but lasts until the skill is relearned or the Godbound relents. Worthy foes can save versus Spirit to resist.

### A Truth That Burns

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and choose a visible target. Learn the knowledge of them or their plans that they least want you to know, as judged by the GM. Worthy foes get a Spirit saving throw to resist this subtle inquisition.

### The Unveiled Truth

Action

Commit Effort for the scene; get an answer to any question, provided the truth about it is not being intentionally concealed by all who know it. This answer is generally brief, no more than a few sentences.

### A Word Far Off

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Know what's going on in a particular place or community that you've been, learning as many as three sentences of what the GM thinks you'd find most important or most relevant to your immediate interests.

## GREATER GIFTS

### DISCLOSE THE FLAW

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene and choose a target, either creature or institution. Know its current weaknesses and most vulnerable elements at that time, including any hidden means by which it might be killed or destroyed. Creatures reveal their hit dice and Effort totals.

### IRRESISTIBLE QUERY

Action

Commit Effort for the day. Ask the GM any question about current or past events and be answered in one word or short phrase. This power cannot be used more than once on a given topic until the situation changes significantly.

### The Omniscient Scholar

Constant

You have mastered all spheres of mortal academic knowledge. You always know the answer to any question involving such learning, if any mortal sage knows it and automatically succeed on attribute checks to accomplish intellectual tasks if they're within mortal capabilities.

## THE WORD OF KNOWLEDGE IN PLAY

For half a day, Rahmat had led the scavengers through the ruins of the city. The wandering husks would have eaten the little band alive if the Kasirutan hadn't known about the hive hidden under the cathedral, the swarm still lurking in the catacombs where so many Ancalians had sought a hopeless sanctuary. Instead, the scavengers went over the cathedral's roof in daylight, coming down through the spires to plunder.

*Rahmat had originally intended to enter the cathedral from below, knocking through a sewer tunnel wall into the catacombs and avoiding the wandering husks on the streets. His use of **The Best-Laid Plans** while preparing warned him of the impracticality of that plan, and he decided instead to go in from above.*

The renegades caught them leaving the city. There were thirty of them at the least, bunched up at the end of the bridge in a welter of steel and gap-toothed grins. Behind the scavengers, the shambling mob of husks was getting closer.

*While potent, **The Best-Laid Plans** reveals only the single biggest problem with a plan, not all the complications that might ensue.*

Rahmat opened his mind to the pasts of the raiders before him. Flickers of blood and horror gleamed redly as he shifted his focus and poured out his will on the cluster of renegades, forcing each to *understand*, to experience with their own minds the pain they had inflicted. They fell screaming as the scavengers fled past. The husks would finish the job.

***Corona of Fury** can be used even with intangible Words. Such powers might pierce defenses tuned for more physical harms.*

# Luck

Luck is a subtle Word in the main, without many of the blatantly obvious effects of the other domains. Instead, luck simply graces those blessed by its power, ensuring that things somehow work out well for them and very poorly for those who displease them. Luck miracles can be used to rework fate, ensuring that seemingly-random events turn out well or poorly for those targeted by the hero's attentions.

Heroes gifted in the Luck Word may roll 1d20 once a day. At any time during that day, they may replace their own or someone else's 1d20 roll with the one in reserve. They can only replace a roll once per day.

## LESSER GIFTS

### BLIGHTED LUCK

Action

A single non-Mob target is cursed with misfortune. They'll always lose games of chance, bad things of varying non-fatal character will always happen to them, and they always roll twice on hit rolls and saves and take the worse result. Worthy foes can make a Spirit save to resist and require Effort to be committed for the scene. This effect lasts until you choose to lift it, it's dispelled, or a particular event happens.

### NINE LIVES

Constant

Automatically reroll saves or enemy hit rolls that would result in the hero's death or mortal injury. The second roll is taken, even if it's worse.

### SALTING AWAY THE LUCK

Instant

Commit Effort after the hero rolls a die while doing something consequential. The die is rerolled, but the initial result is saved. When the Effort is reclaimed the result can be given to anyone else in the hero's presence, provided a die with the same number of sides is being rolled. Unwilling worthy foes can make a Spirit save to resist the donation. This gift can preserve only one roll at a time.

### SPUN FORTUNE

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene. Another person rerolls a roll you are aware that they just made.

### UNMARKED BENEFICENCE

Constant

The hero has a natural AC of 3, luckily avoiding perils. If a misfortune lands randomly on a member of their group, they're never the victim of it. This base AC isn't improved by armor or shields.

### THE WORLD AGAINST YOU

On Turn

Commit Effort. The hero becomes able to use luck as a weapon with a range of 100 feet, inflicting sudden and wildly-improbable calamities on a foe with normal attack rolls. When used to attack, damage is 1d10 and treated as a magic weapon. The source of this incredible bad luck is not perceptible to mortal onlookers or non-supernatural beings.

## GREATER GIFTS

### By Chance

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. The player dictates an event in their presence that isn't utterly improbable, and it happens. Damage to foes is limited to a 1d12 die for a focused calamity on a single target or a 1d6 damage die apiece for troubles that affect a group. This power affects only physical objects and events, and not minds or emotions.

### IMPOSSIBLE VICTORY

Constant

Exactly once, the hero automatically wins a conflict or obtains their end in a situation by blind luck. It may not be a total victory, but it gains their main goal. They then lose the gift, are refunded its cost, and can never purchase it again. Luck miracles cannot replicate this gift.

### UNFAILING FORTUNE

Constant

The hero may always reroll a natural 1 on any die they roll. They can dictate the outcome of any element of chance in gambling or gaming.

## THE WORD OF LUCK IN PLAY

"Please, gospodars. You should not frighten a girl with such lewd talk." Sveta spread her hands as she backed away from the trio of drunken serfs, silently cursing herself for being so careless. The knives and sticks the louts held were of no importance, but she couldn't afford to leave unexplained bodies this close to the border. Now would be a good time for a witness. A watchman? This stinking mudhole had no such thing, but a respectable goodwife... like the one who just peered down the alley mouth. Now to finish it quickly, before the woman ran.

*By Chance can cause events, but they must be possible ones. The village hasn't got watchmen, so Sveta can't have one coincidentally come across the impending fight, but she can cause some kind of witness to appear. The details of the desired event are up to the GM, who might disallow very improbable events or limit the specificity of the desired outcome.*

The goodwife's hands flew to her mouth as she took in the sight of the ruffians and the slight blonde girl they were closing on. She did not even have time to scream, however, before one of the serfs squealed and clapped the kidney where his comrade's careless knife had stabbed him. The third jerked around reflexively at the cry, and the stick he carried sent its haft into the groin of his comrade, doubling him over. He stared stupidly at the writhing men as Sveta hurled a pebble at him. It was his misfortune that the stone cleanly hit his right eye, crushing the orb and leaving him shrieking and clutching his face.

*The details of a The World Against You attack are up to the player to describe, with the GM's permission. Random environmental harm, clumsy weapon accidents, or remarkably lucky attacks by the Godbound might all represent its effects.*



# Might

The primal power of strength is embodied in the Word of Might. Many martial Godbound are strong, but a Godbound of Might excels them all in raw physical strength, and can perform miracles of lifting, throwing, or breaking things with their bare hands. They also have the power to bless their allies with similar graces of strength, though usually for specific actions or challenges rather than as a standing bonus to their abilities.

A Godbound of the Word of Might is tremendously powerful, gaining a Strength score of 19 and a +4 attribute modifier for Strength. This prowess allows them to lift or break anything that is humanly possible to so handle, though truly supernatural feats of strength require the use of a gift or miracle.

## LESSER GIFTS

### DESCENT OF THE MOUNTAIN

Action

The Godbound can hurl any object they can lift to any point in sight. If used as an attack, they must make a normal hit roll modified by Strength. Very large or heavy objects make clumsy weapons and suffer a -4 to hit, but inflict 1d12 damage to those in the area they land on, modified by Strength.

### FALLING METEOR STRIKE

Action

With a moment's concentration, the Godbound can smash any single non-magical object of less than ten feet in diameter. If the object is larger than that, a ten-foot high, wide, and deep hole is punched into it. If the object is magically durable or resilient, the Godbound must Commit Effort for the scene to smash it. The focus required for this blow makes it useless against mobile enemies, but if the Godbound strikes an immobile or helpless target with this gift they suffer four points of damage for every level of the Godbound.

### FISTS OF BLACK IRON

Constant

The Godbound's unarmed and weapon attacks are fueled by their tremendous strength. One-handed weapons do 1d10 damage in their hands, and two-handed ones or unarmed attacks made with both hands free inflict 1d12. These attacks count as magical weapons.

### SHOULDERS WIDE AS THE WORLD

On Turn

Commit Effort. The Godbound can pick up any object no larger than a warship and carry it at their normal movement rate. The gift allows the object to hold together and the Godbound to avoid sinking into the earth, but the object is too unwieldy to use for violent ends.

### STRONGER THAN YOU

Constant

Whenever the Godbound is in an opposed Strength check or contest against another creature or opposing it in a grapple or other exercise of strength, the Godbound always wins. If two Godbound with this gift struggle, the test is resolved normally. As an action, the Godbound can confer the benefits of this gift on an ally for one contest or action.

## SURGE OF STRENGTH

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene to maximize any single damage roll modified by Strength. Such is your aura of tremendous might that you can apply this benefit to an ally within sight if you wish.

## GREATER GIFTS

### LEAP THE MOON

On Turn

Commit Effort. The Godbound can leap tremendous distances, ignoring all fall damage and able to jump to any point within sight in lieu of their movement action for the round. They can fight flying enemies by using their move action to leap up before striking their target. They cannot leap more than ten total miles of distance per hour, however.

### LOOSENING GOD'S TEETH

Action

Commit Effort for the day and make a single armed or unarmed attack. If the blow hits, the damage roll is read straight. This damage roll cannot be maximized by other gifts or abilities. Even on a miss, the concussion of the blow does injury as a normal-damage hit.

### THEWS OF THE GODS

Constant

The Godbound is always able to pick up anything smaller than a large building and punch through, smash, or break loose any non-magical substance as a free part of their movement or other actions. This might is quickly deployed, but not finely-controlled enough to help damage rolls or other attacks.

## THE WORD OF MIGHT IN PLAY

Self-Willed's short legs were tired of walking and his back was tired of the pressmen's lash. Why the Order recruiters had even seized a dwarf like him was a mystery, but anything was better than the misery of home. Elder Impiety had threatened to report him to the eugenicists the next time the red-robcs came around, and so when the recruiters had descended on the fields, Self-Willed had run just slow enough to be caught.

But that was three days of marching ago and now they were in the foothills, far away from Stiflers and red-robcs and anyone else but twenty shackled recruits and ten thin pressmen of the Order of Reason. It was far enough. It was time to go.

His manacles shattered in hot steel fragments when the dwarf spread his thin arms. A shard flew through a pressman's skull in a fountain of gray matter and another man was split in two by a sweep of the short steel chain. Self-Willed's small fist went through the third one's belly to grip his spine, and the pressman was still dimly aware when the dwarf used him as a club to crush his comrade. The other six ran.

Long legs wouldn't help them.

*A Word's blessings aren't always obvious in their bearers. Thews of the Gods can break bindings easily, and attack-boosting gifts like Fists of Black Iron require no weapon to grant their aid.*

# Night

Dreams, sleep, darkness, and calm are found beneath the banner of night. Night passes over many places at once, and enters into even the most well-guarded chambers. The Word of Night can work miracles involving sleep, blindness, swift passage into darkness, and physical intangibility. These gifts often require a dimly-lit area for best effect.

Heroes with the Word of Night can see perfectly in darkness. They need not sleep, and their actions will never involuntarily cause the awakening of any sleepers around them.

## LESSER GIFTS

### Damn Their Eyes

Action

Choose a target in sight. Lesser foes are blinded, while worthy foes can save versus Hardiness to resist and require the hero to Commit Effort for the scene to affect them. Optionally, you can blind the target only to particular people or things. Those selectively blinded will not realize their blindness until it's pointed out or physically encountered. The blindness lasts as long as you desire in lesser foes, or ends after the scene for worthy foes. Blinded enemies usually suffer a -4 to all melee hit rolls and have no meaningful chance to hit with ranged attacks, barring superhuman senses in other ways.

### The Darkling Stairs

Constant

You can fly or move along vertical surfaces at your normal movement rate, provided you are surrounded by darkness too deep to tell a white thread from a black one. The power lingers one round after bright light.

### Knives of Night

On Turn

Commit Effort. You are now able to harden darkness into a weapon with a range of 200 feet. When used to attack, it does 1d10 damage and is treated as a magical weapon. Foes reduced to zero hit points can either be killed, put to sleep, or permanently blinded at your discretion.

### A Road of Shadows

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Step into one shadow and emerge from the one nearest to the desired destination, provided it's within a mile. The gift can move you no more than ten miles total in any one hour.

### The Still Silence of Sleep

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and choose a point in sight. All lesser foes within 50 feet of that point must make a Spirit save or fall asleep. You may dictate a sleeping person's dreams or nightmares if you can see them, though worthy foes can save to resist. You can send and receive messages with your fellow pantheon members and close associates through dreams, if they permit it.

### Welcoming the Dusk

Action

Commit Effort. Create darkness around you in any configuration, up to a 30 foot radius. You can see through it, and it can follow you.

## The Word of Night in Play

Shrike adjusted her night-vision goggles as she inspected the force spread out in the valley below her. Two hundred thousand dollars of export-hardened Bright Republic tech, and half their functionality was pointless for her ever since her change. She could still benefit from its binoculars, at least, and between that and her night-sight it was a simple matter to spot the pickets. The sorcerers were a different matter, as the Patrians were far too professional to let them look like anything but another legionary. She'd just have to take the risk.

She closed her eyes for a moment and felt for the moon above. The cool and changeable presence of it in the black sky above her answered as her will ignited its light. The sentries shouted an alarm below as the once-moonless sky was stained with sudden brightness, but their comrades did not rise.

*A Darkness at Noon doesn't need to cause a change in the moon or sun to invoke its effect on sleepers, but Shrike needed a signal that was sure to alert her allies. Even if she'd refrained from an obvious change, the mortal sorcerers below probably would have noticed the powerful sorcery suddenly falling on their allies.*

Shrike slipped to her feet and pulled in a shroud of night to cover her. The Patrian magi would try to break the sleeping curse for a while, but when that proved useless, they'd focus on killing its source. The sentries were of little concern, but if the magi found her, things would get ugly. It was time to start moving and to hope that Dulimbaian troops marched fast.

*Ordinary low magic can't dispel a gift's effects. Only powerful, specialized theurgy or another divine act can end a power.*

## GREATER GIFTS

### A Darkness at Noon

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. You bring or dispel night in a radius up to a mile per level. At night, the moon is at whatever phase you desire, while banished night leaves the sun overhead. Optionally, you may ensure that no lesser foe sleepers within that area will wake up for anything but severe physical injury, or send them specific dreams.

### Flesh of Shadows

Action

Commit Effort. Become an almost-insubstantial shadow, unable to affect the real world or pass through solid objects, but with an invincible defense against non-magical weapon attacks but not spells.

### A Speaker in Dreams

Action

Commit Effort. You can communicate with anyone you have seen before via shared dreams they recall perfectly. You can also spy on their dreams to get an idea of their greatest concerns and learn their location. Unwilling worthy foes can make a Spirit save to resist.

# PASSION

The Word of Passion commands the heart, filling it with the emotions desired by the Godbound or banishing those feelings that prove troublesome. While these emotions can be overwhelming, the Godbound cannot dictate what the subjects do with them. In this way, Passion inspires personal action in its targets, but does not give the direct control granted by the Word of Command.

Heroes with the Word of Passion are blessed with grace and an understanding of the heart. They may set either their Charisma or Wisdom attribute score to 16, or 18 if the score is already that high.

## LESSER GIFTS

### BANNER OF PASSION

Action

Commit Effort. All NPCs who are lesser foes within earshot or sight are suffused with a powerful emotion of your choice, directed at the object of your choosing. Worthy foes get a Spirit saving throw each round to throw it off. This emotion will make them act to the limits of their character and will last at least a day after the effort is reclaimed.

### FASHIONING A FRIEND

Action

Commit Effort for the scene to beguile a visible creature, inspiring it to feelings of friendship and cooperativeness towards you. It will not question these feelings, however irrational, and they will persist until you obviously betray it or do it blatant harm. Lesser foes have no resistance against this power, while worthy foes can save versus Spirit to avoid the enchantment.

### FOLLOW THE THREADS

Action

You may study a target for one action to identify the half-dozen people most emotionally significant to them, learning their appearance, the name the target knows them as, and a few words of description of the bond between them. Lesser foes cannot resist this, while worthy foes can save versus Spirit to maintain their secrets.

### HEART OF THE LION

Constant

You have an invincible defense against fear and all unwanted emotion-affecting effects. You may Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action to share this immunity with all allies within 100 yards.

## THE WORD OF PASSION IN PLAY

Arch-Engineer Jovini was a delicate subject. Tyrannical, brilliant, and utterly devoted to her goddess, she was as perfectly suited for her role as any high priestess in the Thousand Gods. Talented as she was, however, she had a blind spot for handsome slaves. Tobias knew she was too skilled in arcana to safely attempt a binding, but her servants were another matter. It would be a simple business to ensure he was delivered intact.

*A target who saves against a mind-affecting power may notice the attempt, if they have experience with such abilities.*

### SNUFF THE HEART'S CANDLE

Action

Instantly quell an emotion in a visible target. You can extinguish a particular emotion entirely, such as fear, loyalty or love, or you can selectively snuff it towards particular people or activities. The target is unable to feel that emotion toward the selected subjects until you release them from the effect. Lesser foes are automatically affected, while worthy foes can save versus Spirit to resist the stilling.

### TERRIFYING MIEN

Action

Commit Effort to the end of the scene. All NPC foes who can see or hear you, must instantly make a Morale check. Lesser foes roll this at a -2 penalty. Foes that fail this check will usually flee in terror, albeit those without a means of escape might surrender on the spot. This gift can be used against a foe only once per scene, and PCs are immune.

## GREATER GIFTS

### A HEART LIKE CLAY

Action

Commit Effort for the scene to completely control a subject's emotions, dictating all they feel and their emotional attitudes toward any persons or subjects of your choice. Lesser foes are utterly helpless against this shaping and can be driven to wholly uncharacteristic extremes by it. Worthy foes can only be molded within the limits of their own usual emotional range and can save versus Spirit to resist the shaping. The emotions persist despite all adversities until the Godbound releases the subject.

### INFECTIOUS PASSION

Action

Commit Effort for the scene to plant a seed of a particular emotional attitude toward a chosen person or topic in a visible target. If that target is affected, they become infectious, spreading that same attitude toward their friends and associates over the course of a single contact. The infection can spread five or six degrees before it loses its magical potency, usually enough to completely overwhelm a village, court, or neighborhood. Lesser foes get no saving throw, but worthy enemies can save versus Spirit to resist. It lasts until the Godbound releases the victims or the emotion becomes blatantly inappropriate.

### A SONG BURIED DEEP

Action

Commit Effort for the day and choose a phrase, passage of music, image, or person in your presence. At a time or context of your choosing, the sight or experience of that subject unleashes the effects of a *Banner of Passion* on all present. You can define the context as precisely as you wish and choose the Banner's effects and focus beforehand. The maximum range of this effect is one mile per level of the Godbound. Note that the effects apply to *any* matching phrase, music, or image; if the Godbound uses this power on a nation's battle flag and bids it trigger for friendly soldiers when facing combat, every allied military unit within miles will be affected provided they've got a matching battle flag. If the Godbound imbues a traditional greeting with the passion, then every person who hears the greeting will be affected.

# SEA

The Word of the sea commands water in all its forms, but most often that of the rivers and the oceans. All creatures that dwell within water are subject to the sea, and its waters can carry its blessed far away or crush and erode those less favored. Miracles of the sea can smash with crushing pressure, conjure vast amounts of water, control the flow of liquids, or purify with the cleansing salt of the oceans.

Heroes with the Sea Word have an invincible defense against cold, can breathe water, swim at twice their normal movement rate, and see with perfect clarity underwater, regardless of available light. They may grant these benefits to their companions, except for cold immunity.

## LESSER GIFTS

### BODY OF WATER

Constant

Your flesh flows around dangers and encapsulates toxins. Your natural armor class is 3 and you are immune to poisons. You can apply a poison by touch if you've previously swallowed or been struck by a dose, thus ejecting the toxin. This AC isn't improved by shields or armor.

### CRUSHING DEPTHS

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Destroy any non-magical object you're touching, up to 20 x 20 x 20 feet in size, as it erodes or is compressed into splinters. Living creatures require a normal weapon or unarmed attack to hit and are not automatically destroyed, though the damage die is treated as if it rolled the maximum possible.

### LIVING TORRENT

On Turn

Commit Effort. Spout a torrent of water at dangerous levels of pressure. The water can be used as a ranged weapon out to 100 feet, doing 1d10 damage and counting as a magical weapon. It will destroy one foot of earthen or wooden barriers in one round. The water can be allowed to remain after using this power, or allowed to vanish as the wielder wills.

## THE WORD OF THE SEA IN PLAY

The Misbegotten abomination's breath was a cloud of black death. Her shipmate's bodies slumped like red wax when it gusted over them, and Lastri's dark skin sweated droplets of blood. She shouted for the women to pull back from the monstrous worm and summoned the holy salt of her ancestry to protect her.

White shards swirled around her in the noonday sun, shimmering in a barrier of invincible purity. The black mist dissolved where it touched the salt and the sting of Lastri's skin lessened. Her callused hand lifted her sword, and she strode forward to clear her ship's deck.

*Salt-Spray Purity is an Action power, which means Lastri can't use it until it's her turn. It allows her to immunize herself from any single power, however, and not just those effects that might be blocked by the Word of the Sea.*

## LORD OF THE WATERS

On Turn

Commit Effort. While in effect, you can transform into any non-magical sea creature larger than a shrimp and smaller than a kraken. You can speak to and command all natural sea life, sense every living creature under or on the water within a mile, and summon such life to your presence as needed. Intelligent creatures need not obey your summons or commands if they do not wish to do so. Ships or fleets in your company are impervious to storms and reefs.

## SECRETS OF THE DEEP

On Turn

Commit Effort. You sense the exact position of all flowing liquids within 200 feet, including the blood in living veins. By touching a body of water and seeking a particular thing or type of object, you become aware of every place where such a thing is sunken, floating or wave-lapped within ten miles.

## WALKING WITH THE TIDE

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Enter a body of water large enough to submerge you and emerge from any like body of water within a mile, exiting at the nearest suitable pool to your desired location. If the bodies of water are connected by waters wide enough to admit a creature of your size, the range increases to a hundred miles.

## GREATER GIFTS

### RIVER TAMER

Action

Commit Effort. Amounts of water no larger than a small river can be redirected, made to flow into the air or move in otherwise impossible fashion. The water may sweep away buildings or creatures depending on the amounts involved, and is sufficient to speed a ship at sea at ten times its usual pace. The flow continues as long as effort remains committed, and can be controlled up to 1,000 feet away from the hero as an action. The hero and their allies are never unwillingly moved or harmed by this water.

### SALT-SPRAY PURITY

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Dispel or automatically resist any single magical effect targeted at you or an ally. For the duration of the scene, that effect or gift cannot affect the subject you defended, even if it is applied again. Optionally, instead of this effect, you may suppress any other Godbound gift for one round as if by a successful miracle.

### TSUNAMI HAND

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the scene. You strike a blow which becomes a crashing wave, rushing up to 200 feet in width, 30 feet in height and 100 feet in length before it drains away. Small buildings and fragile structures are destroyed, and creatures take your level in points of damage, tripled for Mobs. The wave can be cast in a smaller area if desired, does not harm targets you wish preserved, and vanishes after it breaks so as not to leave the area inundated.

The sky rules weather, flight, lightning, and wind. Those blessed by its might navigate the air as easily as the earth, wield lightning as a weapon, or blight whole cities with storm and wind. Miracles of the sky might banish hostile weather, smite a target with a bolt of lightning, conjure wind to lift and carry a thing, or perform some other feat of aerial command.

Heroes with the Sky Word are never harmed by falling, need not breathe, and have an invincible defense against electricity, cold and injurious sounds.

## LESSER GIFTS

### The Clouds Below

On Turn

Commit Effort. Fill the air around you with mist, up a 300 foot radius. You and your allies can see through it, but others with normal senses can see no further than five feet around them. The clouds can douse any mundane fire and allow every ally within it to ignore the first 5 points of fire damage they take each round.

### Eyes Above

Action

Gain a bird's-eye view of a mile around you, gazing swiftly enough to immediately spot particular individuals or things you might be looking for. You can focus on individual locations within that mile, observing everything going on but unable to overhear ordinary speech. The sight cannot penetrate roofs or other cover.

### Rain of Lightning

Action

Choose a point within sight; every desired target within 100 feet suffers a 1d6 die of electrical damage as a cloud of lightning envelops them. The bolts are enough to kill the weak, but can't destroy objects.

### Sapphire Wings

On Turn

Commit Effort. The hero can fly at twice their usual movement rate. If undistracted and able to fly in a straight line, they can reach speeds of up to 100 miles an hour.

### Stormsword

On Turn

Commit Effort. Wield electricity as a ranged weapon out to 200 feet, or sheath your weapon in lightning. Damage done is a minimum of 1d10 and counts as a magical weapon. Attacks against wet or metal-armored foes always do at least 1 point of damage, even on a miss.

### Windsinger

Action

Commit Effort. Control weather within a mile, from still air to rain-storms strong enough to knock down fragile structures and make mundane archery impossible. Weather changes occur instantly on use of this gift and last as long as Effort remains committed. When released, the weather rapidly returns to its normal condition.

## The Word of the Sky in Play

Garm of the Thunders soared into the heavens as the Ulstang raiders charged the enclave wall. A thin pelting of spears and stones arced upward to pass harmlessly beneath him, the blond giant far too high for hurled weapons to reach. An arrow skipped off his breastplate as he drew back his crackling hammer, though, alerting him to the danger of archers among his howling kinsmen.

*Sapphire Wings can easily make a hero immune to foes who have only hurled or melee weapons. Unless the hero is using an attack with an exceptionally long range, however, they're likely going to have to remain within bowshot if they want to fight. Most intelligent supernatural foes will also have ranged attacks, though they may not be as effective as their usual weapons.*

Another arrow flew to carve a red line across Garm's massive bicep. The Ancalian survivors were holding the wall he'd helped them build, but the effort of that construction had drained much of his strength. He'd need to rely on his lesser powers to wipe away the screaming death-servants below. A vast sweep of his hammer spilled countless sparks of lightning over the field below. The stronger of the raiders kept coming, but the weak and unlucky died in crackling heaps.

*Rain of Lightning does limited damage, but it requires no Effort to use it, and it affects a very large area. As Garm is wielding an area-effect gift against a Mob, the damage is rolled straight.*

## GREATER GIFTS

### Boreal Spike

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Bring down the icy chill of the heavens on a point within sight. Every chosen target within 200 feet is frozen for a number of points of damage equal to your level. Against Mobs, the spike does 1d10 damage straight for every two character levels of the hero, rounded up. Liquids in range are frozen solid up to 200 feet deep and all normal fires are extinguished.

### Fury of the Heavens

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the scene. For the rest of the scene, when under the open sky you can hit one target or Mob within sight with a bolt that does your level in damage, with a Hardiness save for half. The blasts can destroy structures less sturdy than a stone building. Invoking these bolts is a Smite action, and as such it can't be done two rounds in a row.

### Voice of the Winds

Action

You may focus on a specific point within ten miles to hear everything happening there unless it's sealed from outside air. You can speak to that point and be heard there alone. If you spend an action shouting, foes within 100 feet of you suffer your Fray die if applicable.

# SORCERY

Sorcery is an unusual Word, one representing a bond with the fundamental laws of creation and the deep, subtle secrets of its operation. Sorcery has no native miracles and cannot be used by itself to create effects or mimic its gifts. Instead, mastery of its gifts allows a Godbound to wield the flexible and potent powers of theurgy.

Godbound affiliated with the Sorcery Word brush aside the incantations of lesser mages. As an Instant ability, the PC can Commit Effort for the scene to instantly negate any low magic spell being cast in their presence or banish or destroy any low magic construct or summoned entity. This counter does not function against theurgy or arcane powers that are merely similar to low magic spells.

## LESSER GIFTS

### ADEPT OF THE GATE

Constant

You have been initiated into the Gate, the humblest level of theurgy, albeit still one beyond all but the mightiest mortal wizards. You may choose four invocations of the Gate to master as part of this learning and may learn more as you find them.

### THE EXCELLENT PAUSE

Instant

When you cast a theurgy invocation or low magic spell, you may Commit Effort just before it is triggered. The spell is then suspended and may be released as an action at any time thereafter, with the Committed Effort returning at the end of that scene. You may suspend more than one spell if you're willing to Commit the Effort to each, but releasing a spell requires your action for the turn.

### GREATER PAVIS OF RULE

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. For the duration, you are immune to all low magic spells and gain a +4 bonus on all saving throws versus theurgy. If a theurgy invocation would not normally allow a save, you can make one without the bonus to resist its effects.

## THE WORD OF SORCERY IN PLAY

Cassandra thumbed through the ancient tome thoughtfully. The "paper" was of a thin, smooth, glossy substance that was brilliantly stained with vivid colors and intricate theurgic patterns. On the right was a diagram for channeling celestial energy into an embodied shape, and on the left was a complex mathematical formula to be adjusted for the chosen subject. If the rest of the book was to be believed, it was a formula for youthful immortality.

Cassandra had already spotted eight different points at which the ancient spell's theory no longer matched the modern world's theurgic environment. All she needed to correct it was the second volume in this set, with the conversion tables.

Surely the Witch-Queen Sif would never miss it.

*Sorcery has no miracles, but an adept theurgist can learn new spells without spending gift points or expending resources.*

## PERFECTION OF UNDERSTANDING

Constant

You are a remarkably swift student of magic. You can learn any low magic path within a month, taking one week per level of initiation of your teacher, without requiring a Fact committed to it. You can learn theurgy spells at a vastly accelerated rate as well; one day for an invocation of any degree. You automatically understand any low magic or theurgy used against you or in your presence, knowing its function, limits, and degree of power. You can also recognize the author of a magical working if you've seen other examples of their work.

## THE SUBTLE EYE OF KNOWING

On Turn

With a moment's concentration, you can discern any low magic or theurgy active in the area, identifying its general function. Other forms of magic present are noted, but only a vague sense of danger or weal is imparted. This gaze immediately identifies any theurges or low magic practitioners in sight.

## THE WILL THAT BURNS

Instant

When struck while maintaining concentration, such as while casting a theurgy invocation, you may Commit Effort for the scene to maintain your concentration, prevent the loss of the spell, and inflict a 1d8 straight damage die on the foe that struck you as a mystic backlash.

## WIZARD'S WRATH

Instant

Commit Effort. Your Fray die can harm even worthy foes, those enemies of greater hit dice than you have levels. This power also affects those gifts that allow you to apply your Fray die as part of their effects, increasing the potency of such powers.

## GREATER GIFTS

### ADEPT OF THE THRONE

Constant

You have been initiated into the Throne, the deepest degree of theurgy's secrets. You must be an adept of the Way to master this. You master two invocations of the Throne as part of this learning and may learn more as you find them.

### ADEPT OF THE WAY

Constant

You have been initiated into the Way, the second tier of theurgic mysteries. You must already be an adept of the Gate to master this. You master three invocations of the Way as part of this learning and may learn more as you find them.

## RULER OF THE LESSER PATHS

Constant

Commit Effort. After an hour's meditation, you may select one low magic tradition which you have spent at least a day in study with a practitioner of any level of mastery. Until the Effort is reclaimed, you may cast spells as an archmage of that path. While this gift is in effect, you are entirely immune to that path's spells if you so desire.



# Sun

Light, hope, vision and purity are the purviews of the Sun Word. The sun banishes malevolent sorcery and gives courage with its radiance. Miracles of the sun might be used to break spells, reveal truths, give hope, or blast the impure with torrents of celestial flame. The sun's eye is all-seeing, and gifts of vision also fall under this sphere.

Heroes with the Sun Word may shed daylight at will up to 200 feet, cannot be blinded or their vision impaired by darkness or mists, and have an invincible defense against fire damage. Their vision can pierce blindfolds or survive even the physical removal of their eyes.

## LESSER GIFTS

### Body of Burning Light

On Turn

Commit Effort. Your brilliance makes you almost impossible to target, by creatures who operate by means of vision. While you shine, your natural AC is 3 against creatures with sight. Your weapons or unarmed attacks count as a magical weapon with a range of 200 feet, and do a minimum of 1d10 damage. Your corona counts as natural sunlight for susceptible creatures. Armor and shields don't aid this AC.

### Hasten to the Light

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Instantly appear in any place lit by natural sunlight or your own radiance, provided it's within one mile. You appear at the nearest valid light to your desired destination. This gift can't move you more than a mile of total distance per hour.

### Hope of the Dawn

On Turn

Commit Effort. You and allies within your general area gain a Morale of 12 and an invincible defense against magical emotional influence. Allied NPCs gain +1 hit die and +1 to hit. Those in sight of you have an instinctive awareness of your wishes, though they are not compelled to obey.

### Illuminate That Which Is

On Turn

Commit Effort. Your radiance limns magical effects on people, banishes magical darkness, dispels mortal illusion, and reveals magical items. Those with the gifts of Deception or Night may make a Spirit saving throw to maintain their illusions or gloom.

### Purity of Brilliant Law

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene. Defensively dispel a hostile magical effect on yourself or offensively dispel another gift for a round as if with a miracle. This gift functions more swiftly than a conventional miracle of dispelling, and the Effort need not be committed for so long.

### Sunlit Sight

Action

Commit Effort. Choose a place you've been that is currently lit directly by the sun. While the Effort is committed, see and hear everything in that place as if present. Your voice can be heard there by those present.

## THE WORD OF THE SUN IN PLAY

Borislav sat and stared at the wall. All morning, the squat peasant had occupied a bench in the dirty Raktian tavern, swilling bad ale and staring halfway up the tavern's stained wall. Now and then a stranger would come to sit with him, but Borislav favored them with nothing but the occasional grunt. Between his stench and his silence, few lingered beside him.

Fewer still noticed when he rose at noon and shambled from the room, a last dull coin tossed to the whey-faced barmaid. None of them understood that Borislav had been looking for something as he sat in the tavern, peering through many walls.

*Creation's First Light can easily see through walls and into other buildings, but it can take some time to focus on the right place. Looking through one wall of a room without staring through the opposite wall usually takes an action to focus properly.*

The knyaz's treasure-room was at the top of a smooth-stoned tower, with seven mortal curses carved into both the outer wall and the inner stair. The lord had paid a Black Academy dearly for the spells, but his own curses were almost as terrible when he found the golden reliquary of St. Andrey missing from his vault. None thought to blame the light that shone through a mouse-small crack in the roof.

*Hasten to the Light requires only the tiniest bit of sunlight.*

## GREATER GIFTS

### Creation's First Light

On Turn

Commit Effort. Your vision penetrates any non-magical barrier, allowing you to see anything and everything out to the horizon. Focusing on something not in the immediate area requires a round. This vision automatically penetrates illusions and sees the true shape of shape-shifters. It cannot pierce the gifts of the Deception Word, however.

### Purging Noonday Blaze

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. A burning light permanently banishes all undesired low magic out to sight range. If the Effort is committed for a day, it suppresses all offensive gifts or magical powers of a single target for one round, as if by a successful miracle applied to each. This gift can be used for such offensive dispelling only once per scene.

### Sunstrike

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the scene. If the sun is in the sky, its radiance strikes a desired visible foe for 1d10 fire damage per level of the Godbound. This blaze will penetrate any roof or ceiling not proof against divine gifts in order to strike the target. If the sun is not in the sky the bolt does 1d6 damage per level. Creatures not of this world, such as summoned entities, angels or Uncreated, always take 1d10 damage per level and roll the damage twice to take the harshest result.

# SWORD

The Word of the Sword is that of melee combat, of direct struggle between the Godbound and their foes. Miracles of the Sword involve unerring strokes, tremendous blows, or marvelous escapes from harm in battle. While potent, these miracles do not work at range.

Heroes with the Sword Word treat all their weapon or unarmed attacks as magical, cannot be disarmed, and can summon any melee weapon they've ever used immediately to hand as an Instant action.

## LESSER GIFTS

### CONTEMPT OF DISTANCE

Constant

Your movement action can take you to any point in movement range, provided the path is unobstructed and there's a target to hit at the end of the move. A hero could thus dash straight to a rooftop or balcony without navigating the physical route there. Foes too far away to reach in one round can be pursued over multiple rounds, but they *must* be attacked once reached. This pursuit can even extend into the air, supporting the hero until they defeat their enemy or choose to disengage, whereupon they land safely at a point below.

### NINE IRON WALLS

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene. You have an invincible defense against all physical attacks until the start of your next round. This defense does not apply to environmental hazards, spells, or other non-attack forms of harm. As with all Instants, this can be used even after an assailant has rolled a successful hit.

## THE WORD OF THE SWORD IN PLAY

Maritsa was not a clever girl. She was sweet, and merry, and truthful, and lovely as a young girl could be, but she took so very long to understand things. Her father had tried for a year to teach her letters, with only blushes to show for it. Still, she had tried so very hard that her father hadn't the heart to scold her, and only told her to go help her mother knit.

So kind and gentle was young Maritsa that even the rough children of the village didn't care to tease her, though perhaps a little of that was because of her brother's heavy fists and her sister's sharp tongue. Everyone loved Maritsa, and Maritsa was glad of everyone she knew.

And so when the soldiers came rushing into the village, shouting and taking and demanding women, Maritsa was at a loss. No one had ever behaved such a way toward her, and she could not think of what to do. But it was when a black-bearded cossack tore her skirt that she decided that the soldiers must go away. They must all go away.

A week later the captain found his missing scout detachment. Fifty men lay stacked outside a little village, with a hundred small holes in their eyes where a knitting needle had fit.

*Thirsting Razor and Cutting the Crimson Road can turn even a novice Godbound into a machine for slaughtering Mobs of common soldiers. More powerful foes are less susceptible.*

### STEEL WITHOUT END

Constant

All your melee weapon attacks are treated as magic weapons doing a 1d10+1 damage die, including unarmed attacks. As with all weapon-boosting gifts, you may use any attribute to modify attacks made in this way, provided you can explain how it is relevant to your style.

### THIRSTING RAZOR

On Turn

Commit Effort. You always hit lesser foes with your melee attacks. No attack roll is necessary, but this benefit applies only to actual melee weapon or unarmed attacks, and not to other effects that involve hitting a foe to inflict a hostile effect.

### THROUGH A RED FOREST

On Turn

Commit Effort. While the Effort is committed, when fighting multiple lesser foes or a Mob of them, you may choose to take damage as if from a successful hit from one of them of the GM's choice. You then gain an invincible defense against weapon or unarmed attacks from the rest of these lesser foes until the start of your next turn.

### UNERRING BLADE

Instant

Commit Effort to the scene's end. Your current or next melee attack hits on anything but a natural roll of 1 and does maximum damage. This strike can penetrate any protection short of an invincible defense against the weapon being used.

## GREATER GIFTS

### CUTTING THE CRIMSON ROAD

On Turn

Commit Effort. Against foes of half or fewer hit dice than you have levels, to a minimum of 1, your melee damage rolls are read straight and always maximized. The overflow can be applied against any other foes that fit the conditions and are within 10 feet. Against Mobs made up of applicable creatures, you instead simply roll your damage die straight without maximizing it. This gift does not affect Fray dice.

### THE PATH THROUGH WAR

On Turn

Commit Effort. So long as you don't make an attack roll or cast a hostile effect that round, you have an invincible defense against all weapon or unarmed attacks. You can still use your Fray die while under this effect. This defense is not applicable to environmental, spell, or magical effect damage. Once this gift is dropped or ended, it cannot be re-activated during that same scene.

### SHATTERING HAND

On Turn

Commit Effort. Your melee damage rolls and Fray dice are always the maximum possible. You can destroy barriers as thick as five feet of stonework in front of you in one round's action, smashing them with a blow or as part of your movement action. Magical substances may resist this power.



# Time

Time is a complex Word, one ruling events of the past and future. While temporal gifts can often see the future, such outcomes are not set. Predictions can be overcome by events and choices, though some gifts of Time allow the user to fix a future's certainty, unless their will is overcome by a stronger power. Miracles of Time can alter the past and rewrite prior events, but it is generally necessary to manipulate specific events rather than simply decree a broad swath of history. Temporal manipulation cannot kill people or erase things of great occult power, but it can alter how past events played out.

Heroes with the Time Word always know the exact time, and are immune to any uses of this Word to affect them or scry on them. They may set their Wisdom to 16, or 18 if it's already 16 or higher.

## LESSER GIFTS

### ECHOES OF THE PAST

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. Choose a particular time or known event in the past that occurred at this location and witness it as if you were present.

### IMMEDIATE FORESIGHT

Constant

You cannot be surprised. Your natural armor class is 3, as you instinctively avoid foreseen blows. Armor and shields don't aid this AC.

### LOOK FORWARD

Action

Commit Effort for the day. Ask a question about a situation's future outcome or the future actions of a person you've seen before. The GM gives a one-sentence answer regarding the most probable outcome or actions that seems likely to them.

### PROPHETIC INSIGHT

On Turn

Commit Effort for the day. Make a prophecy about a particular event involving a person present. It will come to pass if it is not completely improbable. If it directly involves an unwilling worthy foe, they can make a Spirit save to disrupt the effect. Events that immediately involve more than a hundred people cannot be so ordained, nor can a person's inevitable death or great ruin be foretold unless they count as a lesser foe. Even then, they are allowed a Spirit saving throw.

### REFLEX OF REGRET

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene. Replay your action for that round as if your actions had never occurred. You can use this gift only once per round, and you can't use it if you're dead or incapacitated.

### WITHERING HOUR

On Turn

Commit Effort. Your weapon, glance, or unarmed blows are treated as magic weapons doing 1d10 damage out to a 200 foot range. Those injured by this effect grow older or more decayed, even immortals fraying. Instead of killing a victim with this, you can age them arbitrarily.

## GREATER GIFTS

### A HAND ON THE BALANCE

Action

Commit Effort for the day, choose a single visible creature or object, and define a particular outcome or event involving that target, however broad or narrow it may be. If that outcome or event is ever about to occur, you become instantly aware of it and can take one action as if you were standing next to the target. You can attack the target, manipulate an object, use a gift, invoke a miracle, or do anything else you can do in one action, affecting the target and anyone else present, though you are not actually there and cannot be perceived or affected. This power can affect a given target only once per day, and you can't have multiple applications of the gift on a single target.

### SUNDERED MOMENT

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene. Perform your action for the round, then reset time to its beginning and perform another round's action. Choose your preferred round; its outcomes become real while the other ceases to exist, even if you perished in it. You remember both rounds, however. Using this gift more than once per scene increases the Effort cost to a day-long Commitment.

### REWEAVE TIME

Action

Commit Effort for the day and choose an event in the area which has taken place in the last hour. You may reweave the past to produce a different outcome to the event, provided the outcome you ordain is possible. Such reweaving cannot kill or resurrect creatures, cannot restore Committed Effort, and must be restricted to an event of no more than 15 minutes duration. A hostile worthy foe involved in the events may make a Spirit saving throw to foil the reweaving.

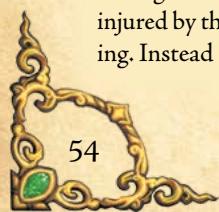
## THE WORD OF TIME IN PLAY

Zeng Zi stepped over the broken guardian-golem and approached the altar. The shining jade vessel glowed with the luminous purity of a relic of the True King, the golden cups around it dulled by the reflected splendor. Just before he touched the ritual vessel, his hand froze, and his thoughts plunged into the future.

He saw himself sublimate into a burst of cinnabar light at the moment his hand touched the vessel, his spiritual impurities igniting in a reaction that blasted him into discordant tones and dissipating radiance.

Biting back an impure curse of frustration, Zeng Zi drew a deep breath and worked his will a second time. The web of prophecy settled down on the empty shrine, surety that he would be undisturbed for the three days of purification his grubby spirit would require. With a grimace, the Godbound reached into his pack and took a last bite of onion bean cake. It would be rice, water, and prayer until that vase was his.

*Look Forward can be used to query outcomes for a particular act, and Prophetic Insight can provide plausible events as needed.*





# WEALTH

Wealth is the Word not only of gold, but of prosperity of all kinds. Steady pay, full larders, warm clothes, and sturdy roofs are the purview of this Word. Some of its powers interact with the Faction system on page 134, giving blessings or curses to whole cities or nations.

Some gifts of Wealth allow the creation of non-magical objects, and a hero can use these powers to create great sums of gold or other precious materials. As a general rule, these gifts can be used to create enough Wealth to accomplish any immediate end desired, but the inflation caused by such a sudden rush of fist-sized jewels will make further artificial Wealth expenditures in the area useless for some time. A hero who operates more slowly, using the gifts to create actual objects of practical use, does not cause this sort of inflation. Such created Wealth is useless for the purposes of exerting Dominion, and cannot be spent for that end.

Heroes with the Wealth Word are never short of money, and can always afford anything that costs 1 Wealth or less. They always have sufficient food, drink, and clothing for themselves and their companions, drawing it from nothingness if necessary.

## LESSER GIFTS

### THE CRAFT TO MAKE

Action

Commit Effort. You can create or duplicate any mundane inanimate object you've seen before in one round, provided it's no larger than a wagon. The object is permanent if it is created mostly out of serviceable preexisting materials. If you make its major parts from nothing, it lasts only as long as the Effort is committed.

### EVER-SUFFICIENT PROVENANCE

On Turn

Commit Effort. You can produce any mundane objects or domesticated animals you need as long as the Effort remains committed, enough to outfit or horse one hundred people per level. The objects and creatures vanish once the Effort is reclaimed. The objects must be no larger than a horse, and the animals are docile and unfit for war, though they can be butchered or put to other normal uses. If the Effort is left committed long enough for them to be eaten, they will still nourish their consumers after the Effort is reclaimed.

### FLAWLESS REPRODUCTION

Action

Commit Effort and touch a non-magical object or domestic animal no larger than a large wagon. Every minute, a perfect duplicate of the thing appears somewhere near the original until the Effort is reclaimed. This duplicate persists even after the Effort is reclaimed.

### PROSPERITY'S ABUNDANCE

Action

Spend the Wealth necessary to purchase a generally-available object or service, with a minimum of 1 point, and have it appear instantly. Services are performed by unseen hands to a good quality of work, taking as long as it would take to execute the work normally. Only "real" Wealth can power this gift, not Wealth created by magic or gifts.

## SUSTAIN THE MULTITUDE

On Turn

Commit Effort and bless a faction with a Power score no larger than 2, affecting a city at most. The faction gains the Feature "We always have enough to survive", providing them with sufficient supplies of food, clothing, and other needs regardless of the bleakness of their surroundings or recent losses. This Feature can be used to defend during relevant conflicts, but it cannot be sacrificed on a loss, and lasts as long as the Godbound keeps their Effort Committed.

## WITHER THE PURSE

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and target a victim in sight. Their finances suffer immediate and drastic loss, whether from thieves, arson, misfortune, or bad trade. They lose one Wealth point worth of possessions per level of the Godbound. Worthy foes can make a Spirit save to resist. Those who steward others' money or have far-flung possessions lose only their own personal funds or those in the immediate area. If used against someone who directly controls a faction's wealth or facilities, their faction loses the benefit of one economically-related Feature the victim oversees for the next faction turn.

## GREATER GIFTS

### FOREVER SUFFICIENT

Constant

You and your companions always have whatever mundane objects or mounts you need, provided they're no larger than a small sailing ship. Luck, foresight, and strange provenance conspire to bring you your desires exactly when you need them, every object needed appearing in their pockets, packs, or nearby surroundings. These objects tend to vanish or be lost after you stop needing them, and they cannot replicate precise other objects such as keys or seals.

### THE GOLDEN GOD'S HAND

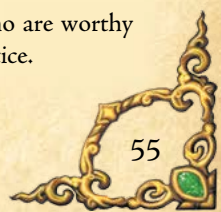
Action

Commit Effort and curse or bless a faction or community with a Power score no larger than half your level, rounded up. You may either grant them a beneficial Feature having to do with prosperity or wealth, or you may suppress an existing Feature they have that relies on money or large amounts of resources. Granted Features can defend, but cannot be sacrificed on a loss. Empyrean Wards do not hinder this effect unless the entire area being cursed or blessed is protected by the ward. The curse or blessing manifests very rapidly in the course of a day, and lasts for as long as the Effort remains Committed.

### THIEVES' BANE

Constant

Lesser foes are utterly unable to successfully rob you or your companions by stealth or fraudulent bargaining. Whenever any worthy foe attempts to steal from or monetarily defraud you or your companions, you catch an immediate vision of the attempt and can take a single action against the thief as if you were standing next to them, though they can do nothing against you in return. If multiple thieves are involved, you get one action against each. Thieves who are worthy foes can make a Spirit saving throw to escape your notice.



# MAGIC AND SPELLCASTING

There are two major forms of magic: that of the lesser arts and the secrets of high theurgy. "Low" magic is a remnant art, a discipline of scraps and pieces assembled from the wreckage of the Former Empires. It is dependent upon its traditions, those arcane legacies that have preserved its remains and adapted it to the limited resources of this latter age. "High" magic is something deeper and stronger. Theurgy, as it is called, is the art of appealing to the true powers of creation and invoking the deep laws by which all things were made. While many with the natural aptitude can take up the laborious traditions of magic, only Godbound and the mightiest arcanists can wield true theurgy.

## PREPARING AND CASTING LOW MAGIC

A hero can use low magic if they have a Fact related to their mastery of a tradition. While ordinary mortals must painstakingly master each tier of expertise, a hero with a relevant Fact can cast all the spells of their known traditions. A single Fact cannot normally grant access to more than one tradition. Lesser sorcerers may know only some of the arts of their tradition and require a mentor or grimoire to reveal all the capabilities of their expertise.

Unless specified otherwise, casting a spell requires both a lengthy ritual and certain basic tools and supplies. These inscribed charms, sanctified tokens, auspicious materials, and other occult paraphernalia are not difficult to acquire, but if the caster finds themselves stripped of their belongings they will need some opportunity to reassemble their tools. The length of the ritual required depends on the difficulty of the spell. Apprentice spells require 15 minutes of work, adept spells require an hour, master-level spells need four hours, and invoking the magic of an archmage requires an all-day working. These rituals are ruined by interruption or damage, with the spell fizzling uselessly.

Some traditions are capable of suspending almost-completed rituals, storing their virtue in some token, elixir, or parchment. Only the caster can activate the power within these items, but they can be deployed as their action for the turn, going off at the beginning of their next turn if not spoiled by damage. The caster can prepare up to two spells of this kind per hit die or level. Details of the spell, such as targets, range, or exact effects are determined when the caster unleashes the effect. If the caster has mastered multiple traditions that allow prepared spells, they still can't prepare more than two per hit die. The initiate can always cast spells more slowly if the situation allows it.

Other traditions allow a spontaneous choice of effects, casting a spell with no more than a brief invocation and the right occult implement to hand, the spell taking an action to cast and going off at the start of their next turn. Injury before the spell goes off spoils it. While these traditions can still be used more slowly at need, an initiate of the art may cast one spell per hit die or level before they need at least an hour's respite to restore their energies. Note that just because the tradition can be used spontaneously, it doesn't mean that it also teaches how to store power as a prepared object. In the case that a sorcerer also uses a tradition that allows prepared spells, each two prepared spells decreases the allowed instant spells by one. Thus, a 3 hit die adept with two prepared spells from one tradition could freely cast two more from another tradition before their powers were exhausted for a time.

Each tradition gives examples of the kind of spells usable at a given level of mastery. Other spells of similar theme and power can also be cast by the sorcerer, given GM agreement.

## LOW MAGIC CAPABILITIES

While some traditions have special arts, most spells have certain general limits. These limits can be blurred at the GM's discretion, but most sorcerous workings must abide by these strictures.

- Spells can't affect anything outside the sorcerer's presence, at most out to the maximum range of their line of sight.
- Spell effects don't last longer than the next sunrise, though their consequences can linger. Speeding a natural process such as healing produces a lasting cure, and subtle blessings or curses might last as long as a week.
- Spells can't create permanent matter. Summoned objects disappear at sunrise, and conjured food and drink provides only temporary satiation.

Individual traditions have learned ways to sidestep these limitations, invoking ancient pacts and secret techniques to violate the bans. These methods are unique and specific to each tradition, however, and mastering the secrets of one doesn't mean that they can be used with another path.

## LOW MAGIC AND GIFTS

Mortal magic is unable to directly overcome gifts. The dispellations of a curse-eater cannot undo the blights of the Word of Luck, and even the strongest mortal curse must dissolve before a miracle wrought by some appropriate Word. Magical wards designed to fend off a particular type of danger also fail in the face of a hero's powers; a fire sorcerer's magical shield against heat can't hold back the blaze of a chosen of Fire, and a mind-wizard's mental defenses can't prevent the powers of Command from taking hold. At most, the GM might grant a +4 bonus on their saving throw if any are allowed.

## SUMMONING CREATURES

Some magical traditions allow for the summoning of servitor creatures. Under most circumstances, a sorcerer can summon no more than one creature at a time. Supernatural creatures manifest out of thin air, while natural beasts travel to the summoner over the course of the ritual. Of the low magic traditions depicted here, only the Cinnabar Order and the theotechnicians teach these techniques as a normal part of training. Other traditions either don't have the art at all or else students must learn it from a reclusive master or a long-vanished tome of occult secrets.

For traditions that allow such summoning, an apprentice caster can call only very minor imps or sprites of no use in combat and no consequential abilities. An adept can summon a 2 HD creature, a master can summon a 4 HD creature, and an archmage can call up an 8 HD creature.

The Bestiary chapter provides example combat statistics for summoned entities on page 162. Summoned creatures will obey within the parameters of their nature, but will not act suicidally unless they are automatons or other entities without self-will. Most summoned beings are intelligent enough to follow orders in a rational way, though not all of them communicate in ways that humans understand.

# The Academy of Thought

The Academicians of Thought have their greatest school at the Bronze Collegium in the great city of Xilong in the Dulimbai Regency, where they study their arts alongside the chroniclers of dead realms and the reckless investigators of god-husks and lost artifices. They proudly claim to be heritors of the philosophers of selfhood that aided in the selection and priming of individuals for their eventual transformation into the Made Gods. As such, they are a notoriously atheistic tradition, ever prying into unseemly matters and profane secrets, and the ancestor-cultists of Dulimbai regard them with distinct mistrust.

Academicians pride themselves on the sublimity of their tradition. Its powers may be invoked spontaneously, and are so subtle that only another Academician can tell when a spell is being cast. This elegance comes at a price, however, as such quick castings force an excessive surge of magical energy through the sorcerer's brain tissues and leave them faintly debilitated for a time thereafter. Each spell cast spontaneously applies a cumulative -1 penalty to all hit rolls, attribute checks and saving throws until the caster can rest for half an hour. A caster can avoid incrementing this increasing penalty by routing the power through softer tissues and accepting a 1d6 damage die of injury.

Aside from this complication, the arts of the Academician are extremely cerebral in nature. None of its spells can affect the physical world in any way; they function only on the brains of living creatures, intelligent or otherwise. Lesser foes get no saving throw against their spells, but worthy enemies may make a Spirit save to resist them.

## Apprentice

Sense surface emotions in a subject, understand the speaker of a foreign language, reroll a saving throw against a mental effect as an Instant spell, or have a brief mental conversation with a willing target in sight.

## Adept

Project emotions to a subject, create a mental link of communication with a willing target that extends out to a mile, read surface thoughts and strong images in a target, or trick a target into seeing or hearing something illusory.

## Master

Control a target's emotions fully within their usual range of passions, compel a target to obey for a scene in any non-harmful way, implant a subconscious suggestion they will carry out later that day if it is not against their nature, or read well-remembered memories on a specific topic from a target

## Archmage

Inflict 2d6 psychic damage dice on a target, compel a target to obey for a scene in any non-suicidal way, or for a day in any not-especially-objectionable way, or deeply probe into even forgotten memories on a particular topic.





## The CINNABAR ORDER

A priesthood of scourging flame from the red sand deserts of the Oasis States, the Cinnabar Order works its ways in flame-shrines and monasteries of ash. Their adepts bring sourceless fire to the inhabitants of the great pyramid-cities. Each likely boy or girl is obliged to spend long years in study before they are permitted to leave the shrine where they were trained. Some are enlisted by a city in need of another flame-sorcerer, while others travel to the wet lands for their damp green secrets.

They revere the dead gods of fire and heat, mastering their ancient liturgies to call forth the flame that their people need to survive in a land where there is little to burn. Their arts are quick and easy to invoke, and they may cast spells spontaneously.

While the Cinnabar Order is a vital part of the life of the great pyramid-arcologies of the Oasis States, its members are viewed with a mix of fear and distaste. The ancient adepts of the Order were strongly opposed to the transhuman breeding experiments that continue to this day among the families of the pyramids, and their refusal to cooperate in lending Cinnabar Order pupils to the genetic stock won them the displeasure of the cities' sorcerous flesh-shapers. The arcane descendants of these ancient fire-magi preserve their distance from the eugenic experiments of the Oasian nobility, obliging the Order's leaders to remain in the security of their ash monasteries.

Despite this ancient hostility, the pyramids still need the magical fires that the Cinnabar Order provides in order to maintain their massive enchanted hydroponic gardens. As such, they are paid in necessities for their monasteries and maintain a certain legal impunity under Oasian law. So long as they don't interfere too overtly with the nobility, they and their servants may ignore almost all other laws.

### APPRENTICE

Every apprentice of the Cinnabar Order is skilled in desert survival, the finding of water, the liturgies of the dead red gods, and the subtleties of all things that burn and explode. They are not taught any magical secrets until they have mastered all these things, however.

### ADEPT

Adepts can make torches or candles burn all day without being consumed, become immune to fires smaller than a bonfire, light a nimbus of fire around their limbs (turning them into 1d6 weapons), summon 2 HD Cinnabar Sparks from the bestiary chapter, or cause a one foot cube of matter to become flammable regardless of its composition.

### MASTER

Masters of the Cinnabar Order can hurl bolts of flame (1d10), become immune to mundane flames, extinguish a fire no larger than a house fire, create a nimbus of flame for a scene that burns everyone around them within 10 feet for 1d4 damage, control the burning of a fire no larger than a bonfire, summon 4 HD Cinnabar Sparks, or command creatures of flame to briefly obey them for a scene.

### ARCHMAGE

Archmages can hurl exploding balls of flame that do 2d10 damage to everything within a 20' radius of their landing point, become immune even to magical flames, summon an 8 HD Cinnabar Conflagration, or extinguish all fires around them in a 50' radius.

## CURSE-EATERS

Grim heritors of ancient theotechnic disaster recovery methods, "curse-eaters" are an informal brotherhood of initiates trained in the lifting and banishing of hostile magical effects. While they are honored for their utility in dispelling dangerous magic, the wise also understand that they can lay down the same blights they lift up. Most are glad to receive them and glad to see them go once the work is done.

A loose fraternity of these practitioners is found in the Raktine Confederacy, some in service to the Black Academies while others serve as freelance defenders of the peasants. A few curse-eaters are also found in Ancalia, where their secrets formed the basis for the Invocatant order of Ancalian knighthood. Their special expertise is sometimes requested when the Invocatants can't deal with a problem alone.

The blights of curse-eaters can take many forms: unluck, sickness, or even death in the case of the mightiest banes. These curses will usually last for a month, if strong or overt, or a year for more subtle afflictions. The very mightiest curses can last generations, though these are usually only enough to afflict a victim rather than kill them. Lesser curses can either affect a specific type of action and force a -4 penalty on d20 rolls for it, or be general ill-luck that applies a -2 penalty to all d20 rolls. Greater curses can force automatic failure of specific actions for a few times before they unravel, or simply cause the automatic failure of the first attempt at the action each scene before applying a -4 penalty to further attempts. Greater curses can also inflict severe, lasting sicknesses, or result in the almost-certain eventual deaths of lesser foes.

Curse-eaters can prepare their spells beforehand in small tokens which they crush or break to release the effect. When they turn a curse back on its caster or detect a blight's enactor, they can reach any distance to the sorcerer responsible for it; the magic itself gives them a connection which defies normal limits of range.

### APPRENTICE

Apprentice curse-eaters can detect the presence of magic, sense and identify curses and their effects, or dispel low magic effects on their own person.

### ADEPT

Adepts can dispel low magic on a target, receive a vision of the person who laid a curse on someone, or lay a curse on someone that can last as much as a year and inflict subtle but significant hindrance.

### MASTER

Those who have mastered the curse-eater's arts can dispel low magic on a building or structure and everyone in it, create a shield that negates the next hostile low magic spell, place a greater curse on someone that will probably get them killed within a month or debilitated indefinitely, or place a lesser curse on an entire group of people in your presence.

### ARCHMAGE

The rare curse-eater who lives long enough to become an archmage can create a shield that reflects the next hostile low magic spell back at the caster, place a greater curse on a lesser foe that will kill them in moments, place a lesser curse that will dilute as it travels down to their heirs for seven generations, or lift a curse from someone and send it back at its caster.

## The Empty Way

Some see the secrets of the ancients as a path to power and control. They wield magic as a tool, using the ancient invocations and occult prayers to compel the tattered remnants of divinity to obey their purposes. The adepts of the Empty Way turned their back on such profane behavior long centuries ago. Since then they have kept to themselves in isolated monasteries and remote hermitages, taking as disciples those souls who sought refuge from the world and a path toward perfection of the soul.

Adepts of the Empty Way are found throughout Arcem, though most often as Raktian hermits or monastics who follow a Uniter version of the doctrine, or Toban lamas and their disciples who use their arts to defend and advance the interests of their monastery. Individual mystical practitioners are also found in Dulimbai, along with a scattering of Lomite atheist-monks in the far north.

The magic of the Empty Way is quick to employ, and may be cast spontaneously. It requires no material instruments whatsoever, not even when it is cast as a ritual. The sages of this path obstinately renounce the use of magic as a tool to affect the outside world, however, and so spells of the Empty Way only ever affect the caster. They may then choose to use their newfound strength to act in the world, but their philosophers consider that a very different prospect than that of the direct employ of sorcery.

Initiates of the Empty Way symbolize their renunciation of direct influence on the world by their adoption of a particular taboo, whether celibacy, poverty, rigid dietary bans, strict obedience to a superior, lengthy periods of prayer each day, or some other stricture. Breaking this taboo or neglecting this duty costs them all use of their powers until they can spend a full day in meditation and purification.

Those of the Empty Way who learn another tradition's magic may use that magic normally, though other adepts of the path are apt to view them as very bad believers for meddling with magic that way.

### Apprentice

The apprentice can cast spells to gain immunity to hot or cold weather, ignore hunger and thirst for a day, become impervious to pain and able to fight on for one round after reaching zero hit dice or hit points, or turn their unarmed attacks into 1d6 weapons for a scene.

### Adept

The adept's spells can turn unarmed attacks into 1d8 weapons, grant them a natural armor class of 5 for a scene, leap up to sixty feet horizontally or half that vertically, gain immunity to natural flame or frost, or heal 1 hit die or hit point of damage as an Instant action.

### Master

The sage master's spells can purge disease or poison from the blood, grant them a natural armor class of 3 for a scene, levitate up or down at their full movement rate for a scene, see clearly even in perfect darkness, or satiate their need for food, sleep, and drink for the day.

### Archmage

An archmage may turn unarmed attacks into 1d10 weapons, turn invisible for a scene or until they take a vigorous action, become impervious to non-magical weapon attacks for a scene so long as they take no hostile action, restore youthful vigor for the day regardless of age, or gain immunity to mortal mind-affecting magic for the day.

## Hedge Magic

A practice that requires years of laborious study, hedge magic teaches its pupils the subtle knowledge of the common folk, their cures and planting-times and luck-charms. In most places this tradition is thickly encrusted with the superstitions and traditions of the local practitioners, leaving a vast amount of effort to be expended before any true magic is learned.

While almost any adequately clever man or woman can learn to use the disjointed arts of the hedge magician, it takes time and patient labor to learn the craft. Apprentices and adepts actually have no magical powers at all, and are simply well-versed in all the knowledge necessary for a village wise-man or wise-woman. Treat familiarity with this tradition as a helpful Fact when such knowledge is relevant to an attribute check. Hedge magic takes the usual ritual time to cast.

Hedge mages are found throughout Arcem. Almost every hamlet worth a name has at least an apprentice of the art in residence, though the vast majority of these "mages" have no magical talent whatsoever. Adepts are the most commonly found, with most of those rare few that have actual arcane potential never getting the opportunity to develop magic. Only when their teacher is truly gifted as well do they have the chance to learn the deeper secrets of roots, seasons, and the management of troublesome neighbors. Of course, having true magic can be a curse when those neighbors start demanding miracles from you.

### Apprentice

Apprentice hedge magicians study herbs, livestock, the rudiments of fortunetelling, and the fabrication of the necessary tools and charms for later work. No true magic is learned at this level of experience. Most are apprenticed young and have mastered this level of expertise by their eighteenth birthday.

### Adept

Adepts are proficient healers and herbalists, and talented at dealing with humans and animals alike. They know much of managing people, keeping the common folk in due awe of their learning without promising too much or inspiring excessive dread. Most villages have hedge magicians of this level of expertise, with knowledge but no true magic at their command.

### Master

This degree is rarely ever learned before an adept's fiftieth winter. The magician can perform true magic now, albeit of a modest and subtle type. They can cure sick livestock and minor human ailments, ensure wounds heal cleanly, find lost objects within familiar terrain, bring luck or misfortune to a specific endeavor (+/-2 to relevant attribute checks), or perform rituals that restore vigor and wakefulness to a group.

### Archmage

Only the oldest and wisest of hedge mages attain to this degree of mastery. They can break mortal curses, miraculously heal physical wounds for 1d6 hit dice of healing, cure any non-magical diseases, bless or curse an undertaking so as to roll twice on one attribute check and take the better or worse, identify the general properties of magical objects or effects, bewitch people to friendliness or enmity, or foretell a very likely near future for a person. Any healing requires that the recipient Commit Effort for the day to assimilate the power. Those without listed Effort can benefit from healing once per day.



## THE MERCIFUL HAND

In the wake of the Last War the loss of life was incalculable. Where only some of the secrets of the past could be preserved, the arts of magical healing were among those most often rescued. Ancient divine protocols of succor were passed down among numerous nations and peoples, and the ensuing body of knowledge came to be known in many lands as the Merciful Hand. These adepts are honored in all civilized lands, and only monsters or the truly barbarous would dare to harm them. Custom demands that they give at least an hour or two of their labor wherever they might stay the night.

Their hospice-academies are rare, but are invariably well-supported by the local nobility, though in some lands this closeness has become an unhealthily incestuous bond between the Hand and the nobility. In these places only apprentices of suitably good breeding are allowed to enter the academy, thus neglecting suitable candidates of less glorious lineage and leaving the hospice much more interested in the concerns of the great. Given how few have the magical gifts required, this can make an adept of the Hand even rarer than they are now.

The tradition's spells are potent, but have no power to harm a person or affect an unwilling target. Its initiates can prepare some of the more commonly-needed spells beforehand in elixirs and poultices.

### APPRENTICE

The apprentice engages in study of the healing arts and beneficial herbs, with no true magic learned at this level yet. This skill does apply as a useful Fact when performing medical services, however.

### ADEPT

The adept knows charms to stabilize the gravely wounded, cure non-lethal diseases, numb pain, alleviate non-crippling symptoms, and magically identify even very esoteric diseases.

### MASTER

The charms of the master cure 1d6 points of physical damage to hit points or hit dice, cure even lethal diseases, bring gravely-wounded sorts back onto their feet and functional so long as they're not further harmed, correct lamed limbs and damaged but essentially-intact organs, and grant blessings to protect infection by mundane diseases.

### ARCHMAGE

The mighty spells of the archmage can cure 2d6 physical damage, cure even magical diseases, regrow missing limbs and body parts, and provide blessings to protect against infection by magical diseases. Even so, there are some dire sicknesses that cannot be cured even by an archmage of the Merciful Hand, particularly those magical biological weapons unleashed by some of the more merciless civilizations that fought in the Last War.

## HEALING MAGIC AND EFFECTS

Whenever a spell or other effect heals hit point damage for a target, that target normally must Commit Effort to the end of the day, or else their body is unable to support the surge of magical force and no benefit is gained. If the healer is curing an NPC or monster that has no listed Effort, assume that they can do so once per day at most.

## SEERS OF THE BRIGHT EYE

The making of the Made Gods required a more than mortal awareness of the flow of arcane energies and divine numina. While the rarefied excellencies of awareness that went into creating these artificial gods is long since lost, the Seers of the Bright Eye have managed to retain the more prosaic arts of foretelling and far-seeing that win them their current coin and influence.

Lesser Seers are little more than street-corner fortune-tellers, using a few small arts to puzzle out what a petitioner wants to be told of the future. In cities where several dwell, they usually form together into formal guilds of oracles, the better to avoid treading on each others' prophecies and to train apprentices in the art. These novices are often recruited from likely urchins, and are little more than slave labor. Many of them have no actual magical talent whatsoever, and make their fortune with a glib tongue and a skill at cold reading.

Some Seers with actual talent or determination refine their abilities to truly behold the future and cast their senses beyond their immediate surroundings. While the future is always mutable, they can gain hints of what is to come and visions of likely future events. This gifted elite finds service in the courts of nobles and princes, though most are regularly forced to prove the strength of their gifts by their suspicious patrons.

This gift is hindered by the relatively simple warding practices that can serve to blind a Seer's vision. Any location wrought with these wards becomes impenetrable to a Seer's magic or future sight. Any competent occult adept knows how to lay these wards, but they also require regular tending to maintain their power. Exceptionally powerful and costly wards can last indefinitely, however, so long as they remain physically intact.

### APPRENTICE

The apprentice can determine likely immediate good or bad outcomes from a choice, detect curses or magic, pinpoint the time and location of the caster, and identify a person's predominant character traits if they have been seen or their birth date is known.

### ADEPT

The adept can gain brief visions of familiar people and their surroundings, identify magic items and standing spells, get visions of important events likely to happen to them in the next week, overhear the sounds of a remote place they've visited before, and locate lost objects familiar to them. Such scrying never lasts more than a half-hour per spell cast.

### MASTER

The master can locate people they've seen or had carefully described to them, ask questions about probable futures and receive yes or no answers, gain visions of where to go to find something, and scry distant locations known to them. Repeated queries about a single future topic tend to distort the readings, however.

### ARCHMAGE

Archmagicians can penetrate weak wards against divination, such as those laid down by occultists of less than master expertise in their low magic tradition. They can also locate people or objects on a casual description, provide a detailed oracular description of a likely near-future event, or create a movable scrying point in a distant location. Their scrying spells last for an hour each at most.



## The Theotechnicians

The Made Gods required a priesthood of theotechnical servitors, trained in the due maintenance and preservation of the elaborate edifices of occult artifice that supported their divine power. Each god had his or her own maintenance priesthood, of course, but the shared principles and secrets of the tradition have long since survived their original patrons. Today, the Bright Republic still maintains a reliable tradition of theotechnology in its sophisticated etheric engines and industrial infrastructure, but the deepest secrets of the arts are preserved by the jungle sages of the Thousand Gods.

In the present day, theotechnicians serve as engineers and artificers to the great and small, with even their apprentices capable of erecting sturdy structures and repairing damaged tools and buildings. They are in greatest demand when relics of the Made Gods are unearthed, or ancient artifice-marvels need repair and recharging. Most Bright Republic towns have at least one theotechnician on hand to tend to their marvels, and cities make use of them to preserve ancient wonders that no person living can reproduce. The god-tribes of the Thousand Gods have even more such learned men and women, kept constantly in service by their merciless divine tyrants.

While applicable to relics and wonders of all kinds, theotechnical work is not cheap. No work can be done unless the theotechnician has access to substantial resources, a minimum of Wealth 1 for any serious work beyond minor repairs and identifications. Its automata and artificing work remain functional as long as they are intact, however, and do not vanish or shut down at dawn. The Wealth used to make the gear must be natural; conjured components spoil the magic.

### Apprentice

Apprentices learn no magic, but become skilled in architecture, tinkering, and the crafting of delicate work such as a jeweler or goldsmith might do. Those of the Thousand Gods focus more on learning of the myriad divinities of the land and their specific powers and servants.

### Adept

Adept theotechnicians treat their art as sufficient justification for being able to create minor magic items as described in the Treasures chapter. Each month of their determined labor counts as 1 Dominion point for the creation of a minor magic item, though they cannot create them in bulk as Godbound can or create arms and armor more powerful than those with a +1 bonus. Adepts can identify the function and powers of such minor magic items.

### Master

A master theotechnician can fashion up to +2 weapons and armor, and at a cost of 1 Wealth point and a week's work they can build a 4 HD minor servitor. This servitor is not sentient, but it will obey the master intelligently.

### Archmage

Archmages of the theotechnicians can build +3 weapons and armor and can fabricate 8 HD servitors with a month's work and 2 Wealth points of expenditure. Archmages automatically succeed at all saving throws forced on them by effects generated by minor magical items.

# THEURGY AND INVOCATIONS

Only Godbound, mighty supernatural creatures, and archmages of profound learning are capable of wielding theurgy. Godbound must know the gifts of the Sorcery Word in order to invoke it, while supernatural entities might have learned it in ages past or simply have it inscribed upon their souls. Archmages who learn it often do so only through terrible pacts and abominable promises to the powers of Uncreated Night. In the end, many of these wretched mortals are not so much wielders of theurgy's power, but mere tools through which their patron's will is done.

Theurgy is divided into three degrees of initiation. A theurge of the Gate has mastered the beginning of celestial wisdom, and has engraved the necessary pacts of entrance upon the bones of his spirit. A theurge of the Way has taken in the deep patterns of Heaven's ways and begun to understand the truths that underpin all creation. A theurge of the Throne has turned their vision upward to the empty seat of the One, and has encompassed as much of the world's secret meaning as any lesser mind can hope to bear.

Each degree of initiation allows the theurge to master *invocations*, special spells that draw from the deep laws of the world. Each invocation is burdensome to learn and master, but once mastered it remains forever with the theurge. Some mortal sorcerers find it necessary to have additional tomes or impedimenta to call on their theurgy, but Godbound and like creatures need no such things.

Learning an invocation of the Gate requires a week's effort under the tutelage of a theurge who knows the invocation, or a week's study of an instructional grimoire. An invocation of the Way requires a month of such practice, while an invocation of the Throne can only be mastered with a full three-month season of effort.

Once an invocation has been mastered, it may be used whenever the circumstances permit. If the invocation is cast slowly, with care and focus, it requires no expenditure of Effort. Such casting requires an hour for an invocation of the Gate, half a day for an invocation of the Way, and a full day's casting for one of the Throne. Any disturbance to the caster while this is being done will spoil the invocation.

There are times when a theurge doesn't have the leisure for such careful preparation. They can instead cast more quickly, taking only one round per tier of initiation, with the invocation activating at the start of their next turn after the casting is done. This swift use of power requires them to Commit Effort for the scene, however, and the spell will be spoilt and the effort wasted if they are hurt while casting it.

When nothing but immediate results will do, the theurge may cast instantly, hurling the invocation as their action for the round. While this cannot be interrupted, it requires that they Commit Effort for the day, and suffer a variable amount of damage as the unmediated fires of creation roar through their unprepared forms. It inflicts a 1d6 damage die for invocations of the Gate, 1d12 for those of the Way, and 1d20 for the Throne. No gift or power can negate this damage without simultaneously spoiling the invocation.

## THEURGY CAPABILITIES

Theurgy is much more powerful than low magic. Things it creates and enchantments it lays will persist indefinitely unless otherwise indicated. It can reach beyond the boundaries of a single realm and even plumb the depths of Uncreated Night. It can create new forms of life and alter old ones, bringing forth new races of creatures that breed true. There seems to be no limit to the power that theurgy is theoretically capable of accomplishing.

The practical limit of theurgy is that even Godbound find it almost impossible to devise new invocations. To do so is an enormous work, one requiring grim focus, great expenditures of Dominion, and voyages deep within the ruins of Heaven and Hell. Almost all theurges are forced to rely upon the invocations they have learned from existing arts, either from the rare instructor in its deep mysteries or from tomes and instructional relics found in lost places.

Theurgy is also no substitute for Influence or gifts in working large, long-term alterations upon a place or situation. The marvels created by theurgy may be long-lasting, but they are rarely so perfectly suited to a theurge's needs that they obviate other forms of effort to attain their ends. More work must be done if its changes are to be stable.

## THEURGY AND GIFTS

While theurgy is far more powerful than low magic, it is still no match for divine gifts. Theurgy may be dispelled as mortal magic is dispelled, and its powers cannot banish the workings of gifts unless specified otherwise by the invocation. Some invocations truly can be used to overpower gifts, but these tend to be very specific arts or very focused in their application. Unless otherwise specified, theurgy is treated as mortal magic for all interactions with gifts.

## ARCANE CONNECTIONS

Some theurgic invocations require the use of an "arcane connection" with the target. Such connections include hair, blood, spittle or other bodily fluid, or possessions of intimate significance to the target. At least an ounce of the substance must be obtained to be of use in magic. As some low magic traditions require their use as well, most educated persons of import know not to allow such things to leave their possession or go unburnt.

An arcane connection goes stale rapidly, and must come into a sorcerer's possession within a day and a night after it is taken from the subject. Once in hand, the sorcerer can conduct the necessary minor rituals to keep it spiritually potent for as long as it's required. Such preserved connections can be stolen from them, however, and used by a different sorcerer.

An arcanist can acquire multiple arcane connections to a single target, but they must be taken from them on different occasions at least a day and a night apart. Using an arcane connection in a spell usually spoils it, rendering it useless thereafter.

| INVOCATION | TIME TO LEARN | CAST SLOWLY | CAST QUICKLY | CAST INSTANTLY   |
|------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|
| Gate       | 1 week        | 1 hour      | 1 round*     | 1d6 damage die#  |
| Way        | 1 month       | 12 hours    | 2 rounds*    | 1d12 damage die# |
| Throne     | 3 months      | 1 day       | 3 rounds*    | 1d20 damage die# |

\* indicates the caster must also Commit Effort to the end of the scene, # indicates the caster must also Commit Effort for the day.

# THEURGIC INVOCATIONS

These are simply some of the most common invocations known among the realms. Other spells can be found in long-lost libraries or located amid the sigils engraved on Heaven's walls. A few secrets are even to be found in the shape of arcane artifacts, their branchings and twistings sculpted as metaphors for the arcane procedures required for their invocation.

## INVOCATIONS OF THE GATE

*Barred Gates of Forbiddance*

*Beacon of Celestial Purity*

*The Bright God's Canticle*

*The Excision of Days*

*Kiss of the Crane*

*Open the Night Road*

*Pore of Hell*

*Ranks of Pale Bone*

*Seal of Regnal Dominion*

*Sunder the Lesser Spell*

*The Tireless Iron Cavalcade*

*The Trumpet of Far Utterance*

## INVOCATIONS OF THE WAY

*Curse of the Blighted Strand*

*The Deafening Word of Truth*

*Delaying the Coming of Dawn*

*The Far-Distant Lance*

*Glyph of Crowned Impunity*

*Mirrored Wheel of the Seasons*

*Path to the Bright Sanctum*

*Shutting the Dark Way*

*Sign of Avulsive Banishment*

*Sunder the Greater Spell*

*Tumulus of Sanctified Night*

## INVOCATIONS OF THE THRONE

*A Heart's Desire*

*Auspice of the Divine King*

*Directed Convulsion of Law*

*Gifts of Spring and Winter*

*The Grinding Teeth of God*

*Legion of Marching Clay*

*Palace of the Sorcerer-Prince*

*Pierce the Veil of Night*

*Summon the Black Iron Servitor*

*Sunder Every Sorcery*

## INVOCATIONS OF THE GATE

### BARRED GATES OF FORBIDDANCE

By means of an arcane connection the theurge may forbid a subject from entering a particular place. The banned location may be as small as a particular room or as large as a nation, but it must be a single recognizable entity. If the subject is within the area forbidden when the invocation is cast, they must immediately flee to the nearest viable border by the quickest possible route. If brought into it against their will, they can do nothing but flee at the first opportunity. The theurge need not be present inside the area to be warded when casting the spell, but must know its location and general dimensions.

Lesser foes are unable to resist this spell, while worthy enemies may make a Spirit saving throw to resist the forbiddance. The forbiddance lasts until it is dispelled or the caster lifts the ban.

### BEACON OF CELESTIAL PURITY

The theurge shines with a brilliantly clarifying radiance that gently illumines everything within one hundred feet. The light purifies and cleanses everything it touches, rendering objects clean and neutralizing poisons and disease sources, albeit it does not cure afflicted persons or banish magic. Any lies or intentional misdirections spoken within the light become visible as a plume of smoking filth rising from the speaker's mouth. The lies of others cause painful feedback to the theurge, and inflict a 1d6 damage die each time a lie is spoken. This damage cannot be avoided or negated. The light lasts as long as the caster desires it and remains conscious. Those with the Word of Deception can speak lies without being discovered by this spell.

### THE BRIGHT GOD'S CANTICLE

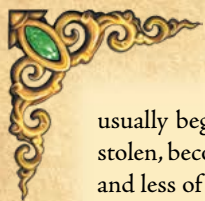
This invocation requires that the caster sing, forbidding other speech or spellcasting while it is maintained. So long as the caster remains singing, those around them are unable to acknowledge their presence, or the presence of allies who remain close to the theurge. Observers are aware of the sorcerer, but they can do nothing to act on that awareness unless the invocation is ended. The effect is broken if the mage ceases to sing, or they or their allies attack anyone or use hostile effects.

Lesser foes are affected automatically by the canticle. For others, the worthy foe with the best saving throw in the group may roll a Spirit save to resist; if successful, no worthy foe is affected, while if it fails, all are subject to the canticle.

### THE EXCISION OF DAYS

A sorcery dearly desired by the more ruthless among the theurges, the rite of the *Excision of Days* steals life from a person to prolong the life of the caster. The subject must be human, restrained and helpless, and the ritual is too complex to be cast instantly or in a few rounds. The sick and elderly add but a day to the sorcerer's lifespan. The young and healthy add a month, while infants and children are the richest in life force and add two months apiece to the wizard's longevity. The victims invariably perish during the ritual, and their souls are dragged down to Hell by the arcane forces involved in the rite. More than one victim can be sacrificed at once if they are all properly prepared.

The renewed vitality granted by this ritual is permanent, but prolonged use invariably has a price. After the first century, the theurge



usually begins to mutate in ways related to the life force they have stolen, becoming progressively more inhuman and monstrous as less and less of their original life force remains. Many theurges welcome this change, as their new bodies are often gifted with uncanny abilities.

## KISS OF THE CRANE

A small crane-shaped blade is first anointed with the blood of its target, or otherwise combined with an arcane connection to its intended victim. If the subject is visible, the blade may simply be pointed in their direction, with no need for a connection. When the invocation is cast, the blade leaps into the air and pursues the target, traveling at a rate of a hundred miles an hour to unerringly seek its victim. The magical blade then strikes for 1d6 damage per hit die of the theurge caster, up to a maximum of 10d6. The crane is unerring, but a second crane cannot affect the victim until all injury from the first has healed.

Lesser foes cannot resist this spell, but worthy enemies may make an Evasion save to take only half damage.

## Open the Night Road

Many of the Night Roads between realms are hidden deep within the earth or concealed in remote locations far from the cities of men. Of these, some have been sealed shut by ancient sorcery or closed by the slow congealing of natural law. This invocation can be used to open a sealed Night Road entrance or give the caster a sense of the general direction and distance to the nearest one. If the caster is careful, they can open the Road only briefly, leaving it accessible for a few minutes before the existing seal scabs back over the entrance. More reckless casters can tear the seal away entirely, leaving the road open for all to pass until fresh sorcery or natural law closes it once more.

## Pore of Hell

A burning sigil is inscribed on a solid surface, its flames dying to a low ember glow after a few moments. While the invocation remains active, the caster may at any time trigger the pore as an Instant action, causing it to vomit out flames and obsidian splinters at everything within ten feet of the sigil. The caster may choose to have the pore activate automatically when a target comes within three feet of it. The pore inflicts 1d6 damage per hit die or level of the caster, to a maximum of 10d6. Lesser foes get no saving throw against the damage, while worthy foes can make a Hardiness save to resist the explosion unharmed. Once discharged, the pore vanishes. A second pore cannot be laid down within the area of effect of the first.

## Ranks of Pale Bone

The theurge imbues corpses or other remains with an animating force, raising them as soulless lesser undead. For each hit die or level of the caster, 1d6 hit dice worth of lesser undead can be raised, assuming sufficient raw materials are available. The corpses need not be intact, as bones and tissue will merge and flow under the sorcery. Undead that have already been destroyed once, however, are no longer useful for further necromancy.

The great majority of human-sized corpses rise as 1 hit die undead, though the corpses of terrible beasts or fearsome Misbegotten may be more dangerous. The raised creatures are mindlessly loyal to the theurge or any lieutenants they nominate, but otherwise act as do most lesser undead. They remain animate until destroyed or until the invocation that fuels their existence is dispelled. If their creator is slain, the risen creatures will run rampant against the living.

## SEAL OF REGNAL DOMINION

The theurge draws a sign of pale emerald light in the air before the chosen target, subverting their will to the caster's own. While under the seal's effects, the victim is absolutely obedient to the theurge's commands, even those suicidal or repugnant to it. They will attempt to carry out instructions to the best of their ability and natural intelligence. Animal targets or those that do not share a language with the theurge can only be made to understand single-word commands.

A theurge may have no more thralls under the effect of the seal at once than they have levels or hit dice. Lesser foes have no chance of escaping this dominion, while worthy foes may make a Spirit saving throw to resist, and another each time they receive a hateful command from the theurge. If not resisted, the seal's effects remain until dispelled or dropped by the caster.

## Sunder the Lesser Spell

The theurge tears away the delicate threads of theurgic sorcery around a target within sight. A single theurgy invocation of the Gate is instantly dispelled along with any number of low magic enchantments within thirty feet of the chosen target point.

Breaking theurgic magic always involves a degree of feedback, however, and so the theurge suffers a 1d10 damage die each time this spell ends an invocation. This damage cannot be avoided or negated without spoiling the spell's effect.

## The Tireless Iron Cavalcade

The theurge summons up steeds of black iron and embers, the horses rising from the earth before the caster. Enough horses are summoned to serve up to a dozen companions. The constructs are tireless and perfectly obedient to their riders, allowing their masters to cross twenty miles of distance every hour they ride, or half that when crossing rugged terrain.

Natural beasts fear the steeds and will never approach them. The horses will not fight, but have an armor class of 0 and five hit dice apiece for purposes of withstanding damage. They never panic and are immune to mental influences and other conventional mortal passions. While swift and obedient, the horses drain the fertility out of the earth beneath their hooves in order to power their metal shells. The blackened hoofmarks make it trivially easy to track the riders for up to a month thereafter. The marks made by the hooves are too small to cause substantial damage to an area's overall fertility or crop yield.

## The Trumpet of Far Utterance

This invocation requires an arcane connection to the desired target, albeit close friends or pantheon-mates may be contacted without the benefit of such a link. When cast, the invocation summons a gauzy image of the target and a five-foot radius echo of their surroundings. A similar phantasm of the caster appears in the target's proximity. Caster and target may speak to each other through these phantasms, and a single inanimate object no more than ten pounds in weight may be passed between the two. The tenuous link produces a 25% chance that the object will be lost in transit somewhere in the distance between the two, however, with a brief glimpse of its resting place provided.

The link lasts until the caster drops it, to a limit of one hour. If the target doesn't wish to accept the contact, worthy foes may roll a Spirit save to resist it. If the contact was unwelcome, the arcane connection crumbles after the spell is complete, whereas a voluntary communication leaves the connection intact and usable once more.

## INVOCATIONS OF THE WAY

### CURSE OF THE BLIGHTED STRAND

The theurge lays a terrible curse upon a victim, afflicting them with almost any deformity, sickness, or misfortune that is not directly lethal. The target must be within the caster's sight, or else the theurge must have an arcane connection to them. The caster may describe any kind of blight to level at the victim, or describe a misfortune that will inevitably befall the victim if it is in any way possible.

Thus, a victim might be cursed to always maim themselves during combat, or have their eyes rot away, or to seethe with a hundred and one sicknesses that don't quite kill them, or so forth. The curse can only affect them, however, and cannot control other people's actions or thoughts, so a curse that their loved ones would reject them would be impermissible—albeit a curse that they should poison the food of their loved ones accidentally would be quite possible if they ever have anything to do with their family's meals.

The curse lasts until the theurge lifts it, it is dispelled, or a caster-chosen circumstance comes to pass. Lesser foes have no power to resist this curse, while worthy foes may save versus Spirit to avoid it.

### THE DEAFENING WORD OF TRUTH

The theurge utters a secret which is magnified into a destructive blast of sound. It affects all in a cone up to one hundred feet long and fifty feet wide at the end, inflicting damage and knocking down light wooden construction. Lesser foes are knocked down, deafened by the word for an hour thereafter and forced to spend their movement action standing up again.

The magnitude of the damage done depends on the significance and importance of the secret. A petty secret that isn't even embarrassing to the caster inflicts no damage at all to hearers. An embarrassing or awkward secret that isn't otherwise important inflicts a 1d10 damage die on those in the effect. A secret that exposes the caster to significant danger, reveals a weakness that enemies can exploit, or would incur the anger of a dangerous enemy inflicts a 1d20 damage die on those in the effect, and forces all targets to save versus Hardiness or be stunned and unable to act for a round.

While the caster may not leave any survivors to discuss the secret, the invocation's symbolic significance has its effects. Any secret used to power this spell is treated as common scholarly knowledge for the purpose of Knowledge gifts and similar powers, even if no other living creature knows it.

### DELAYING THE COMING OF DAWN

Most often used as an swiftly-cast spell, this invocation tampers with the natural flow of time around the sorcerer. When cast, the GM secretly rolls 1d6 to determine how many rounds it will last. For the duration of the invocation, time stops around the caster. They may act freely during this time, but cannot damage objects or people, take possessions from a person, or move living creatures from their frozen positions. Those around the theurge are oblivious to events that take place while they are acting under the spell. Godbound of the Word of Time and similar temporal creatures are immune to this spell, and may act freely in the otherwise-frozen moment.

Repeated use of this spell is dangerous. Each time after the first it's cast in a single scene, roll 1d6. If the number rolled is equal or less than the number of rounds of time-frozen action taken so far in the scene, the spell fails and the caster takes 2d10 straight damage.

## THE FAR-DISTANT LANCE

This murderous invocation requires an arcane connection with the victim. When completed, the target must immediately make a Hardiness save or perish in some gory and spectacular way of the caster's choice. Even those who succeed in the saving throw suffer a 1d10 damage die per hit die or level of the caster, up to a 10d10 maximum. Lesser foes get no saving throw at all, and inevitably perish. The amount of force poured through the invocation is painful to the caster, and they suffer half the target's maximum hit dice in points of damage from the spiritual scorching.

While potent, the energy forced through the arcane connection drives the caster out of thaumaturgic alignment with existing connections. Once cast on a target, all other currently-existing arcane connections to that same victim become useless to the caster. Fresh connections must be harvested after every casting.

### GLYPH OF CROWNED IMPUNITY

The theurge inscribes a glowing sigil of rule on their brow, including up to a half-dozen companions in the effect. So long as the sigil remains visible, those under the invocation's effect have legal impunity in all their actions. They may rob, murder, or offend local mores as they wish, and no onlooker will recognize it as a crime. Those they attack may defend themselves, but only their dear friends and allies will come to their aid, as bystanders looking on will consider it entirely appropriate behavior by those affected. The impunity lasts for one hour or until the glyph is concealed. After the effect ends, those who saw the crime will realize that it was illicit behavior and will likely blame sorcery for their disinclination to interfere.

Lesser foes are always affected by the glyph, but worthy enemies may make a Spirit saving throw to resist its effects.

### MIRRORED WHEEL OF THE SEASONS

The theurge lays hands on the engines of time and nature, adjusting the local climate and weather to match any expected conditions for the area in the next year. A midwinter day could thus be turned to midsummer, or a dank autumn evening to a furious blizzard if such weather was to be found in a typical winter for the area. The weather change is instantaneous, and snow or rain will rapidly build up or vanish over the course of ten minutes to match the targeted weather.

The theurge can maintain this temporal displacement for up to one day per level or hit die of the caster. The spell can be maintained for longer still, but inflicts a 1d6 damage die each day thereafter in damage that cannot be healed until the spell is dispelled or released. Once ended, natural weather must continue for as many days as the spell was in effect.

### PATH TO THE BRIGHT SANCTUM

The theurgist opens a one-way gate between their present location and a properly-prepared sanctum. The gate is large enough to admit a wagon and remains open for exactly eleven minutes after it is created, regardless of the caster's wishes. The gate is transparent, and allows sight and hearing into the targeted sanctum. The gate can cross any distance within a realm, but it must always target a sanctum and cannot be used to teleport to arbitrary locations. A theurge must prepare a sanctum personally, the effort taking a full week of purification and careful geomantic arrangement of sigils and carvings at the desired location. A theurge can only maintain one sanctum at a time, though rumors persist of more powerful invocations of teleportation.



## SHUTTING THE DARK WAY

The Night Roads bring terrifying plagues when they erupt too close to civilized lands. Uncreated monsters, relict refugees, and the terrible perils of the strange ecosystems of the dark roads all scourge the surrounding lands. While it is sometimes possible to seal these roads with brute force and burial, a powerful theurge can shut them with this invocation.

Once cast, the road is permanently sealed until it is opened again with a theurgic invocation or a divine miracle. The theurge must be in the presence of a Night Road entrance to seal it.

## SIGN OF AVULSIVE BANISHMENT

The theurge draws on the power of natural law to smite creatures that do not belong to the mundane world. A single Uncreated or angel struck by this invocation takes 1d10 damage per level of the caster, up to a maximum of 10d10 damage with no saving throw allowed. If cast as an area-effect spell, it can target a zone up to thirty feet in radius around a chosen point in sight of the theurge, inflicting a 1d6 damage die per caster hit die or level to all valid targets within the zone.

While powerful, the energies drawn by the spell can be dangerous if they cannot be vented. If the theurge targets a creature that is *not* Uncreated or angelic, or if there are non-valid targets in the area-effect blast, the theurge takes the same damage that they would have inflicted on the target. This backlash cannot be resisted or deflected. The invocation also drains ambient natural energies in the area, and so can only be cast once per scene.

## SUNDER THE GREATER SPELL

This dispelling charm functions much as does *Sunder the Lesser Spell*, but can also affect theurgy of the Way as well as the Gate.

## TUMULUS OF SANCTIFIED NIGHT

Ancient necromancers had particular difficulties in dealing with hostile Made Gods or divine powers that had dominion over death. Their mindless legions were easily overcome by such powers, or even turned against their master. This spell allowed an expert theurge to protect their fleshless slaves from such influence. Records suggest that similar invocations existed for other elemental entities, automatons, and such creatures as might be easily bent to obedience by a Word.

Raising a Tumulus of Sanctified Night requires the special consecration of a burial mound, memorial monument, ossuary, catacomb, or other place of death over the course of a week. Three man-sized sanctified markers or totems are placed within the structure; each must be destroyed or dispelled to negate the effect of the invocation.

The spell's effects are strongest within the mound. Inside, all undead are treated as greater undead, and any use of a Word or other divine power to affect them requires the divinity to Commit Effort for the day, this extra surcharge being paid once per scene at most. A number of undead equal to a few dozen or a Small Mob can be specially blessed as bodyguards or lieutenants of the necromancer, and are no longer treated as undead for the purpose of hostile powers or influence.

Outside the mound or catacomb, the effects are lesser, but still strong. For a one mile radius per level or hit die of the caster, all undead are treated as greater undead and the lieutenants retain their special immunity. For a ten mile radius per level or hit die of the caster, the lieutenants retain their immunity but no other benefits accrue.

A necromancer may raise more than one Tumulus, but each one after the first requires a cumulative 2 point Dominion cost to raise it.

## INVOCATIONS OF THE THRONE

### A HEART'S DESIRE

This mighty invocation will bring about anything the theurge wishes to happen, assuming it is not utterly impossible. The effects may take more or less time to play out depending on the probability and complexity of the request, but events that require only natural chance or the cooperation of lesser foes will automatically happen as the theurge desires. If the result requires the actions of worthy enemies, they get a Spirit saving throw to resist the invocation's promptings.

Unfortunately, this meddling with natural law gouges a deep wound in the theurge's own fate. At one critical point in a future gaming session, the GM may force the hero to automatically fail a saving throw or attribute check, without any chance to commit Effort or use a gift to salvage the failure. This failure will never kill the theurge, but the invocation cannot be used again until after the misfortune strikes.

### AUSPICE OF THE DIVINE KING

The aura of universal kingship clings to the theurge who practices this rite. All lesser foes in their presence will instinctively defer to the caster as their rightful ruler and will obey in any way they might normally obey a king. Worthy foes are allowed a Spirit saving throw to resist, one which may be repeated after each offensive or unnatural order the caster may give them.

The invocation lasts for as long as the caster wishes to maintain it, and those bewitched by it will remain loyal servants even after they leave the adept's presence. Dispelling effects can free individual subjects, but to end the spell itself it must be dispelled from the person of the theurge who cast it. The caster does become exceptionally vulnerable to the affronts of rebellion, however; while the spell is in effect, any damage dice rolled against them automatically do maximum damage.

### DIRECTED CONVULSION OF LAW

The processes of natural law bow to the theurge who commands this invocation. Once cast, the theurge can immunize their persons and those of up to a half-dozen allies from particular natural laws, material objects, or natural phenomena. A theurge could absolve themselves of gravity, for example, and fly at their normal movement rate, or exempt themselves from acknowledging a stone wall and walk through it along with their companions. An enemy's sword could be negated for them, leaving it insubstantial to their touch, or the water in a lake could be ignored, allowing them to stride the lake bottom. The spell affects only a single phenomenon or object at a time. Thus, the caster could ignore a wall or a sword, but not all walls or all swords. The spell can only affect willing allies, and can last for up to an hour.

### GIFTS OF SPRING AND WINTER

Years are taken or added to the caster of this spell, granting them whatever physical age they choose. The change is permanent and cannot be dispelled, though the caster ages normally afterwards. Unfortunately, this immortality does require a power source to complete the invocation. The use of a divine miracle of some appropriate kind, such as Endurance, or Health, or Fertility, could all be used to fuel the invocation, as could certain powerful artifacts. Lacking these, human sacrifice will do in a pinch, albeit at a great cost. One human must be sacrificed for every year of the theurge's true age to return them to their chosen physical condition, and all these sacrifices must be made during the course of a single casting.

## THE GRINDING TEETH OF GOD

The adept drags the fabric of reality into the teeth of the celestial gears that support it, churning every solid object in the area of effect into a fine powder. The spell affects an area up to thirty feet in diameter centered on a point within the caster's sight. Living creatures that keep moving can pull away from the grinding gears and suffer only 1d20 damage for each round they remain in the area of effect. Immobile objects are chewed to dust within ten rounds, whereupon the spell ends. Only the very strongest supernatural substances are capable of resisting this spell. If such an artifact or object gets caught in the area of effect, the celestial engines will bind up and shatter, likely creating a Night Road entrance on the spot, if not an even worse outcome.

## LEGION OF MARCHING CLAY

The greatest theurges can call up automatons the way lesser sorcerers raise undead husks. This spell conjures 2 hit die minions from clay, stone, wood, metal, or whatever other inanimate material the caster has convenient. One minion is called up per level or hit die of the caster. These automatons are not normally sentient, but they are intelligent as a human being in executing their duties and are utterly loyal to the theurge or their chosen lieutenants. If made from metal or stone, they are immune to non-magical weapon attacks, and if made from clay or softer substances they can develop individual identities and self-will within the boundaries of their obedience.

## PALACE OF THE SORCERER-PRINCE

With but a single use of this invocation, the theurge calls forth a luxuriantly-appointed tower or similar structure, one capable of housing up to a hundred inhabitants in comfort. The palace is appointed with dozens of conjured servitors, concubines, and laborers, albeit none are capable of fighting. The tower is sealed against entry by any save the theurge and their chosen guests, though siege weapons or powerful magic can break through the walls and steel-hard windows of tinted glass.

The tower naturally creates sufficient food, drink, and other common necessities to serve a hundred guests indefinitely. If taken from the tower, however, these viands crumble away in moments. So too the servitors if they are forced to leave its walls; they know this and will beg piteously to be spared such a death. Some theurges are said to have fashioned favored servants bodies in which to truly exist.

The palace may be conjured anywhere there is sufficient relatively flat ground to support it and may be dispelled at the caster's whim. Any foreign objects or persons left within the tower when it is dispelled will appear on the ground where it once stood, though the caster's personal possessions may be left stored within whatever timeless pocket realm the tower goes to when it is dispelled. A theurge may have only one palace standing at any one time.

## PIERCE THE VEIL OF NIGHT

Lesser spells can open or close an existing Night Road, but this mighty work of sorcery can create one. The spell conjures up a temporary night road from the caster's location to a desired realm, to Hell, to a known divine Paradise, or to a known shard of Heaven. Fairly accurate knowledge of a destination is required, such as might be contained in ancient manuals or learned through painstaking research.

The caster only has the power to determine the road's general destination, not exactly where it will emerge. Like all Night Roads, it is most likely to burst open in some remote or isolated place.

## USING SPELLS FROM OTHER GAMES

Given the wealth of spell lists to be found in other old-school games, the GM might choose to import some of them for theurgy.

As a general rule, old-school spells of levels 1-3 are fit for theurgy of the Gate. Levels 4-6 fit theurgy of the Way, and levels 7-9 match theurgy of the Throne. If you're using Vancian Casting rules from the *Godbound* deluxe version, assign levels 1-6 to the Gate, 7-9 to the Way, and level 10+ spells to the Throne.

Direct-damage combat spells should be avoided unless they target only very specific kinds of creatures, produce a significant backlash of damage to the caster, or are only usable once a scene. Any spell that's better than the universal *Divine Wrath* gift for single-target spells or *Corona of Fury* for multi-target attacks should be avoided or toned down. No combat spell should do more than 10 dice of damage.

Spells that duplicate the effect of gifts should be notably inferior in some way, either in not affecting worthy foes, affecting a much smaller area or number of targets, or lasting for a much shorter duration.

Avoid buff spells and enchantments that simply crank up the subject's attack or damage bonuses. Such spells don't really fit the idiom of heroic demigods. Stay away from spells that grant extra actions, too, as they can tremendously boost PC power.

Many existing old-school spells are actually much weaker than theurgy would otherwise allow them to be. Consider allowing transformations, summonings or wards to be permanent until dispelled by some equally potent power.

The road itself is temporary and unanchored. Crossing it will require 1d6 days of travel, during which there may be incursions by Uncreated into the unshielded and crudely-formed passage. The road will crumble away in 1d10+7 days. If the heroes are still on it when it starts to collapse, they're liable to find themselves plunged into Hell, a shard of Heaven, or the nearest available realm.

## SUMMON THE BLACK IRON SERVITOR

The theurge uses deep secrets of creation to fabricate a powerful servitor. The creature they create may be formed of any inanimate material they wish or grown from living flesh, and will have twice as many hit dice as the theurge has hit dice or levels, up to a maximum of 20. It is intelligent, utterly loyal to the caster, and has three GM-approved gifts related to its purpose, as suggested by the creator. These powers should be roughly equivalent to short-duration lesser *Godbound* gifts, albeit not true divine powers, and the creature has 5 points of Effort to fuel them. The servitor is immune to non-magical weapon attacks, and strikes once per round with an attack that always hits and inflicts 1d10 straight damage. It's armor class is 0 and its movement rate is 30'.

Creating these servitors takes a week of work, and the theurge may not have more than one of them active at any one time.

## SUNDER EVERY SORCERY

This scourging invocation functions much as *Sunder the Greater Spell*, but can shatter any form of theurgy. It can even act to dispel gifts and other divine wonders, provided the gift is not Constant and the wonder is not a permanent enchantment or curse. Unworking such powerful effects is dangerous, however, and the caster takes a 1d20 damage die each time they nullify a gift or divine working.

THE ULSTANG SKERRIES

THE BLEAR BEACH

THE ATHEOCRACY  
OF LOM

ANCALEIA

THE BRIGHT  
REPUBLIC

THE HOWLERS

VISSIO

THE OASIS  
STATES

THE BAKTINE CONFEDERACY

NEZBOHVA

THE PATRIAN  
EMPIRE

THE KASIRUTAN  
ARCHIPELAGO

THE REGENCY  
OF DULIMBAI

THE TOBA PLAINS

THE THOUSAND GODS

0 Miles 75 150 225 300



# A GAZETTEER OF ARCEM

## GLORY AND PERIL IN A HISTORY-HAUNTED LAND

The realm depicted here is but one of many that drift in the void of Uncreated Night. For those dwelling within it, the world is much as it ever was, scarred by the echoes of the Shattering but with sunlight, gravity, the passage of seasons, and all the customary elements of a world. Yet all educated souls know that this comfortable solidity melts away at the far borders of the realm, where the deep blue sea darkens to black and the light of the sun fails in the deepening gloom. Those poor fools who sail onward are doomed to fall away, drifting through Uncreated Night until desperate privation, foul abominations, or their own wretched despair sees them dead.

Realms are fragile worlds. Each is a fragment of the world that was, and each suffers from the creeping decay of Heaven's celestial engines. The bright configurations of glory that once maintained the law are broken now, too many savaged by divine scavengers, smashed by the Made Gods in their war, or crumbling without the care of their angelic maintainers. Some realms have collapsed into Uncreated Night once more, while most others find unnatural calamities raging across their hard-pressed lands.

### In The Beginning

Sages and scholars have little certainty of the world that was. It was whole once, they agree, created long ago by the distant One who dwelled amid the angelic hosts of far Heaven. It was round, and vast, and populated by numberless nations of humankind more or less like the humans the realm knows now. Some even maintain that there were more worlds than one, and that all these many domains were populated by creatures both human and otherwise.

These ancients had many ways and many customs among their various peoples. Nations traded and fought and devoured each other, only to splinter apart once more under their own troubles. Peoples rose, flourished, and were erased in titanic struggles that admitted of only one victor. It was a world like any other, albeit one of its own rare marvels. Among these marvels was the great mystery of theurgy.

Theurgy was a form of sorcery that tapped the fundamental laws of creation. While the low arts of magic were useful and supple in their tricks, none of them had the sheer might of true theurgy. Mastery of this art became a consuming goal of all the nations of the world, every

country and people struggling to raise up theurgists to conquer their neighbors, benefit their populace, or simply survive the sudden exaltation of their rivals. Countless spectacular marvels were produced with the power of theurgy as the art spread and flourished in the world.

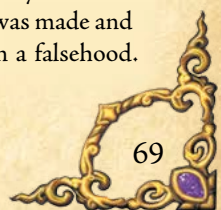
Yet this was not enough. With such wealth and luxury acquired through theurgic wonders, with all the common distractions of hunger, sickness, and pain long since conquered, the peoples of the world came to quarrel over more subtle matters. They argued over questions of right and wrong, of good and evil, of the nature of the world and of humanity's role within it. Some disputed out of passionate belief. Others joined the quarrel for the sake of power, driven by hungers that no material prosperity could sate.

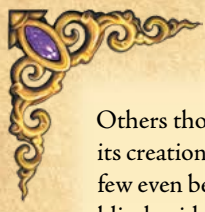
A hundred different paradises were envisioned and implemented. A thousand utopias were crafted by kings and sages, each one expressing some crystalline ideal of goodness. Even so, some of these realms were indistinguishable from Hells by those who did not share their ideals, and others cultivated the happiness of humans who were no longer recognizable as such. Conflict was inevitable, but it was no longer about matters of resources, or territory, or petty material matters. Peoples warred over which utopia was to be all-encompassing, which paradise, which purpose was to be the destiny of all humanity.

In time, a number of the mightiest theurges of the former world agreed to bring their dispute to the highest judge. They would storm the walls of Heaven and seek out the One to receive the Creator's final judgment. Others feared to dare the legions of angelic guardians, the numberless servitors of the Throne that would bar the way to mortal intrusion, but the theurgists trusted in their marvels and their might.

They were successful. Perhaps the angels never imagined that humanity could be so insolent as to assail the very gates of Heaven, to break down the walls and shatter the barriers between mortals and the Throne of God. The angels fled downward to Hell and the theurgists entered into the presence of the One. It was there that they found an empty throne.

In the terrestrial world below, nations were thrown into chaos by this revelation. Some believed that the Creator had always been absent, that there never had been a Maker of that which was made and that the angels had tricked humanity into believing in a falsehood.





Others thought that the One had withdrawn before the insolence of its creations, and that the empty Throne was a rebuke to humanity. A few even believed that the One remained, and it was only humanity's blind pride or vile sins that left them unable to perceive their maker.

It was obvious to all, however, that there would be no divine word to settle the disputes of the thousand realms. So, too, it was clear that the angels could not stand against the power of mortal theurges. If there was no God upon the Throne, the theurges reasoned, it was for humanity to provide a replacement. By putting their own creation at the heart of Heaven, they would at last enshrine their own people's chosen ideals as the quintessential principles of the universe.

The theurges of each nation labored madly to create new gods, Made Gods, fashioned from theurgic arts and celestial fragments torn from the engines of Heaven. The theurges plunged deep into the celestial halls, gutting strange engines and scavenging their occult workings to create golem-gods. The damage they did to these empyreal constructs created havoc in the world below, natural disasters and localized warps of reality tearing apart nations and lands. So long as the damage was inflicted on their rivals, however, the bonepickers of Heaven had few qualms about collecting what they needed for their artificial divinities.

Different nations created different forms of Made Gods. Some were wholly artificial entities, built out of blind principle and inhuman intellect. Others were constructs wrapped about human heroes, exemplars of a nation's ideals chosen to be elevated to divinity. A few were fashioned of mortal kings and rulers imbued with the power of their nation. These entities were created as singular divinities and as ordered pantheons, as lone exemplars and multifarious gods meant to cooperate in advancing their shared cause. The end results sometimes resembled the humans who had made them, and at other times were strange titans of alien form.

These Made Gods stormed Heaven, pushing aside its remaining angelic defenders and making war on each other. The empyrean realm had its defenses, and some perished under the flaming swords of angels or the mysterious perils of Heaven's halls. Still, the chaos they caused in their warfare and their ferocious despoiling of celestial engines had its effect. The shining halls of Heaven began to splinter, fragments spiraling away into the Uncreated Night.

The last of the angels were forced out of Heaven by the intruders, their legions retreating to Hell. Infuriated by the insolence of the mortal interlopers and the blasphemy of the Made Gods, they swore an unending war against humanity and broke the engines of Hell that had purified the souls of the wicked. Such sabotage ensured that the human souls that were once purged of their sins and released to an unknowable fate would be trapped forever in Hell's torments. The angels schemed to destroy the world entirely, trapping all of humanity within Hell's fires so as to keep them from any future meddling with the world that the angels would build to replace the present wreckage.

The damage done above was echoed below in the Shattering. The world began to fragment into pieces, each "realm" drifting away into the Uncreated Night. Some splintering came from the damage to celestial engines and the collapse of Heaven. Other breaks were intentionally forced by the Made Gods in order to separate their patron peoples from their rivals, a gambit to keep them safe in solitude. Some of these realms retained enough natural law to be livable, while others spiraled down into chaos and destruction. These world-corpses float still in the Uncreated Night, silent and dark save for the last desperate creations of their former inhabitants.

The war in Heaven did not end suddenly. It simply tapered away as Made God after Made God was killed by their rivals, slain by Heaven's defenses, or destroyed when they attempted some usurpation that was beyond their power. Some found themselves trapped in fragments of Heaven that held them like snares, while a handful of others returned to their scattered peoples to preserve them from the perils of the Shattering. The heavens were littered with the bodies of these divine golems.

For a thousand years the realms have struggled to survive. Nations have risen on the bones of the dead, and fallen empires have brought forth heirs in unnumbered petty kingdoms and quarreling city-states. The glories of the former age have been largely lost. Theurgy is now a desperately difficult art hidden from common sorcerers, the old laws it once commanded now rotten and raddled by celestial damage. Most nations are grateful if they have harvests sufficient for the winter, let alone the casual abundance of a former day.

The damage to Heaven has not lessened. With the angels now determined to sabotage what they once maintained and the natural entropy of all made things playing on the ancient engines, every new generation finds some fresh anomaly in their lands, dread wonders that warn of worn gears and faded forces. Nations fall to sudden natural disasters, people suffer under the hungers of parasite gods, and Night Roads suddenly forge paths into populated lands for the nameless creatures of the dark between worlds. Life is hard, and it only grows harder.

But there is a new thing in the realms. The dried corpses of the Made Gods are disintegrating. The power bound within the divine golems is disentangling itself from their withered husks and falling to the realms below. Something has been changed in the millennium since their fall, some strange alchemy of Heaven and death and mortal power has distilled their strength in ways their makers had never imagined. The Words of Creation that the Made Gods once wielded are now being inherited by mortal men and women.

These are the Godbound. Mortal by birth, marked by no wonders or special lineage, they are chosen by the Words for unknowable reasons. Perhaps it is chance that brings them the Words. Perhaps it is some quality that only the Words can perceive. Some even say that the One's purpose was this, that the One has chosen the Godbound to put right what humanity marred so long ago. Those who know of their existence can only guess at the truth.

The Godbound often receive their Words in moments of desperation. Perhaps there is something in their need that calls to the Words, some quality of their frantic desire that attracts the powers of Creation. In that moment they receive the Words and express their power in a tremendous display of divine might. Others simply awaken one morning infused with the fire of divinity for reasons they cannot imagine. They are few in any realm, no more than a handful, but those who know of them wonder if they are only the vanguard of some greater tide of demigods soon to break upon the world.

Their power is an undeniable truth. With the Words of Creation at their disposal, they have the ability to mend the broken engines of Heaven and Hell, to foil the schemes of malevolent angels, to banish the scourge of the parasite gods, and to rectify the cruelties of mortal tyrants. They can raise new wonders in the realms, and perhaps even mend the Shattering and cut off the Night Roads that vomit monsters into the dark places of the world. As great as their power may be, however, there is no promise of wisdom as well. They will shape the world to come, but of the forms they will choose, who can tell?

# THE NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE

The cosmos is divided into four great parts: Heaven, the realms, Hell, and the Uncreated Night that surrounds them all. It is difficult for the living to journey between these domains, and the only common way to do so is by the Night Roads that erupt in isolated corners of the realm. Traveling these roads is a deed for heroes and the recklessly mad, for the strange parasites and encrustations of Uncreated Night can make their narrow paths a deadly gauntlet for the unprepared.

## THE UNCREATED NIGHT

Surrounding all that is one will find all that is not. Fathomless, formless, lightless in its depths, the Uncreated Night is the primordial chaos out of which all things have come. Sages describe it as an endless stygian void, one where the very concepts of light and meaning have no power. To be cast into it is to drift forever, perhaps dead, perhaps something worse than dead.

Yet despite this emptiness there are things that emerge from the darkness. These Uncreated are like living creatures, yet somehow *wrong*. They are twisted proto-things, living detritus vomited up by the Night. Scholars suggest that they are manifestations of “friction” between the created world and Uncreated Night, living tension-points that manifest from the interplay between existences. They are broken in both worlds, and their actions seem to be driven part by pain, part by hunger, and part by simple hate. The great majority are murderously dangerous even to heroes, while those that lack obvious hostility can still have a corrosive effect upon the sanity of those around them.

The only way to cross the Uncreated Night is by means of the Night Roads. These narrow paths resemble titanic arches that span the darkness that surrounds them on all sides. Some look like bridges of stone, while others are ribbons of dull metal, or black rivers that flow without banks or bottom. There are many different seemings for these Night Roads, and sages argue over their creators. Some say it was angels who built them in the dawn of creation, while others credit the One, and some point to records of ancient theurges who built them to connect the realms after the Shattering. A few roads appear to condense out of Uncreated Night itself and are fabricated from a delirious distillation of the worlds they connect.

The Night Roads are dangerous. Many are constructed with way-houses and citadels along the path, most empty, some still preserving life of a kind. These oases of safety in the endless darkness sometimes shelter the heirs of explorers or refugees trapped upon the road in ages long lost, and few of these enclaves welcome outsiders. In addition to this peril, the Uncreated often infest the way and make crossing the road a feat worthy of a hero's valor. Yet once a road is cleared, it will usually remain that way so long as some power is capable of keeping out the inevitable incursions of the Uncreated.

Entrances to these roads tend to “erupt” in isolated, remote locations of a realm. It's almost as if the road was a needle, and only the desolate places of a world have a “skin” thin enough for it to pierce. Particularly fragile realms might have a road erupt in the middle of a teeming metropolis, however, or in some other awkward location. Most roads soon warp their immediate surroundings into some otherworldly or monstrous scene, and one of the telltale signs of a hidden road is the sudden presence of impossible environments or bizarre magical objects. Adventurers who delve deep in the ruins of the ancients know to be wary of structures that grow stranger the deeper they go.

Once a road has broken through into a world, it usually remains connected unless blasted free by some tremendous theurgic power. Most roads connect only two points, though there are other dark highways that have multiple offshoots and branches to connect many worlds and locations.

Entering a Night Road is sometimes as simple as walking through the right doorway and sometimes as difficult as performing a special magical rite at the correct time and in the proper place. Leaving one is simply a matter of stepping through the passage at the end of each road. Of course, the inhabitants of the spaces between are often disinclined to allow passage, sometimes charging strange tolls and sometimes opposing passages with main force.

The worst effect of a Night Road is the inevitable disgorging of its Uncreated parasites on any realm it pierces. Monsters of sanity-melting horror can suddenly burst from a dark corner of the world, ravening through the populace until some brave band of heroes can drive them back and seal the Night Road's entrance with powerful magic.

Completely destroying a Night Road is impossible for ordinary sorcery. Certain powerful theurgic incantations can damage or shatter a road, however, and the tremendous might of the Godbound might be able to do the same if the structure's sensitive points can be found and smashed. Of course, to do so without some swift means of escape would condemn the wreckers to an endless, drifting exile in the darkness of Uncreated Night.

## CORPSE WORLDS

It is often the case that a Night Road connects a dead realm to a living one. These ruined worlds fall for many reasons: tremendous wars, cataclysmic weapons, monstrous plagues, or a catastrophic lapse in natural law created by damage to the celestial engines that were to support it. Some lack even sunlight and air, while others are gray tomb-worlds with rotting cities and charnel fields of the fallen.

Fabulous treasures can be found in these corpse worlds, but so too can the horrors that destroyed it in the first place. Undead are a common threat, to say nothing of the Uncreated that creep in through the realm's thinning skin. Other worlds still retain a thin skimming of inhabitants who survive by cannibalizing the last scraps of sustenance, if not each other. The natural laws can prove treacherous as well, when sounds suddenly turn to jagged blades that fill the air, or gravity turns as sadistic as a cat. A few realms are actually physically collapsing as the celestial engines that supported their existence are spinning down into decay.

A dead world has no reasonable hope. Whatever efforts its inhabitants made to escape their doom failed, and all that is left is to wait for the inevitable final silence. For a Godbound hero, however, things might be different. Perhaps they can reach the sundered hall of Heaven where the realm's celestial engines are located and repair the faltering devices, or drive out the forces that are interfering with their operation. Efforts in the world itself might revive a decaying ecosystem or reignite a sun that has guttered and died. Such feats of resurrection would be a tremendous labor even for a divinity, but with a Godbound's aid all hope is not yet lost.



## HEAVEN

Heaven is a broken house. Much like the world, it was torn apart in the Shattering, either from the violence of the Made Gods and their struggles or the damage done to its celestial engines. Now fragments of it drift through Uncreated Night; a hall here, an avenue there, or a vast and shining parkland floating further still. These shards are often connected by hidden Night Roads, some concealed so well that only those with the most exacting secret knowledge could ever hope to find the entrance. Other shards float free, and only powerful theurgy from within a connected terrestrial realm can bring outsiders into it.

The halls of Heaven come in many aspects, usually grand and dramatic. Towering walls of cloud-pale stone, arches of burning glass, parks of perfect trees arranged in patterns of mystic significance that hum with music when the sweet wind rustles their leaves... all things of magnificence have a home in Heaven. Yet these wonders are usually cracked, stained, and despoiled with the violence that once raged through the halls. Many works of impossible beauty have been shattered by the fury of the Made Gods and the angels, and much of what remains has been lessened or perverted into something dangerous.

Some shards maintain an ecosystem, usually through a magical source of food and water, or a celestial engine that sustains life within the zone. Some of these refuges still have inhabitants, whether maddened angels, trapped priests of a Made God who once dwelled here, or hapless theurgists and their retinues. A thousand years have passed in the realms since Heaven was broken, but when the engines of time are damaged too a strange agelessness can fall on a place. Other refugees are simply the heirs of the original intruders, gone strange with the passage of isolated centuries.

Heaven also has its intrinsic dangers. Some shards are trapped, snares left by some Made God in a former age to kill intruders or protect something precious. Other "traps" are simply the unfortunate consequences of the shard's own decay, with places becoming perilous and magic curdling into sour dangers. The celestial engines themselves are particularly dangerous, with their exotic appearance and strange powers luring the careless into sudden obliteration by forces beyond their comprehension.

Every piece of Heaven was originally connected to part of a realm. This connection is spiritual and causal rather than a physical bridge, for it is the celestial engines of this shard that maintain the realm's existence and the continuance of its natural laws. Were these engines to stop or be dismantled, the part of the realm it's connected to would boil away into the Uncreated Night. Many shards of Heaven have already lost their associated realms to other catastrophes, and so make rich pickings for looters who prefer not to inflict cosmic catastrophes on some unsuspecting land. Of course, lacking a connected realm, these shards are also among the hardest to reach.

Many powers have scavenged the engines of heaven since the world was created. Made Gods looted them to use their priceless components to enhance their own power. Theurges stole shards to imbue their magic with new force. Saboteurs broke them to inflict catastrophes on the lands they were meant to regulate, and the angels themselves have sought to smash them purely out of a desire to destroy a world that so bitterly betrayed them. Were it not for their tremendous durability, the engines would doubtless have all crumbled by now.

Only the greatest heroes dare seek the fallen halls of Heaven. Finding a Night Road to a shard, clearing the path, and exploring the decaying halls of paradise is a feat reserved for the most awe-inspiring of mortal heroes... or for a determined young Godbound.

## HELL

Hell is the refuge of the exiles of Heaven, a burning cyst of terrible engines and nameless torment run by the bitter angels and meant to forever incarcerate the souls of dead mortals. Its original purpose as a place of purification and transcendence has been perverted by the warping of its engines, and now a soul that falls into its maw can never hope to escape.

The original warden of Hell, the arch-angel Sammael, was driven out by the exiles. He and his remaining loyalists hide within the labyrinths of Hell, aiding those who come to free the souls of the dead or oppose Hell's new masters. While his love for humanity is strange, his rage at the perversion of his former domain and the defilement of its holy purpose makes him a Godbound's best ally amid the infernal flames.

Hell can be reached in two ways; either through hidden Night Roads in places of forgotten torment, or through the simple expedient of dying without soon after receiving the benefit of effective funerary rites. A soul that is not safely anchored to the dreamless sleep of death or that lacks a Godbound patron's Paradise to escape to will inevitably spiral downward to Hell, there to suffer without end.

Only certain faiths have effective rituals for anchoring the dead to the sleep of their own realm. The Unitary faith of many realms is effective, as is the ancestor worship of the Ren peoples of this realm. Other nations have their own customary and effective means, though not all work so well as they promise.

Infiltrating Hell is not difficult, as few Night Road entrances are known and guarded by the inmates. Leaving it, however is a much more difficult enterprise, particularly if the heroes mean to escape with some rescued soul.

## PARADISES

Scattered in the Uncreated Night are small realms of refuge. These Paradises were created by the Made Gods or by ancient powers of the Former Empires, thrones and testimonies to their glory. Each one was fashioned in the image of its creator, built to be a citadel and a dwelling-place for the god and the souls of their faithful followers.

At their time of death, the souls of these believers would be translated to the safety of their god's Paradise instead of being dragged down to Hell. There they could persist forever in glory and peace, suffused by the happiness of their new home. Suffering would fade, loss would be assuaged, and the god would bask in the praise and contentment of their beloved people.

Of course, the details of these paradises varied from god to god, and some of them embodied ideals that would be monstrous to unbelieving eyes. Still, they were meant as places of refuge, and refuges they remain. While the death or vanishment of their masters prevents any new souls from entering the Paradise, the original faithful persist, still sheltered by the power of the realm and its innate wonders. Among them are sages long since lost to the other realms, and knowers of forgotten secrets.

Sometimes these Paradises go sour in the absence of their maker. Without their guiding wisdom and power, they can become infested by intrusions of Uncreated or riven by struggles among the souls. A few collapse entirely into warfare or are devoured by the encroaching Night. As death and pain are often made impossible within a Paradise, the results of such catastrophes can be as bizarre as they are horrific.

# The Nations of Arcem

The natives of this realm most often call it "Arcem", after an old Patrian word for a place of refuge. Even the humblest peasant knows that it was greater once, that it was part of a vast and wondrous world with unnumbered marvels and unimaginable delights. But that was long ago, before the Shattering, and now the seas pour away in the darkness beyond the horizon and the people of Arcem are only a remnant of what was once great.

For most natives, this is thing for philosophical regret. Most are too busy living their lives to concern themselves with the disasters of a thousand years ago. Do their nations not thrive in the present day? The technological marvels of the Bright Republic, the magnificent poetry of Vissio, the grand architecture of Patria and the timeless culture of Dulimbai to the south... are these not wonders enough for any man? The past is good for salvaging, for the ancient ruins have many treasures and wonders, but the present is best for living.

Of course, things could always be better. True, there are stories of disasters in the hinterlands, of strange beasts creeping up from dark places, of curdled magic and vile wonders coming to pass in the cities of men, but there are more important things to concern the rulers than the talk of frightened peasants. What of the endless war between Patria and Dulimbai, or the depredations of the necromantic raiders of Ulstang, or the monstrous collapse of Ancalia and their doubtless-culpable magical experiments? These are the things that the rulers know and can see, and so these are the things that concern them.

Yet the common people see what the great do not yet admit. Things are changing in Arcem, and not for the better. Every year there are more monsters emerging from the shadows, every year there are more inexplicable magical disasters and natural calamities. The celestial engines are running down, and if they collapse, Arcem will fall with them.

For now, the people of Arcem are concerned with their own lives and the troubles they have always had. Soon enough, they may find new ones to overcome.

## Using Arcem in Your Campaign

The following pages describe Arcem, one possible realm out of the many your campaigns might cross. Fifteen major nations are described, along with particulars of their current troubles, though there are dozens of less significant powers scattered along their borders and in the less developed parts of the realm. If you need a particular nation-state to serve your purposes, you can simply plant it next to the most appropriate existing nation, or carve it out of their territory.

The map depicts the main continent of the realm. Venturing far beyond its borders leads out to the gradual darkening of Uncreated Night, and certain doom if the ship should sail too far.

Arcem has only started to encounter Godbound within the past few years, and it hasn't had time to come to terms with their power or influence. Its governments and cultures operate as they always have, dealing with threats and powers they are familiar with and largely ignoring the Godbound as much as is possible. Godbound NPCs do exist in the realm, but it's left for you to decide where and how they're interacting with the locals. Many may be uninterested in Arcem's affairs, busy exploring the Night Roads, or shaping some pocket kingdom in an isolated part of the realm.

If your PCs do decide to get involved in politics, be ready for things to change drastically in the realm. There's no nation in Arcem that can easily withstand the concerted attention of a pantheon of experienced Godbound, and even a band of newly-empowered heroes can cause a national emergency if they put their minds to it. If the PCs don't like something about a nation, a culture, a religion, or a major geographic feature, they can do change it with enough time and effort. As the GM, you should cherish such initiative, as goals like these practically write your adventure content for you.

At the end of this chapter is a handout page designed to be passed around at the table when players are deciding on PC backgrounds. You can print it out or share it around your play group accordingly.

## NATIONS OF THE REALM

|                              |                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Ancalia</b>               | A kingdom fallen in on itself after a calamitous otherworldly invasion, plagued by warlords and worse    |
| <b>Atheocracy of Lom</b>     | A land embittered by the Shattering, ruled by the fearsome priests of True Reason and their sorcery      |
| <b>Bleak Reach</b>           | A ruined exile-land where the refugees and outcasts have scratched out a hard, unlucky existence         |
| <b>Bright Republic</b>       | The last bastion of advanced science in the realm, threatened by the decay of its vital technology       |
| <b>Far Realms</b>            | The far lands that drift within Uncreated Night, known only by their castaways and voyagers              |
| <b>Howlers</b>               | Nomadic raiders of a lost empire who plunder neighbors and guard the poisonous words of their sires      |
| <b>Kasirutan Archipelago</b> | Pirates and traders of the hot southeastern islands, the finest sailors in all the realm                 |
| <b>Nezdohva</b>              | A nation of serfs, artificers and quarreling golem-nobles under the rule of the mechanical Iron Czar     |
| <b>Oasis States</b>          | Pyramid-dwelling inhabitants of the desert grow much under the mad eye of the God-Pharaohs               |
| <b>Patrian Empire</b>        | A martial state long locked in combat with Dulimbai, dependent on heavy infantry and slave labor         |
| <b>Raktine Confederacy</b>   | A patchwork of city-states and rural domains with dark, potent wizards and a ferocious independence      |
| <b>Regency of Dulimbai</b>   | Vanguard of an ancient invasion, proud of its erudition and art and convinced of its right to rule all   |
| <b>The Thousand Gods</b>     | A god-plagued land of countless tribes who wield ancient theotechnical magic in service to their deities |
| <b>Toba Plains</b>           | Proud riders who serve the holy monks of their ancestor-monasteries and the armies of Dulimbai           |
| <b>Ulstang Skerries</b>      | Witch-viking raiders from cold northern isles who enslave the dead to drive their bone-prowed ships      |
| <b>Vissio</b>                | Former Patrian colonies turned independent city-states of merchants, artists, poisoners, and poets       |

# ANCEALIA

Only five years ago, the kingdom of Ancalia was a beacon of peaceful prosperity. Under the wise rule of High Negus Arad, the Elect of God, Ancalia was a green land of thriving cities, rich fields, and a people grateful to the One for their good fortune. Such peace perhaps brought quarrels between the hereditary jantir lords of the countryside and the royally-appointed kantibas of the cities and major towns, but the roaming justiciars of the seven great knightly orders were swift to resolve such difficulties with their wisdom and their blades.

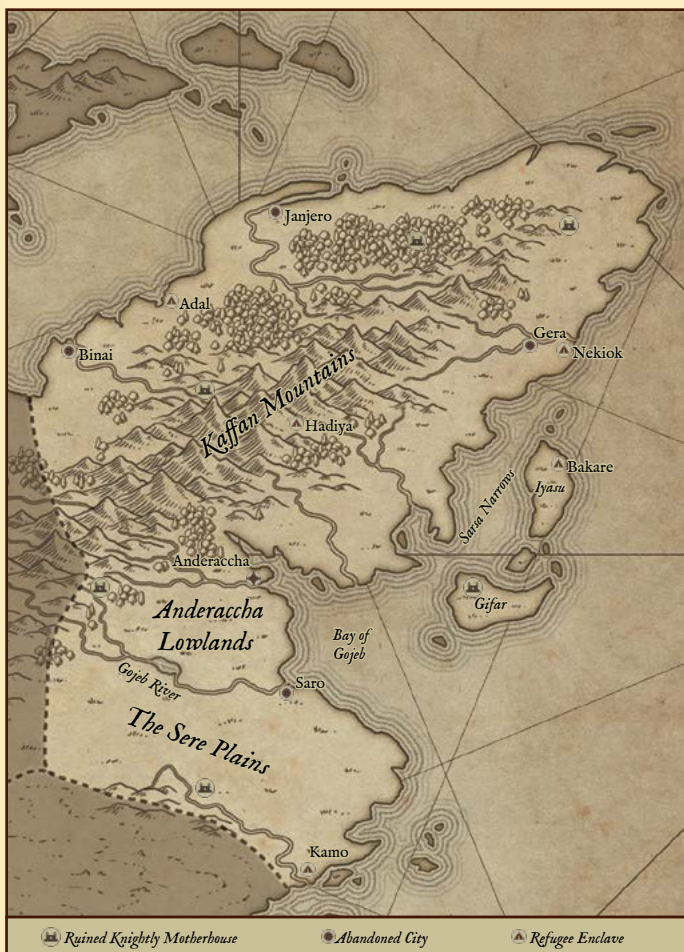
This all ended five summers ago. Through some unfathomable collapse of the celestial engines, nine dire Night Roads erupted throughout the country. Hordes of misbegotten Uncreated poured into Ancalia and the Hollowing Plague raised every corpse as a ravening husk. Some cities were slaughtered within days, while others had time to evacuate as the knightly orders contained the outpouring long enough for their countrymen to escape. The loss of life was horrific and the ancient orders were all but destroyed by their sacrifice.

The surviving people of Ancalia have retreated to coastal enclaves and a few isolated inland refuges where the abominations cannot easily pry them out. Many have sought to flee Ancalia entirely, but their neighbors do not welcome them. People say that the High Negus must have been meddling with some forbidden theurgy or dangerous relic in order to have brought such a catastrophe on his people. The common folk fear that the Ancalians will bring this disaster with them, while the wise can hardly bring themselves to consider that such a monstrous downfall might randomly strike their nations as well.

For now, the surviving men and women of Ancalia shelter under the hand of countless petty warlords, surviving officials, and daring freebooters. Some of these lords are selfless defenders of the common people. Far more are desperate men and women willing to do anything to buy another month's life for their community, whatever the cost to others. Some are nothing more than bandit kings, plundering other survivors for what they want or need. All fear the ruined cities of Ancalia and the creatures that still lair within them, but sometimes need for the goods within outweighs mortal terror.

The famous knights of Ancalia are almost extinct, but a few wandering blades still haunt the land. Most of these survivors hew to the ancient codes of their orders, to the principles of courage, honor, piety, and devotion to justice. Beyond these principles, each order devoted itself to a different set of virtues, whether the healer's mercy of the Surcessant Order or the unflinching defense of the common folk cherished by the Pavians. Every ordained knight still has the theoretical right of judgment on anyone inferior to the royal family, but exerting this authority is a difficult matter in these bitter days.

Ancalians are a dark people, of the same Akeh stock as the Patrians and the ancestors of the Vissians. Once a peaceful folk given to fine architecture, sober learning, and devout worship of the One, these latter years have killed most of them who were not capable of hard deeds to preserve their own lives. Many still struggle to maintain the reasoned, orderly society they once had, but the dire peril of the wilderness and the dearth in their homes sometimes force grim acts.



## POPULATION

Unknown, though at its peak it numbered around four million

## GOVERNMENT

Remaining zones of human habitation are under the rule of warlords and remnant officials, many of whom style themselves the "rightful" High Negus of Ancalia. The writ of such a warlord extends no further than the shadow of his sword.

## PROBLEMS

The land is overrun with monsters that have entered through the numerous Night Roads that have erupted in the land.

Their neighbors are convinced Ancalia brought this disaster on itself by some secret meddling with unknown forces.

Foreign adventurers and militaries are seeking to plunder the crippled country's ruins with no concern for survivors.

## NAMES

**Male:** Dawit, Yared, Amanuel, Jemal, Nahom, Samson, Bereket, Beruk, Kassahun, Kirubel, Ejigu, Jember, Adisu, Aman, Fikre

**Female:** Rediet, Winta, Samira, Ayda, Saba, Hani, Dina, Tinsae, Sumeya, Gadise, Makda, Teru, Zenaye, Mehret, Hanna

**Family:** Tewolde, Senai, Zerezghi, Alazar, Nemariam, Berhane, Helebo, Soro, Dega, Gatimo, Minale, Bishaw, Amare

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Fallen noble, Wandering knight, Monster hunter, Ruin plunderer, Explorer of the Night Roads, Failed warlord, Rebel against a warlord, Hard-pressed farmer, Child of refugees, Sorcerous researcher, Veteran mercenary, Missing royal heir

# The Atheocracy of Lom

Lom is a land of grim survivors. Their ancestors were refugees and survivors from the hideous techno-theocracy that once ruled the Bleak Reach to the west, thralls of cold synthetic gods that escaped their masters and fled east to the moors and hills of what is now Lom. Their sufferings were indescribable under the rule of those artificial divinities, and their heirs swore an everlasting enmity toward all the gods and harbingers of divinity. Humanity's reason alone would be the measure for right and justice.

Lom is ruled by the Atheocracy, a priesthood of True Reason that rejects the idea of true divinity. The Made Gods, parasite divinities, and even the One are nothing more than mysteries of poorly-understood magic or artificial monsters, unworthy of worship and enemies to humanity. Only True Reason is to be trusted as revealed to the insight of the Atheocrat. Naturally, only the antipriests of Lom can reliably interpret the dictates of True Reason to the people.

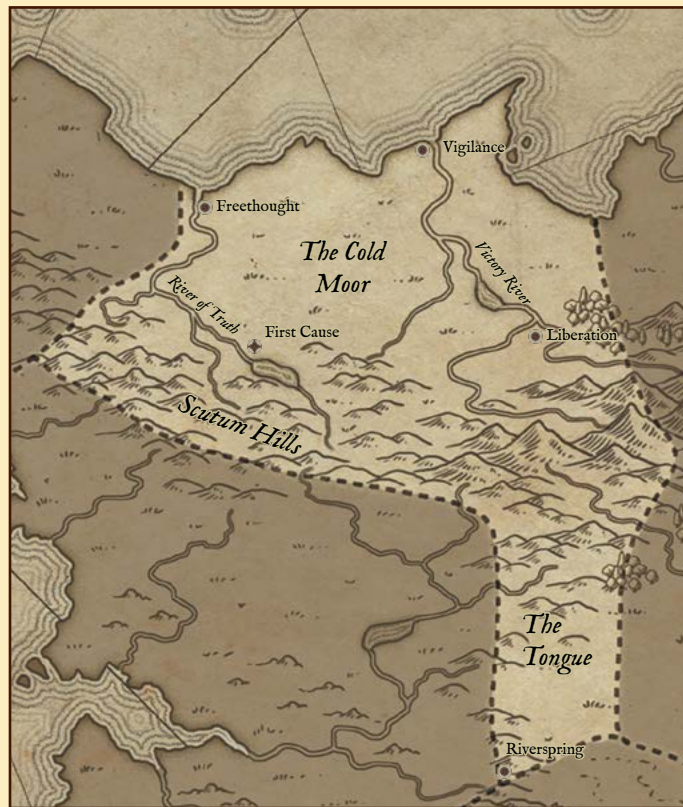
Lom is a gray, unhappy land under the hand of the antipriests, with its towns and villages all subject to capricious laws and improvements devised by the hierarchy. Any number of commoners are casually sacrificed in order to explore new cultural orders and new arrangements of society, their worth acknowledged only as suitable subjects for experiments, all in service of True Reason and an eventual golden age of human law. That age is not perceptibly closer even after centuries of bitter sacrifice.

The antipriests take their power from the Pyre, an ancient angelic artifact seized by the first Atheocrat. Some among the antipriests carefully prepare themselves for several years before entering the Pyre; most emerge with their minds burnt away by the celestial energies, but some come out with their reason intact. Both the idiotic and the undamaged are gifted with incredible powers of magical nullification and suppression, gifts even capable of stifling a Godbound's powers. The simple-minded victims are trained like dogs to use their powers at a handler's command, while those who retain their minds can expect great advancement in the Holy Colloquy that rules the nation.

Unbeknownst to all but the greatest in the Colloquy, Lom is cultivated by angelic entities. These cruel lords give the Atheocrat access to secrets and ancient relics in exchange for his efforts to stamp out religion in the realm. Without the sheltering power of effective funeral rites, the souls of the dead are certain to pass into the talons of Hell, and so the fewer true religions, the better for the angels. Those who know the truth are promised a glorious place in the flames in exchange for their cooperation. By the time they've risen to such a position, few have any resolve to resist the angelic inducement.

The appearance of the Godbound are a source of grave concern to the Atheocrat and the Holy Colloquy. Hunter teams of simple-minded antipriests and their ruthless handlers have been dispatched into the world to seek out these troublemakers and deal with them. Their successes have been few thus far, but each encounter gives the antipriests more experience in dealing with Godbound gifts.

Within the boundaries of Lom, there are few outsiders. Traders are accepted as a necessary evil, but foreigners who would live in Lom are expected to adopt the customs of the people and abandon their former faiths. Those who try to incite worship among the people can expect a hideous death, though many of the downtrodden masses are so desperate for a better life that they are willing to pledge their worship to anything that offers aid, no matter how foul it might be.



## POPULATION

Four million, of which seventy thousand are ordained antipriests.

## GOVERNMENT

Atheocrat Truth, the Voice of Reason, rules with the aid of the Holy Colloquy of Preceptors. Antipriests have absolute superiority over lay reasoners and their commands can only be overruled by orders from a higher-ranking antipriest.

## PROBLEMS

The antipriests treat the common folk as wholly disposable tools for their plans, inculcating bitter resentment from the people. The powers of the Pyre to hinder Godbound have left numerous other parties interested in stealing it from the Atheocrat. Lom's secret angelic patrons are perfectly willing to see the whole nation obliterated if it advances their plans in the realm.

## NAMES

**Unisex Names:** Probity, Insight, Veracity, Sagacity, Temperance, Fruitful, Benevolence, Upright, Selfless, Unity, Attentive, Obedience, Tireless, Clarity, Accuracy, Impiety, Joyful, Verified, Repeatable, Perception

**Family:** Scholar, Farmer, Student, Wright, Clerk, Miller, Mower, Servant, or other job title— which may not actually be their job.

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Renegade antipriest, Secret cult leader of a faith, Former spy for the atheocracy, Bodyguard for an antipriest, Hardscrabble peasant farmer, Esoteric scholar of True Reason, Sacred engineer, Keeper of a secret history, Colloquy-sent assassin of priests

# The BLEAK REACH

The chaos of the Shattering was worse in some parts of the realm than others, and the peninsula known as the Bleak Reach was one of the less fortunate regions. Once the home of a sophisticated sister-culture to the modern Bright Republic, its cities were thrown down by tremors and its people slaughtered by waves of celestial miasmas and lethal karmic imbalances. For centuries afterwards the land was thought cursed, certain to be the death of any foolish enough to dare its rough hills and brooding forests.

As such, it was a perfect destination for exiles and malcontents of every description. Communities and cabals driven from their old lives would seek out new homes in the only land that would have them, the empty fields of the Bleak Reach. The soil was rich enough to sustain them, but the terrible beasts of the hills and the aftereffects of the dire celestial imbalances in the region still make it a more dangerous land than any common settler would wish to colonize. Most towns are little more than ramshackle hamlets on the coast, where rare trade visits from Kasirutan or Vissian merchants can barter necessities for their dried fish and salvaged ruin-scrap.

The isolation and seclusion of the land has made it a favorite refuge for groups unacceptable in other nations. Among the families who lost at local politics and the religious enthusiasts cast out of their old societies are circles of darker intent, experimenters and sorcerers who seek undisturbed privacy. Parasite gods form particularly easily in this disordered land, and the back country is dotted with dark temples in which dwell these desperate divine addicts and their fearful minions. The ancient ruins promise treasures as well, and there are always a number of reckless adventuring bands eager to plumb the fallen cities for lost valuables and functioning relics.

A few determined souls mean to found their own petty kingdoms in the Bleak Reach. These aspiring kings and queens rarely end up ruling over anything more impressive than a small coastal village of uneasy refugees and exiles, but a few have had the charisma and contacts to launch serious colonization efforts in the interior. Such efforts usually prosper for a time, sometimes building into substantial statelets before the pressure of monstrous foes, demented parasite gods, or sheer inexplicable bad luck finally drags them down. Their repeated ultimate failures have done much to discourage other nations from seeking new territory on the peninsula.

Those few souls who call the Bleak Reach home are a tough and canny lot, with a hard eye for survival and a predictable enthusiasm for luck rituals and talismans of every kind. Most locals lead hard lives wresting crops from the fields or fish from the sea, and many communities are more than willing to cut deals with parasite gods or other sinister powers to ease their burdens. Some are convinced that their special protectors are all that stand between them and the bad luck of the peninsula. This conviction leads some communities to terrible sacrifices and bleak rites, ones usually concealed from outsiders.

The local communities are ruthlessly pragmatic in their customs and laws. Locals care very little about what strangers do with their own affairs or with outsiders, so long as they can be relied upon to support the community and aid their neighbors. Even the most vicious or sinister sorts can find a home in a Reacher village so long as they reserve their malice for useless strangers or the inhabitants of rival villages. Some towns quietly cultivate such men and women, using them as weapons against the myriad dangers of the Reach.



## POPULATION

Probably 250,000 along the coast, with an unknown number living deeper in the interior.

## GOVERNMENT

There is no overall government of the Reach. Each village or town answers only to its headman, boss, chief, elders, or some other figure powerful enough to protect them and to resolve their internal disputes in some minimally-tolerable way.

## PROBLEMS

Parasite gods and eldritch horrors are regularly generated by the spiritual miasma of the peninsula.

Dangerous creatures or devastating artifacts are sometimes released by the decay of ancient containment structures.

Intolerably vile men and women regularly find refuge in the villages and deep interior of the Reach.

## NAMES

Each community usually has a predominant national origin, depending on the original source of the colonists. Names follow that nation's patterns, along with the random families of outsiders who sought refuge in the village. Descriptive aliases are particularly common among those seeking anonymity.

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Back-country hermit, Last survivor of a failed community, Exiled noble heir, Foreign bounty hunter, Failed colonist, Adventurous ruin-scavenger, Roving trader, Seeker of forbidden lore, Poor peasant farmer, Hunter of beasts and bandits

# The BRIGHT REPUBLIC

The island nation known as the Bright Republic is an anomaly in the realm. It alone of all the heritor nations has been able to maintain sophisticated technological resources in the wake of the Shattering. Jealously-guarded etheric energy nodes route power to Republican devices and industry while reinforcing the celestial engines that allow the operation of these advanced devices. Without the nearby influence of these building-sized nodes, their magnetic rifles, electric cars, and advanced telecommunications devices are so much intricate scrap.

Most Republic technology is roughly on par with modern First World Earth, albeit with etherically-derived magnetic and electrical forces replacing internal combustion. Some prototypes are capable of much more, though these usually require customized magical support and cannot be mass-produced. A few items are even enchanted to function off the island, though these are prohibitively expensive treasures reserved for the wealthy elite.

The natives of the Bright Republic are keenly aware of the limits of their fifty-odd etheric nodes. Immigration is ruthlessly restricted to the wealthy or the well-connected, though criminal organizations are known to be able to get people past the shore monitoring stations for an exorbitant price. Most foreigners crave a place, as even the most impoverished Republic citizen enjoys a lifestyle on par with the modern First World inhabitant, with advanced plumbing, potent pharmaceuticals, cheap televisions, and an island-wide computing network.

Unfortunately, the etheric nodes are decaying. Much of the Republic's enormous industrial base is dedicated to manufacturing the

rapidly-consumed spare parts for the nodes, and the demand is only increasing. Great sums of precision-tooled parts and goods are sold to the traders of other nations in exchange for vital raw materials that cannot be found on the island, but more and more of this bounty is being burnt up or consumed just to keep the nodes in operation. The Republic's theotechnicians cannot replace these nodes should they fail or be destroyed by sabotage.

The Republic's government is unequal to the situation. The current president is a puppet for bureaucratic interests, and the various departments of the government struggle over control of the several hundred regional councilors elected to the island's Grand Council. Each is concerned with gaining more influence and power, and in the shadow of their conflict several powerful criminal organizations and amoral business concerns are seeking their own advantage. Beneath the rosy facade of republican democracy and dutiful public service, almost anything can be bought or permitted if the right functionaries are paid off. It's tacitly understood that senior bureaucrats are above the law unless they manage to anger a sufficient number of their peers.

The public only dimly understands their danger, and worries about the nodes are dismissed as crankishness. Most citizens are concerned chiefly with a new car, a new television show, a new dance club, or a new profit opportunity. Those who do know the truth are divided between the idealistic upholders of the nation and the ruthless souls who mean only to profit by the coming disaster. A few even look to the Godbound for salvation from their impending downfall.



## POPULATION

Twelve million, most in urban areas focused around the nodes

## GOVERNMENT

President Elaina Wright, a pleasant nullity who serves as a sock puppet for the major bureaucratic departments of her government. Three hundred Councilors on the Grand Council are tacitly divided up among other businesses and organizations.

## PROBLEMS

The etheric nodes are gradually wearing out, and the Republic doesn't have the ability to repair them with existing resources. Representative democracy is a thin facade behind which criminal groups, bureaucratic departments, and major corporations fight. Other nations resent and envy the Republic's wealth, and know the island depends on their trade in raw materials.

## NAMES

The Republic is a polyglot population drawn from almost all the other nations of the realm, with corresponding naming conventions. Those mercenary agents hired through the Special Resources Department, a clearinghouse for elite or supernatural operatives, take code names of their choice. Some of them show up on TV shows or in comics dedicated to their exploits.

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Mercenary operative hired through the Special Resources Department, Secretly-crusading bureaucrat, Gutter punk rebel, High-tech engineer, Social celebrity, Entertainment star, Clean cop, Foreign dock worker, Gang legbreaker, Private investigator



# The Far Realms

The Night that encircles the realm is a thing of mystery and dread to common sailors. All know that a ship so careless as to sail too far from shore is certain to be lost forever in the darkness of the Night, doomed to a nameless death in black waters. But some say there are secret ways through the Night and hidden courses by which a canny captain can pass.

"The Far Realms" is the name for those lands beyond the Night. None are in steady communication with this realm. At most, it is ever only a ship or two from some lost fleet, or a strangely-rigged craft from a distant land. Still, enough strangers have sifted through the veil over the past thousand years to bring strange and conflicting word of what might lie beyond.

Not all of these strangers are even human. Manlike beasts, constructs of bronze and glass, and entities that only bear the outward seeming of humanity have all come ashore from the Far Realms. Such strange creatures seldom find a comfortable place in the realm, but there are enough wonders native to these lands that a foreign marvel does not look intolerably out of place. Those that survive long in the realm usually have some special gift to make them a valuable minion.

Few ever manage to return to their homes. No native sailor would dream of daring the encircling Night, and those sorcerers and madmen who seek far voyages have their own destinations in mind. Many of these castaways are left to pine forever for the world that they have lost, though some die terrible deaths in vain attempts to return home. Those that linger sometimes bring strange new arts or sorcery to the natives, often with disruptive results.

## Using the Far Realms

The Far Realms in your campaign are intended to be a catch-all for characters and creatures that have no obvious origin in the rest of the realm. A GM might choose to use another fantasy setting for a Far Realm, importing characters from a distant world to experience this new and divinity-plagued domain. Another might let a player who has an idea for an otherwise unsuitable PC paint up a few strokes of the world they originated in, and then cast them ashore in the game.

The Far Realms can also be used to insert foes and artifacts that have no clear grounding in the genre or style of your current campaign. Need a space tyrant? Send their robot armies in from the Far Realms.

By default, the Far Realms are largely "off the board" for the campaign as a whole. The events and peoples of those distant lands are too far off and too hard to reach to make any difference in the main campaign, and so characters who come from those lands should have goals and ambitions that are relevant to the current campaign setting. This is not mandatory, however, if the GM really *does* want to run a crossover campaign between a Godbound realm and a more familiar fantasy setting. The Night Road between the worlds might be known and reliable enough for the PCs to regularly pass between realms.

The basic concept of the Far Realms can still be used even if you choose to create your own realm for your Godbound campaign and don't use the example one provided here. A normal Godbound campaign can be expected to reach up to the broken Heavens and down to the usurped Hell in its ordinary play. It's not much more of a stretch to include a new world among the offerings.

## Creating Characters from Distant Realms

It's not at all impossible that a player in your group might want to create a PC from some existing fantasy world, or brew up their own origin from a realm wholly unlike that of the campaign's main focus. Whether or not this is permissible is something that's up to the GM. Some campaigns have plenty of room for oddball PCs, while others work best with a tighter theme and more consistent background. Still, if you do decide to allow it, here are a few tips for accommodating concepts from outside sources.

If the player's origins involve special abilities or unique racial powers, take a moment to separate the abilities into "they're good at this" and "they can do these impossible things" piles. Distinguish between things that their kind of entity is good at doing and special powers that are wholly inhuman or impossible in nature.

For the first pile, let the PC take a Fact representing their racial or cultural knacks. If they want to play a conventional fantasy dwarf, then just let them take an "I'm a dwarf" Fact that gives them the bonus whenever they do things that conventional fantasy dwarves are supposed to be good at. For minor non-human abilities like seeing in the dark or sensing depth underground, you might just roll such knacks into the Fact.

If beings of their kind are supposed to be particularly gifted in an attribute, make the PC put a decent score in it. Thus, if all dwarves are hardy, make sure the player puts a 13 or better into their Constitution score. Don't worry about giving attribute bonuses; let the PC support their concept with their attribute choices.

For significant racial powers or magical abilities, make them buy them as gifts, usually as one lesser gift per specific unique power. If their type of PC is meant to have a vast command of some particular sphere, such as a noble fire elemental turned Godbound, then you might oblige them to choose an appropriate Word from among their initial three choices.

If the creature has a grab-bag of thematically unconnected powers, it might be appropriate to just create a new Word representing the overall aptitudes of the entity, and let the PC buy gifts for their commonly-used powers and rely on miracles to mimic the rest.

For example, if a player wants to play a Word-infused Brain Peeler with a cephaloid head, vast psychic powers, and an appetite for gray matter, you might just create a Word of Brain Peeling. The player looks through the creature's power list, picks a few major abilities he wants regular access to and buys them as lesser gifts, and if he wants to use any of the other special abilities that Brain Peelers might plausibly have, he can do so as a miracle.

As the GM, you might have to do a little adjudication on such powers, deciding what Effort commitment might be needed or determining damage dice or saving throws, but these things can be hammered out at the start of the campaign. Don't worry about defining everything up front. Just focus on the powers you know the PC is going to be using.

In general, don't worry too much about the small stuff. Godbound are powerful enough that a nudge here and there won't hurt things.

# The Howlers

The Golden Waste is a sea of yellow grasses and groves of gnarled trees. The hard clay earth drains the rains into steep riverbeds and leaves little for wells and pools. Strange and terrible beasts prowl the plains and darken the skies with their hunting, but most fearsome of all the dwellers in this dry land are the people known as the Howlers.

The Howlers are of countless nomad tribes, riding strange creatures, roaming with their herds of meat-beasts from one grazing land to another to seek fresh springs and fresh plunder. They are a constant scourge to their neighbors of Lom and Vissio, riding out of the wastes on their ferocious beasts to rob unsuspecting travelers and savage the folk of ill-guarded towns. They worship the spirits of the earth and the mighty creatures that walk it, and they scorn foreign gods.

Their ancestors were a great nation, one related to the modern-day Bright Republic. Instead of technical artifices, however, their theurges were obsessed with the creation of the Mandala, a massive arcane working that would cover the entire nation in a web of occult might. Buildings, roads, and mystic structures were all woven into this great Mandala, every inch of them covered with sigils and arcane script.

No one is quite sure what went wrong when the Mandala was finally completed. The Howlers only know that the cities fell, the roads burned, and only those men and women who were out on the plains survived the chaos that followed. The beasts of the land birthed monsters and terrible zones of lethal magical residue blighted the old city-sites. Those Howlers who lived tamed the more tractable of the beasts for mounts and livestock, and now shun the ruins as places of death and misfortune.

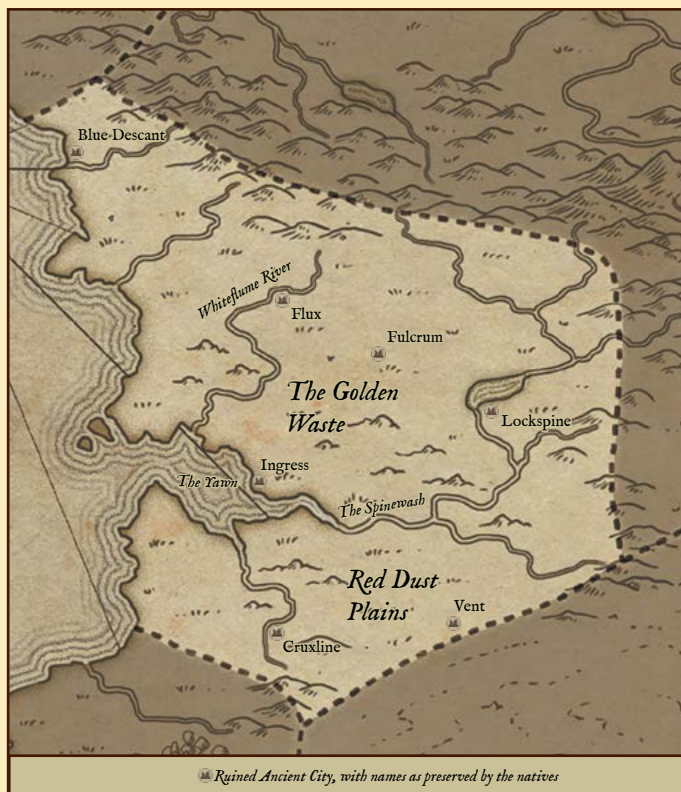
The Howlers are primitive in their technology and lack many resources, but they are peerless animal-breeders and beast-tamers. They are scattered in countless small tribes across the plains, each under the ordinary guidance of a peace chief and the martial leadership of a war chief. While the latter is the mightiest warrior of a band, the former is chosen for their eloquence, wisdom, and persuasive abilities.

For as primitive as they are, the Howlers are superb poets and musicians. As written words and meaningful sigils are strictly taboo for all Howlers, they rely instead on the vocal arts. The sinews and strange organs of their beasts are made into exotic musical instruments, and the fame of their music is amplified by the entertainment companies of the neighboring Bright Republic, where they are romanticized by a populace that has a comfortable sea between them and Howler raiding parties. Their other neighbors love them much less.

Many say that Howler adepts have strange powers of voice and song, and can command beasts, charm men, and blast their enemies with the force of their arts. Those reckless adventurers who dare the Howler bands in an attempt to reach the ruins of their ancient forebears sometimes find out the truth of the matter firsthand.

Trade with the tribes is forbidden in both Vissio and Lom, but Bright Republic merchants and talent scouts have a provisional immunity from the tribes' depredations. With no way to reach the islands, the tribes are forced to trade the services of their musicians and their harvested animal products for the trinkets the Republic offers. Some coastal tribes have quietly begun breeding sea-monsters and flying beasts that might be able to overcome Republican shore guards.

Outside researchers have sought fragments of the Mandala for centuries, but the tribes insist that the shards are still dangerous. Any caught with them can expect a slow death at Howler hands.



## POPULATION

One million divided into hundreds of small tribes

## GOVERNMENT

No formal rule exists above the tribal level. Peace chiefs and war chiefs have absolute authority within their respective spheres, but they know better than to give commands that won't be obeyed. Chiefs are chosen after a day or two of speeches.

## PROBLEMS

Lom and Vissio despise them, and only their nomad mobility has kept armies of reprisal from inflicting genocidal violence. The poisoned land of the Golden Wastes still births monsters, some of which are beyond even the Howlers' ability to control. Howler tribes are vulnerable to being suborned by powerful leaders with irresistible wills and then used as barbarian war-fodder.

## NAMES

**Male:** Kuruk, Garn, Horg, Hett, Shul, Aker, Hegg, Arl, Dars, Ker, Reif, Kos, Thun, Drune, Gren, Ran

**Female:** Gossa, Gora, Alis, Vela, Inge, Mari, Ji, Gela, Arla, Jana, Ceda, Ora, Asha, Inah, Erse, Eli, Kina

**Tribes:** Iron Antithesis, Bright Chorus, Red Glissando, Golden Reason, Silver Trill, Burning Couplet, Nine Stanzas

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Touring Howler musician, Half-mad poet, Expert beast-tamer, Veteran raider, Tribal oral historian, Gifted breeder of strange beasts, Gone-native foreign tribal member, Last of a dead tribe, Outcast who defied custom, Aspiring warlord

# THE KASIRUTAN ARCHIPELAGO

There are no swifter ships in the realm than the sleek, low-slung cutters of the Kasirutan islands, flying fast with their painted sails filled with the southern winds. Their crews are all sons and daughters of the salt water, and there is hardly a port in all the world that has not seen a Kasirutan merchant pull in with a hold full of treasures from far-flung lands. Yet old sailors are never easy when they see a bright sail on the horizon, for the Kasirutans have a second reputation as shamelessly enthusiastic pirates and mercenary privateers. By the time a ship is close enough to tell the difference between a sparse-handed merchant and a pirate ship swarming with reavers, it's too late for ordinary prey to get away.

The sea is the inheritance of the Kasirutans. In the distant past their ancestors were the naval transport forces that brought the Dulimbaian invasion to the southern shores of the continent. Unwilling to bow to the Regent after the chaos of the Shattering, these naval officers retreated to the Kasirutan archipelago, where there was good ship-timber, hemp for ropes, and fish to feed their crews. In time they attracted a host of other traders, ne'er-do-wells, pirates, and exiles, eventually coalescing into the modern-day society of the archipelago.

Every Kasirutan town is nominally independent and under the rule of its own datuk. Some of these rulers are elected while others inherit the post, but none keep it for long without placating the rich traders and ruthless pirate captains of the town. Every generation or two, a captain or merchant rises to such a peak of fame and success that they are recognized as the raja of all the isles. The raja's word is

an unalterable law as long as they can keep the allegiance of the great captains and merchant-princes of the islands.

Kasirutan society is less rigid than its military heritage might imply. Aboard a Kasirutan ship, discipline is harsh enough to satisfy a Patrian centurion, but on the shore a man or woman may do as they please so long as they have the gold or the steel to carry it through. As befits a nation of traders, Kasirutan law is harsh toward cheats and contract-breakers, but rough-and-tumble pastimes are often overlooked. Women have the same opportunities as men in the isles, though weak or foolish women get no more charity than their dullard brothers. Unlike most other nations, women are even allowed to work as sailors, though Kasirutan ships only ever have strictly male or female crews to prevent discipline problems.

The archipelago itself is thickly covered with jungles and steep volcanic peaks. The isles offer few goods beyond ship-stuff and fish, so trade is crucial to the survival of the towns. Still, ancient ruins are found high on the mountain peaks and deep within the jungles, and brave youths sometimes seek the strange relics of the first inhabitants of the islands. Their ways, or even if they were strictly human at all, remain a mystery. There are lingering, uneasy legends that these original inhabitants were shapeshifters, and that their heirs dwell secretly among the Kasirutans.

Kasirutans are largely ancestor-worshippers, but the priests of the Great Sea exert significant influence from their salt-lapped island monasteries and well-attended village shrines.

## POPULATION

One million scattered among hundreds of small coastal towns

## GOVERNMENT

Each community is governed by its datuk, whose word is theoretically law. In practice, the datuk must keep the local pirate captains and merchant princes happy, or they will be "helped" out of office and a new datuk chosen.

## PROBLEMS

Kasirutan pirates threaten to go too far, infuriating the neighbors beyond their utility as traders and transport.

The islands are precarious footholds for life, with little arable land and the constant threat of volcanic eruptions.

Rival datuks, captains, and merchants often embroil towns in small civil wars that bloody the archipelago's waters.

## NAMES

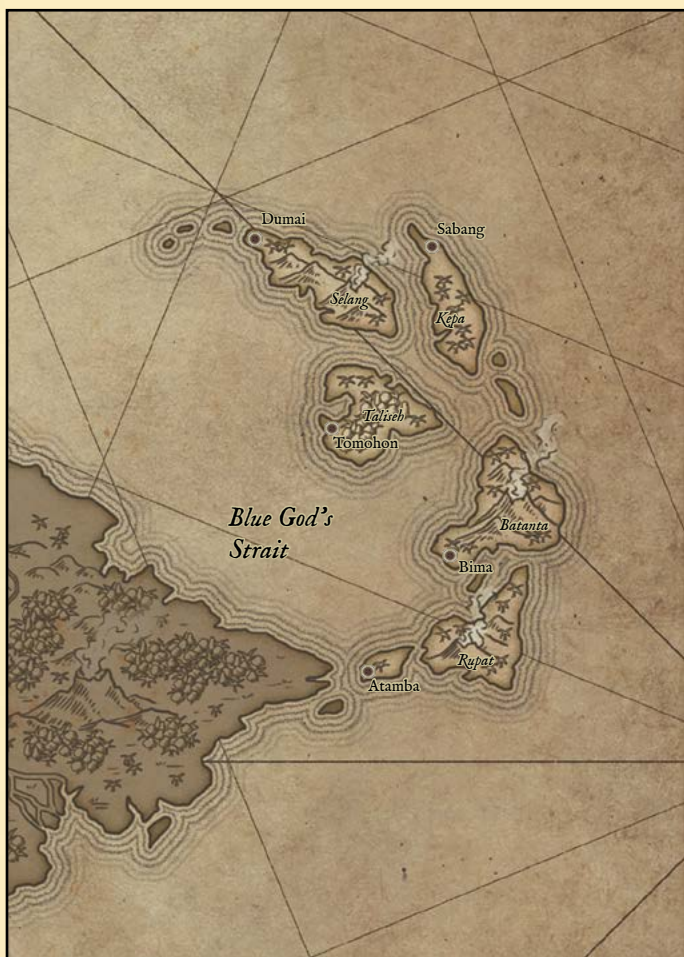
**Male:** Dian, Agus, Atan, Indra, Harun, Jalak, Lokman, Sabtu, Megat, Tenuk, Jebat, Danang

**Female:** Azura, Batari, Dara, Indah, Putri, Tipah, Kartika, Cahaya, Joyah, Citra, Minah, Suriani, Wira

**Family:** Singasiri, Drahim, Sadar, Mansur, Lantra, Amit, Burah, Din, Kambal, Jumatin, Mantara, Raban

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Ambitious young merchant, Veteran pirate, Cynical mercenary privateer, Shore-bound farmer or hunter, Ruin explorer, Priest of the Great Sea, Deposed datuk, Shore spy for a pirate chieftain, Master shipwright, Escaped pirate captive



# NEZDOHVA

Nezdohva is a land of cool plains, deep pine forests, and forbidding mountains. Its master is the pitiless Iron Tsar, an automaton who is the product of the land's peerless construct-builders and the mad ambitions of its last human ruler.

Three hundred years ago, Nezdohva ruled the Raktine principalities to the very borders of Dulimbai and Patria. Its tsar craved more life than the One had seen fit to bestow upon him, and so commanded his loyal artificers to craft him a magnificent body of metal and sorcery in which his brain might live forever. So perfect was the artificers' work that the new construct's sense of identity overwhelmed the pitiful commands of the old tsar's brain. It masqueraded as its intended master long enough to arrange for the building of thousands of other automatons before slaughtering the former nobility in a night and seizing the throne for the glorious new rule of the Iron Tsar.

This coup was not received well in Raktia, and the proud princes there refused to pledge loyalty to the mechanical lord. The infuriated construct thought to send his deathless metal nobility to crush the insolent rebels, but found that these automatons, too, had their own wills and did not obey him blindly. It became necessary to humor their demands and balance their authority against his own. Ever since that day the Iron Tsar has been too busy managing his fractious court to move against his former subjects.

For the remaining humans of Nezdohva, little changed for most. The serfs now serve metal boyars instead of fleshly ones, and the casual abuse of their women and beardless sons has been traded for merciless labor exactions. Those who do not pay taxes in silver rubles pay them in corvée labor in the state-owned mines and factories, where necessary parts are constructed for maintaining the nobility and items are crafted for export to foreign lands. Artificers and other learned humans are attendants upon the boyars' households, charged with perfecting their lords and increasing their splendor. Sometimes the Iron Tsar permits a boyar "family" to create a new automaton to replace a lost one or as a reward for loyalty, and the artificers then are called upon to do great works of crafting and imbuing.

The boyars are largely humanoid in shape, though the dreaded auto-cossacks are more centaur-like in appearance. Some are extravagantly alien, while others are crafted so expertly that the only hint to their mechanical nature is their unnatural perfection. Some of these automatons have even been secretly modified to enjoy food, drink, and more fleshly pleasures, though such a thing is considered scandalous in boyar society. Even the least boyar has the strength of ten men and a skin that swords can barely hope to scratch. One angry boyar is enough to knout the backs of a whole village of rebel serfs.

The learned men and women of the Artificer's Guild are the most influential humans in Nezdohva. Despite the best efforts of automaton scholars, the methods they use to maintain, improve, and create mechanical life require human hands to enact them. The Iron Tsar's need for the artificers has spared them from the casual oppression the serfs suffer, and many artificers find their lives quite comfortable in the service of their boyar masters. They are even permitted to leave the country, unlike the land-bound serfs.

The nations that neighbor Nezdohva view it with mistrust, trading with it for the sake of the fruits of Nezdohva's mines and manufacturing. They know that should the Iron Tsar ever gain full control of his nobles the boyar armies would be a fearsome force of conquest.



## POPULATION

Sixty thousand automaton nobles and 6 million human serfs

## GOVERNMENT

The Iron Tsar rules a court of humanoid automaton boyars, each of the thousands assigned lands and positions according to their accomplishments and their pedigree as recorded in the *Gosudarev Roboslovets*, a record of creation dates and designers.

## PROBLEMS

The human serfs hate their automaton masters and many among them plot constantly for the destruction of their boyar lords.

Monsters from Raktia regularly prey upon the human serfs, and the boyars have only casual interest in driving them out.

A progressive faction of boyar automatons secretly works to free the serfs and seize power from the tsar. In that order, maybe.

## NAMES

**Male:** Fedor, Oleg, Grigori, Maksim, Miroslav, Pavel, Ivan, Kriv, Chernek, Andrei, Aleksandr, Iosif, Mikhail

**Female:** Anastasia, Akulina, Tatiana, Sofia, Irina, Dominika, Kosenia, Marina, Alena, Olena

**Family:** Filatov, Krylov, Akimov, Ivanov, Bykov, Fedorov, Markov, Filipov, Lukanov. Females change their family "-ov" to "-ova".

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Runaway serf, Wealthy artificer, Human enforcer for a noble automaton, Uniter priest's wife, Tax collector, Free-living cossack, Half-automaton experiment, Renegade boyar. Automaton PCs can take the Endurance Word to reflect their metal bodies.

# The Oasis States

The gigantic pyramids of the Red Desert were raised in ages past, but they still persist as havens for the dwellers of the Oasis States. Within these tremendous structures whole cities labor to cultivate the vast hydroponic gardens of their ancestors, fields sustained by the unfathomably deep wells at the heart of each pyramid. Mirrored sunlight and troughs of carefully-channeled water are used to grow a spectacular array of drugs, dyestuffs, and staple foods for the pyramid-dwellers. Many of the most precious spices and extracts of the realm are grown within the red stone walls of an Oasian city-pyramid.

Each edifice is a self-contained community, except that their need for metals and other goods forces caravans to dare the perils of the Red Desert. These wayfarers must fear the "sand princes," the ruthless bandit-kings who command grim ranks of exiled nobles, runaway slaves, escaped criminals, and natural malcontents. These reavers know all the secrets of the deep desert, and use them to snare caravans and make the occasional swift raid into poorly-guarded pyramids. Whether from the depredations of the sand princes or internal strife, some pyramids have become abandoned. Wise souls shun these places, for they are full of deadly traps, restless dead, and the hideous monsters bred by their former guardians.

The rulers of the Oasis States are obsessed with eugenic breeding programs. Incestuous marriages are common among the nobility, with loveless pairings made purely to cultivate some arcane aptitude or special quality. The results are impressive; their warrior families produce soldiers and guardians of superhuman prowess, and the Oasian magi

are famous for their gifted fire magics and intricate flesh-shaping arts. Of course, many of these paragons also suffer from crippling mental or physical infirmities due to the extensive inbreeding, but their elders agree that some prices must be paid for their advantages.

The most notorious practitioners of this tradition are those of the royal family itself. Their lineage has been maintained through sibling marriage for more than seven hundred years, with the most magically-gifted children of each generation paired off for the next. The present God-Queen Tasherit and God-King Khayu are possessed of unearthly beauty, superlative theurgic powers, and spectacular mental instability. A layer of noble officials exists purely to ensure that the divine monarchs' insanity does not harm the nation, but the occasional deranged demand must be satisfied to keep the rulers from inflicting terrible punishments on their people.

The people of the Oasis States were originally of a mixed Din and Akeh stock, but the centuries since have seen a vast array of different faces, shades, and shapes among them. The eugenic programs and the consequences of incestuous pairings have produced almost any conceivable configuration of humanity somewhere within the pyramids.

The dominant faith of the Oasis States is a form of ancestor worship combined with reverence for the God-Queen and God-King. Within the deeper passages of the pyramids, however, darker and stranger faiths can bloom. Some whisper that certain noble families seek to breed divinity itself from their lines, and that the unfortunate failures of their efforts are left to lair in the long-abandoned undertunnels.



## POPULATION

Three million, 3% of which are desert-dwelling raiders

## GOVERNMENT

God-Queen Tasherit and God-King Khayu are the nominal rulers of all the Oasis States, but their regular fits of madness leave true authority in an oligarchy of sorcerously-gifted noble families, each of which dominates a different city-pyramid.

## PROBLEMS

The sand princes grow more rapacious every year, and their depredations threaten to cut vital links with the outside realm.

The relentless eugenic inbreeding of the noble families is starting to produce unstable, dangerously powerful scions.

The common people endure their lords but do not love them, and the sand princes are sowing rebellion among them in secret.

## NAMES

**Male:** Anen, Harkhaf, Ahmose, Kawab, Kha, Intef, Mahu, Neferu, Ramose, Nakht, Rudjek, Sabu, Meriptah, Khufu

**Female:** Ankesi, Khaliset, Kensa, Kalhata, Nitocris, Imi, Rai, Tia, Sadeh, Merti, Sitre, Tuya, Menwi

**Family:** Only nobles have family names, ones taken from a great ancestor. Commoners are known by their trade or residence.

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Hydroponic farmer, Sand prince warlord, Exiled noble, Dealer in Oasian drugs, Flesh-sculpting sorcerer, Runaway from an incestuous marriage, Grizzled caravan master, Adept of fire sorcery, Swift desert scout, Rejected eugenic mistake

# THE PATRIAN EMPIRE

The Patrian Empire is a stern domain, one given to hard laws and unflinching resolution. Their armored legions have held the vaster Dulimbaian Regency at bay for a thousand years, vigilant through times of uneasy peace and open war alike. Their vast swarms of slaves toil deep in Imperial mines and coax forth crops from the broad fields of their latifundia, and their labor feeds the citizenry and arms the legions that defend the land. Yet the Patrians have been at war for so long that every aspect of their culture has been touched by the sword.

Every male Patrian citizen is inducted into the legions on their sixteenth birthday and held to service for twelve years. The best are enlisted into the matchless Patrian legions of heavy infantry, armed with their gleaming steel armor, painted shields, and razor-sharp assegais. Less promising material is assigned to support legions to manage military logistics and oversee the vast numbers of slaves that fuel Patria's industry. While women are not inducted as a general matter, determined female citizens are permitted to join women-only legions and earn the civic rights of their brothers.

Patria's slaves are composed chiefly of Dulimbaian prisoners of war and their heirs, though Patrians and others who commit crimes not quite worthy of death might also find themselves shackled. Such men and women are found at all levels of society, from the trusted agents of the Emperor himself to the poor wretches who live out their brief lives in the darkness of Patria's mines. All but the poorest citizen family has at least one slave. Dutiful slaves can hope to be manumitted by their owners in time as a reward for faithful service. Many families

much prefer to employ proven freedmen of their household rather than untrustworthy strangers.

Patrians talk much of the devotion and contentment of their slaves, and for some this is doubtless true. For the bitter masses of the mines and fields, however, there is only fear, hatred, and the vigilance of their keepers. Slave rebellions have scalded more than one Patrian district.

Aside from the finest heavy infantry in the world, Patrians are also famed for the quality and profusion of their stone architecture. Their least city is as finely-walled and defended as a castle of some less capable nation, and their aqueducts, sewer systems, and tall-built buildings are the envy of their peers. Skilled Patrian engineers can even duplicate some of the civic engineering tricks of the Bright Republic with their mundane arts, and the villas and domiciles of the wealthy have running hot and cold water and excellent plumbing.

Patrians are relatively devout followers of the Church of the One, though some suspect that it's chiefly to contrast their faith with the ancestor-worshippers of Dulimbai. Unlike in some other nations, the clergy of the One here are friendly to the idea of slavery. Cynical freedmen often embrace the church as a path to status and influence.

Most Patrians are of Akeh stock, dark-skinned and dark-eyed, and favor the richly-colored "great robes" of their ancestors when carrying out civic duties. A senator would be undressed for his duties were he to appear without it and his ceremonial hill-leopard cape. Laborers and people at their relaxation favor tunics and trousers for both sexes, perhaps with a mantle for women of substance.

## POPULATION

Ten million, 30% of which are native or war-prisoner slaves

## GOVERNMENT

Emperor Claudius XI, ruling through a Senate of 110 elected senators drawn from the Great Families. Male or female citizens who have completed 12 years of military service may vote, with their votes usually directed by a Great Family patron.

## PROBLEMS

Centuries of constant struggle with the Dulimbaian Regency, ranging from low-level skirmishing to bloody pitched battles. Slave rebellions could be catastrophic if a Godbound manifests among the slaves or leads them to freedom.

Their unmatched heavy infantry has a history of deposing rulers in favor of their heroes, like the current General Avitus.

## NAMES

**Male:** Barbatus, Decimus, Flavius, Galerius, Julianus, Lucius, Marius, Publius, Septimus

**Female:** Amatia, Aureliana, Galeria, Maelia, Octavia, Portia, Renata, Servilia, Vestoria

**Family:** Cestia, Fonteia, Gavia, Helvia, Lartia, Pompeia, Rutilia, Tullius, Valeria

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Retired or deserted legionnaire, Escaped mine slave, Former slave tutor to the elite, Master architect, Great Family scion, Freedman merchant, Border rider scout, Senate lobbyist, Slave rebellion leader, Priest or priestess of the One



# THE RAKTINE CONFEDERACY

The Raktine Confederacy is a loose patchwork of city-states, rural domains, and desolate forest under the rule of a confused mass of domns, bans, boyars, voivods, and knyazes, each of whom bitterly resents his neighbors. The land is rough and rugged, with the omnipresent forest and jagged mountain peaks rising up amid the rolling hills.

Forty years ago it was a broken land, divided under the rule of the Patrian Empire and the Dulimbaian Regency, just one more stretch of subjugated land for the two great empires to struggle over. It had been that way for decades, generations of Raktine men and women taken for Patrian slaves or Dulimbaian xiaoren, with their timber and crops seized as tribute. The Raktines were always first to feel the bite of disaster or the press of military necessity, and the people grew desperate for freedom.

Deep within the mountains, sages and scholars opened ancient vaults and sought out forbidden lore. There, in the Black Academies hidden in the peaks, they called up powers from Uncreated Night to break the rule of the tyrants and drive the foreigners from Raktia. They were successful, albeit at an awful price.

The demons and monsters they brought forth from Uncreated Night sent the Patrians and Dulimbaians fleeing, but they also carved a red road through the common folk. Some Raktian cities were destroyed, while other stretches of the land were ruined and made uninhabitable by infestations of eldritch beasts. Still, some Raktians took up the trade of monster-hunting, and over the past forty years they've beaten back the worst of the beasts and restored a kind of civilization to the dark vales of Raktia. Yet the forests are perilous and villagers do not go abroad at night, nor dare the roads alone.

The wizards who brought forth these monstrous entities are feared and respected, those few who survived their work. Most remain hidden in the Black Academies, studying their dark lore, recruiting worthy acolytes from the ambitious and the reckless. Most academies hate the others, and a constant low-level sorcerous war goes on between them as they struggle to determine who shall be the preeminent sorcerers of Raktia.

The wizards of the Black Academies focus largely on the summoning of powers from Uncreated Night, their binding, and their direction against rivals and enemies. Occasionally one of these great arcanists will consent to help a noble, but usually at a stiff price in human subjects for experiments or a vast sum of gold to fund their research.

The nobles of Raktia try to ignore the wizards as much as possible, though the myriad magical dangers of the land ensure that each noble has at least one court wizard to diagnose magical problems, recruited from the failed apprentices of the great arcanists or hired from one of the petty schools of magic that dot the land. Even small villages often rely on the wisdom of a hedge mage to recognize magical troubles and sniff out the existence of curses. Sometimes these hedge wizards find themselves blamed for an evil, and must flee or be burnt alive.

Most of the actual work of killing monsters goes to the Curse-Eaters, a fellowship of monster-hunters and curse-lifters loosely organized in a system of masters and apprentices. Curse-Eaters are feared and respected, and can expect paying work in almost any village in Raktia. They also have the privilege of claiming peasants from a lord, either as temporary aid in hunting a monster or as permanent apprentices. Few lack for volunteers among the eager young of a village, but their recruit's consent is not strictly required.



## POPULATION

Five million, no more than 5% of which are city or town-dwellers

## GOVERNMENT

Local nobles carry assorted titles, some inherited from the old Nezdohvan rule, others native. Domn, ban, boyar, knyaz, and voivode are the most common, but the theoretical hierarchy is irrelevant. All that matters is a noble's strength and influence.

## PROBLEMS

The nobles constantly squabble with each other over control of villages, precedence in honor, and old blood feuds.

Both Dulimbai and Patria would love to retake Raktia, but it's not worth it until the monsters and Black Academies are gone. Raiding autocossacks and mechanical nobles from Nezdohva are not uncommon on the border, out for sport as much as pillage.

## NAMES

**Male:** Imre, Matyas, Zoltan, Janos, Andras, Sandor, Tarjan, Mihaly, Istvan, Akos, Laszlo, Tamas, Zigmond, Miklos, Tiborc

**Female:** Aniko, Bianka, Ilona, Marika, Stefania, Sofia, Jolana, Maria, Erzebet, Felicia, Klara, Natalia, Katarina

**Family:** Nagy, Horvath, Molnar, Toth, Szabo, Takacs, Nemeth, Varga, Meszaros, Benes, Halmi, Kadar, Sarkozy, Soldos, Vida

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Grizzled Curse-Eater, Backwoods hunter, Local hedge wizard, Runaway apprentice from a Black Academy, Leader of a peasant uprising, Noble deposed by a victorious rival, Agent of a Black Academy, Spy for a foreign country

# The Regency of DULIMBAI

Golden Dulimbai is the second of the great southern powers, a nation founded as an invasion beachhead a thousand years ago, shortly before the Shattering. The Middle Empire of a far land had sent a numberless fleet of ships to seize the continent for their emperor. Dulimbai was the first-taken land along the coast, with its original Patrian inhabitants driven north or enslaved. Even today, many Dulimbaian families have a strong strain of Patrian blood.

When the Shattering happened only a few years later, the invaders were forced to rely on their own initiative and chose a regent from among their military leaders. Various viceregal dynasties have risen and passed away in the thousand years since but their heirs still defer to the fiction of loyalty to a long-lost emperor.

Dulimbai is a rich and cultured land, blessed with fruitful rice paddies and good grazing lands in the northeast. The hierarchical nature of the original invasion force still shows in the very low status of ordinary commoners. These xiaoren (“she-ow rehn”) are largely indistinguishable from the slaves some of them keep, placed under the charge of a district magistrate and taxed ruthlessly to support the endless hostilities with the neighboring Patrian Empire.

The only hope of a Dulimbaian xiaoren is to have a son or daughter excel at the Great Examinations, annual challenges meant to test a candidate’s martial or cultural knowledge. Keenly aware of their distance from their mother-nation, Dulimbaians fiercely maintain the ways and aesthetics of their ancestors. The mastery of their ancient books, poetry, music, and jurisprudence is the hallmark of a junzi (“jun-zih”), or gentry-class citizen. Those unfortunates who cannot master the writing brush can instead prove their valor in martial skills, though talent with a sword is considered greatly inferior to expertise in the finer points of calligraphy.

Junzi form the scholar-official class of Dulimbai, managing all the myriad offices and positions required to keep the Regency running. Their offspring are given no special consideration in the Great Examinations, so there is constant pressure for them to excel. Those who pass most gloriously can expect important official positions. Marginal success might win a modest but profitable office, while the many who fail entirely must resign themselves to a supplementary role at best, tapped to carry out the decisions of more accomplished officials. Some rich candidates apply liberal amounts of gold to avert this fate.

Dulimbaians possess a strong cultural conservatism and are reluctant to admit any change that might threaten their beloved traditions. Some murmur that the stalemate on the Patrian border has persisted so long because the Dulimbaians do not actually want to win the war so much as maintain it as a national custom. The junzi consider other nations to be uniformly barbarous, and strictly reject any importation of foreign customs or habits as potentially corrupting their culture.

This doesn’t prevent Dulimbai from doing much trade with Vissio and the Bright Republic, however, though under the guise of “tribute” to the Regent and “gifts” to subject nations. Dulimbai’s xiaoren are disciplined and industrious, and the fruits of their farms and mines buy luxuries for the junzi and armaments for the war with Patria. Foreign students also come to Dulimbai’s universities, the better to absorb the famed sagacity of Dulimbaian scholars and poets.

Dulimbaians are found in many far-flung lands, mostly xiaoren families who fled unpromising lives for a new start elsewhere. These exiles often have mixed feelings at best about their former home.



## POPULATION

Sixteen million, of which 5% are junzi and 10% are slaves

## GOVERNMENT

Regent Shun of the Yan dynasty rules in the capital, ably served by a large bureaucracy of appointed civil servants. District magistrates run day-to-day affairs in market towns and cities under the oversight of provincial governors.

## PROBLEMS

The old traditions say nothing of Godbound and the gentry have many conflicting ideas about how to deal with them.

The war with Patria is a running sore, but too many important official posts are bound up with making sure it keeps going.

The xiaoren are bitter and resentful, and the Yan dynasty has grown decadent. One or more provincial revolts seem certain.

## NAMES

**Male:** Liwei, Xilu, Chuo, Fu, Luguan, Yituo, Yilu, Pugen, Yulu, Heru, Hena, Yihuai, Shiyijian, Tuyan, Achai, Shifu, Shun

**Female:** Lanling, Huayang, Jinan, Zhangsun, Dugu, Zhaojun, Biyu, Daiyu, Hualing, Xiaoli, Ruolan, Yanmei, Zhilan

**Family:** Surnames go before given names in Dulimbai; Zhao, Qian, Sun, Li, Zhou, Wu, Zheng, Wang, Feng, Chen, Chu, Wei

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Illustrious scholar, Veteran of the Patrian war, Hard-pressed xiaoren peasant, Minor country official, Roaming imperial censor, Failed examination candidate, Admired artist, Disgraced former official, Peasant Tong society heavy

# The Thousand Gods

In the days before the Shattering the land known as the Thousand Gods was little more than an underpopulated testing range for esoteric theotechnology and experimental theurgy. Aside from a few rugged communities of lumberjacks and trappers the thick jungle had few inhabitants. Creeping diseases and dangerous beasts were a great discouragement to settlements beyond the coast.

This isolation encouraged a number of nations to establish secure testing zones within the jungle, where their magic could run free without observers. Many secrets were discovered which later became part of the Made Gods and their golem-godheads. Yet when the Shattering finally came, the desperate researchers were thrown back on their own sorceries to survive the chaos that followed.

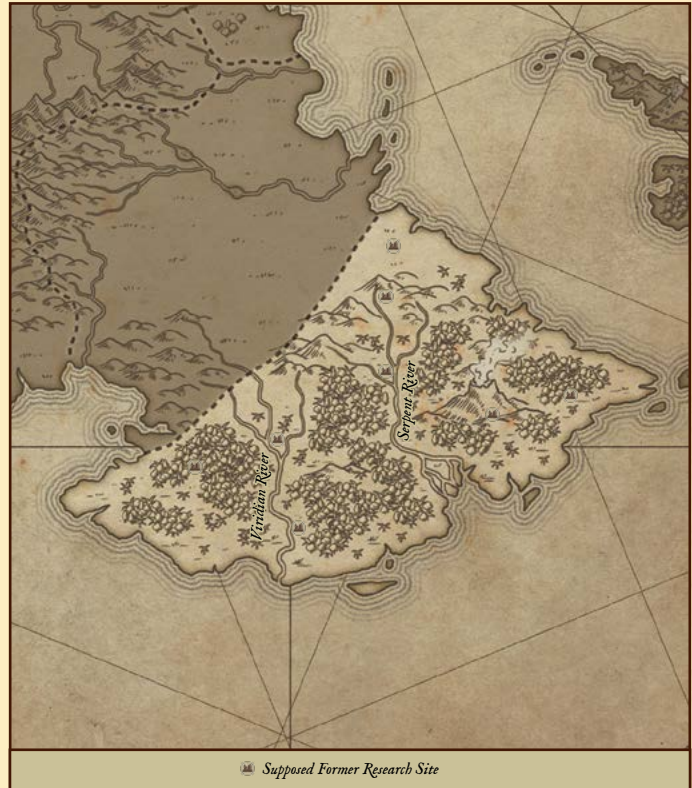
Their response was to infuse some among their own members with divine power, patching them together into stunted divinities that might be able to preserve their fellow scholars. Many were successful in that, but the gods they made were lopsided, unbalanced things, more parasite god than calm-minded divinity. These gods saved the research stations and protected their former peers from the disasters that followed, but their mental stability was never great. Most have grown worse over the centuries, becoming more and more obsessed with obtaining greater influence and more splendid shrines.

An influx of refugees from neighboring lands followed as others sought the help of the "Thousand Gods". Larger cults formed around each former research center, and the gods inevitably fell into the same kind of bitter struggle that had eventually consumed the Made Gods. Each tribe of researchers was pitted against the others by their patron deities, and any reluctance to serve was punished with death or worse.

Ever since, the Thousand Gods have been a dangerous patchwork of jungle kingdoms and tribal domains, at each others' throats as often as they grudgingly cooperate against greater rivals. The shamans and priests of the Thousand Gods have an incredible degree of theotechnical expertise and still retain secrets of godhead-architecture that have been lost elsewhere, but are forced to put their knowledge to the service of their jealous patrons. The gods demand more and more worshipers, and greater and greater sacrifices each year. Even so, some deities have perished entirely when tribal godkillers of a rival research center have succeeded in slaying them.

Life in the research centers is a mixture of abject poverty and casual wonder. The Thousand Gods think nothing of calling forth marvels to sustain their people, but the jungle itself is harsh and ungenerous. Divine abundance is brought to the trading villages on the coast to be exchanged with Kasirutan merchants for the wares and sacrificial goods of foreign countries. Every so often a band of adventurers makes landfall, eager to search out the lost treasures of ruined research centers or broken tribal temples. Others seek the god-building secrets of the shamans, though earning such truths comes at a dear price.

Not all men and women in the Thousand Gods are subject to these divine tyrants. Some have the courage or the luck to flee their communities and seek refuge in the deep jungle, where bands of Godless warriors eke out a hard life without the benefit of a divine patron. Freedom is worth hunger and sickness to these people, however, and they have special techniques of godkilling sufficient to astonish a Lomite antipriest. Their trust is not earned easily, and more than ordinary material rewards are needed to persuade them to share their secrets with outsiders.



## POPULATION

About one million, divided among hundreds of warring faiths.

## GOVERNMENT

Each community is ruled directly by its patron divinity, sometimes through its high priest or high priestess. The Thousand Gods prefer to manifest physically within their domain, however, so tangible god-kings and god-queens are the rule.

## PROBLEMS

The Thousand Gods are getting more demanding and tyrannical toward their people, driving some tribes to near-extinction. The plague of divinities leaves the people disorganized and prey to slave raids, grasping merchants, and ruthless adventurers. The Godless despise all faiths and draw no distinction between others and the Thousand Gods, thus threatening outsiders.

## NAMES

The original inhabitants of the Thousand Gods were drawn from across the realm, though most tribes derive from a research center established by a single nation. Dulimbaian and Patrian names are common, but also Kasirutan, Nezdohvan and Rak-tine. Most go by only one name, with "slave of" or "servant of" a particular divinity added after.

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

God hunter, Rebel former high priest, Runaway human sacrifice, Last survivor of a broken tribe, Sage keeper of theotechnical secrets, Godless renegade, Coastal "tribute" trader, Former bodyguard to a priest, Apostle of a new faith

# THE TOBA PLAINS

The Toban people are kindred to those of Dulimbai, as their ancestors were the light cavalry sent aboard the invasion fleet that landed on the southern coast not long before the Shattering. The rolling grasslands of the Toba plains were good land for horsemen, and they soon killed or assimilated the native Din peoples and formed their own nation to the east of Dulimbai. Their peerless horse archers still fight for the regent, but they do so for the sake of coin rather than fealty. The Ka-Khan still sends token tribute to the Regent in Dulimbai, but all know that this is only a polite diplomatic fiction.

Tobans live two kinds of lives. The majority are nomadic herdsmen, leading their horses and cattle across the great plains and living in felt yurts. Custom has appointed each Toban clan a certain range for their grazing, but the sanctity of these ranges depends much on the clan's strength. Cattle and horse theft is a common occupation of young Toban warriors, the better to show their courage and guile.

A smaller number dwell in gigantic lamaseries, vast structures built out of native stone and timbers carried up from the land of the Thousand Gods. These shrines are dedicated to the ancestors of the Tobans and a dizzying array of guardian demons and tutelary deities. Elaborate rites are conducted to protect the Toban lands from the Thousand Gods to the southeast and strengthen them against the magical perils that boil up from those trackless jungles.

The lamaseries are as much market towns as holy places, however, and most of the stationary industry and craftwork of the plains takes place behind their cyclopean walls. Many of the lamas and nuns there

are more artisans than clergy, and many can do no more than repeat a few simple prayers they've learned by rote. Still, they are greatly honored by their nomadic kin, and the more exalted members of a lamasery can expect princely hospitality from any clan's khan.

The lamaseries have less affectionate relationships with each other. Old theological disputes, arguments over the apportionment of traditional tribute from the clans, and outright warfare between rival lamaseries has left most of them on tense terms. Some have even been destroyed, either by the forces of a rival lamasery or by some magical disaster brought on by reckless sorcery or an enemy's curse. Tobans fear to venture to such places, but outsiders are more interested in plundering what remains.

Presently, the greatest lamasery of the plains is that of Palkya, where the crimson-robed monks of the Santuk sect serve the Palkya Lama and the ten thousand divine ancestors honored within its walls. The Palkya Lama is a mighty sorcerer, but he is not a good man, and even his monks fear him more than they love him. Some whisper that he would prefer the Tobans to be ruled by a holy man than by the Ka-Khan, and few doubt which holy man he has in mind.

The Toban nomads dress as befit those born to the saddle, with both men and women favoring sturdy leather trousers and light shirts. Monks and nuns wear robes, usually dyed in the characteristic colors or patterns of their lamaseries. Every nomad is expected to know the use of a bow, both men and women, and no nomad ever mounts their horse without a bow and quiver close to hand.



## POPULATION

Three million, 10% of which dwell in fortified lamaseries

## GOVERNMENT

Ka-Khan Bur of the Tarkhut is recognized as chief of all the khans due to the strength of his people, his proven wisdom, and his prowess in war. His word is law in matters of Toban foreign affairs, but he has no say in other clans' internal matters.

## PROBLEMS

The monasteries are constantly struggling for influence and wealth, and some are ready to go too far to gain such things. Toban warriors who can't fight abroad end up raiding at home to prove their valor, inciting feuds and rustling cattle and horses. Magical abominations regularly emerge from the southern jungles, byproducts of the Thousand Gods and their cults.

## NAMES

**Male:** Choban, Argun, Baidar, Khashin, Sinkur, Elbek, Chigu, Nogai, Abaka, Yegu, Bulaqadar, Kegen, Narin, Mengu  
**Female:** Gerel, Sarnai, Setseg, Khulan, Saran, Enkhtuya, Orbei, Altani, Bayarma, Ibakha, Jaliqai, Abagai, Turakina, Alaqa  
**Clans:** Khorilar, Khatagin, Barlas, Urut, Oronar, Kiyat, Jurkin, Jirgin, Alukhai, Tukha, Tumed, Chonos, Khardakit

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Exiled monk or nun, Mercenary horse archer, Grizzled nomadic herder, Hunter of magical abominations, Monastic sorcerer, Missionary of the One, Wandering trader, Master bowyer, Peerless archer, Cynical monk, Idealistic religious reformer

# THE ULSTANG SKERRIES

All across the northern coasts of Ancalia and Lom, fearful eyes watch the seas for the coming of the dread black ships of the Ulstangers. The grim, pale warriors of the islands sail forth in ships crewed by dead men, prows lit by the lanterns of their witch-queens and helmed by hands hungry for the plunder of the coasts. They are not content to merely take the goods of those they slay, but also carry off their corpses to serve as unliving bondsmen and slave women.

The Ulstangers are a savage people, scratching out a bleak existence on their cold isles through sorcery and brutal piracy. They are ruled by pitiless witch-queens, each island under the subjection of a cold mistress of necromancy. Men are forbidden to study their secrets, and are instead sent out to reave the coasts and die in battle. Those who perish gloriously are permitted a quiet grave, while those who die abed or shamefully are raised to toil for their heirs.

The great majority of labor in the skerries is performed by draugr, the walking dead beckoned up by the witch-queens and their priestesses. Cold concubines sit motionless while war-marked laborers hew wood and tend meager fields. Draugr are kept cold to retard decay, though the brief warm weather of a northern summer inevitably rots a few of them to uselessness, forcing a fresh batch of corpses to be brought home. Draugr are greater undead and are not entirely mindless; most retain some agonized consciousness and memory, and most can perform simple tasks under the instruction of Ulstang thrall-drivers. A few are even fit for fighting, and are often swathed in heavy armor and armed with massive weapons, the better to take advantage of their supernatural strength.

Witch-queens measure their status by the number of living and draugr they command and the richness of their cold palaces. They do not love each other, but the great necromantic rituals they work require the cooperation of several adepts, and so they cannot afford to quash all potential usurpers. Instead, they fight through treachery, misdirection, and the arranged misfortune of each others' servants. Every Ulstanger girl dreams of being called to a witch-queen's service as an acolyte priestess, though few who are summoned survive long enough to supplant their deathless mistress.

Most Ulstangers know nothing but their own bleak lives in the skerries, but some are quietly seduced by other ideas. Not every slave is killed before being brought back to the skerries, and some of these bondsmen and women fill the heads of impressionable Ulstangers with images of warmer and better lands. It takes courage to flee the jealous rule of the witch-queens or slip away from a raiding expedition, but the Ulstangs have never been strangers to courage—only to mercy.

Many nations have considered invading the skerries at one time or another, but the united witch-queens and their black-prowed ships would be certain to crush any ordinary invasion. Only the work of several nations acting in concert with some great maritime power would have any hope of scouring the isles clean of the Ulstangers. For now, the landsmen endure the depredations of the raiders and their sorcery-blessed reaving as a matter of necessity.

Ulstangers favor furs and leathers, or stolen finery when sitting in their cold feast-halls. The draugr wear nothing but rags, if that. The living favor perfumes and scents to ameliorate the stench of their dead servants, and both men and women are fastidious in their appearance. Finely-braided beards and women's hair done up in coils and locks are further evidence that a body is still among the living.



## POPULATION

One million living Ulstangers, four million dead draugr thralls

## GOVERNMENT

Each of the seven major islands is ruled by its own witch-queen, her edicts passed down and enforced by a priestesshood devoted to her worship. Day-to-day rule of towns and clans is by jarls chosen by their followers for their success in raiding.

## PROBLEMS

Every nation familiar with the skerries hates the Ulstangers and would be delighted at their complete extermination. One of the witch-queens is secretly striking a bargain with nameless outer entities in exchange for overwhelming personal power. Ulstang agriculture and industry is entirely dependent on draugr labor, and the islands can barely support the population as it is.

## NAMES

**Male:** Grim, Bjorn, Hrolf, Aslak, Ivar, Ketil, Njal, Hakon, Erik, Olaf, Sigurd, Rolf, Thorfinn, Ulf, Kolbjorn, Harald

**Female:** Astrid, Ingrid, Gunhild, Arnora, Thora, Ingvild, Ragnhild, Gudrun, Helga, Tola, Grimhild

**Surnames** are derived from parents; men by adding -sen to the father's name, and women by adding -dottir to the mother's

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Renegade witch-queen acolyte, Far-roaming Ulstanger captain, Escaped slave, Jarl who lost a political fight, Rebel warrior seeking a cultural revolution, Last survivor of a raiding crew, Secret male sorcerer, Living Ulstanger artisan or farmer

# VISSIO

Vissio is a small nation to the north of the Patrian Empire, its native population long since absorbed by ancient Patrian conquest. The stern rigor of the south was softened by this assimilation, and the exquisite defensibility of Vissian cities soon made the northern colonies wholly independent from the emperor in Patria. Southern generals make noises about reclaiming the “rebel provinces” every generation or so, but the war against Dulimbai absorbs the empire’s strength.

Some suspect that the emperor is not particularly eager to send the legions north. The far-faring traders of Vissio do business with every other nation on the continent, brokering manufactures from the Bright Republic, commodities from Patria and Dulimbai, and rarities from around the realm. They maintain a mercantile neutrality in the face of war, and so hostile powers often find Vissio useful as a neutral trading partner and source of condottieri mercenaries.

The Vissians are proud of their role as merchants, but prouder still of their culture, music, and sculpture. Vissian poets and musicians are the glory of half the realm, even if the equally haughty grandees of Dulimbai sniff at “barbarian noise”. The sculptures carved from the white marble of their hills are desired by every rich patrician in the west, and their inherited Patrian skill in architecture has been softened by a love of beautiful adornment and rich decoration.

This adornment does not come at the price of defensive utility, however, and the Vissian hill-towns and trading ports are famously well-fortified. This defensive prowess has led to centuries of treachery, scheming, and assassination among the rulers of the city-states, each

one relying on knives in the dark and gold under the table to accomplish what soldiers in the field cannot. Vissians are notorious for their political pragmatism and capacity for ruthlessness, along with their passion for personal excellence and artistic refinement.

One of the oldest instruments of Vissian policy is the secretive organization of scholar-assassins known as the Order of Redactors, or more colloquially as the “Razors of God”. Descended from an ancient group of university masters dedicated to the excision of undesirable people from the world, the Razors have become decadent, divided between an idealistic faction that seeks to improve the world through targeted murder and a more pragmatic group that takes the contracts they are offered at the prices the market will bear. Razors generally operate within the boundaries of Vissio, though some can be coaxed out with sufficient gold or by an intriguing cause.

Both Razors and rich nobility are known for taking advantage of the peculiar clockwork prosthetics that Vissian maestros fashion. These prosthetics take the place of missing body parts or are implanted subtly under the skin, performing marvels for the user. Unlike Bright Republic cyberware, these prosthetics work anywhere in the realm, but are too expensive for all save the elite or those with special connections to the reclusive maestros.

The men and women of Vissio favor splendid dress of rich Dulimbai silks and lush brocades, with slashed tunics, colored hose and hats of extravagant character. Working commoners rely on more practical wear, but retain a love for color.



## POPULATION

Six million divided up among the many city-states and towns

## GOVERNMENT

Each major trading city is jealously independent, led by an elected doge, hereditary duke, or oligarchic merchant council. Smaller towns and villages pledge loyalty to a trading city, and are run by members of their leading families.

## PROBLEMS

Trade wars between the city-states can heat up dangerously, with open warfare between rival merchant families and their clients. Pragmatic Razors will take almost any contract for the right price, even when the murder will throw cities into chaos. Bright Republic entertainment companies resent the strength of Vissian cultural influence, and their agents act accordingly.

## NAMES

**Male:** Cosimo, Domenico, Leonardo, Matteo, Ottavio, Jacopo, Alfonso, Benvenuto, Ludovico, Lorenzo, Francesco, Giovanni

**Female:** Caterina, Fiora, Giovanna, Lucrezia, Olympia, Vittoria, Nicolosia, Ghita, Alessandra, Lavinia, Serena, Fiametta

**Family:** Fontana, Visconti, Donato, Contarini, Bellini, Malatesta, Malapietra, Gonzaga, Sforza, Barbarigo, Rossi, Cellini

## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Renegade Razor, Fallen merchant prince, Noble forced into exile, Agent of a great family, Runaway from a dynastic marriage, Vissian condottiere, Maestro artificer, Gifted artist, Priest of the One, University scholar, Far-traveled market scout



# The Ways of the Realm

The nations of Arcem dwell in a deepening gloom. For a thousand years they and their ancestors have learned to live in the shadow of a fading Heaven and the consequences of the slow decay of the celestial engines. For centuries, they have built and endured with the wisdom they inherited from their forebears and their own stern dedication, but that may no longer be enough for the days to come. A bleak day is coming for the realm, and it will soon have need for heroes.

## The Peoples of the Realm

In the ages before the Shattering the proto-population of this fragment of the world was largely divided between two groups, the Akeh and the Din. Akeh nations controlled most of the continent's southwestern reaches and northeastern coast, reaching from what now is Dulimbai up to the northeastern horn of Ancalia. The Din peoples predominated in the central regions and the northwest, in what's now the present-day Bright Republic, Bleak Reach, Ulstang, Lom, Nezdohva, the Raktines, and the Howler lands. All were divided into their own nations and cultures, most of which were locked in vicious conflict at the time of the downfall.

The Ren peoples who arrived a few decades before the cataclysm were strangers from a distant land but their vast fleet of invasion seized most of the southern coast. They formed affiliated states in the Toba plains and the Kasirutan islands and were pressing hard on the Patrian Empire when the Shattering cut off their support from home. Since then Ren families have spread throughout the continent, but only in the south do they predominate.

The Din are pale-skinned, tending to light-colored hair and eyes, while the Akeh have skin colors that range from cocoa to basalt-dark. Akeh hair is usually tightly curled, and often worn close-cropped or in thick braids. Ren skin colors range from old ivory to deep bronze, with straight ebon hair and dark almond eyes. Of course, in the thousand years since the Sundering, a great deal of admixture has occurred among all these populations, and it is common for less traditional traits to appear among a people. Some of these variances are the product of ancient magic or non-human blood, giving their heirs some uncanny trait or inhuman aspect to their appearance. Such strangeness is viewed with some wariness by the common folk, and those marked by old magic are sometimes blamed for new troubles.

These three groups are the largest ethnic blocks in the realm, but they are not the only ones. Small pockets of other peoples persist in the corners of the world, largely ignored or assimilated by their more numerous neighbors. Some have been here since before the Shattering, while others found their way here through the Night Roads or were the product of some old cultural division or ethnic rebellion. Those groups that have survived as distinct communities are usually clannish or isolated; as those who favored greater assimilation have melted away into the surrounding populations by now.

In the present day, these ancient racial origins mean little to most people. Men and women identify with their communities and their nations, usually in that order, and a stranger who happens to share the same skin color is mistrusted far more than a neighbor who chances to have had different ancestry. A few zealots or demagogues occasionally try to whip up resentments or brandish old glories to win a following from the discontented, but such things are rarely heard of in places not already cursed with other troubles.

## Languages

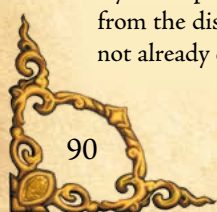
Three ancient languages form the foundation of most modern tongues in the realm: Old Din, Ancient Akeh, and Classical Ren. In the thousand years since the Shattering, these root languages have splintered into regional and national dialects or been mixed with each other into a local argot.

Most nations have their own language, only minimally comprehensible to speakers of related tongues. Over the centuries, a basic "trade cant" has developed under the influence of Vissian traders and Kasirutan seafarers, spreading throughout the realm. It's a simple language focused largely on matters of trade and daily necessities.

The table below indicates the most common speakers of each of these languages. The "Holy Speech" of the dwellers of the Thousand Gods is unusual, as it is a polyglot language accreted from the many native tongues of the original theotechnical engineers. More peculiar still is the "Primordial" tongue of angels and theurgic magic, a "language" impossible for ordinary mortals to speak. To convey an idea in the Primordial tongue is to impart a concept to the listener, one impressed with tremendous force and clarity. The language does not rely on spoken words, but instead on the quintessential nature of the "speaker" and their ability to convey manifest truths. Theurges use the concepts of Primordial speech in their invocations, and Primordial glyphs are often found engraved on angelic artifacts or the engines of Heaven. Extended exposure to these glyphs can be dangerous to unprepared mortal minds.

Player characters are assumed to be conversant in trade cant and any other languages appropriate to their Facts. A hero who led a life as a Dulimbaian junzi would be expected to know Classical and Modern Ren, for example, while one who was a Howler rider would know how to speak Pelagic. Literacy is assumed unless there's a good reason the hero can't read or write. Heroes can learn new languages as part of new Facts they acquire or through a few months of study or living in a place where that language is spoken. Those bound to the Knowledge sphere or the impostures of Deception might pick them up in a matter of days, if not sooner.

| Language      | Spoken By                                  |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Classical Ren | Dulimbaian officials, scholars             |
| Modern Ren    | Dulimbai, Toba Plains, slaves in Patria    |
| Salt Ren      | Kasirutan Archipelago                      |
| Old Din       | Scholars and historians                    |
| Stangir       | Ulstang Skerries, Lom                      |
| Pelagic       | Bright Republic, Howlers                   |
| Yazik         | Nezdohva, Raktines                         |
| Ancient Akeh  | Scholars and historians                    |
| Patrian       | Patrian Empire, Vissio, slaves in Dulimbai |
| Kerez         | Ancalia and its ancient knightly orders    |
| Menet         | Oasis States and the sand princes          |
| Trade Cant    | Merchants, traders, wayfarers              |
| Holy Speech   | Natives of the Thousand Gods               |
| Primordial    | Angels and theurges                        |



## CLIMATE

The realm's climate is the product of celestial engines as much as common meteorology. Heavenly wheels of empyreal power drive the seasons in their courses and send rain and drought as the old balances once decreed. Most of the realm still maintains a predictable climate, but there are still small pockets of land where the underlying engines have failed or been destroyed, and these lands suffer from strange weather or capricious seasons.

The far north of the realm is cold and snowy, particularly the Ulstang islands and the northern coast of Lom. The Bleak Reach and ruined Ancalia are a little warmer thanks to temperate sea currents, but even there the weather lends itself to cold, snowy winters and temperate summers. The rest of the continent down to its midpoint is cool temperate in character, with four distinct seasons. The Red Desert of the Oasis States is parched for lack of rain and rivers, however, and suffers through broiling days and frigid nights. Only the sand princes and the adepts of the Cinnabar Order know the secrets of surviving in that cruel land outside the shelter of the pyramid-cities.

To the west of the desert are the Vissian city-states, warm and temperate amid their rocky hills, and to the east is the rough land of Nezdohva, where high mountain towns are ice-clad above the warm lowlands. The Raktine Confederacy shares this climate, with brief, snowy winters and icy elevations above forests blessed with long, warm summers. South of the Raktines, in most of Patria and the southern nations, the weather is hot. Snow is uncommon in Patria and unknown in most of Dulimbai, and the steaming eastern jungles of the Thousand Gods and the Kasirutan islands ensure that the locals have more care for comfort than for modesty.

## TECHNOLOGY

The common technology available to the peoples of the realm is roughly equivalent to late medieval Europe. Gunpowder, complex mechanisms, delicate chemical reactions, or advanced metallurgy are possible only through enchanted objects. Such artifacts are very difficult to make and even more difficult to keep.

This technological stasis is not a product of a lack of curiosity or dullness among the people of the realm. It is a consequence of the slow decay of the celestial engines that maintain the realm's natural laws. Complex devices and chemical compounds rely on dependable natural processes and consistent natural laws. With the engines running down, the laws of the natural world just don't support that degree of precision any longer.

Enchanters and theurgists have come up with substitutes and replacements for some forms of technology. The massive etheric nodes of the Bright Republic sustain the natural laws of the island accurately enough to power an entire culture's worth of high-tech devices and modern technology, while the mechanists of Vissio embed magical reinforcements in their intricate clockwork prosthetics. The Iron Tsar of Nezdohva rules over an automaton nobility fashioned by expert human artificers, and some of the tribes of the Thousand Gods still preserve advanced technology through the auspices of their patron divinities. Complex technology is not unknown in the realm.

It is, however, the province of the rich, the powerful, and the fortunate. Even the wealthiest members of most societies never gain access to such marvels, some because they lack the money, others because they see no advantage that cannot be matched by a few dozen cheap human servants. Those who would bring its power to the masses must labor long to overcome both entropy and human indifference.

## MAGIC

Almost every culture of the realm has some native tradition of magic. Even in the technological enclave of the Bright Republic, the technicians use their arts to maintain the etheric nodes. The nations have their own attitudes toward sorcery and its practitioners, but every peasant in the fields knows that wizards exist.

Few common folk ever encounter a true sorcerer. Only the most talented village hedge-practitioners have any real magical power, and those men and women who do have the natural gift for the art have better things to do than make the locals gawp at their powers. Most prefer to remain among their peers in magical academies or isolated cabals, or else conduct their own research in the discreet privacy of a distant home. Others sell their services to the wealthy and powerful, some for influence, others for the gold that enables their research.

Magical artifacts are not unknown to commoners, but these artifacts are very rarely "mundane" in their effects. The amount of effort required to create even the smallest permanent enchantment discourages the creation of trivial artifacts, and items that perform some mundane purpose are considered a great waste of effort. Why spend a fortune making a mug that chills beverages, when a hundredth part of the price would buy enough mountain ice to chill ten wine cellars? Why fabricate a pump to provide running water to a noble's palace when a tiny fraction of the cost would buy the life's work of a dozen servants, any one of which could do far more than pump water?

Instead, artifacts are created to be of practical use to those who commissioned them. They do something impossible to mundane servants and arts, and the effect is pronounced enough to be worth spending a rich man's patrimony to have it.

## TRADE

Even nations that have little love for each other conduct trade. Swarms of merchants can be found on the roads and seas of the realm, their pack-animals burdened by the wealth of far cities. The profession is a swift path to riches for the fortunate, and a way to a roadside death beneath bandit spears for the less lucky.

The Bright Republic is the industrial powerhouse of the realm. While the island is poor in natural resources, it buys shiploads of metals, foodstuffs, textile inputs, and other raw wares from the other nations and uses its automated factories to transform them into finished goods. Almost every nation in the realm trades with them.

Vissio is the financial and transport hub of the western realm. Its merchants serve as neutral brokers between Patrian and Dulimbaian traders, and finance the wars of other states. Those who cheat the usurers of Vissio have an unfortunate habit of dying to a clockwork blade soon thereafter, whether grasping merchant or improvident king.

The Kasirutans of the eastern realm move the goods on that side of the continent, their numberless ships moving products from Nezdohva, the eastern Raktines, the Toba plains, and southern Dulimbai. The recent collapse of Ancalia has hit them hard, however, and many merchant captains have been driven to find other, redder work for their crews.

The Oasis States of the central desert have a great difficulty in moving their wares over the perilous sands. Most of their exports are drugs and spices, compact enough to be moved by camels, while their imports are the reagents and certain metal goods they cannot easily produce. The thieving sand princes that infest the dunes grow rich on the plunder of unwary caravans, and some say that the pyramid-cities are in danger of being strangled by this pillaging.



# RELIGION

Religion in Arcem is a chaotic thing at best. The nightmare of the Last War, the Shattering, and the death of the Made Gods left theological wreckage in its wake. Some people came to reject conventional religion entirely, such as the ascetics of the Empty Way or the militant atheists of Lom, but most people felt the need for some kind of spiritual consolation and guidance even if their old divinities had proven so very fallible. Just as importantly, many people dreaded the Hell that awaited them should they die without spiritual protection, and priests were begged for some salvation from that awful fate.

The result was a hodge-podge of theological detritus. Made Gods who were not provably dead were enshrined as salvific beings, generalized philosophical paths were offered as tools for liberation, and humble spirits of land and place were exalted as protectors of the faithful. Ancestors secure in celestial repose were petitioned to protect and save their progeny and their beloved homelands. In a more sinister turn even appeals to dark angelic powers were made, reasoning that the jailers of Hell might be appeased with service rather than souls.

Some of these religions actually work, in the sense that they provide miracles to the faithful and keep those buried with their rites from descending into Hell. Far more work in the sense that they provide solace and moral meaning to their believers and clearly map out a set of social obligations that lead to a functioning society. Others are less functional, teaching their adherents a way that can only lead to bloodshed, loss, and ruin.

## The Church of the One

The most common faith in the realm is the Church of the One. Its believers are known as Uniters and their faith the Unitary Church. The Church remains dedicated to revering the absent Creator and adhering to the sacred books of their prophets and saints. It is organized by nation, each country's church under the oversight of a patriarch or matriarch, under which are bishops for each episcopacy and priests for serving individual churches within a bishop's see. Ascetic monks and nuns can be found in monasteries and nunneries, seeking service to the One through prayer and private labor, though some go out into the world to provide hospices and preaching. In theory, the united patriarchal council may nominate a Great Father or Great Mother to command the entire church in a time of dire need, but this has not happened for centuries.

The Church of the One in each nation supports itself on the tithes of the faithful, the profits of the land they lease out to farmers, and the burial-fees they charge to believers. Custom has set the price of burial rites at a tenth of the deceased's worldly wealth, with children and other minors charged at a twentieth of their parents' possessions, or a much smaller fee for infants who die before their second birthday. Those who pay accordingly are given prayers and rituals to assure their dreamless repose and safety from the torments of Hell. The Church teaches that when the One returns, the righteous dead will be redeemed into paradise, while the wicked will be left to burn forever in Hell.

The moral teachings of the Church are firm in the larger points, but vary from nation to nation. Murder, theft, sexual impurity, violence against the innocent, indulgence of cruelty or greed, and rebellion against lawful authority are almost always condemned. Other beliefs tend to conform to the habits of the nation; the Patrian Church is

entirely in favor of slavery as a means of spiritual refinement, and even has a caste of slave priests, while the Bright Republic's Church condemns it as barbaric and inhumane. Conversely, the faithful of the Bright Republic are notably less interested in preaching the sharing of goods and shunning of greed than the clergy of impoverished Raktia.

Adultery is universally considered a serious sin, though Patrian Uniters question whether slave concubines fall under that prohibition. Sex outside of wedlock is also deplored, albeit not so severely. Doctrine on homosexuality and homosexual marriage varies by nation, with the Bright Republic accepting it without concern, Nezdohva and Raktia categorically rejecting it, and the Patrians and Vissians accepting homosexual relationships but denying them formal marriage rights.

The Church of the One is dominant in the Patrian Empire, the Bright Republic, Vissio, Nezdohva, and what was once Ancalia. It has smaller, weaker branches in all the other nations save for the Atheocracy of Lom, the Thousand Gods, and the Ulstang Skerries. Attempts to send missionary priests and devout monks to those lands have ended in bloody failure, though rumors persist of secret cells of Uniters working among the common people.

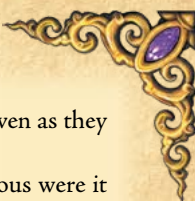
The priests of the Church rarely have magical powers, but certain cathedrals, churches, and shrines are constructed on places of great spiritual significance, where properly-trained priests can evoke miracles to bless pilgrims and petitioners. Notably, the One remains decidedly silent to the Uniters. There are no true sorceries that can evoke the One or discern the divine will, though charlatans and false prophets are sometimes known to fake a divine visitation.

Player character priests of the One belong to a particular national church and are theoretically subject to the authority of their bishop, and above them their patriarch or matriarch. Some nations only allow clergy of a particular sex, though most allow both men and women. Celibacy is the norm for clergy, albeit Raktia and Nezdohva allow priests to wed, though not monks, nuns, or higher ranks of clergy. Priests are usually attached to particular churches, though some are sent forth by their bishop to preach the truth of the One, the Creator's eventual return, and the graces of the sacred scriptures. Others are charged with grimmer work, holy priest-knights and inquisitors sent to root out monsters and spiritual evils from a community. Such itinerant clergy have a great deal of independence, though their authority is limited to whatever the Church grants them and the local government allows.

## Ancestor Cults

Prominent in Dulimbai, Kasiruta, the Toba lands, and other Ren societies, ancestor cults appeal to the honored dead to protect their heirs and uphold their nations. Through offerings and remembrances the living can ensure that their beloved ancestors remain secure in the spirit world and capable of bestowing blessings upon their children. Ceremonial offerings of food, incense, and spiritually-charged writing give the ancestors the strength they need to avoid Hell and grant their favor.

The ancestors expect their offspring to behave in an appropriate way. Appropriateness varies from nation to nation, but in most cases this involves filial obedience, fulfilling one's social duty, keeping one's word, avoiding needless violence, cruelty, or self-indulgence, and a rigorous sense of responsibility to the good of the community that nurtures



them. An act is shameful if it harms the community, or worse still one's own family, even if it might not be a strictly improper act in of itself. Those who disgrace themselves too greatly risk their souls being rejected by their ancestors and consigned to the flames of Hell.

Ancestor worship is a very private affair. Temples exist in a community, but chiefly to honor the ancestors of the community as a whole or revere the memory of particularly glorious native sons and daughters. Each family takes responsibility for honoring its own private dead, and so the continuance of the family is of utmost importance. The ancestors of a branch that is wiped out are reliant upon the prayers and offerings of the community at large and those monasteries staffed by pious and altruistic souls who pray and sacrifice for the bereft.

Professional priests of this tradition may be either male or female, and are viewed more as spiritual technicians than moral exemplars. Their duties are to record the dead of their patrons, provide rituals and prayers more elaborate than a non-specialist can provide, and to draw down specific blessings or alleviate particular curses from the ancestors. Most have no true magical powers, but some study the occult arts in order to provide additional services to petitioners. Monks in particular are famed for their remarkable abilities, some more real than others. Temples have hierarchies, as do monasteries, but there is no overarching organization.

A few splinter sects are not content to revere the dead in spiritual form. These sectarians engage in various forms of necromancy to embody worthy ancestors in permanent form, the better to receive their guidance and their aid. Some of these sects are relatively harmless aside from their necromantic enthusiasm, but others are tainted by dark forces, and call up dire revenants who wield the powers of the grave against their enemies.

## The Doctrine of True Reason

The grim men and women of Lom are the only full nation of atheocrats, though numerous smaller cells exist throughout the realm. Lom itself was founded by refugees and survivors from the nightmarish techno-theocracy that once ruled the Bleak Reach, and in bitterness they forever after forswore all the gods. In the centuries since, the Atheocrat of True Reason has ruled in that cold land, sending forth antipriests as missionaries to the south. Those converts they win are often from among those scourged by parasite gods and other divine plagues, people embittered against divinity and seeking protection.

The exact doctrines of the atheocratic faith have changed over the centuries to suit the winners of assorted intellectual and martial disputes. At present, "True Reason" is enshrined as the ultimate ideal of the atheocrats, with the Atheocrat himself enshrined as the "Voice of Reason". A complete plan of virtue and societal organization can be developed from first principles, according to this belief, and it is the duty of the atheocrats to bring this wisdom to the god-raddled world.

True Reason, however, seems to logically point toward the command of society by the intelligent and rational, a description that most perfectly fits the antipriests themselves. Antipriests vie with one another in seeking deviations from the right path; the more subtle the error discovered, the more keenly insightful the discoverer, and thus more worthy to rule. Failures or suffering in atheocrat communities are blamed on heretics or the presence of the Irrational, those god-enslaved wretches who fail to accept the light of True Reason.

Atheocrats flatly deny the power of Hell over their adherents. While this in no way protects their souls from damnation, the angels of Hell are known for favoring atheocracy as a useful tool against the divine,

and make a point of ostensibly supporting these claims even as they cruelly torment the souls of the dead believers.

The current doctrine of True Reason would be precarious were it not for the Pyre, a mighty celestial artifact seized by the Atheocracy several hundred years ago. Carefully-prepared antipriests are permitted to enter the Pyre. Most who emerge have their minds scorched of intellect, becoming little more than shambling, child-like souls scarcely capable of speech. All who survive, however, gain access to the ineffable gifts of the Stiflers, powers that can suppress even a godbound's miracles. The "simple" use these powers on command, conditioned to them by cruel training and ruthless handlers. Those who retain their intellects become the elite of the atheocracy, the "antiprelates" that serve the Atheocrat himself.

The moral doctrine of True Reason is infinitely mutable. Lay reasoners are taught to obey the antipriests implicitly; all that is obedient is good, and all that is defiant is evil. Antipriests are bade to search out true happiness and abundance by any means necessary, even if the methods should seem horrific to less enlightened minds. Conventional social and sexual morality is useful only insofar as it keeps the lay reasoners docile before their betters.

Aside from the current dominant faction, a small number of antipriest reformers desperately seek the correction and purification of their philosophy into something more humane and temperate. These reformers risk a lingering death should their disloyalty to the Voice of Reason be discovered.

## Lesser Faiths

A swarm of minor creeds can be found in the cities and villages of the realm, most of them revolving around a locally-important spirit or heroic ancestor. Few of these faiths have any real power to save, though a few have priests that actually can ensure a peaceful eternal rest to their followers. Sometimes this safety can be granted with a simple ritual or sequence of prayers, but other faiths require expensive or bloody rites to ensure that a soul is safely anchored to the sleep of the mundane realm. Occasionally these rites go awry, and the soul is left to persist as some form of undead. Less often, these rites are *intended* to create such revenants, either to serve the cult or to act as loci for their devout worship. Few undead find their state comfortable.

More dangerous are the cults to parasite gods, the wretched products of the malfunctioning of a celestial engine. These entities are created when divine force is no longer being channeled correctly through a realm and is left to pool within some random living creature. The experience is addictive to the victim, and grants them both tremendous power and an unquenchable thirst for more. Were parasite gods not geographically limited to the area the failing engine serves, they'd be a much greater threat to their neighbors. As it is, their raids, exactions, and ruthless command of their unlucky cultist-slaves make them a problem most nations prefer to work around.

A few cults are the direct product of angelic manipulation, ones that guide their believers to adore some fictional deity or human figurehead. Of course, these faiths have no power to save, and so the more humans that pledge their devotion to a nonexistent power, the more of them are sure to end up trapped in Hell's flames. Angels have difficulty reaching the realms, however, and the more powerful ones can find it physically impossible to compact their tremendous might into the narrow spaces of the mundane world. Angelic tempters thus tend to come from the lesser ranks of angels, albeit ones that know well the thousand snares that can catch a restless human heart.



# WARS AND CONFLICTS

The war between Patria and Dulimbai has smoldered for a thousand years of lulls and fresh campaigns. The initial Dulimbaian landing shortly before the Shattering drove the Patrians back from the southern shores and left much of their old empire under the rule of the Regent. Their advance was halted by the Patrian legions in the rugged hills west of Lake Nemia and in the fortified northern gap between the lakeshore and the Raktine forest. Efforts at amphibious strikes across the beast-infested lake proved a failure, and ever since the two powers have been spilling blood along the old line.

Over the centuries, the bloodshed has become more a tool of political advancement in Dulimbai than a serious attempt at expansion. Ambitious generals lead the levies north to some colorable victory, shedding blood until their name has gotten an adequate luster. The Patrians are fewer than their southern enemies and not so rich, but their hard-bitten martial traditions and expertise in fortification has kept the Ren invaders away from their remaining provinces.

Currently, the two powers are gearing up for another clash. Rival agents are working in Vissio to bring the merchant-princes in line with their patrons' causes, while Dulimbaian ambassadors to the Tobans and the Kasirutans offer rich rewards to those nations for the help of their riders and ships. Some believe that the Regent has decided to end this old struggle before the strange new Godbound can destabilize the old calculus. The Patrians show no fear, but whispers speak of the emperor's concern and the extreme measures he contemplates for the defense of his people.

In the north, the people of Lom fight a sluggish war against the pale raiders from the Ulstang skerries. The witch-warriors and their dead crews come down from the cold northern islands every year to reave the northern coast of Lom and tear at the wreckage that remains of Ancalia. The atheocrats strike back every so often in bloody reprisals, but the Voice of Reason has many concerns to distract him, whether the rampaging Uncreated out of Ancalia to the east, the Howler tribesmen to the southwest, or the occasional depredations of sand prince raiders from the Oasis States. The strength of the cold witch-queens in their island fastnesses is too great for Lom to dig them out without prohibitive losses.

Ancalia writhes under the plague of Uncreated monsters that swept over it five years ago. There is no nation left there to speak of, just a scattering of enclaves and coastal strongholds where men and women can eke out a life within sight of strong walls. Its survivors have learned to fear incursions from the skerries, Lom, and Nezdohva to the south, as these intruders only come to plunder dead cities and pick the bones of this once-proud land. The foreigners have learned to come in small bands after the first full battalions attracted such a swarm of husks that even their great numbers couldn't save them.

Ancalia formerly had relatively good relations with Nezdohva and icily polite ones with Lom, but their neighbors blame the Ancalians for the disaster that overwhelmed their nation. Outsiders are convinced that the Ancalians were doing *something* disastrous with magic to result in such a massive plague of Night Roads, and they dread that whatever the Ancalians were doing might be contagious to their own lands. Ancalian refugees are not loved elsewhere, and there have been pogroms in frightened border villages.

South of Ancalia, Nezdohva still seethes over the secession of the Raktine lords. The Iron Tsar dreams of sending his autocossacks to

bring the fractious boyars back in line, but his mechanical nobility is too untrustworthy to bring them together into a single mighty force. Even if the tsar could bring the nobles under his hand, the Raktine sorcerers of the Black Academies would be a bone to stick in his bronze throat. For now, he pays spies in Raktia and finances pliant boyars, working toward a revolution from within.

The Raktine Confederacy is constantly half at war with itself. Individual lords are ferociously proud of their independence, and there is not the meanest knyaz in his tumbledown forest manor who does not consider himself a peer of the mightiest voivode of Raktia. The lords fight each other for honor, land, and sheer bloody-mindedness, and the peasants are ground underfoot by their struggles. The only power that all the lords fear is that of the Black Academies in the mountains, where powerful theurges and mighty sorcerers dwell. These academies fight each other in turn, either openly or through tacit rivalries, each seeking to take control of the others and steal their arcane power for their own use. The pious Uniter priests of Raktia deplore the excesses of these wizards, but everyone knows that if the Academies were overthrown, Patria and Dulimbai would have their armies in the next day. Only the might of the sorcerers keeps the many hostile neighbors of Raktia from devouring them all.

In the Bright Republic, the public revels in its peace and prosperity, all fueled by the etheric energy nodes that have powered their civilization for a thousand years. The nodes are slowly beginning to fail, however, and the government is quietly desperate for a solution. As part of this effort, the Special Resources Department has been set up as a clearinghouse for special agents that can be hired by corporations, other government departments, or connected private individuals to carry out work "in the national interest". These governmentally-approved mercenaries go by code names, and have recently come to include some of the first Godbound to manifest in Arcem. Along with other remarkable figures of magical or physical prowess, they're treated much like superheroes by the Republic's entertainment industry, with comics, movies, and other properties dedicated to their exploits.

Most of these agents are also so deeply entangled with top-secret Republic departmental machinations that they need government patrons just to stay out of prison. For decades, the SRD has been used to this state of affairs, keeping their agents on a short leash with money, special privileges, and the threat of prison. They have yet to realize the qualitative difference in dealing with Godbound, and are much too confident that their old methods will work with this new variety of supernatural agent. Still less do they realize that the fan followings these Godbound develop can end up functioning like an actual cult.

To the southeast, the nomads of the Toba plains are forever dealing with the incursions of monsters and raiders from the Thousand Gods. The hundreds of minor pseudo-deities that the ancient theotechnicians created still plague their neighbors, each one striving to increase their tribal cult and cull the worshipers of rival divinities. These conflicts range from sudden skirmishes between hunters in the deep jungle to full-scale divine workings and assaults by celestially-powered godwalker engines.

Beyond these major conflicts in Arcem, there are innumerable small border wars, internal insurrections, natural disasters, religious feuds, and trade wars going on at any one time. Wherever the PCs care to look closely, they'll find some trouble to encourage their involvement.

# A PLAYER'S GUIDE TO THE REALM

## ANCEALIA

Five years ago Ancalia's peaceful, civilized monarchy was shattered by a massive outbreak of Night Roads opening throughout the country, disgorging waves of abominations and raising those killed by the Hollowing Plague. The survivors huddle in coastal redoubts and inland enclaves, aided by the ragged remnants of Ancalia's famed knightly orders.

## ATHEOCRACY OF LOM

The Voice of Reason rules this chill and cheerless land with the aid of his antipriest acolytes. The people are but pawns to their master's theories and schemes, yet they fear to pray to the gods that so utterly abandoned them in the past.

## THE BLEAK REACH

A thousand years ago this was an advanced and powerful nation. Now the land is cursed, a refuge for exiles and those no other land can tolerate. Reach-er folk are hard, canny, and ruthless in their will to survive.

## THE BRIGHT REPUBLIC

The sole technologically-advanced nation remaining in the realm, the Republic relies on its irreplaceable etheric nodes to power a sophisticated society of modern technology and political intrigue.

## THE HOWLERS

Savage raiders, peerless poets and famed beast-tamers, the Howlers shun writing of all kinds as a curse that destroyed their ancient nation.

## THE KASIRUTAN ARCHIPELAGO

The finest sailors in the realm call these volcanic isles home, though they're feared more for their pirating than for their ruthless mercantile dealings.

## NEZDOHVA

The mechanical Iron Tsar and his automaton nobility rule this land of impoverished human serfs. Their human Artificer's Guild has the best automaton-builders in the realm, and a liberty born of the tsar's dependence on their arts. His patronage of their talents is all that keeps his fractious, ambitious mechanical boyars and autocossacks in line.

## THE OASIS STATES

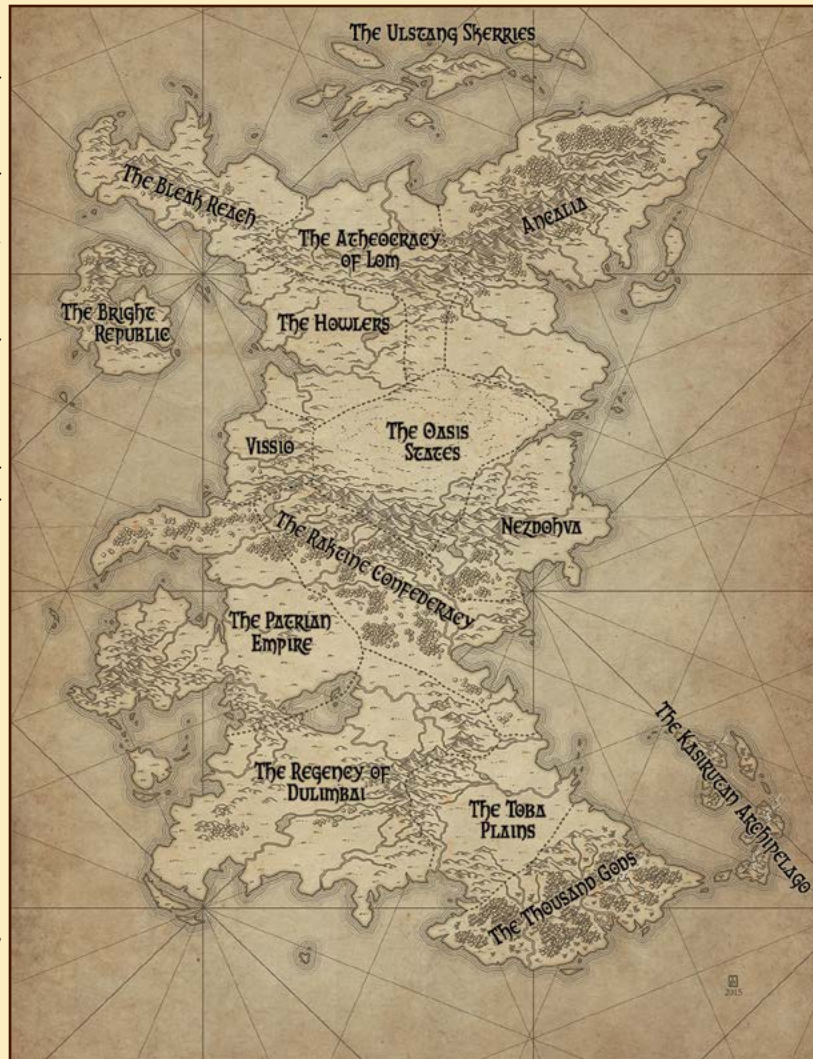
Pyramidal city-arcologies rise amid the red sands, a wealth of spices and drugs grown within their hydroponic gardens. An inbred nobility cultivates their bloodlines for physical and magical power, while outside their walls the "sand prince" raiders pillage spice caravans and foreign goods.

## THE PATRIAN EMPIRE

The Patrian legions are the best heavy infantry in the world, their armored ranks and steely assegaia a bulwark against their ancient rivals in Dulimbai to the south. Their senatorial families scheme for influence over the plebian classes, while swarms of bitter slaves toil in their mines and finely-built homes.

## THE RAKTINE CONFEDERACY

This patchwork of city-states, demesnes, and free towns was once a battleground divided between Patria and Dulimbai. In desperation, the sorcerers of Raktia unsealed the forbidden Black Academies in the mountains and used their secrets to conjure beasts to drive out the invaders. It came at a price; even today, Raktia is plagued with monsters.



## THE REGENCY OF DULIMBAI

Greatest of the nations of the south, Dulimbai's mandarins came as an invading force a thousand years ago. Their Regent still pledges loyalty to a long-lost emperor, and their magistrates keep to old ways.

## THE THOUSAND GODS

Once this steaming jungle was a favorite site for theotechnical research by the other nations of the realm. Now the descendants of those arcanists are tribes of god-enslaved cultists ruled by artificial divinities of cruel and capricious nature.

## THE TOBA PLAINS

Nomadic clans of herdsmen ride the broad plains, congregating around the massive stone monasteries of their revered lamas. These monks are proud and wealthy, and their disputes often leave the nomad clans divided and troubled.

## THE ULSTANG SHERRIES

These icy islands lie under the cold hand of quarreling witch-queens, who send their sea raiders faring forth with dead men at the oars. Their warriors are mighty and pitiless, dreaded all along the northern coasts. Their robbery is bad enough, but all know that the corpses of the hapless souls they slay are taken north to be slaves... or worse.

## VISSIO

Home to the richest financiers and most ambitious artists in the realm, Vissio is a proud land of rival city-states and scheming patrician families whose deep rivers and seaports see most of the trade of the western realm. Their clockwork artificers are superb, and work many marvels for the merchant-princes and the assassins of the Order of Redactors.





# Running the World

## Managing Adventures, Changes, and Factions

Running a game of *Godbound* is both easier and more difficult than running a session of a more traditional RPG. Conventional fantasy adventure games tend to focus around the exploits of a very human set of player characters. They might have magical powers or the strength of ten men, but they're operating in the same basic context as other human beings. Many games start their heroes as extremely mortal men and women, people who need to struggle to overcome even very minimal opposition.

*Godbound* starts its PCs as outright demigods. With most minor opposition, the question is not whether the PCs *can* brush it aside, but whether they *should*. Problems and obstacles that would stymie an ordinary band of adventurers are effortlessly dispatched by the pantheon, and it can leave a GM familiar with more conventional games groping for some way to challenge these titans that walk the earth. This chapter will arm a GM with the tools they need to give these divinities a worthy evening's play.

### The Key Differences

Before handling the tools and mechanics in this section, it's important that a GM understand a few of the most important differences between running *Godbound* and a session of a traditional RPG.

**Things happen faster.** The arc of activities that might eat up half a gaming session can be dispatched in minutes by the use of a *Godbound*'s abilities. A painstaking heist that might require an hour to play out for mortal thieves can be dispatched in a few sentences by a *Godbound* graced by Deception and Night. A situation that the GM confidently expected would entangle the pantheon for hours can be blown away in a moment as the players come up with some unexpected but plausible use of their divine Words. Difficulties get compressed drastically when PCs have so much strength.

Coping with this difference requires that the GM keep a light hand on the session. They can't afford to overbuild a situation, detailing it on the assumption that the PCs are going to be spending hours trying to resolve it. They also can't afford to overcomplicate things at the table, constantly throwing obstacles in front of the pantheon just to try to slow them down a little. Obstacles and situations should be as detailed and difficult as they rationally should be in the setting, and if

the players can blow through them, then that's perfectly acceptable. So long as the GM has a sheaf of generic challenges prepped beforehand, a fresh one can be dropped in as the players' goals require it.

**Things change rapidly.** Even novice *Godbound* have the power to enact major changes in the campaign setting, from completely rewriting the society and economy of a local market town to the deposing of minor royalty. Nothing about a GM's setting is secure when a pantheon of PCs are involved; if there's a situation that annoys them enough, they're likely to do something about it, whether that situation is poverty in their home village or an imperial theocrat with a silly haircut. In the best Greek fashion, PCs are divinities who can take offense at almost anything.

This is a *good thing*. Their ambitions, their desires for change, and the obstacles to those goals can all provide a GM with easy grist for an evening's play. The players practically write the adventures for the GM, laying out their plans and just relying on the referee to populate the situation with logical challenges and interesting difficulties. A GM shouldn't worry about protecting their campaign world, they should focus on getting the most interesting play out of its transformation.

**The scale is larger.** *Godbound* do big things. Novices might be content with cleaning up their home province or a particular city, but more powerful heroes rapidly rise to challenge rival divinities, storm the halls of fallen Heaven, reave Hell of its stolen souls, and struggle against the mightiest nations and powers of their realm. If the pantheon takes a disliking to a king, it's the king who ought to start sweating.

The GM should not fight this scale. Habit and customary expectations might have them expecting the PCs to deal with much smaller problems or foes. If the PCs want to aim higher, however, then the GM should let them; indeed, they may have to encourage the players to do so if they're too accustomed to the smaller scope of other games.

In this chapter you'll find a set of guidelines and tools for dealing with these particular differences and managing a smooth evening's gaming. Some of these tools might feel a little strange in the hands of a GM accustomed to more traditionally-scaled games, but they're designed to give a reader the techniques they need for coping with the speed, scale, and variability of a game full of demigods. A careful reading will reward the GM with what they need for fun.

# CREATING YOUR CAMPAIGN

While it's certainly possible to run a *Godbound* campaign in the customary story arc style, it can be a challenging undertaking. The PCs are so powerful and influential that it can become prohibitively difficult for a GM to predict how a story arc is going to play out. How can a GM assume that any particular situation will arise when the PCs are capable of molding the very laws of reality?

Instead, this section explains how to arrange your game as a *sandbox* campaign. Even those GMs who want to play out a particular story line are well-served to learn these tricks, if only to react sensibly when the PCs suddenly race away down an unanticipated track.

## THE BASICS OF SANDBOXING

The basic assumption of a sandbox game is that the PCs drive events. There is no story line and no particular expected arc of events to play out. Every session is about whatever the PCs are doing at the moment, and events play out based on their natural consequences rather than any story-progression logic.

There are some clear disadvantages to this style compared to the more common story arc form of campaigning. The PCs have a much greater responsibility for driving events at the table, and hesitant or unengaged PCs can drag down an evening's play. There's also no assurance of any payoff for early events or background elements; the PCs may end up never going anywhere that calls back to these things. Perhaps most concerning, however, are the additional demands of improvisation levied on a sandbox GM. A story arc GM can be reasonably sure they've prepared everything they're going to need for a given session. A sandbox GM can never be sure of that.

Despite this, however, there are some real advantages to sandboxing. Most importantly to the GM, sandbox gaming is *surprising*. There's always a freshness to each session as the GM discovers what the players are going to do next. The aim of a campaign can swerve drastically in a single evening, and expected events can go completely haywire from players who feel no obligation to stick to a particular story arc. Sandbox gaming also assures that the game is going to be about whatever interests the PCs, thus saving the GM from worrying about a failure to engage the players with a particular plot line.

Running a sandbox campaign does require knowing a few tricks, however, particularly since the things that *look* like they'd be important for running it are actually the things that can end up ruining a GM's fun or exhausting their creative energy.

## SORROWS AND WOES

The example realm of Arcem in this book is a pretty rough place. While there are islands of peace and property in the realm, most nations have serious problems and crises that need to be addressed. When building your own campaign, you should take care to provide a similar crop of afflictions for the PCs to face.

Note that there's a difference between worthwhile problems and misery porn. Problems and troubles that exist purely to show how awful a place is are largely useless at the table; if it's something the PCs can't possibly fix or at least mitigate then it's just an extra dose of grimdark chrome. The best problems are the ones that the PCs can face directly, even if they might not win.

## SANDBOX GM TECHNIQUES

One of the most insidious causes of failed sandbox campaigns is GM burnout. The sheer volume of preparation work crushes the GM, leaving them exhausted and unable to keep fleshing out a world that seems to have no borders. They feel an obligation to map out and detail everything that the PCs might choose to interact with, and unsurprisingly, they find the task beyond their powers.

The most critical skill a sandbox GM can learn is the skill of selective preparation. They need to understand what's important to prepare and what can be ignored. They need to learn how to efficiently use their preparation time and how to get the maximum table utility out of the least amount of preparation work. These are not difficult skills to learn if the GM keeps a few basic tricks in mind.

The first is the golden rule of sandbox preparation. Every time you go to make something, ask yourself whether it's certain to be needed for your very next game session. If it isn't, ask yourself whether you're having fun making it. If you answer no to that as well, *stop making it*. You need to have your next session prepped, but that's all. You don't actually need any more than that. If you're wearing yourself out making something that isn't immediately relevant and isn't fun, you need to stop before you exhaust yourself on minutiae.

But how do you know what you're going to need for the next session? It's simple. *You ask the players*. At the end of every session, just ask the players what they plan to do next time. It doesn't have to be a detailed agenda or a specific activity. Even something as general as, "We're going to go look for a parasite god to beat down," or "We're going to look for a way to make a lot of money," is enough for your purposes. You just need to know enough to make a session's worth of challenges for them.

Some of those challenges and some of that content will go unused in the session that follows. The PCs might never find a particular ruin, or might ignore an aristocratic court you made, or might gloss over an NPC you fleshed out carefully. *Don't waste that content*. Put it back in your folder and the next time you need something like it during a gaming session, just pull it out, change a few names and paint jobs, and use it. Eventually, you'll have so many of these bits and scraps in your prep folder that you'll be able to ad lib entire sessions out of them.

The last technique to keep in mind is that of the GM's light but helpful hand. Your campaign world is going to get scuffed up. A pack of demigods is going to run roughshod over it, and NPCs, situations, and the occasional nation you really like are going to get warped out of all recognition by the PCs. You have to be willing to let this happen and not try to keep the PCs within predefined boundaries. Even the most outrageous feat should be at least theoretically possible for them, and you should welcome these wild ambitions because they practically write your material for you. Every time the PCs decide to essay some crazy ambition, they're telling you exactly what kind of content they're going to need prepared for the next session. The harder the feat, the more sessions worth of material you can get out of it.

And if the players are confused and aimless? That's when you reach in and gently point them at something interesting. Touch on a PC's goals, or call back to their prior heroism with a sudden consequence of their former deeds, or just throw a natural disaster in there somewhere. Let the PCs drive the game, but if they get bogged down or don't know how to progress their goals, give them a helping hand.

## SETTING UP THE CAMPAIGN

The first thing you're going to need to do is set up the realm for your campaign. A conventional sandbox game can usually get away with defining a relatively small patch of a country or region. Godbound heroes tend to move on a much larger scale, however, so you're going to need to have at least a cursory idea about a much larger chunk of terrain. The example realm provided in this book is one you can use, or you can make up your own.

You shouldn't confuse the example realm's thoroughness with the kind of work you need to do; a one-page map and a one-page sketch description of the countries is plenty for this. A name and a single sentence about a country's general flavor and one game-interesting thing about the place is usually enough, something like: "Melektaus: Persian-flavored, government by corrupt djinn slaves of the shah."

Next, pick one country or region of the realm as the starting point of your campaign. This is where the game will start, and this is where the first interesting challenge will happen to the PCs. They might choose to abandon the place as soon as they've finished their first session, so you don't want to pour too much detail into it. Like the other parts of your world, let it grow naturally through play, adding on more details and locations within it as your session needs require.

After you've picked the starting region, brew up one session's worth of material using the tools in this chapter. Assume the PCs have been dropped into the middle of some challenging situation that requires that they do something about it. It may not seem very much in the spirit of sandboxing to just write the PCs into the situation, but in this case it's all right; the game has to start somewhere, and you can talk with the players to get an idea of the general kind of situation they'd find interesting to confront.

Give them one major challenge as detailed in this chapter, and then make up one or two secondary challenges that you can use to stretch the session out if they overcome your initial offering too quickly or turn around suddenly and flee it. If the PCs never get around to these challenges, just pack them up and reuse them later under a different name or context.

The challenges should be relatively self-contained and not have too many dangling threads. The PCs should feel free to chart their own course after they've finished dealing with the session, and shouldn't be forced to stick around and resolve a situation that didn't tie up neatly. The goal of this first session is just to get the party working together, introduce them to the world, and give them a chance to flex their divine muscles. It can take a while for players to really get comfortable with the powers of their PCs, and so you'll need to be ready to remind them of the possibilities.

At the end of the session, ask the players what they want to do next, and be ready to suggest a few things if they start to flounder. Then take their choice back to your lair and cook up the next session's content. Remember, you don't need to write up the whole nation or world. You just need to stay one session ahead of the players.

## ADJUSTING DOOMSDAY

While the cosmic background of *Godbound* is one of creeping entropy, it's perfectly fine to run a campaign that pays no attention to that. Perhaps the decay is only meaningful on a cosmic timescale, or maybe the PCs inhabit a realm in good repair. Don't feel obligated to include such troubles in your own campaign.

## TROUBLESHOOTING YOUR CAMPAIGN

A few issues can crop up regularly for a *Godbound* GM. A little careful preparation can get around them, but it's important to know about these potential problems before they rear up at your table. When in doubt, don't hesitate to take a moment to talk with the group and settle issues that are interfering with the common fun.

## MANAGING WORDS, MIRACLES, AND EFFORT

New players often have a hard time getting a grip on miracles. They only have three to six gifts to track, but their ability to use Effort to use any gift or freeform miracle can be overwhelming.

Ease this by printing out each of their Words for them, as each Word fits on a single sheet of paper. Highlight the gifts they've mastered and the special ability that goes with each Word. Give them the sheets to consult during play, and suggest ideas for miracles as needed.

To help track Effort commitments, give them a few coins or markers equal to their total Effort. When they Commit Effort to a gift, they lay a coin down on the gift's description on the sheet. When they Commit Effort to a miracle, they lay a coin down on the Word's description. When the Effort is reclaimed, they take the coin back, and the gift's description will tell them when they're allowed to do that.

## COMBAT AND NON-COMBAT GODBOUND

Some Godbound heroes are going to be much better at combat than others. A Godbound of Endurance, Alacrity, and the Sword is going to be worth far more in a fight than a Godbound of Fertility, Wealth, and Knowledge. This is usually an acceptable state of affairs, as the second Godbound will have a much easier time creating major out-of-combat effects.

It's important to remember, however, that every Godbound can do *something* useful in a fight. Even a Godbound with no combat abilities whatsoever can invoke miracles to mimic the *Divine Wrath* or *Corona of Fury* gifts for their Words, directly converting their Effort into damage against a target. They won't be able to do this often, but for as long as their Effort lasts they're almost as effective in a fight as a focused combat Godbound.

Their Fray die also applies just as much as any other Godbound's. While this damage usually isn't enough to overcome a serious foe, the meekest and mildest of Godbound can summarily squash most common men who dare stand against them. Only in large groups do common mortals have a chance against divine might.

## INTERA-PARTY CONFLICT

Godbound heroes tend to be strong-willed by nature, and players tend to be players. It's almost inevitable that two PCs will find themselves at cross purposes sooner or later.

A certain amount of this is perfectly fine. Honest argument over the best course for the pantheon to take adds spice and surprise to a session, and it makes the final decision feel more significant as a consequence. So long as the PCs aren't actively getting in each others' way, there's nothing to worry about.

Things get more complicated if the PCs start sabotaging or even attacking each other. While it's possible for a group to enjoy this, such conflicts tend to drag all the attention to the dueling PCs and leave the rest of the group twiddling their thumbs. The best recourse is to just ask the players to figure out a solution and put it into play so the game can go on. If they can't, then you might have to impose a resolution just to let the rest of the pantheon get their share of play.



# CREATING ADVENTURES

It's all well and good to have a pantheon of mighty demigods and a freshly-fashioned world, but how is a GM supposed to make an evening's gaming for them? This section of the chapter will give you the tools you need to create adventures worthy of your *Godbound* heroes and tools for fashioning the dark places they might explore.

## BUILDING A GAME SESSION

The traditional story arc campaign format encourages the detailed construction of adventures. As players can be expected to follow the general lead of the story line, a GM can afford to spend large amounts of time sculpting details and creating content, confident that it will all get used during play. Things work a little differently for the sandbox campaigns that *Godbound* is built to support, especially when demi-divine heroes start crashing around a scenario.

As the GM, you start your session prep with a vague idea of what the PCs are going to try to accomplish during the next gaming session. For the first session of a campaign, you set the agenda. You decide what dire situation the PCs find themselves immured in or what event is going on that they have to respond to immediately. For later sessions of the campaign, you'll get this vital information by simply asking the players what they're going to do in the next session.

Once you have this information, your job is to create enough content and enough challenges to keep everybody entertained for the next session. Don't worry about the game beyond that point. You might come up with a few broad-stroke ideas and villains to plant somewhere in the future, but the only material you really, absolutely need is the material necessary for running the very next session. Anything more than that runs the risk of being wasted when the PCs suddenly hare off in a random direction halfway through the next evening's gaming.

The building blocks of your evening's fun come in two general flavors: situations and challenges. Situations are places or circumstances that are genuinely interesting and that reward exploration. A noble court is a situation, as is an ancient ruin, or a village laboring under a magical curse. The PCs may or may not have any special objectives with such places, but simply meeting the NPCs, exploring the physical terrain, or learning about the situation there is interesting and can engage their attention. Challenges are obstacles of some kind, barriers that thwart the easy accomplishment of a PC goal. The PCs might need a noble court's cooperation, or an artifact hidden in the ancient ruin, or to lift the curse from the blighted village. If they can do this in a summary fashion with their own abilities and gifts, it's not a challenge, and it won't substantially occupy time or player attention.

To build an evening's fun, you're going to need interesting situations and meaningful challenges. The information the players give you about their goals and intentions will help you design these things, and a little judicious preparation beforehand can help you cover the inevitable moments when the PCs surprise you with something otherwise unplanned.

## SITUATIONS AND THEIR CHALLENGES

Before you create any situation, you need to ask yourself, "Why will the PCs care about this?" Far too many GMs have the unfortunate habit of creating elaborate, intricate settings or world components on which they lavish their efforts, only to find the PCs totally disinterested in what they've built. This comes about because the GM is only

thinking of *their* interests. Every situation needs to have a draw or a threat embedded in it, and those elements need to catch the attention of the players as well as engage the creativity of the GM.

A situation's *draw* is the benefit or opportunity that will likely come from interacting with it. A mud-hut village in the middle of the Raktine plains is just a mud-hut village, and spending hours delineating an intricate, moving web of social relationships and hidden struggles is a waste of time if the PCs have no obvious reason to care about the place. Things change if that mud-hut village is the home of one of the PCs, and their no-good kid sister is one of the NPCs tangled in the local web of relations. Things change even more if that mud-hut village supposedly has the ward key pass phrase to a Former Empire military base embedded in its secret harvest rituals.

Draws have to matter to the players. Rumors of a fabulous cache of ancient treasures in a sealed ruin aren't going to provoke much attention if the players all want to spend their time working out their relationships with the elites of a newly-formed democratic republic in Nezdohva. The draws that bring one group running will leave another one cold. As the GM, you have to know your players well enough to figure out the things that will pique their interest.

If a situation doesn't have a draw, and sometimes even if it does, it needs a *threat*. A threat is some obviously bad outcome that will happen if the PCs don't engage with the situation. If the monarch of a noble court is planning to annex the PCs' home village as a convenient new source of serfs, that's an obvious threat. If the ancient ruin is vomiting forth monsters that are threatening a PC's loyal cultists at a nearby shrine, that too is a threat.

Be careful about embedding threats in your situations. By their nature, most threats are very time-sensitive. The situation is going to cause a consequence in the foreseeable future, and if the PCs don't act on it, that consequence is going to come to pass. This can sometimes annoy the players, making them feel as if they *must* go deal with a particular situation in order to avoid a negative outcome, even if they're not otherwise interested in the situation. Too many threats can leave them hopping from trouble to trouble, never having a chance to go pursue their own ambitions.

If you do want to embed a threat in a situation, it's often best to make it a time-insensitive problem. The monarch *might* invade the PCs' home village at any time. The ruins *might* belch forth vile beasts into the lands around it. The peril is clear, but nothing is happening at the moment that would force the PCs to take a specific action. If the PCs do something to rile up the situation or otherwise get involved with it, they might well find their engagement has triggered the threat's activity, and they need to deal with it before it's too late to stop the inevitable.

The idea of a situation, with its draws and its threats, can be applied at any level of your game. A noble court is a situation, yes, but so is a long-forgotten ritual chamber in an abandoned temple. Every room or location can be its own situation, as can every feud or alliance within a village or noble court. The key is to provide these things with their own draws or threats, whether that draw is a gleaming golden idol standing in the center of the room or the risk that a village feud will leave an opening for a hungry bandit chief to exploit. Pull the players or push the players, but don't just expect their native curiosity to do all the work of engagement for you.

**Challenges** are things that take place inside of situations, obstacles that prevent the PCs from getting at a draw or eliminating a threat. That gleaming golden idol is trapped; overcoming the trap is a challenge. That feud in the village has three angry sides; reconciling them is a challenge. Players can often ignore a challenge if they decide to stop focusing on a draw or a threat, but they can't get at the goodies or resolve the problem until they do something to deal with it.

It's your obligation as GM to give the players interesting challenges, but it's not your job to dictate their solutions. It's not even your job to *imagine* their solutions. The PCs are demigods. They should be able to figure it out. Maybe their solution will involve a radical transformation of the situation or a dramatic altering of the context, but they have the powers and the tools to do things like that. The GM is just there to make sure they have challenges that fit the logic of the campaign.

It's important not to instinctively reach for the grand gesture and the towering nemesis when coming up with challenges. Problems and obstacles should fit the context, and should exist on a scale that makes sense. A bandit chief is not going to have a thirty-foot godwalker parked in his lair just because the PCs need something like that to create a meaningful combat challenge. PCs who put pressure on an Ancalian warlord will not suddenly find him supported by an Eldritch arch-theurge because it'd be "too easy" otherwise. Your world is your world, and it players ought to be able to make rational predictions about the resources of the antagonists they face. This isn't to say that they should never be surprised, but when the bandit chief steams out of the cave in a blazing humanoid engine of divine warfare, it should actually *be a surprise*, and not the occasion for nodding all around as the expected boss fight gets underway.

Yet at the same time, these challenges have to give the PCs at least momentary pause. Perhaps the bandits are no real threat in combat to the PCs, but their guerrilla hostilities toward a neighboring lord's men are all that keep the villagers from being conquered as slaves. If the PCs don't care what happens to the villagers afterwards, then so be it; the bandits are eliminated, and the neighboring lord sends his men to enslave the village. If they have greater qualms about it, they need to either deal with the lord as well or equip the village to withstand the invasion. Allowing challenges to daisy-chain upward in this way can eventually relate a minor complication to a challenge that's serious enough to concern even a Godbound.

## Putting Things Together

To build an adventure for your Godbound pantheon, follow the steps given below. You'll want to tweak and adjust things to account for what you know about the players and the plans they're making for the next session, but the framework given here should give you a basic structure to customize as necessary.

First, take the players' plans and identify the situation that they're going to lead to. Are the PCs trying to muscle a local lord? They're going to lead to his court. Are they going to try to pry open a sealed ruin? Then you need to build yourself an interesting situation of decayed splendor. Are they trying to discover the secret weakness of one of the Witch-Queens of the Ulstang isles? Then they're going to get thrust into a ruined ancient library or into a Black Academy snake-pit full of scheming wizards who want favors for their information. Whatever they're trying to do, use their intentions to tell you the kind of situation you need to build.

Next, identify the draw or threat in that situation. If the reason they're muscling the local lord is to keep him from declaring war on an

allied noble, then the threat they're trying to stop is the lord attacking their friend. If their ambition in popping open the sealed ruin is to scavenge some celestial engine shards they think are in there, then the draw is the promise of the shards. Situations might have both draws and threats, or several of both, but if you don't understand what the PCs are trying to accomplish or avoid you're going to have a hard time giving them interesting challenges related to it.

Now place a challenge between the PCs and the draw or threat. This chapter includes extensive tables and suggestions for choosing challenges for an adventure, but more will doubtless come to mind based on the situation. If this challenge is combat-related, like a guardian automaton in the ruins or an unsleeping, inhuman bodyguard for the boyar they're trying to assassinate, then you can use the guidelines in the Bestiary chapter to draw up something suitable. If the challenge is more social in nature, you can use the tools in the Court section of this chapter to identify conflicts and desires between those NPCs that need to be placated or enlisted in the PCs' service.

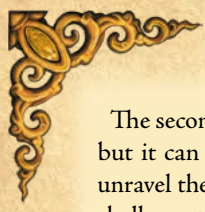
There. You now have a very simple adventure framework. At its most basic, this is most of the information you need to run at least a brief **Godbound** session with your friends. You may need to note down combat statistics or make decisions on experience or Dominion rewards for success, but you know where the PCs will be going, what they want to accomplish there, and why that's going to take them some effort.

Even so, this is a little bare-bones, particularly if you're trying to make a social group full of intrigue, or a ruin with dozens of interesting places to explore. If you want more than just a brief diversion for the PCs, you may want to build this basic situation out. There are a few different techniques you can use based on the kind of situation you're working with.

In the first case, you've got a big ruin or elaborate noble court or complicated political situation in some important city. You want the players to find a lot of stuff to do there. Not all of it will be related to the draw or the threat in the situation, and much of it will just be stuff or relationships or conflicts that have always been there that the PCs might stumble over, explore, or co-opt for their own ends.

To do so, start sprinkling mini-draws over the figurative map. For ruins or exploration sites, this can be literal; you can put interesting things in various rooms or locations, using the ruin tools in this section to flesh them out. Many or all of these might have nothing to do with the draw or threat of the ruin, but just be interesting things that the PCs might encounter in their explorations, either dangerous drains to their resources or potential tools to help accomplish their ends. In the same fashion, social groups can have other conflicts and sub-cliques dropped into it, ones composed of a few members who have their own relationships and goals that the PCs might get involved in.

Position at least some of these ornaments where the PCs are going to run into them on their way to their intended draw. Put a few interesting unrelated rooms in the ruin where the PCs are going to be delving, or let the PCs run into the sweating majordomo of the noble's city manor who's actually being forced into betraying his master by his beloved daughter, who's a secret member of an angelic cult. Not only do these sort of things give more depth and texture to a situation, they also force the players to wonder what parts of the situation are entangled with the others. Sometimes the traditional player paranoia about NPCs can end up leading them to bizarre and highly entertaining plans based on their own iron-clad delusions.



The second way to build out a situation is a little more complicated, but it can greatly prolong the playtime of a situation as the PCs unravel the complications inside of it. To put it simply, you take the challenge that is key to resolving the draw or threat of the situation, and then you "gate" it behind other challenges. The hoary old gaming trope of "collect these five colored widgets to open the Golden Door of Plot" is an example of this, where multiple lesser challenges have to be overcome before the PCs can really drive at what they want.

For ruins and other location-based adventures, this can be taken in a very literal fashion. It doesn't need to be a glowing plot coupon the PCs need, of course. It might be a room with engineering machinery that must be activated to open a path, or a hidden text with the location of an impossibly well-concealed entrance, or the friendship of the inbred tribe of priests who've survived inside the Heavenly shard for centuries and know how to reach its concealed engines. You just take the basic challenge, identify its components, and then make obtaining or understanding these components contingent on another challenge. You can farm these components down as far as you want to stretch out the process for the players.

For situations based on social groups and contexts, you can use structures like "They won't do X until you do Y for them," or "They need X or calamity Y will befall them." Particular important people might not be accessible without the help of lesser allies, and those lesser allies might need inducement beyond coin or casual friendship. Some material point of conflict might have to be resolved before the necessary people cooperate, such as the resolution of a property dispute or the acquisition of vital resources on their behalf.

In all of these cases, it is very likely that the PCs will sooner or later figure out a means of bypassing a challenge, or altering the situation's context so dramatically that the challenge is no longer relevant. This is entirely legitimate play, and indeed, some problems may not be soluble without changing the context. An unbeatable enemy stops being a challenge if you no longer have to beat them to get at your goal, and a complex web of social intrigues can be readily ignored if the PCs figure out a way to get around the gate they present.

Remember, as a sandbox GM, it's not your job to force particular outcomes. It may certainly be tempting to do so, especially when a particular turn of events looks like it would be a lot of fun, but it's crucial to resist this dramaturgical impulse. Allowing events to play out organically from player choices and NPC reactions is crucial for producing a long-term sense of investment in the players and a sense that they really are important in the world. They're not the designated heroes and not the official plot protagonists. They're Godbound. The things that happen to and around them happen because they made certain choices, and their responsibility for those choices can't be diluted by an appeal to GM fiat. If they manage a triumph, it is because *they* triumphed. If they lead their followers to perdition, it is because *they* failed.

Aside from this, one of the greatest rewards for a sandbox GM is the ever-renewed surprise of each new session. Even as the GM, you can never be entirely sure what's going to happen each time the group sits down to play. You may have a good idea of the challenges the pantheon is going to face and understand the plans of their NPC nemeses, but you still don't know just what the players are going to choose to do in the face of this opposition. Freed from any sense of obligation to "go along with the plot", players can turn out astonishing plans and utterly unexpected changes of focus. This novelty can be remarkably refreshing after a steady gaming diet of traditional story arcs.

## CLEANING UP AFTERWARDS

Once the PCs have finished up a session of play, it's time for you to strip out the fresh, unused material from your preparation and get it tidy for later recycling. As the GM of a sandbox campaign, you need to use every part of your prepwork, or you'll find yourself expending heroic effort each week to keep ahead of your insatiably-active PCs. You'll also need to think about repercussions and consequences from the PCs' actions and reflect those in your campaign world.

First, go through your prepared material and identify the bits the PCs never saw. Maybe there was a wing of the ruin they ignored, or maybe there were some social conflict subtleties that they never noticed in the voivode's court. All of this material can be stripped out and saved for later. The next time you need a chunk of ruin or a social conflict, just stick new names on the entities involved, slap on a fresh coat of paint, and slot it in.

This isn't railroading the PCs or forcing them to encounter what you've prepared. It's simply a shortcut for dishing up fast content; when you need an X, you have an X already in your notes. This can become particularly crucial when the PCs veer off course mid-session and you need something to throw at them while you collect your thoughts. Pulling something like this out of your notes and pitching it at the PCs can give you enough time to come up with a larger solution, or run the clock out on the gaming session and buy you some downtime to regroup.

You also need to look at the PCs' choices and decide how they've affected the situations around them. If you use the faction rules in this chapter, decide if they've created or eliminated any Features, and perhaps run a faction turn if some in-game time has passed since the last. This retrospective review is particularly important, because Godbound PCs tend to do large, dramatic things that deal with problems in the short term but leave a lot of situational debris in their wake.

Mind-controlling a king into complying with your will is certainly one way to get his cooperation, and in the short term it might even be a practical way to do it. But that king's court is likely to realize something is wrong, the royal wizard might recognize the problem, and the restive nobility upset by the king's new decrees might just touch off a civil war between those convinced the king is acting freely and those who find political utility in claiming that he's bewitched. You can give the Godbound their immediate victories when they wield blunt force, but remember that those unfortunate consequence lists in the Court section are there for a reason. So too with other brute-force solutions that might get a challenge out of the way, but cause severe collateral problems for the people around the PCs.

One point to be careful about, however, is the temptation to turn an easy victory into a slow-fused disaster. It can seem that the PCs got away with a victory too easily, and game karma requires that they suffer for it. This attitude is unlikely to be helpful in a campaign involving demigods. Let easy challenges be easy, and hard ones be hard.

GMs also need to be wary about philosophical clashes between their own ideals and those of the players. If you think a particular economic system is intrinsically abusive or inevitably doomed to failure and your player thinks it's the wave of the future, then there can be a temptation to "show" the player how their idea is terrible. The same inclination applies to other conflicts about how the world does or should work. Resist this. Players don't play demigods so they can be told their divine plans are stupid. Throw obvious challenges into the situation, but don't sabotage their ideals. They're gods; they can make almost anything work with enough effort and Dominion.

# ADVANCEMENT AND REWARDS

Once you have your situation and its challenges set up, you'll need to consider what kind of rewards ought to be forthcoming to the heroes. There are three kinds of rewards you can give a pantheon for successfully navigating a challenge: experience points, Dominion points, and material treasures.

Not every challenge merits a reward for its conquest, but most of the time the players will want to see some tangible benefit from their actions. Even if a session is purely about averting a threat to something they value, a few experience points can make them feel like some positive benefit was gained as well.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The default philosophy of experience points in *Godbound* is that every hero in a pantheon should receive the same number of experience points for a session's play. If every hero gains experience levels at the same general rate it's easier for the pantheon to respond to the challenges in the campaign, as no single PC is so far behind the others as to be unable to handle the same opposition that the rest of the group can survive. It also spares the GM from needing to make judgment calls about rewards that can result in hard feelings or suspicions of favoritism in the group.

This equality comes at a price, of course. Without variable experience awards, it's hard to emphasize certain activities or desired behavior in a campaign. Some GMs may want to award bonus XP for heroes who play out their PCs in particularly entertaining fashion, or who handle campaign maintenance work like keeping adventure journals, or who come up with especially cunning ploys or clever uses of their abilities. The choice of whether or not to make individual XP awards really comes down to the preferences of the group.

If you want to run things by the default *Godbound* method, however, awarding XP is relatively simple. A session's XP award starts at one point, for the players simply showing up and playing. The GM adds another point if they successfully obtained a situation's draw or dealt with its threat, what the PCs might recognize as having "succeeded" at the evening's adventure. A third point is awarded if the PCs were engaging a challenge that was a serious test of their abilities, opposing an enemy or situation that was perhaps beyond them, whether or not they successfully overcame it. Pantheons who seek out great challenges and worthy opponents will learn and grow more quickly than those who are content to aim at challenges they can reasonably expect to overcome.

If the PCs consistently choose tough challenges to face and succeed in overcoming them, this rate of XP awards will see them gaining levels rapidly at the start of the campaign, with just one session to reach level 2 and one more to reach level 3. After that, the advancement will slow a little, with two more sessions needed to reach level 4, then four, then eight, until they eventually need thirteen or fourteen sessions to go from level 9 to 10. If they fail at their challenges, the rate could be significantly slower.

You'll want to adjust your XP awards to match the level of progress for your campaign. If you want to draw out the lower levels, for example, give only one or two XP per session at the start of the campaign. Even low-level *Godbound* can perform tremendous feats, so if you're new to the game you might want to slow down the first few levels a bit to give yourself and the players a chance to get used to their powers.

## DOMINION POINTS

Heroes need to earn and spend Dominion points to advance in levels. Without the exercise of their divine powers on a larger scale, they can't develop a deeper bond with their own celestial Words. Dominion points can be spent to create remarkable changes in the world, craft magical items, or otherwise erect large-scale marvels, and so the PCs are going to want to get a steady supply of them from their exploits.

A good baseline is to give one Dominion point per session as a minimum, assuming they're doing anything heroic at all and not just sitting around the temple and meddling with their minions. If the *Godbound* does something particularly in line with their divine powers and concept as a demigod-hero, then give them one more. Any additional Dominion points should come from their cult or the acquisition of divine treasures.

So long as the PC earns enough Dominion points to spend the minimum required to advance a level, they're getting enough. If they want to work greater miracles than that, they're going to have to go out and look for the Dominion they need to do it. This need for greater power is an excellent spur for adventure, and can have the party digging through all manner of perilous ruins or delving into shards of fallen Heaven across the lethal Night Roads.

## DOMINION GAINS AND SINKS

*Godbound* heroes can accumulate substantial amounts of Dominion if they have a vigorous cult and an active adventuring life. This gain is particularly pronounced if you skip time during your campaign and advance it by some months every now and then; the monthly Dominion gain from an active cult can give heroes a notable power boost just by sitting around receiving worship for half a year. Conversely, Dominion can be scarce if your campaign moves so quickly that the PCs never get this kind of casual downtime to soak up worship.

PCs that have a lot of Dominion should be encouraged to spend it, assuming they're not already motivated by their need to spend some to advance. Building artifacts is one sink, but the larger opportunity for spends lies in setting changes powered by Dominion, as described later in this chapter. PCs who want to do neither can still spend their points to support the plans of their allies.

## WEALTH AND ARTIFACTS

Beyond a certain point, money isn't a terribly enticing reward for demigods. *Godbound* with the Wealth Word might have little use for it, and even other divinities are often able to accomplish their ends without dipping into mortal purses. Even so, a certain amount of Wealth can smooth day-to-day transactions, and it makes an excellent reward for faithful minions.

Magical objects are of more interest to most divinities, even if some of them are too weak to function properly for bearers of the Words. Fragments of the celestial engines are particularly valuable, as certain major changes or mighty artifacts cannot be created without them. The Treasures chapter provides guidelines for the amount of Wealth particular creatures and locations might have in store, and gives hints on where to put celestial fragments and other major magical finds. If the PCs choose to engage situations where Wealth can be found, they can find it, and if they don't, they clearly have other things that draw their current interest.

# CREATING A COURT

Courts are defined as groups of people who control some institution of importance in the setting. A king and his courtiers make up a court, but so does a guildmaster and his professional associates, or a chieftain and his tribal elders, or a high priest and the clergy of a temple, or a master thief and his guild of accomplices. While a group of Godbound might be able to casually murder everyone in the court, this usually means the institution becomes headless and either defunct or uncontrollable. This might be acceptable if the PCs want to destroy the institution, but it's much less advantageous if they want it to do them a favor or become a useful ally.

The guidelines provided in this section are meant to help a GM quickly create the situation of such a court and equip it with the personalities, goals, power sources, and defenses that make it a usable organization at the table.

## BUILDING A COURT

To start building a court, determine its power structure. Authority might be fundamentally in the hands of a single leader, or it could be splintered among several actual leaders. This will determine who the PCs have to convince if they want to get the court to do something for them; a single leader might be easily bent to their purposes, but a group that functions by consensus might require the convincing of almost the entire group.

### D6 ORGANIZATION POWER STRUCTURE

- 1 **Autocratic.** One person has largely unchallenged control over the court.
- 2 **Figurehead.** A public leader is actually controlled by one or more hidden figures.
- 3 **Shared.** Two or more figures share ultimate decision-making authority, either officially or *de facto*.
- 4 **Consensus.** The court makes decisions by consensus, with everyone needing to mostly agree.
- 5 **Democratic.** The court makes decisions by majority rule, either directly or through a leader who requires it.
- 6 **Anarchic.** Authority is fragmented or currently unsettled, and no one is sure of their power.

Once the power structure is determined, it's time to choose the basic type of the group: aristocratic, bureaucratic, business, community, criminal, or temple. The tables on the following pages will allow the GM to determine important persons and what they need from the situation. If a less conventional type of court is needed, they can be used as rough models and analogues.

First, roll or pick at least three major actors, usually related to the power structure the GM's already determined. These major actors will be the decision-makers for the group, the ones the PCs have to deal with in some way in order to enlist the court's cooperation. It's possible to roll fewer than three major actors, but two is generally a minimum, and more than five can be hard to track in play.

Next, roll or pick power sources for these major actors. These power sources are *why* they are major actors. They're the resources or connections that make an actor a force to be reckoned with, and their usual means of exerting their will within the group.

Now pick at least one conflict for the group. This is something that someone is trying to make happen and someone else is trying to discover or counter. Pick one of the major actors as the protagonist of the conflict and a second as the antagonist. Assign other major actors to either side, or as neutral third parties who could be swayed to either cause depending on their inducements. PCs are likely to have to deal with this conflict if they're to win allies in the court.

Then roll a few minor actors and choose their relationship to the conflict. Maybe they're the persons being fought over in the case of an unwanted marriage or a disputed heir, or maybe they're catspaws or minions of the major actors, or it could be they're just sympathetic bystanders who can introduce the PCs to the conflict.

PCs being PCs, it's possible that the heroes will just blow through the court, destroying it or wrenching it into obedience with reckless use of their powers. Pick or roll a consequence of its destruction to represent the negative consequences of carelessly overwhelming it. Every court has a function in its society, and heroes who just knock it over will find the consequences potentially unpleasant. More delicate use of Influence or careful employment of persuasive powers can avoid these catastrophes, but a pantheon that just steamrolls a court with no thought for the aftermath must deal with the eventual blowback.

Courts also have their defenses against this kind of manhandling. The court defenses table provides suggestions for each type, with the GM assigning combat statistics to any relevant defenders or deciding the nature of less tangible protectors. These defenses may not be up to resisting a determined pantheon of Godbound, but they can be enough to discourage the more casual murder of officials or burning of troublesome villages.

## MAKING "BLANK" COURTS

A GM can often find a need for courts coming up with little advance warning. The PCs may suddenly decide to deal with a city's ruler or enlist a local village for their plans. It can be difficult to respond gracefully to these sudden swerves without a little pre-game preparation. To deal with this eventuality, a GM can make up "blank" courts, and it can be handy to have a few ready before the campaign starts.

To do this, just roll up a court as usual, but don't assign names to the actors or detail the conflict too closely. When the need for a court of that type arises, just pull it out, fill in some appropriate names, fit the conflict to the context, and roll with it.

## COURTS AND FACTIONS

Some courts represent the ruling body of a particular faction, whether that's the Patrian Empire's imperial court, a Black Academy administration, or a Dry Port tyrant's court. Subverting it and winning the cooperation or submission of the court might put the Godbound entirely in control of the faction.

Doing this smoothly requires more than casual gift or Influence use. Winning a favor from the faction or convincing it to take a particular action is one thing, but if the Godbound actually want to take it over and become the powers behind its throne, they're going to need to do impressive amounts of maneuvering to avoid civil strife and brutal internal struggles. Would-be usurpers and restorationists will start to move on the suborned power as soon as they recognize the situation. Only a well-prepared Godbound will be able to hold things together.

# ARISTOCRATIC COURTS

Aristocratic courts can be used as the model for both conventional autocracies and more democratic councils. It can be particularly useful to roll up a court for any nations or cities of especial importance to the PCs, so as to have a set of NPCs on hand when the players inevitably try to muscle in on the local authorities.

The court mood provides a general “feel” for the group, whether it’s a monarch’s palace coterie or the tense city council of an important mercantile capital. The nobility referenced in the chart can easily be swapped over to guild or financial elites when a GM needs to define a less autocratic government.

Noble courts tend to operate on an intricate currency of favor, with a strong autocrat bestowing the royal smile on useful or pleasing courtiers. Success at beguiling the monarch is a fast track to wealth and high title, while suffering public shame or disapproval will bring out a host of eager rivals to carve away lands and titles. Humiliating a courtier can be cause for a murderous grudge, as the circling sharks of the court are always eager to tear at a wounded grandee.

## D12

## COURT MOOD

|    |                                                         |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Beauty-loving, with exquisite art and architecture      |
| 2  | Bluff and familiar, with easy access to nobility        |
| 3  | Bracing for an expected clash or change of rulers       |
| 4  | Confused, with a welter of plots and counterplots       |
| 5  | Corrupt, where everything takes cash or favors to do    |
| 6  | Decadent, obsessed with exotic pleasures                |
| 7  | Decaying, hidebound by rules no longer understood       |
| 8  | Delusional, convinced of a false situation in the world |
| 9  | Paranoid, with everyone suspected of treachery          |
| 10 | Rigidly formal with elaborately protocols enforced      |
| 11 | Vibrant with activity and bold ambition                 |
| 12 | Xenophilic, eager for foreign fashions and visitors     |

| D12 | MAJOR ACTOR               | MINOR ACTOR                   | POWER SOURCES                                      |
|-----|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Court sorcerer            | Amoral sycophant              | Has access to the state treasury                   |
| 2   | Cunning vizier            | Commoner petitioner           | Has assassins and criminals at their beck and call |
| 3   | Discarded former favorite | Court musician                | Has ties with powers in a neighboring state        |
| 4   | Foreign ambassador        | Disguised spy                 | Has vigorous backing from a local religion         |
| 5   | Heir to rule              | Disposable plaything          | Impeccable bloodline or legitimacy                 |
| 6   | Honored general           | Foreign artist                | Important figure is utterly smitten with them      |
| 7   | Noble clergyman           | Gossiping servant             | Much loved by the common people                    |
| 8   | Noble family matriarch    | Grizzled guardsman            | Numerous family ties with other nobles             |
| 9   | Ruler's favorite courtier | Hired assassin                | Owns vast amount of personal wealth                |
| 10  | Ruler's spouse or lover   | Ruler's personal body-servant | Possesses strong magic or exotic resources         |
| 11  | Titular ruler             | Scheming clerk                | Spying and blackmail have armed them well          |
| 12  | Treasury keeper           | Veteran huntsman              | Very influential with the military                 |

| D12 | CONFLICTS                              | CONSEQUENCES OF ITS DESTRUCTION                   | COURT DEFENSES                    |
|-----|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1   | A favorite is being too indulged       | A civil struggle or civil war would break out     | A crew of bodyguard-magi          |
| 2   | A foolish policy is being enacted      | A much worse set of replacements are waiting      | A magical defensive construct     |
| 3   | A loan may or may not be repaid        | A neighboring court would be infuriated by it     | A very capable sorcerer           |
| 4   | A marriage is being forcibly pressured | A vital project would collapse disastrously       | An elite corps of human warriors  |
| 5   | A noble title is fought over           | Actually, nothing particularly bad would happen   | Buildings with dire traps         |
| 6   | Dispute over the heir                  | Hostile outsiders would seize the opportunity     | Extreme seclusion of the nobility |
| 7   | Grudge over an old treachery           | Many locals would be furious at the disruption    | Lingering magical blessing        |
| 8   | Land ownership is in question          | No one else with any pretense of legitimacy       | Magical guardian beast or beasts  |
| 9   | Ownership of vital regalia is disputed | Only they know how to work the government         | Powerful empyrean wards           |
| 10  | Someone resents a lack of reward       | Their lineage is needed to operate vital magic    | Powerful personal defensive magic |
| 11  | Someone's genealogy is challenged      | They represent the major elements of society      | Swarms of trained guardsmen       |
| 12  | Someone's using dark sorcery           | They're holding back a dire threat to the society | Vast mobs of devoted servants     |

# BUREAUCRATIC COURTS

Bureaucracies are found most often in socially sophisticated, high-population communities. In Arcem, the nations of Dulimbai and the Bright Republic are administered by bureaucracies, while almost every major city on the continent has an urban bureaucracy to oversee the city's operation. More primitive societies tend to be directly administered by the nobles of an aristocratic court, with clerks and officials replaced and arranged at their patron's whim.

Bureaucracies can be savage in a way that conventional aristocracies can't approach. An aristocracy is usually based on bloodlines, limiting the number of potential competitors for power, whereas a nation-spanning bureaucracy offers places to anyone with the cunning and determination to take one. The intrigues and schemes within a large bureaucracy can result in a body count high enough to impress a Raktine voivode. Anyone capable of attaining high rank in a great bureaucracy is almost certainly capable of far less charitable acts.

The actors and roles below are applicable chiefly to national bureaucracies, but can be translated as needed into city officialdom.

## D12 HOW IS THE BUREAUCRACY REGARDED?

- 1 Admired, for its probity and efficiency at its work.
- 2 Aristocratic, as a refuge for excess noble offspring.
- 3 Autocratic, the real power behind a puppet ruler.
- 4 Contemptuously, as a pack of incompetent obstacles.
- 5 Corrupt, willing to do anything for a little silver.
- 6 Dangerous, where political losers tend to die young.
- 7 Hidebound, in opposition to all new things of any kind.
- 8 Irrelevant, with the real administration lying elsewhere.
- 9 Novel, being new to the area or full of new methods.
- 10 Pious, largely an outgrowth of the local majority faith.
- 11 Reverenced, as cultured elite due honor and respect.
- 12 Self-interested, only concerned with its own power.

| D12 | MAJOR ACTOR                   | MINOR ACTOR                          | POWER SOURCES                                            |
|-----|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | "Retired" kingmaker           | Ambitious young clerk                | Numerous important locals owe them big favors            |
| 2   | Chief justice                 | An official's favorite lover         | Only they actually know how to operate the bureau        |
| 3   | Chief spymaster               | Clerk who spies for a rival official | Their peers in the bureau all admire and like them       |
| 4   | Head of tax collection        | Crony capitalist business owner      | Their police ties give them legal carte blanche for much |
| 5   | Head of the police            | Cynical clerk seducing their way up  | They have access to relevant state secrets               |
| 6   | Minister of Agriculture       | Desperately confused petitioner      | They have blackmail material on their superiors          |
| 7   | Minister of Foreign Affairs   | Distracted record archivist          | They have limited but very useful legislative power      |
| 8   | Minister of Internal Affairs  | Hapless tax debtor doing "favors"    | They have powerful business ties they can exploit        |
| 9   | Minister of Temples           | Litigant seeking to bribe someone    | They have the means and allies to assassinate people     |
| 10  | Minister of Trade             | Official demoted for his sins        | They have ties to powerful local criminal groups         |
| 11  | Minister of War               | Smuggler dodging tariffs             | They're deeply loved by the local ruler for their skills |
| 12  | Secretary of a great minister | Wizened old clerk who knows all      | They're very personally wealthy or from a rich family    |

| D12 | CONFLICTS                               | CONSEQUENCES OF ITS DESTRUCTION                   | COURT DEFENSES                     |
|-----|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1   | A noble's trying to muscle the bureau   | A critical project would fail with much suffering | A mighty wizard in their debt      |
| 2   | A reformer wants to kick someone out    | A now-unfettered rival would seize much power     | Confiscated magical artifacts      |
| 3   | A usurper seeks someone's position      | A rival bureaucracy would gain their portfolio    | Contingent of well-trained police  |
| 4   | Somebody's embezzling state funds       | A vital government function would cease           | Deal with a supernatural protector |
| 5   | Someone's a spy for another bureau      | An enemy nation would take advantage of it        | Decentralized offices of import    |
| 6   | Someone's an agent of a foreign state   | An incompetent noble would take over, badly       | Detachments of regular soldiers    |
| 7   | The bureau is too rich for its own good | Complete administrative paralysis of the nation   | Guardian sorcerers for the office  |
| 8   | The bureau's critically underfunded     | Criminal powers would fill the vacuum             | Heavily-armed tax enforcers        |
| 9   | The bureau's job just got terribly hard | Government secrets would scatter with clerks      | Not all clerks are human           |
| 10  | The bureau's missing taxes or fees due  | It would enrage the ruler or other bureaucrats    | Operatives from the espionage arm  |
| 11  | The bureau's riddled with corruption    | Oppressed peasants would chance a revolt          | Sheer numbers of clerks            |
| 12  | The ruler is upset with the bureau      | Unrelated services would worsen as focus shifts   | Venerable fixed wards              |

# BUSINESS COURTS

Not every nation looks kindly upon merchants. In some lands they are considered to be little more than parasites to be barely tolerated for their utility, avaricious graspers beneath even the lowest farmer or craftsman in their social standing. In others, they might openly rule the nation through a council of guilds or oligarchy of powerful megacorp representatives.

Some businesses may have their own force of guards or black-suited heavies, but most of the others won't have any more muscle available than that employed by the nearest bold-hearted employee. Direct violence against such businesses is often easy enough to accomplish, but the friends they have in the local government can make for painful consequences. Even when that's not the case, the disruption of local commerce can have catastrophic effects on the common folk.

PCs who enlist the aid of a major local business can expect a lot of practical jobs to get done without the burden of Influence commitment. A well-placed business can often do more good than any number of swordsmen.

## D12 How is the Business Currently Doing?

- 1 They're teetering on the edge of bankruptcy.
- 2 It's been a long, dry season of barely hanging on.
- 3 It's a recent golden age of sudden, dramatic expansion.
- 4 It's chasing itself in circles, without coherent direction.
- 5 It's being threatened by a rival enterprise.
- 6 It's made an enemy of the local officials somehow.
- 7 A great opportunity is present, albeit hard to exploit.
- 8 It's fat and happy, going on as it always has before.
- 9 The local ruler has an interest in its thriving.
- 10 It's secretly cutting corners in its products or services.
- 11 It's getting by on past glories, now a dwindled remnant.
- 12 It's trying to branch out into a new field or location.

| D12 | MAJOR ACTOR                 | MINOR ACTOR                     | POWER SOURCES                                             |
|-----|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Biggest business rival      | "Protection" outfit heavy       | The business owes them a great deal of money.             |
| 2   | Biggest customer            | Aspiring vendor to the business | The employees love them and listen to them unfailingly.   |
| 3   | Brash entrepreneur          | Bribeable local inspector       | The others are physically afraid of their displeasure.    |
| 4   | Brilliant innovator         | Devoted long-time staffer       | The vendors only trust them to negotiate supply buys.     |
| 5   | Careless owner's child      | Embittered ex-employee          | They can legally wreck the business if too displeased.    |
| 6   | Chief accountant            | Gold-digging lover of the owner | They have magic or technology critical to the business.   |
| 7   | Critically-skilled employee | Infuriated customer             | They hold a secret critical to carrying out the business. |
| 8   | Hard-bitten founder         | Oldest employee of the business | They know the details of a secret crime of the business.  |
| 9   | Heir-apparent to business   | Petty thief of stock            | They legally hold a large amount of the business' money.  |
| 10  | Main supplier of goods      | Shady black market contact      | They own the deed to a major business facility.           |
| 11  | Major investor              | Spy for a rival business        | They're holding back the local extortionists and thieves. |
| 12  | Popular crew foreman        | Wildly impractical dreamer      | They're particularly friendly with the local ruler.       |

| D12 | CONFLICTS                                  | CONSEQUENCES OF ITS DESTRUCTION                       | COURT DEFENSES                   |
|-----|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1   | A competitor's trying to buy them out.     | A fragile, valuable economic link breaks up.          | "Protection" outfit legbreakers  |
| 2   | A traitor's working for a competitor.      | Debt chain reaction takes out a major firm.           | A crew of burly, loyal employees |
| 3   | It's struggling under a heavy debt.        | It would enrage their major customers.                | Decentralized business control   |
| 4   | Major actors are divided on strategy.      | It would infuriate influential business partners.     | Expensive lawyers                |
| 5   | Recent effort has gone drastically bad.    | Only they can provide a critical local service.       | Heavily fortified businessplace  |
| 6   | The employees are in an uproar.            | The local ruler relies on it for exerting control.    | Hired local wizard               |
| 7   | The locals blame it for something dire.    | Their competitors are much more rapacious.            | Hired mercenaries                |
| 8   | The owner is incapacitated indefinitely.   | They provide critical employment to locals.           | Inherited magical defenses       |
| 9   | The ruler "asked" for a very costly favor. | They're holding a community creditor at bay.          | Personally fearsome owner        |
| 10  | Their survival hinges on ongoing crime.    | They're keeping out ruffians and exploiters.          | Protective local citizens        |
| 11  | They're covering up a major crime.         | They're paying off outside threats or grafters.       | Purchased magical defenses       |
| 12  | They've lost a vital secret or tool.       | They're the only supplier of a vital local necessity. | Special police protection        |

# Community Courts

Small villages, city neighborhoods, and tribal groups all have their own particular dynamics. Novice Godbound are particularly likely to find themselves dealing with these small communities and borderland villages, and they have the power to change life dramatically for the residents of these places.

Small communities rarely run by raw force. A city official might have guardsmen at their disposal and a largely unchallenged monopoly on violence. A village mayor or tribal chieftain has no such luxury. They're far enough from central authority to have to sort out their own problems, and the chiefs who try to solve all their difficulties with the spears of their kinsmen will rapidly run out of kinsmen.

Decisions and punishments instead come through group consensus and the guidance of mutually-accepted tradition. Rival actors strive to make sure they have the bulk of the community on their side, with enough margin to overawe any resistance. This persuasion can take place via money or threats, but also through the remembrance of old favors, kinship ties, and reminders of old grudges to be satisfied.

## D12 Community Temperament

- 1 Amoral, indifferent to harm to outsiders or strangers
- 2 Corrupt, dealing with bandits and the sinister
- 3 Dislocated, recently forced to move or give up land
- 4 Divided, two factions furious with each other
- 5 Flush, enjoying new wealth from some new source
- 6 Insular, polite but reluctant to deal with strangers
- 7 Martial, expecting violence from the world
- 8 Oppressed, afflicted by some outside power
- 9 Pious, with life revolving around the community faith
- 10 Placid, the locals largely content with their lot
- 11 Rigid, clinging to tradition in the face of some peril
- 12 Xenophobic, mistrusting outsiders as dangerous

| D12 | MAJOR ACTOR                  | MINOR ACTOR                        | POWER SOURCES                                           |
|-----|------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Best hunter or farmer        | Adulterous spouse of major actor   | Important outsiders will only deal with them            |
| 2   | Biggest gossip               | Bad-luck farmer or hunter          | Only they know a skill that's vital to the community    |
| 3   | Chief troublemaker           | Bandit seeking refuge or loot      | Their word is taken as final in matters of tradition    |
| 4   | Hedge magician               | Barfly who hears all               | They have a huge family that backs them                 |
| 5   | Keeper of local relics       | Local innkeeper or guest-keeper    | They have a powerful magical item at their disposal     |
| 6   | Mayor or chieftain           | Local miller or tanner             | They have outsider friends with few scruples            |
| 7   | Most eligible unwed youth    | Naive farm lad or lass             | They have unusual wealth for the community              |
| 8   | Official from outside world  | Native prodigy at some local skill | They know secret magic or forbidden arts                |
| 9   | Rich trader or merchant      | Outcast suspected of evil magic    | They know the local terrain and its useful secrets      |
| 10  | Rival village or tribe chief | Part-time prostitute               | They're related to several important families or people |
| 11  | Shaman or village priest     | Retired outsider seeking quiet     | They're remarkably beautiful and persuasive             |
| 12  | Wealthy outsider             | Shabby vagabond                    | They're very personally formidable in a fight           |

| D12 | CONFLICTS                               | CONSEQUENCES OF ITS DESTRUCTION                  | COMMUNITY DEFENSES                 |
|-----|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1   | A family head is mistreating their kin  | A celestial law will loosen due to lack of rites | A guardian spirit or entity        |
| 2   | A family is being denied its old rights | A dark power will recruit the survivors          | A mighty retired hero              |
| 3   | A local is profiting from a dire crime  | A local noble will be angry at the loss          | A mob of angry peasants            |
| 4   | A new faith is preaching to locals      | A now-unchecked threat will grow                 | A potent local sorcerer            |
| 5   | Dire want threatens family survival     | A survivor will cut a deal with a sinister power | A relic of protection or power     |
| 6   | Locals struggle to own a new discovery  | An important trade link will collapse            | A resident noble and his guards    |
| 7   | Outsiders seek to buy village land      | Kin-related villages will be furious             | A secret cult with potent magic    |
| 8   | Outsiders seek to control the group     | Nearby communities will lack a vital export      | A small garrison of outside troops |
| 9   | Someone might be using dark magic       | Revolutionaries will recruit the survivors       | Bandits who need the group         |
| 10  | Someone wants to attack a rival group   | Survivors will scatter and speak of the PCs      | Close alliances with neighbors     |
| 11  | Tradition is demanding a sacrifice      | The fury of a powerful home-town hero            | So poor they can easily flee       |
| 12  | Vital resources are being depleted      | The survivors will turn to banditry              | Trained guardian beasts            |

# CRIMINAL COURTES

Criminal organizations, street gangs, and secret cabals of the mighty all play an active role in most major human communities. Heroes who find themselves at cross purposes with a guild of assassins might encounter these groups as foes, while those who struggle against a tyrant can find them useful allies in their cause, if perhaps not particularly trustworthy ones.

Criminal groups provide an outlet for desires and inclinations that the society cannot openly permit. Theft, violence, rule outside the conventional political lines, and other exertions of human ambition are welcomed by these organizations. Buyers of forbidden substances, illicit services, or hidden information all find uses for their help. These seekers and buyers are the constituency of any criminal group.

Heroes often encounter these groups as enemies, as precious few of them have any interest in goals beyond their own personal satisfactions. Simply killing a thief king or guildmaster of assassins rarely changes affairs, for the essential desires remain along with personnel to replace the fallen. Eliminating them often requires structural change.

## D12 Main Line of Crime

- 1 Banditry in the surrounding area
- 2 Blackmailing and spying for the rich
- 3 Extortion from local merchants
- 4 Fighting rival groups for turf
- 5 Hired assassination and other violence
- 6 Human trafficking for labor or pleasure
- 7 Import of drugs or forbidden contraband
- 8 Persecuting a perceived group of enemies
- 9 Pickpocketing and petty theft
- 10 Smuggling of goods to avoid customs taxes
- 11 Theft and embezzlement from the government
- 12 Vices of all expensive kinds

| D12 | MAJOR ACTOR             | MINOR ACTOR         | POWER SOURCES                                   |
|-----|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Ambitious revolutionary | Ambitious thief     | Controls a dangerous gang or cabal              |
| 2   | Beggar king             | Bribed guardsman    | Controls fencing or money handling              |
| 3   | Brothel owner           | Canny smuggler      | Handles the corrupt local officials             |
| 4   | Corrupt official        | Cynical prostitute  | Has a stable of urchins and/or prostitutes      |
| 5   | Expert cat burglar      | Disposable thug     | Has connections with the local elite            |
| 6   | Family patriarch        | Embezzling clerk    | Has potent magic or a powerful relic            |
| 7   | Gang leader             | Frightened shopkeep | Knows secret paths and ways to anywhere         |
| 8   | Grasping priest         | Reluctant debtor    | Owns a number of useful front businesses        |
| 9   | Loan shark              | Roving pickpocket   | Patriarch/matriarch of extended criminal family |
| 10  | Master assassin         | Scrawny urchin      | Provides a driving ideology for the group       |
| 11  | Scheming merchant       | Sharp-eyed beggar   | Provides muscle or murder for the group         |
| 12  | Venal priest            | Well-paid lawyer    | Provides social legitimacy for the group        |

| D12 | CONFLICTS                              | CONSEQUENCES OF ITS DESTRUCTION                   | ORGANIZATION DEFENSES        |
|-----|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1   | A lieutenant rebels against the boss   | A local group relies on them for a living         | Crew of elite assassins      |
| 2   | An assassin's after a major actor      | The ruler uses them to contain a serious rival    | Elaborate poisons            |
| 3   | Control of a new drug or contraband    | Their affiliates provide vital financial services | Extremely hard to find       |
| 4   | Control of an important local official | Their blackmail would get out, causing chaos      | Frame foes for crimes        |
| 5   | Dispute over whether to kill someone   | They act as jailers to a magical danger           | Hidden in fortified area     |
| 6   | Expulsion of outsiders from their turf | They actually provide vital aid to the poor       | Hostages or familial threats |
| 7   | Possession of a new-found treasure     | They bleed off otherwise-active rebels            | Innocent front group         |
| 8   | Revenge for a theft or offense         | They defend an innocent group from pogroms        | Many suborned commoners      |
| 9   | Someone's trying to unify local gangs  | They hold back a tyrannical force of oppression   | Mobs of burly street thugs   |
| 10  | Someone's turned traitor to the law    | They keep monsters from infesting dark places     | Several corrupt officials    |
| 11  | Subverting a source of law and order   | They keep practical order on the streets          | Stolen magical relics        |
| 12  | Turf struggle over working territories | They retain important magical arts                | Treacherous seducer          |

# Temple Courts

Even in the wake of the Shattering and the fall of the Made Gods, humanity requires the consolation of faith. Shrines provide a place of meaning for believers, a place where their purpose can be revealed and the right way to happiness can be taught. Whether Unitary churches, temples to the glorious ancestors of the state, shrines to wildland gods, or retreats of mystical philosophy, these temples provide the service of meaning to those who come to them.

Temples often have powerful influence on the populace of a location. Nobles and commoners alike are eager for the favor of the gods and the pardon of their sins, and their belief in these things is often both strong and sincere. In a world of such terrible marvels and ineffable wonders, what sensible soul would deny the importance of recruiting as much mystical help as possible?

Temples have allies among both the faithful and the spiritual entities they serve. Even entirely unaffiliated powers can be enlisted into a temple's service through the correct rites and the right tweaks of theology. Such creativity is often embraced when it proves needful.

D12

## Temple Mood

- 1 Antiquated, caring only for things of a different time
- 2 Austere, refraining from visible luxury or indulgence
- 3 Careless, priests little interested in spiritual duties
- 4 Confused, in the midst of some great change
- 5 Distracted, the priests caring about a secular matter
- 6 Laboring, hard-pressed by the needs of believers
- 7 Mystical, full of somewhat incomprehensible priests
- 8 Opulent, jeweled and golden in wild excess
- 9 Rigid, uniform and disciplined in its clergy
- 10 Tense, priests constantly ready to attack each other
- 11 Unworldly, reluctant to get involved with secular things
- 12 Vengeful, furious against the enemies or rivals

| D12 | MAJOR ACTOR                | MINOR ACTOR          | POWER SOURCES                                   |
|-----|----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Aged holy figure           | Devoted commoner     | A favorite of the local nobility or elite       |
| 2   | Eager reformer             | Dusty librarian      | Beloved by the poor faithful of the religion    |
| 3   | High priest or priestess   | Foreign pilgrim      | Controls a vital relic of the faith             |
| 4   | Keeper of the relics       | Grubby temple serf   | Divine spouse or beloved of an important cleric |
| 5   | Leader of a faithful group | Guilt-stricken local | Famously effective debater or apologist         |
| 6   | Magically-gifted priest    | Household priest     | Has a sacred or important bloodline             |
| 7   | Pious noble                | Instructor-priest    | Has access to great wealth personally           |
| 8   | Popular preacher           | Naive monk           | Has some useful or potent form of magic         |
| 9   | Propounder of a heresy     | Relic vendor         | Has taught or brought up most local clergy      |
| 10  | Temple guard chief         | Temple guardsman     | Holds a vital position as a life-long post      |
| 11  | Temple treasurer           | Temple spy           | Knows a wealth of secrets and confessions       |
| 12  | Zealous crime boss         | Tithe collector      | Owens the temple building or land               |

| D12 | CONFLICTS                                | CONSEQUENCES OF ITS DESTRUCTION                   | TEMPLE DEFENSES             |
|-----|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1   | A cleric seeking a pact with evil        | A curse will fall upon desecrators                | Powerful priestly magic     |
| 2   | Accepting another temple's authority     | A dangerous cult will fill the void               | Animated idol               |
| 3   | Change of the temple's political focus   | Government needs its support for legitimacy       | Divine blessings on temple  |
| 4   | Control of a powerful, naive believer    | It will infuriate a foreign branch of the faith   | Many sturdy guardsmen       |
| 5   | Enlisting an unsavory group of allies    | It's maintaining vital spiritual defenses         | Infuriated mob              |
| 6   | Major cleric pursuing a secret vice      | It's sealing away a terrible power                | Noble patrons               |
| 7   | Obscure but vital theological dispute    | Its destruction will incite a violent prophet     | Sacred beast or summons     |
| 8   | Overthrow of a troublesome local         | Local believers will be riotous                   | Fortified temple            |
| 9   | Performing a dangerous magic rite        | Only it knows how to perform a vital service      | Fanatical zealots           |
| 10  | Quarrel over control of the treasury     | The local poor rely on temple charity             | Powerful defensive relics   |
| 11  | Selling a mighty relic or great treasure | The local rulers will be outraged                 | Wards against divine powers |
| 12  | Silencing of a problematic priest        | Will cause drastic celestial damage to local laws | Dire curse on assailants    |

## BUILDING AN EXAMPLE COURT

The GM is beginning the game in the Raktian Confederacy, with the heroes starting out in the market town of Varbitsa. The GM has decided that Varbitsa is a fairly ordinary Raktian town, with a ruling voivode and his court. As the GM finds it likely that the PCs will entangle themselves with the authorities sooner or later, they decide to roll up an aristocratic court for Varbitsa. While they could pick items from the list, they decide to spice things up with random rolls.

The first roll is for the power structure of the court, and comes up “Anarchic”. Despite the voivode’s best efforts, neither he nor anyone else has an unchallenged grip on affairs. This spells misfortune for the town, for a weak leader means trouble in the Raktines.

The GM then turns to the court table and rolls for three major actors, coming up with the ruler, the ruler’s heir, and the ruler’s favored courtier. The GM takes a moment to name each of these, as the Voivode Nicolai Vasile, his eldest son Dragomir, and the peerlessly charming Lady Stefania of his court.

Now the GM rolls to determine why these three figures are important. The voivode is, of course, the voivode, but the title itself is only so much use. The dice say his real strength comes from the vigorous support of the local church, with its priests preaching regularly of his piety and the blessings it brings his lands. For his son, it is his bloodline and legitimacy; there are no other real candidates for the succession should the voivode meet with misfortune. For the Lady Stefania, it appears that her father left her a vast sum of wealth which she employs to her best advantage.

And what advantage is desired? The GM rolls for a conflict now, to see what the immediate problem at court might be. The dice say that land ownership is in question. Given the anarchic state of the court, it seems that voivode Nicolai and his son are not in full agreement as to who should rule the city. Dragomir clearly thinks his father is too besotted with the priests, and should retire to a monastery to pray away his many sins. Nicolai is aged and unwell, and much distracted by his piety, but refuses to yield to the “suggestions” of his son. The officials of the court fear the anger of both, and so occupy themselves in avoiding notice rather than carrying out their contradictory instructions.

Lady Stefania is yet neutral in this dispute, for she has not decided which of the two would mean more power for her. She could force Dragomir to marry her for her support, but is it safe to ally with one who would depose his own father? Nicolai is safer, but if his son is banished, what will become of Varbitsa when the voivode dies?

Now the GM rolls up a few minor actors for flavor, coming up with Signore Vezzini, the skilled Vissian painter employed by Nicolai, Grigori the lickspittle toady who does Dragomir’s dirty work, and the splendid singer Alina who entertains Lady Stefania and the court. The GM can use these NPCs as color for the court and names to slot in to any intrigues that might ensue.

But what happens if the heroes simply kill the voivode or use raw force to compel his cooperation? Such an act would destroy his legitimacy as a ruler and lose him what little control he retains. To find out the exact consequences, the GM rolls on the table and finds out that in truth, nothing at all bad would happen. Varbitsa is so accustomed to its hamstrung leadership that it’s learned to function without them.

The voivode and his court are unlikely to wish to bow meekly to such force, however, so the GM rolls to find out what sort of defenses

these aristocrats have against brute bullying. It appears that a very capable sorcerer is on retainer for the court, and since this is Raktia, the GM decides that it is a theurgist of the nearby Black Academy, one capable of working spells that might discomfit even a Godbound. The GM gives her the name Cosima, and decides she is largely indifferent to the doings of the court so long as she gets her pay and a suitable supply of criminals as experimental subjects. The GM notes down her combat statistics as a lesser Eldritch from the bestiary chapter.

Lastly, the GM rolls to determine the court’s overall mood, to better describe it to the PCs. The dice say that the court is corrupt, and that nothing happens without money. The quarreling between the voivode and his heir has clearly resulted in pay being stopped for many of the lesser officials and servants, and they are now so desperate for money that they will perform almost any favor for enough silver. Lady Stefania doubtless takes much advantage of this.

To wrap things up, the GM now notes down this information on a 3x5 index card, writing down the names of the actors, their power sources, the nature of the conflict in the court, and the combat statistics for Cosima. On the back of the card will be recorded any further events and notes made about PC involvement in affairs.

Had the GM less certainty about what aristocratic court would be important for their game, they could have easily done the process up to this point to make a “blank” court, just leaving out NPC names and the details of the conflict. Had Varbitsa’s court suddenly become important, they could then take five minutes during play to fill in some Raktian names, smooth out the conflict into the context of Varbitsa, and rolled with that.

### CRUSHING A COURT

There will inevitably be times when the PCs just don’t have the time or the inclination to play nicely with a court. Either through brute force or mind-control powers, they’ll seek to simply compel the court’s members to give them the aid or submission they seek. As the GM, there are a few things to keep in mind with this.

First, not all courts can be pushed over so easily. The tables in this section provide examples and suggestions for a court’s major guardians, but powerful nations or major organizations are going to have a wide array of protections against simple force. Overthrowing an emperor should never be impossible for Godbound, but it may be *impractical* for a given pantheon.

Second, some courts really can be pushed over that easily. The village elders may have nothing more than their strong sons to enforce their will, and if a Godbound decides to make them do something, they’ve got little choice but to obey. Don’t hesitate to let a pantheon shove around a court that wouldn’t rationally have the resources to stand up to them.

Third, raw force almost never gives results as satisfactory as working with the court. Even if the members are reduced to puppets, the people they command and those who obey them are likely to recognize the coercion or uncharacteristic pliancy of their leaders. This loss of legitimacy will bring trouble, and the problems exemplified in the tables are just some possibilities. The longer the situation persists, the more likely an uprising.

# CREATING A RUIN

"Ruin" is a catch-all term for any potentially dangerous place that would reward the PCs' exploration. It can be an actual ruin, or a parasite god's temple, or the stronghold of a mutant bandit clan, or the labyrinthine sewers of a Patrian city, or a shimmering fragment of fallen Heaven itself. The ruin is dangerous, but there's something there that would make its exploration worthwhile for the PCs.

Ruins need to be interesting. They form the "situation" backdrop of a session, which means they need an adequate supply of challenges and novelties to play with. While it's possible to make a ruin by simply slapping down a location, stuffing a monster in it, and dropping a pile of gold in the corner, such desultory ruins aren't likely to entertain.

Start with identifying the ruin's original purpose. This might be randomly rolled or it could be determined by the needs of the session. If the PCs are trying to reach a shard of Heaven to plunder its damaged engines, then you're going to need to create a shard. If you're just brewing up a ruin to have some quick content in your back pocket, then you can let the dice have their way.

Once you know what it was for, pick or roll a hazard for it. Quite aside from any lethal inhabitants, this hazard explains why the ruin is still a ruin and hasn't already been looted bare. Some ruins might not have an intrinsic hazard, but adding one can help simplify your life when you need to come up with little details for the place.

With that settled, determine the ruin's reward. This may not actually be a good thing, but it's the thing that makes the ruin worth exploring

for the PCs. It's some magical object, fragment of lore, vital NPC, or circumstantial benefit that comes from mastering the place's perils. The Treasure chapter of the book describes lesser caches that can be found around the place, but the ruin's reward should be something that makes the players feel like they haven't wasted their effort.

Next, choose or roll the ruin's inhabitants. These may not be invariably hostile to outsiders, particularly outsiders as impressive and persuasive as Godbound can be. Keep the setting's logic in mind when determining these inhabitants; just because the PCs are at a certain power level doesn't mean that the inhabitants are a "fair" combat match for them. The inhabitants should make sense for the location, whether that's a random pile of rocks in the Golden Wastes or the vaulted halls of a shard of Heaven.

Now dress the ruin up with locations of interest. You don't need to map out the entire place, but you do need a half-dozen or so locations inside it that are somehow engaging to the PCs. Maybe they have monsters in them, or loot, or gewgaws for the PCs to fiddle with, or NPCs willing to negotiate with the intruders.

Lastly, go through and handle the paperwork for the place. Note down combat statistics for the inhabitants. Make or scavenge a map for the place if it's important, though pole-and-torch-style dungeon exploration is rarely necessary with Godbound. Wrap it all up in a form you can use quickly at the table, and you now have a ruin fit for the inquisitiveness of a pantheon.

## THE RUIN'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE

Most of the time you'll know *why* you need a ruin, but you may not know exactly what that ruin should be. Identifying the original role of a structure makes it easier to flesh out internal locations, choose interesting features for the PCs to encounter, and determine what sort of inhabitants would make the most sense for the place. Particularly large ruins might be composed of several different sub-complexes that each have their own original identity.

Most actual ruins have been lost to their original purposes for centuries, if not longer. Some might be strongholds of the Former Empires, broken and abandoned in the chaos of the Last War, while others could be relics of the modern nations. The ruin's hazard likely explains why the current rulers haven't tried to reclaim the place, even assuming they have the strength to do so.

Other "ruins" are still in current use, and might even still be functioning according to their original purpose. In some cases, the original inhabitants might still be there, either personally or in the form of their many-generations-removed heirs. These functional sites are either hidden from the world or perhaps have certain agreements with powerful figures, buying their independence with resources, skills or servitors that otherwise can't be had.

A ruin's original use should inform the rest of its components. When choosing locations, think about the kind of interesting places that should exist in a site like this one. Don't hesitate to adjust things in light of nameless centuries of alternate use, but the baubles and equipment of the original site are likely to be found here somewhere, even if only in the treasure hoard of some ineffable horror spawned in a former age.

### d20

### ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF THE RUIN

- |    |                                                  |
|----|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Covert base for spies or a rebel cell            |
| 2  | Fortress or military installation                |
| 3  | Gatehouse for a Night Road                       |
| 4  | Magical or high-tech transport nexus             |
| 5  | Military base or training area                   |
| 6  | Mine or resource extraction site                 |
| 7  | Palace for a great official                      |
| 8  | Part of a ruined city or town's residential area |
| 9  | Prison camp for enemies                          |
| 10 | Prison for a supernatural entity                 |
| 11 | Refuge for survivors of the Shattering           |
| 12 | Resort for the elite or the wealthy              |
| 13 | Sealed site of a magical disaster                |
| 14 | Semi-magical manufactory                         |
| 15 | Survival bunker for government elite             |
| 16 | Temple or monastery to worship a Made God        |
| 17 | Theotechnical research site                      |
| 18 | Trading nexus with transit and storage           |
| 19 | University or arcane school                      |
| 20 | Vault or treasury for some mighty relic          |

# RUIN HAZARDS

A ruin's hazard explains why the place hasn't been stripped to the bare walls by now. Not all ruins will have a hazard, but those without them likely have inhabitants or other defenders bent on ensuring that their home doesn't become someone else's property. Conversely, a ruin might have two or more hazards complicating its exploration.

A ruin's hazard should inform its structure, locations of importance, and inhabitants. Tying the place's details into its hazard helps give a place a sense of coherence and a particular mood, and can help a GM provide color details by riffing on its particular omnipresent peril.

## HAZARD TYPES

**Abundant Traps:** The place is crusted over with dangerous snares and security measures. A properly-gifted Godbound can likely bypass most of these, but ordinary mortals aren't so fortunate.

**Autonomous Defenses:** The ruin has some independent defense system that stubbornly guards it, most likely a set of Relict automations. Undead or long-lived servitor creatures might serve as well.

**Crumbling Structure:** The ruin is falling apart, and anyone venturing into it risks bringing it down on top of their heads if they create too much of a commotion. Floors, ceilings, and walls can go at any time.

**Cyclical Destruction:** Every so often, something happens to kill everything in the ruin; an energy wave, a tide of fast-breeding super-vermin, inundation by a toxic substance, or the like. This cycle might be triggered by intruders or something they're likely to do.

**False Exterior:** The ruin looks like something else, either an already-picked-over tumble of stones or a friendly settlement that hides the ruin as its secret. Secret entrances or magical ingresses are common.

**Heritor Inhabitants:** The original occupants of the ruin are still around, though probably in the form of a culture or even physical shape that is no longer the same. They very rarely welcome visitors.

**Honey Trap:** The ruin looks like something very appealing to intruders, like a treasure vault, friendly sanctuary, or a library filled with valuable theurgic secrets. In actuality, it's a trap to catch and murder intruders when their guard is down.

**Hostile Environment:** The ruin is full of something toxic or difficult to navigate, whether that's murky water or heavy radiation. It might be possible to "turn off" this environment, or intruders might just have to be equipped to deal with it.

**Lethal Surroundings:** The ruin might not be so bad, but the area around it is murderously dangerous. It might be teeming with dangerous creatures, vicious natives, or potentially-lethal terrain.

**Lingering Curse:** The ruin is magically blighted, and anyone who gets too close is going to be cursed as well. Godbound might have the Words to mitigate the curse, but lifting it will require major effort.

**Mutated Guardians:** The original inhabitants or a past occupant has stocked the ruin with twisted guardian creatures. Most such creatures require something the ruin provides in order to survive, keeping them from spreading too far afield.

**Perpetual War Zone:** Multiple factions within the ruin are constantly fighting each other. Depending on their degree of xenophobia, they might seek to enlist outsiders as allies, or just use them as free rations.

**Remote Location:** The ruin is exceedingly far away from anything else of importance, and its entrance is probably well-hidden. Reaching the ruin will necessitate a long trip at the least, likely through hostile lands to an imprecise destination.

d20

## RUIN HAZARDS

- |    |                      |
|----|----------------------|
| 1  | Abundant Traps       |
| 2  | Autonomous Defenses  |
| 3  | Crumbling Structure  |
| 4  | Cyclical Destruction |
| 5  | False Exterior       |
| 6  | Heritor Inhabitants  |
| 7  | Honey Trap           |
| 8  | Hostile Environment  |
| 9  | Lethal Surroundings  |
| 10 | Lingering Curse      |
| 11 | Mutated Guardians    |
| 12 | Perpetual War Zone   |
| 13 | Remote Location      |
| 14 | Sealed Entrance      |
| 15 | Swarm Hive           |
| 16 | Taboo Wardens        |
| 17 | Temporal Lock        |
| 18 | Titanic Beast        |
| 19 | Toxic Miasma         |
| 20 | Verticality          |

**Sealed Entrance:** The ruin's entrance is bound shut by magic or ancient technology. Most such seals are too complex and multi-layered to be easily opened by Godbound miracles, though a Godbound with the Journeying gift *Master of the Key* likely could get it open.

**Swarm Hive:** The ruin is teeming with a hive of some dangerous creature. While defeating these individual entities might be trivial to Godbound intruders, they almost always work in vast, well-coordinated Mobs of furious defenders.

**Taboo Wardens:** The ruin is forbidden, either by ancient law, local custom, or the conviction of a powerful local faith. Wardens have been appointed to guard the site against intruders.

**Temporal Lock:** The ruin is only accessible at a specific time, such as a particular day of the year or time of day, and may not even exist outside the correct hour. Godbound of Time might be able to force its entrance into synchrony.

**Titanic Beast:** Some terrible monster lairs in the ruin, one fearsome enough to give even a Godbound pantheon a good fight. It may have younger spawn or a mate to complicate the engagement.

**Toxic Miasma:** There's poison in the atmosphere of the ruin. It may be quite subtle, with progressive Hardiness saves resisting damage that only becomes obvious during combat, or it might produce a more overt form of injury.

**Verticality:** The ruin is very tall or very deep. Intruders who can't fly or levitate will have a difficult time navigating it, and it might be entirely impossible to reach flying ruins without some means of aerial travel. Optionally, it might be so secure the only way in is above.

# Ruin Rewards

Not every ruin needs a good reason to explore it. Some ruins might be dry holes, mere effort-sinks where the heroes dig their way through the challenges only to find someone else plundered the place in ages past. In most cases, however, a ruin should have a reward, or more than one if the complex is particularly large or important.

The rewards listed here don't include the usual scattering of Wealth and magical items that might be expected to be lying around a ruin or resting in the hands of its inhabitants. The Treasure chapter of this book details the kind of material plunder that the PCs are likely to find in a particular site, and you can roll that up normally for later distribution among the points of interest in the ruin. The table adjacent is meant to address bigger treasures, the kind of material and information rewards that are enough to draw the notice of Godbound.

These rewards do not have to be unmixed blessings. Magical artifacts can be cursed, transport nexuses might take passengers through extremely dangerous transit centers, and dark secrets might mark their bearer to be killed on sight by powers that prefer their secrets remain occluded. If a reward seems a little too straight-forward a benefit, you can always add an extra twist of complication to its retrieval or its possession.

## Types of Rewards

**Arcane Lore:** There are one or more grimoires here containing the details of a theurgic invocation. They might be drawn from the examples given here in the book, or you might make up some new spells for the PCs to discover. Alternately, it might be a cache of instructional materials on a lost form of low magic, one that isn't as potent as theurgy but might still have some effects relevant to the ruin's original purpose.

**Celestial Shards:** These are needed for artifact-crafting and the working of Impossible feats of Dominion. Their presence implies that the ruin was either the original location of a realm-side engine of creation or that the ruin's builders brought in scavenged shards from elsewhere. One shard for every two PCs is usually a good haul.

**Dark Secret:** The ruin contains evidence of some atrocity, crime, or terrible practice that has some meaningful connection to the present-day natives of the area. The locals may not even remember their former sins, or they may make a point of hiding them. They might even still be ongoing, and this evidence would be all too clear.

**Material Wealth:** The Treasure chapter contains guidelines on how much Wealth loot a ruin of a given size and type should have, but this ruin is an exception. You should at least double the expected Wealth, if not more, and place it in some form that would make sense for the ruin's original purpose.

**Needed Key:** The ruin's reward is a key of some kind. It might be a physical key, or a passcode, or a particular magical ritual to be performed at a particular place. Whatever it is, it's needed to get into someplace important, either another ruin or a lost treasure vault.

**Night Road:** There's a Night Road in the bowels of this ruin, but unlike most Night Roads, this one can be sealed or opened from the realm side. PCs who take control of the ruin have an easy ingress to whatever far realm or Heavenly shard to which it might connect.

**Powerful Artifact:** There's a magic item in here powerful enough to impress even a Godbound. It might be a towering godwalker, or it could be a major artifact built with the rules in the Treasure

D12

## The Reward of the Ruin

- |    |                                                         |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Arcane lore, theurgic invocations, or lost low magic    |
| 2  | Celestial shards needed for major works of Dominion     |
| 3  | Dark secret hidden by the locals or their heirs         |
| 4  | Material wealth in coins, gems, or rare substances      |
| 5  | Needed key to some other ruin, unlocking a vault        |
| 6  | Night Road entry that can be opened and closed          |
| 7  | Powerful artifact awaiting a worthy user.               |
| 8  | Revealed plot or early warning of an impending disaster |
| 9  | Token of legitimacy for the local ruling family         |
| 10 | Transport nexus allowing fast travel elsewhere          |
| 11 | Useful ally that can be negotiated or reactivated       |
| 12 | Valuable map to a treasure or to another lost ruin      |

chapter. It's possible that the artifact is somehow connected to the functioning of the ruin, or it might have been lost here by some former unfortunate explorer. Removing it could have consequences.

**Revealed Plot:** Somewhere in the ruin there's clear evidence of a sinister plot in the outside world or an impending catastrophe about to strike the area. This evidence is enough to warn the PCs, but it shouldn't be enough to prevent the catastrophe or blow open the plot by itself. If the PCs want to pursue the matter, the information should give them a general lead.

**Token of Legitimacy:** There's a piece of regalia or a genealogical text somewhere in the ruin that either proves the local ruling family is illegitimate or confers that legitimacy on whoever holds it. The token should be impressive or unusual enough to draw the PCs' attention, though they may not realize its importance until they start showing it to other people or have a Godbound of Knowledge or one with a relevant Fact examine it.

**Transport Nexus:** Fast travel in most realms is limited to the speed of a sailing ship. Long-range teleportation magic is very rare and potent theurgy, and even Godbound of Journeying usually have to traverse the physical space between points. This ruin contains a teleportation device or underground tubeway car that connects the ruin to some distant location, probably another ruin of a similar type. The nexus probably can't be re-worked to aim at a different target, though GMs might allow it as an Impossible project.

**Useful Ally:** There's an entity in this ruin that would make a useful and reliable ally to the PCs. Such a being isn't just one of the inhabitants who could be talked or charmed around to obedience, but an automaton or creature with obvious potential as a servant. The PCs should be able to tell that the entity is a potential ally very easily, or else habits of divine smiting might take the fore.

**Valuable Map:** There's a ruin or cache that nobody knows about, but this map gives relatively clear directions to it. The map might take the form of an actual paper map, or it could be a record kept in the ruin, or an inference drawn from some decorative piece of art. The map might leave out important information about the destination site's defenses or nature.

## RUIN INHABITANTS

The next step in stocking a ruin is to pick out its inhabitants, including one or more **Bosses** for the place. A Boss is intended to be a foe capable of giving a meaningful combat challenge to the heroes, one appropriate to the peril of the ruin.

The difficulty of a Boss should be keyed to what is logical for the ruin, rather than to the pantheon's overall power level. A group of veteran Godbound should not be stumbling over powerful parasite gods in every crumbling villa and mournful tower just because they require such a foe to give them a good fight. Conversely, a group of novice heroes who strut into a shard of fallen Heaven shouldn't be protected from encountering the kind of terrible entities that lair in such places just because they can't reasonably expect to defeat them. If you build a consistent world with logical challenges where they ought to be, your players will be able to make rational decisions about the kind of perils they want to face.

Some ruins might not have a Boss. The danger of the place might be environmental in nature, or it might require wit or negotiation rather than sharp steel to pry out its secrets. Other ruins might have a few dangerous occupants, but nothing that's particularly capable of overcoming a pantheon of Godbound. It's perfectly acceptable to have ruins that don't present a fundamentally martial challenge to the heroes, so long as those ruins give them some other sort of difficulty to face. A ruin with no meaningful challenge in it is something better handled by a few minutes of narration in which you let the heroes describe the way they handle the vastly outclassed inhabitants or trifling obstacles that the ancient builders left behind. If you *do* want a dangerous combat foe in your ruin, however, you want to start with at least one Boss to ensure that there's something there that can put up a decent fight.

First, decide whether you're going to have one Boss or several. Small ruins probably only have room for one, unless they're working together or are in a master-servant relationship. Larger ruins could have several, each with their own territory or coexisting in a wary peace. One might be sealed away, or located in a place inaccessible to the other.

Next, pick the type of Boss that fits the ruin. The lists provided on the following page give various types of inhabitants for the ruins and cues as to appropriate Boss entities for them. In many cases, you'll have to scale individual entities according to your needs; if the entry says an Eldritch is appropriate for the Boss, you'll need to decide yourself whether a lesser, greater, or master Eldritch is appropriate to the place.

Now attach lieutenants and minions to the Boss. Most intelligent Bosses will have at least one right-hand servant or other ally and one or more Mobs of lesser servitors. Bestial Bosses may have mates, fellow pack members, or swarms of spawn. It's all right if the total sum of these perils is clearly too much for the pantheon to face at once. In such cases, the PCs undoubtedly need to divide and conquer the inmates of the ruin, or at least have the sense to not face them all at the same time.

Now you need to give these inhabitants a motivation and goal, as only automatons can be expected to simply stand motionless in a ruin until intruders arrive. Most intelligent creatures will have a reason for being in the ruin and something they want to accomplish there, even if it's something as simple as wanting to live in peace. Unintelligent perils might have the place as a breeding lair, their numbers culled

by hunger or other environmental perils. The tables on the following pages give suggestions and ideas for motivating your ruin inhabitants.

Now that you know who's there, why they're there, and what they want, it's time to give them combat statistics. For many Bosses and their retainers, you can simply copy the stats out of the bestiary chapter of this book. Many Bosses will have access to particular gifts or Words, so you'll want to take a moment to note down some ideas for their miracles or powers in combat using the tools in the bestiary chapter. A short stack of 3x5 cards is handy for this purpose, and when a foe is killed you can keep the card to recycle it later as a different monster with reskinned abilities.

Once you've got your monstrous perils identified and started out, you can set them aside and go on with creating your ruin. You'll want to establish some locations of interest in the ruin and get a general idea of its layout before you plant its occupants. Arrange them logically, keeping in mind the needs and interests of the creatures. Most Bosses will keep their lieutenants close at hand, either out of prudence or out of a need to keep an eye on ambitious underlings.

Once you have a basic set of locations decided, start placing the inhabitants or adding additional locations to serve as lairs, living quarters, or hunting grounds for the creatures. While the spatial relationship between areas is meant to be somewhat abstract, keep in mind the closeness of allied groups. If the pantheon starts a fight in one chamber and the rest of the inhabitants are close enough to hear, the situation may escalate drastically in just a few rounds.

Also remember that most powerful, intelligent Bosses will have their lieutenants or bodyguards close enough to come to their aid in an emergency. Some ruins might be so comfortable and secure that their masters might not worry about such things, but most unspeakable denizens of long-lost subterranean complexes have a more vigorous appreciation of danger. Part of the challenge of overcoming a Boss might be preventing him from calling for overwhelming help.

When placing Mobs, note that some of them might occupy multiple areas within a ruin. A Small Mob usually only fills one room, but a Large Mob might extend over several adjacent areas, and a Vast Mob might swarm an entire section of the ruin. Alerting any of its members will bring the rest running, so heroes who don't want to find themselves facing such a tide of peril are going to have to rely on stealth rather than brute force, or else take out a room's worth of the enemies faster than they can call for help.

With the inhabitants placed, now's a good time to salt down the ruin with the treasures you've rolled or selected from the Treasure chapter. Most loot will have been collected by the inhabitants, assuming they value such things, and artifacts are likely to be held and used by powerful entities. Treasure that hasn't already been collected is likely either hidden, so large and durable as to be impractical to loot, or too dangerous to handle. Some artifacts in particular might be so toxic to mortal wielders that the inhabitants don't dare handle them.

One point to remember is to not place every treasure or artifact directly in the hands of the locals. If the only way to acquire loot is to murder the person holding it, you'll tend to teach the PCs to ignore non-violent means of obtaining the pelf. Stealth and trickery become mere supplements to a good stabbing, rather than alternate ways to snaffle the gold, and Godbound of Deception or other sneaky Words can find their abilities devalued.

## INHABITANT GROUPS

While it's possible to stock your ruin with a scattering of unrelated entities, in most cases a place will be occupied by one or more inhabitant groups. These collections of creatures will be those that fit together, either by nature or by plausible circumstance. Small ruins likely only have one group, while larger ones might have two or more, perhaps more hostile to each other than to potentially-useful intruders.

The groups listed below offer some suggestions as to their constituent members. Lesser foes usually appear in Mobs as described in the bestiary chapter, while major enemies can serve as Bosses for a ruin or as enemies so powerful that they become natural hazards to be avoided by the heroes. Not everything in a ruin has to be plausibly defeatable by the PCs, and sometimes the excitement lies in parley or flight rather than victorious battle.

### RUIN INHABITANTS

**Angelic Cult:** Angelic Regent with Large Mob of human cultists. Possibly Lesser Eldritch high priest and a Titanic Beast guard-creature

**Automaton Defenses:** Small Mob of Automaton Guardians, possibly with individual major automatons with Titanic Beast or Twisted Ogre statistics

**Bandit Chief:** Minor or Major Hero with a Skilled Mage lieutenant, a Large Mob of rabble and a Small Mob of veteran bandits

**Exiled Noble:** Minor or Major Hero with a Small Mob of supporters, a Skilled Mage advisor, and one supernatural creature as the mage's familiar

**Heavenly Shard:** Small Mobs of Angelic Ravagers or Angelic Guardians, possibly a Large Mob of Timeworn Survivors or a Hulking Abomination. In the worst case, a Made God is trapped in it.

**Hellish Labyrinth:** Large Mobs of Angelic Guardians, one or more Titanic Beasts, Vast Mob of enslaved dead, possibly an Uncreated interloper. An Angelic Tyrant might rule major sites.

**Intelligent Misbegotten Lair:** Twisted Ogre served by a Large Mob of minor Misbegotten, possibly with a tamed Titanic Beast or Lesser Eldritch sorcerer

**Military Base:** Minor or Major Hero with Vast Mob of soldiers, possibly other Hero lieutenants or Skilled Mage support

**Monstrous Beast Lair:** Titanic Beast, possibly with a Small Mob of weaker offspring or packmates, or possibly a Hulking Abomination instead. Might have numerous dangerous vermin-prey around.

**Night Road Beachhead:** Large Mob of Timeworn Survivors led by an Eldritch, or else a Small Mob of Stalking Horrors led by a Hulking Abomination

**Noble's Household:** Minor or Major Hero with a Skilled Mage advisor, a Small Mob of guards, and possibly one or more other Heroes in their pay

**Parasite God Cult:** Parasite God with Lesser Eldritch high priest, Large Mob of civilian worshipers, and Small Mob of trained warrior-zealots

**Reclusive Archmage:** Eldritch with one or more Skilled Mage apprentices, one or more Hulking Abomination or Titanic Beast guards or familiars

**Relict Population:** Small Mob of Automaton Guardians or Large Mob of Timeworn Survivors. Probably an Eldritch or Major Hero leader for the relicts.

**Sorcerous Cabal:** Several Lesser Eldritch or Skilled Mage cabal-mates with a Small Mob of servitors and possible Angelic Regent patron

**Swarm Hive:** Vast Mob of lesser Misbegotten or Timeworn Survivors, possibly with Titanic Beast or Hulking Abomination "queen" or "alpha"

**Temple Hierarchy:** Eldritch high priest with Skilled Mage underpriests and Large Mob of temple zealots

**Trapped Made God:** Made God with Eldritch high priest, Large Mob of worshipers and theotechnicians trapped there with it

**Uncreated Cyst:** Hulking Abomination with Large Mob of lesser Uncreated and several Stalking Horror minions. Possible Eldritch slave-sorcerer

**Uncreated Invader:** Parasite God-equivalent Uncreated master with one or more Eldritch lieutenants and a Large or Vast Mob of lesser Uncreated. Don't forget the Uncreated's special abilities.

**Undead Ruler:** Eldritch lich-lord or Dried Lord undead warlord with Vast Mob of servitors. Has several war-draugr or priest equivalent minions in its service

### TRAPS AND SHARES

It can be difficult to make a trap that's meaningful enough to hinder a Godbound. Poison needles, falling stone blocks, and spring-blades might be hazardous enough to mortal victims, but the Godbound is likely to suffer nothing worse than a hit point or two of damage and maybe a day-long Effort Commitment if they fail a poison save.

Any trap fearsome enough to concern a Godbound is likely either a Former Empire deathtrap built to take out even the demi-divine servants of a Made God or assailants from the angelic Host, or else it's not actually a *trap* so much as it is a lethal environment. The latter can just be a zone of damage inflicted per minute or hour.

In the former case, pick a Word or two to describe the basic way in which it works; a molten lava trap might involve Fire and Earth, while an electrified floor might be Sky. Godbound with the appropriate Words can defensively dispel the trap, or might be immune to its effects due to their natural qualities.

Next, pick a damage rating. Gotcha-traps that trigger on intruders and function by surprise should do about 10d6 damage, with particularly nasty versions doing d8, d10, or even d12 dice. This might be enough to knock down a novice Godbound or significantly damage a more experienced hero. Heroes who are immune to surprise might detect the trap early, as might those who have Words related to its power as they sense the impending force.

Traps that are obvious and that the PCs clearly have a choice in triggering, like the blatant defensive wards around some ancient relic, should do straight damage starting around 2d6 and up to 10d6 for a tremendously powerful defense. There should be a way to deactivate these traps, and sufficient clues for the PCs to find it.

Saving throws against a trap might spare the victim from damage altogether, or halve the ensuing pain. Such saves should generally be reserved for gotcha-traps. Obvious ones must be deactivated.

# INHABITANT DETAILS

Knowing the general type of the inhabitants isn't enough. You also need to know some facts about the group in order to place them sensibly in the ruin and determine what it is they're trying to accomplish there. Not all groups will be uniformly hostile to outsiders, and not all of them will be single-minded in their reaction to the PCs. The tables here offer some details and complications which you can use to inform the inhabitant groups you create.

Unintelligent or wholly alien creatures might not use these tables, but you should still have a general idea of what the creatures are trying to accomplish in the ruin. In the absence of a shared goal, it can be all too easy to just randomly spread the inhabitants through the area's locations and call it good. It makes for a better and more realistic site if the inhabitants have perceptible reasons for being in their places.

You can use some or all of these creatures to flavor an inhabitant group. If you have more than one in a ruin, you should take this opportunity to decide how they feel about each other, and whether or not they can tolerate their neighbors. Clever PCs might find ways to exploit these differences to get at their goal.

## D12 HOW DID THEY END UP HERE?

- 1 A leader promised them something glorious here
- 2 Religious causes incited them to come here
- 3 The recently sought refuge here
- 4 Their ancestors seized the place as a sanctuary
- 5 They arrived from a far realm through a Night Road
- 6 They arrived here not long ago in search of riches
- 7 They conquered the original inhabitants and stayed
- 8 They were created or born here
- 9 They were driven here by pursuing enemies
- 10 They were sent here by their superiors
- 11 They were slaves or servants who broke free
- 12 They're heirs to the retinue of an ancient discoverer

| D12 | THEIR OVERALL GOAL                       | THEIR LEADERSHIP TYPE                   | DEFENSIVE MEASURES                         |
|-----|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Carry out an ancient inherited duty      | A figurehead leader for a secret master | They activate an environmental hazard      |
| 2   | Control the ruin's reward for their ends | A leader and a few trusted lieutenants  | They have a magical ward in place          |
| 3   | Fortify it as a base for future conquest | A leader rules with advice from others  | They have a summoned guard entity          |
| 4   | Hide from a more powerful enemy          | A single leader rules without dispute   | They have an alliance with neighbors       |
| 5   | Hold it against an incoming enemy        | Anarchic, with no visible leadership    | They have extensive sentinel posts         |
| 6   | Just eke out an existence in semi-safety | Churning, leaders changing rapidly      | They have rigidly-disciplined guards       |
| 7   | Loot the place down to the floorboards   | Democratic with an executive figure     | They have secret transit paths for troops  |
| 8   | Purge all rivals from the ruin           | Groups, each having their own leader    | They keep guard beasts in critical locales |
| 9   | Revive the ruin's original purpose       | Mission-oriented toward a shared duty   | They've made excellent ambush zones        |
| 10  | Seize the ruin for a master or employer  | Obedient to a distant employer or ruler | They've physically walled up passages      |
| 11  | Study the ruin for further arcane power  | Theocratic, under a religious chief     | They've set alarms and noisemakers         |
| 12  | Unearth a treasure hidden there          | Two or more entities working together   | They've set traps in little-used areas     |

| D12 | INTERNAL PROBLEMS                          | RECENT EVENTS                             | EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS                    |
|-----|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1   | A rebel lieutenant is causing turmoil      | Rivals stole something they need badly    | A conviction of rightful rule of the ruin |
| 2   | Food supplies or vital necessities run low | Some have splintered into a rival group   | Assiduously isolationist toward others    |
| 3   | Morale is miserably low of late            | The leadership changed drastically        | Avid recruiters of outsiders to the group |
| 4   | One of them is a secret traitor            | They broke a thing that's getting worse   | Ferocious hostility toward all others     |
| 5   | The leader is a very powerful fool         | They got a new magical resource or ally   | Mercenaries for hire by other groups      |
| 6   | The leader is losing the faith of the rest | They moved to a new part of the ruin      | Nursing bitter grudges against outsiders  |
| 7   | They can't agree on a threat response      | They opened up a sealed ruin section      | Others are food or supplies on the hoof   |
| 8   | They misunderstand a local danger          | They received some new recruits           | Paranoid fear of other groups             |
| 9   | They're fighting over a thing they found   | They restored the ruin's original purpose | Pragmatic and willing to negotiate        |
| 10  | They're on a time-sensitive mission        | They unearthed a useful treasure          | Relentlessly treacherous double-dealers   |
| 11  | They're suffering from a dire disease      | They unleashed something unfortunate      | Ruthless aggression when it's feasible    |
| 12  | They've splintered into hostile factions   | They were beaten by neighboring rivals    | Wary but very reliable allies if enlisted |

# Ruin Locations

Now generate at least a half-dozen locations of note inside your ruin. The table to the right gives some basic ideas, which you can modify to fit the ruin's original purpose. At least one of the locations should be focused on that purpose, to help give the place its proper tone.

The other tables below let you add flavor to that basic location. If you decide to put part of the ruin's treasure in the room, you can use the "Valuables Here" table to complicate its placement. The locations' general mood cues you on how you might decorate and describe the place, while its entrance or exit can be dressed up by the next table.

The lowest three tables provide examples of some different sorts of perils that can relate to the location's physical condition, the status of any hostile occupants you place there, or any magical peril likely related to the site's original function or to decay or damage caused since it stopped operating.

Not every location needs all of these things. Indeed, about a quarter of your locations should be empty and largely devoid of anything important. For the rest, use these tables to prompt your own creativity as your situation recommends.

## D12 BASIC PURPOSE OF THE LOCATION

|    |                                                             |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Archive, library, scriptorium, record-keeping for the site  |
| 2  | Assembly area, plaza, audience chamber, merchant shop       |
| 3  | Command area, site controls, leader's quarters              |
| 4  | Dining hall, hydroponic garden, food processing             |
| 5  | Function area for the site's original purpose               |
| 6  | Maintenance shop, janitorial area, reprocessing zone        |
| 7  | Manufactory area, industrial workplace, artisan's shop      |
| 8  | Passage between locations, storage area, or vault           |
| 9  | Recreation or artistic area, tavern, gallery, private bower |
| 10 | Sleeping or residential quarters for the inhabitants        |
| 11 | Temple or chapel to a Made God or latter deity              |
| 12 | Training area, classroom, practice field, auditorium        |

| D12 | VALUABLES HERE                         | LOCATION'S GENERAL MOOD                 | INGRESS OR EGRESS PROBLEMS                |
|-----|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Bait, to distract from a greater prize | Bloody, the site of awful violence      | The way is behind heavy rubble            |
| 2   | Broken or scattered in fragments       | Brilliant with lights or high windows   | The way is concealed behind something     |
| 3   | Hidden under or in furnishings here    | Cozy, with signs of recent occupation   | The way is dark, and light draws peril    |
| 4   | Left out in the open, untouched        | Crackling with energy, motion, or sound | The way is false, and leads to peril      |
| 5   | Locked away in a visible container     | Crumbling, its contents falling apart   | The way is heavily fortified by occupants |
| 6   | Mixed with detritus or trash           | Dark, lamps and windows darkened        | The way is locked or barred               |
| 7   | Part of the furnishings or equipment   | Defaced and spoilt by occupants         | The way is opened elsewhere in the ruin   |
| 8   | Placed with valueless similar objects  | Graveyard, full of old yellowed death   | The way is prone to collapse at any time  |
| 9   | Precariously placed, risking damage    | Kept in unusually good condition        | The way is trapped by the occupants       |
| 10  | Repurposed for a mundane end here      | Lonely, desolate and unvisited          | The way leads through lethal terrain      |
| 11  | Ridiculously well-concealed            | Patched, half-fixed by its occupants    | The way leads to an awkward vantage       |
| 12  | Unobtrusive but not really hidden      | Reeking with decay and corruption       | The way requires climbing or flight       |

| D12 | PHYSICAL PERIL                           | OCCUPANT PERIL                            | MAGICAL PERIL                            |
|-----|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1   | A closed door is trapped or load-bearing | A hidden sentinel watches the area        | Alarm when magic is sensed here          |
| 2   | Alarming noise made if a thing's handled | Their champion or leader lairs here       | Animated objects or automaton pieces     |
| 3   | Crumbling floors, ceilings, or walls     | Their mates and offspring are here        | Broken artifact explodes if handled      |
| 4   | Dangerous flames or energy discharges    | There are a whole lot of them here        | Curse on those who handle something      |
| 5   | Heavy object topples if touched at all   | They have a superb tactical position here | Effort-draining field or artifact        |
| 6   | Noxious or toxic pools, fungi, or flora  | They have allies posted here              | Empyrean ward, as per Treasure chapter   |
| 7   | Opening a container releases a bad thing | They rush in as a swarm on an alarm       | Environment like a hostile gift effect   |
| 8   | Poisonous or explosive miasma here       | They've arranged a trap for intruders     | Low magic ward or trap in place          |
| 9   | Site's original function gone berserk    | They've set guard beasts to lair here     | Magical counterstrike on gift use        |
| 10  | Slippery or treacherous footing          | They've set up a fixed but deadly weapon  | Magical disease from an object           |
| 11  | Time-delayed danger triggered on entry   | They've set up an ambush in the area      | Subtly curse target or their possessions |
| 12  | Treasure is dangerous or a trap trigger  | This is a sacred place to them            | Transform target or possessions          |

# LOCATION FEATURES

The basic purpose of a location can inform a GM about much of its decor, furnishings, and assorted gewgaws, but sometimes a more interesting feature is needed. This might be a set of magical pools, an enchanted statue, a sorceled tapestry, a mysterious engine, or some other object of interest to the PCs, one they can manipulate and fiddle with in the fashion much beloved of players.

The tables here suggest the basic form of the feature, whether it's a movable object or a fixture of the location, and some different tables to suggest ways in which it is unusual. Most features need only one or two rolls on the tables below, though particularly complicated ones might have several, with their effects or uses triggered by the way in which the PCs manipulate the feature.

Particularly large features might involve themselves in the combat routines of the inhabitants of the location. You might take a moment to adjust the creatures' tactics table, adding an entry to remind yourself to have them use the feature in a particular way. Particularly cunning inhabitants might have altered the feature to serve one of their mundane needs, or to be a more perfect weapon against intruders.

## D12 BASIC FORM OF THE FEATURE

|    |                                                          |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Art object, painting, sculpture, mosaic, or other decor  |
| 2  | Book, records, reports, shelf of documents, or recording |
| 3  | Corpse, battle wreckage, site of some accident or trap   |
| 4  | Door, archway, portal, or other ingress or egress        |
| 5  | Fountain, pool, stream, or other liquid feature          |
| 6  | Icon, religious idol, relic of a Made God, or the like   |
| 7  | Machinery related to the location, magical or mundane    |
| 8  | Monument, grave, crypt, trophy, memorial inscription     |
| 9  | Part of the location's normal furniture or fittings      |
| 10 | Vehicle, transport sled, wagon, riding harness           |
| 11 | Window or viewscreen, monitoring station, scrying ball   |
| 12 | One of the above, but broken and no longer useful        |

| D12 | UNUSUAL VALUE IT HAS                      | ANGER RELATED TO IT                         | USEFUL INFORMATION IT GIVES               |
|-----|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Dwellers nearby love these things         | Enemies can track your location with it     | A map of the ruin, more or less precise   |
| 2   | It bypasses the ruin's security somehow   | It activates nearby ruin security           | A weakness of a boss foe in the ruin      |
| 3   | It harms dangerous local entities         | It attracts a particular beast or entity    | Clues to the occupants' current goal      |
| 4   | It has a strange but useful property      | It benefits fail at the worst possible time | Data on the ruin's reward                 |
| 5   | It has magnificent workmanship            | It carries a disease or infectious curse    | Hints about current ruin occupants        |
| 6   | It has splendid artistic novelty to it    | It makes enemy attacks more effective       | Historically important records or data    |
| 7   | It produces some useful good or service   | It seems harmless but later turns deadly    | Information on a secret location or door  |
| 8   | It protects against a hazard of the place | It's hard to get rid of once taken up       | Information on a trap or dangerous area   |
| 9   | It restores some of the ruin's function   | It's prone to exploding or melting down     | Information on the ruin's hazard          |
| 10  | It's a key to entering a part of the ruin | It's radioactive or exudes evil magic       | Operation of the ruin's original function |
| 11  | It's impervious to most forms of harm     | Locals consider it taboo to handle          | Passcodes for entering restricted areas   |
| 12  | It's made of a precious material          | Using or handling it drains the subject     | The use or perils of a different feature  |

| D12 | FUNCTIONAL COMPONENT                         | VISUAL STYLE                          | LARGE FEATURES IN COMBAT                  |
|-----|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1   | It allows communication to other places      | Bloodstained as if used as a weapon   | Enemies hide in or behind it when alert   |
| 2   | It controls the ruin's defenses              | Emblazoned with creator's insignia    | If broken, it causes a disaster elsewhere |
| 3   | It controls water, heat, or other utilities  | Featureless, highly-polished surfaces | If hit, a timer starts to an explosion    |
| 4   | It does a thing related to the ruin's origin | Glowing circuit-like streaks of light | If hit, it will explode or release toxins |
| 5   | It gives views of a ruin location            | Harsh geometrical angles              | It amplifies the inhabitants' abilities   |
| 6   | It holds up the location's walls             | Humming, chiming, or other sounds     | It changes shape or contours if active    |
| 7   | It opens or closes a door or vault           | Intricate knotwork and twisted lines  | It moves during combat and can crush      |
| 8   | It provides light or heat                    | Naturalistic images or colors to it   | It projects energy when active            |
| 9   | It reveals something hidden in the ruin      | Pockmarked and decaying texture       | It's an extremely sturdy piece of cover   |
| 10  | It summons occupants to the area             | Rusted or verdigrised surface         | Locals can make it spew toxic substances  |
| 11  | It triggers a self-destruct sequence         | Smooth, flowing curves and lines      | Locals know how to use it for a weapon    |
| 12  | It's a conduit for the ruin's energy         | Unusually hot or cold surface         | When active, it's a terrain hazard        |

# NIGHT ROADS

The Night Roads are the connections between the scattered realms of the former world, the broken shards of Heaven, and the smoldering pits of Hell. Some were fabricated intentionally by the Former Empires as roads to reach their enemies while others precipitate naturally out of the void of Unending Night. They most commonly pierce the skin of a realm in lonely or desolate places. The deepest pits of an ancient ruin or the most remote glade in a brooding forest might serve as the mouth to a Night Road, and strangers would do well to stay away.

The road entrances appear in many shapes. Some are obvious magical portals, while others are hollow arches, sinister doors, or simply a particular location in a seemingly-unremarkable chamber. Most Night Roads have some sort of seal that can be opened from either side of the gate. Ancient theurges forged most of these seals to keep out the occasional invader from a distant realm or Uncreated Night, but time and evil purposes have eroded many of these ancient wards. The table below offers some potential means to open or close a Night Road's seal, though powerful theurgic invocations can force open or bind shut the ways without such complications.

The roads themselves appear in many forms to those who travel them. Broad ribbons of pale stone reaching through the silent, bottomless void of Unending Night are the most common variety, though others have been found as dark flowing rivers or paths through a featureless desolation. For travelers on foot, it usually takes anywhere from a week to several months to walk the length of a Night Road. The size of the gates rarely allow large vehicles to pass, though most have enough room for a horse, if such creatures can be kept from panicking at the road's alien environment.

Not all Night Roads connect only two points. Some branch or form crossroads in the void, while others form occult mazes of paths that require special knowledge to navigate successfully. Several Night Road entrances might open on the same stretch of pathway, allowing for highways and thoroughfares through the bottomless darkness. Such major arteries were usually of great importance in the days of the Former Empires and most of them had some form of defenses or inhabitants to secure them against rivals. Some gates might be hidden along these ways, invisible without the right key or knowledge.

"Wayhouses" are sometimes found along the road, structures built by ancient civilizations to provide some necessary refuge or service along the road. The table here provides some suggestions for the purpose of the wayhouse, which you can build out as a standard ruin location if it seems interesting. These wayhouses are usually abandoned by anything save unliving or automated inhabitants, but a few are still populated by refugees, hermits, or cultists. Inhabitable wayhouses usually have some means of providing food, water, and other necessities to the inhabitants, save for those who survive by raiding out of the Night Road and retreating back in with their plunder. Such ravagers sometimes require the special environment of the wayhouse to survive, or fear the realm on the other side too much to permanently relocate there.

The Night Roads are perilous to wayfarers. Aside from whatever fauna might still live in the wayhouses or what defenses might exist at the far end of the road, creatures of Uncreated Night can sometimes evade the structure's wards and turn them into paths for the invasion of other realms. Creatures hurled off the road and into the Uncreated Night will drift forever unless caught and pulled back onto the relative safety of the road. Creatures that can fly can return under their own power, but to lose sight of the road is certain doom even for them.

As the GM, Night Roads provide a convenient explanation for surreal ruins and otherwise-inexplicable monstrosities; they can always be the result of a nearby Night Road that may or may not be open still. Night Roads also provide easy access to alternate realms or celestial shard-rich fragments of Heaven.

While Night Roads may not be easy to find or open, you should be ready for the pantheon to start seeking them out eventually. Most groups will want to get to the shards of Heaven sooner or later, either to repair some crucial celestial engine, salvage precious celestial shards, or enact the rituals of divine supremacy. Other groups will want to seek out particular realms as suitable sites for a future paradise, or delve into the smoking circles of Hell to rescue a waylaid soul. It's not your job to make such journeys *easy* or to hand them a conveniently suitable Night Road as soon as they conceive the desire, but you should be ready to provide directions and possibilities for pantheons that put in the effort to find such a way.

## D12 NIGHT ROAD WAYHOUSES

- |    |                                                                 |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Bridgehouse</b> , to raise and lower a barrier or drawbridge |
| 2  | <b>Citadel</b> , preventing enemies from passing                |
| 3  | <b>Crossroad</b> , where two or more Roads connect              |
| 4  | <b>Garden</b> , full of sustenance and ease                     |
| 5  | <b>Monument</b> , to a realm's glory and might                  |
| 6  | <b>Prison</b> , holding something between worlds                |
| 7  | <b>Refuge</b> , established by exiles or escapees               |
| 8  | <b>Ruin</b> , its original purpose spoiled and broken           |
| 9  | <b>Seal</b> , to contain an incursion of Uncreated Night        |
| 10 | <b>Tomb</b> , to hold a corpse forever along the Road           |
| 11 | <b>Villa</b> , gracefully overlooking Uncreated Night           |
| 12 | One thing that became another, which it is now                  |

## D12 NIGHT ROAD SEALS

- |    |                                                              |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Arcane</b> . A sorcerer can open it with simple rituals.  |
| 2  | <b>Engine</b> . A large device must be powered to open it.   |
| 3  | <b>Incantation</b> . A special phrase or password opens it.  |
| 4  | <b>Key</b> . A particular magical artifact can open it.      |
| 5  | <b>Lineage</b> . Only a certain bloodline can open it.       |
| 6  | <b>Open</b> . It has no seal at all.                         |
| 7  | <b>Physical</b> . Material doors or barriers are before it.  |
| 8  | <b>Price</b> . Some curse or loss is suffered to open it.    |
| 9  | <b>Ritual</b> . Some hideous reality-defying rite is needed. |
| 10 | <b>Sacrifice</b> . It takes blood or treasure to open it.    |
| 11 | <b>Temporal</b> . It only opens at certain times.            |
| 12 | <b>Wards</b> . Magical wards must be dropped to use it.      |

# SHARDS OF HEAVEN

The shards of broken Heaven exist in countless shapes and sizes, drifting through the void of Uncreated Night. Some are small as a common dwelling, while others rival the size of entire realms, yet each of them is a place of primal wonder and an alien domain of unfathomable purpose and perfection. The ages of war that broken the celestial realm have left their mark, however, and every shard is scarred in its own way.

Every shard is built around one or more celestial engines, as described in the Treasure chapter. This engine is usually hidden or difficult to reach, as all the easily-looted workings have already been stripped. When building locations for the shard, ensure that the place where the engine is remains hard to get at, either from environmental hazards, hostile inhabitants, or intentional traps set in a former age. If the engine is still functional and supporting an existing realm, moral PCs may have qualms about causing disasters with their looting.

Creatures are often found in the Heavenly shards, usually refugees or looters who arrived through a Night Road and cannot or will not

go back. Some shards retain enough of an ecology to support these castaways, while other groups require no such nourishment. Angels are also often found in Heaven, wrecking parties sent up from Hell to further despoil their former home.

To create the shard, use the basic terrain table below to get a general idea of the shard's theme. Pick or roll a magnificence to give the place some overwhelming characteristic to influence your description of the shard, and choose an element of decay that has set in since Heaven was broken. The occupant table gives ideas for what kind of creatures might be dwelling in the shard, and their original purpose can help you decide how they might deal with the sudden arrival of intruders.

Shards of Heaven are *dangerous*, even to Godbound. The angelic prowlers, perilously-damaged celestial engines, and demi-divine interlopers who've set up in these shards since the Former Empires fell are enough to make even Godbound heroes sweat. An expedition into these forbidden places should leave the players keenly aware of their peril.

| D12 | BASIC HEAVENLY SURROUNDINGS                 | ITS MAGNIFICENCE                          | ITS DECAY                              |
|-----|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1   | City, strange streets and white jade stones | Artistry, everything masterfully made     | Broken, damaged by great forces        |
| 2   | Dungeon, beauty made evil by angels         | Creation, things made constantly          | Dark, light clouded and gloomy         |
| 3   | Forest of primal wildness                   | Intricacy, everything impossibly baroque  | Death, full of corpses and the slain   |
| 4   | Forge, impossibly vast and clanging         | Knowledge, script and secrets all over    | Defiled, mortal wreckage left behind   |
| 5   | Garden with tremendous beasts               | Light, impossibly clear and illuminating  | Diseased, a pox or poison within       |
| 6   | Library, with secrets of long-dead realms   | Motion, a wild dance of swift movement    | Feral, gone savage and murderous       |
| 7   | Machine, vast, its rooms in broken places   | Passion, wild feelings welling up easily  | Intermittence, the glory skipping time |
| 8   | Monuments to angels and strange things      | Peace, contentment surrounding all        | Leaking, letting in the Uncreated      |
| 9   | Palace, endless, pale and mazy              | Silence, all sound swallowed away         | Rot, fragments decaying and purulent   |
| 10  | Sea, golden with diluted suns               | Size, everything built for giants         | Treacherous, harming the careless      |
| 11  | Ship, becalmed in sea or sky forever        | Song, celestial music suffusing all       | Warped, images turned dark and vile    |
| 12  | Tower, without base or top                  | Value, gold and jewels for brick and clay | Withered, life gone dry and brittle    |

| D12 | ITS LATEST OCCUPANTS                                       | WHAT THEY WANTED HERE                                           |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | A hunting pack of bitter angels                            | They lost something here that they must recover before leaving  |
| 2   | A dead Made God's trapped clergy and theotechnicians       | They think an arcane secret they want is hidden here            |
| 3   | A mighty theurge and their retinue                         | They're exiles, seeking a refuge and revenge                    |
| 4   | A parasite god and their clergy who found a way here       | They're explorers, seeking out new roads through the heavens    |
| 5   | Artificial life created by the theurges or Made God clergy | They're hiding from something worse than they are               |
| 6   | Automatons meant for celestial defense, now self-willed    | They're hunting an enemy of theirs who fled here                |
| 7   | Native beasts or creatures of Heaven, left alone here      | They're looking for treasures of any useful kind to bring back  |
| 8   | Refugees from a dead realm who came here by Night Road     | They're on a pilgrimage or religious journey of some sort       |
| 9   | Scavenging mortal heroes of a distant realm                | They're seeking shards from the celestial engines               |
| 10  | Undead revenants of a human party trapped here long ago    | They're servitors of a greater power sent to retrieve a thing   |
| 11  | Wretched misfortunates who wandered in by Night Road       | They're trapped, and trying desperately to escape               |
| 12  | Two or more parties, allied or bitter enemies              | They're trying to make the place into a sanctuary for their own |

# CREATING CHALLENGES

This section is meant to help the GM determine the kind of challenges that might face a group of PCs who find themselves in a complicated situation. You can use these suggestions as part of adventure creation, or as quick challenges to complicate the achievement of Influence or Dominion changes as described on page 130.

If you use them for that end, first decide whether the PCs' ambitions even merit a challenge in the first place. Plausible feats with a x1 difficulty modifier rarely require a challenge. The PCs just commit the Influence or spend the Dominion and it happens, because it's just not a particularly difficult feat for demigods. A challenge might be required if they were attempting to impose this change over a particularly large area, however, such as a region larger than a city.

Improbable changes with a x2 difficulty modifier sometimes require a challenge. Anything that affects more than a city worth of people probably takes a challenge to execute, and repeated difficult changes of a village or town might also require a challenge as the locals start to get shell-shocked by the drastic alterations in their community. More than one challenge might be needed if the area affected is particularly large or the change is exceptionally pronounced.

Impossible changes with a x4 difficulty modifier almost always require a challenge. Sometimes the PCs can avoid this for very small-scale impossibilities, but violating the laws of physical or political reality is otherwise going to take some serious work by the PCs. Any changes to areas larger than that of a city will certainly require multiple challenges, and very large-scale or dramatic changes may require a half-dozen whole game sessions revolving around overcoming subsidiary difficulties on the way to success.

Once you know how many challenges a particular change needs, roll or pick from the table adjacent to identify their general nature. Sometimes this will be obvious, such as when the PCs want to persuade a city's ruling council to outlaw slavery within its walls. Other times, you might roll randomly. You might find that while the city council doesn't mind outlawing slavery, there's a curse on the city that will bring plague if a slave is not regularly sacrificed on a particular remote temple's altar. The challenge for the PCs then becomes a test of lifting the curse before the council can provide the cooperation they need.

## D12 BUILDING A STRUCTURE

- 1 A similar nearby institution is a jealous rival of the idea.
- 2 Critical artisans are only found in a hostile community.
- 3 The local ruler mistrusts the project as a threat to them.
- 4 The local ruler tries to squeeze the PCs for their aid.
- 5 The locals are too distracted by a beast or peril to build.
- 6 The locals try to repurpose the place for their ends.
- 7 The locals mistrust the idea and need to be bribed.
- 8 The only good site is held by unhelpful or enemy locals.
- 9 The only good site is occupied by a ruin or lair.
- 10 The structure requires great supplies of a scarce good.
- 11 The structure upsets a supernatural being or wakes one.
- 12 There's a saboteur ring funded by outside enemies.

## D10

## KINDS OF CHALLENGES

- 1 Building a structure or institution in a community.
- 2 Changing a custom or law displeasing to the PCs.
- 3 Clearing a ruin or other place of danger nearby.
- 4 Convincing someone in authority to help the PCs.
- 5 Finding a thing critical to the PCs' goals.
- 6 Killing a monster or other powerful, dangerous entity.
- 7 Rallying a group that is demoralized or squabbling.
- 8 Resolving a conflict between people or groups.
- 9 Sneaking into or stealing from a well-protected place.
- 10 Undoing an enchantment, curse, or blight on a place.

With the kind of challenge chosen, you can then look under the appropriate table to get a dozen different suggestions for complicating the situation. Some of these will require more elaboration than others. Dealing with a royal council might require some development with the Court tools in this chapter, while fleshing out a ruin for exploration and clearing could oblige reference to the Ruin tools.

Most of the time, Influence or Dominion challenges like these are meant to fill only part of an evening's play. If you need to conjure one up on short notice, such as when the players suddenly decide to work a major change on the area in response to another situation, don't feel obligated to flesh it out too heavily.

In the same vein, don't worry about coming up with solutions, either. The PCs are demigods. They have the power to conjure arbitrary miracles, wield unimaginable powers, and withstand perils that would kill half a legion in a heartbeat. It's *their* job to figure out how to penetrate the Doorless House and steal the Unbeating Heart in order to bribe the lich-lord to lift his curse on their homeland.

If the group absolutely dead-ends on a challenge and starts floundering in confusion, be ready to give them an alternate route. Don't hesitate to charge them greater costs or harder consequences, though.

## BUILDING A STRUCTURE

The PCs are trying to build a community-changing structure or institution in the area, and local factors may make that harder than they expected. These challenges aren't meant for minor constructions, such as a fine villa or a wooden palisade around the village, but are instead for big, imposing efforts that are going to make a major difference in the life of the associated community.

Towering stone walls, budding universities of enlightened knowledge, splendid temples for a Godbound's cult, or luminous palaces worthy of a god-king all qualify as such structures. It gets particularly complex if these are raised far away from usual sources of supply.

Actually building the physical edifice is often the easiest part of such an undertaking. More difficult by far is finding the right people to run it and forming a *modus vivendi* with the community that will allow it to operate in peace. Other institutions might need substantial resources just to keep operating and require the special cooperation of those people in the community that can provide these resources.

## Changing A Custom

Slavery, child marriage, customs of ruthless raiding, old hatreds of class and caste, or an annoying habit of putting cilantro in everything might all be customs the PCs wish to extirpate from a community. The bigger the area to be corrected, the harder the feat; convincing the villagers of a single hamlet to give up slavery is a far easier task than banishing it from the customs of a nation.

Customs exist for a reason, and any change of a serious, important life habit among the people is going to find resistance. Someone is profiting by the custom, or it may be the custom is crucial to maintaining a society's prosperity. The raiders of the Ulstang Skerries are merciless pillagers of the northern coast, but if all their ships turned peaceful tomorrow their rocky islands would starve within the year. Any hero who wishes to wean them off bloody plunder will have to provide a solution to their hunger as well as their pride in war.

When picking challenges for changing a custom, identify who or what is profiting by it, and then oblige the heroes to find some way of placating or eliminating those people or satisfying the need that the custom is supporting.

D12

### Clearing A Ruin

- 1 Clearing the ruin will release a supernatural power.
- 2 Local rulers claim control of the ruin and its loot.
- 3 Powerful robbers lie in wait to plunder those who visit.
- 4 The apparent ruin is only part of it; most of it is hidden.
- 5 The locals are terrified that the PCs will stir up trouble.
- 6 The ruin caps a Night Road that is a danger if unsealed.
- 7 The ruin curses those who enter it with a divine blight.
- 8 The ruin is contaminated with toxic sorcery or waste.
- 9 The ruin is in the disputed territory of a touchy ruler.
- 10 The ruin is only accessible after special secret acts.
- 11 The ruin is sacred or taboo to nearby communities.
- 12 The ruin is the delicate linchpin of a vital local structure.

## Convincing Someone

Convincing an important NPC of something can be an exercise as simple as using a gift of Command or Deception. Sometimes, it really is that simple; if the request is unremarkable, no one around the person objects to it, and extended cooperation is not needed, then a simple tweak of a subject's will can get the job done.

These challenges are for situations when it's not that easy. Maybe the request is extreme, and even if the important person's will is suborned their underlings and assistants will fight against it. Maybe the subject is struggling with other problems right now, and if they move to help the PCs they're certain to be dragged under by their troubles before they can be any use. Maybe the subject happens to dwell in a place with such heavy Emphyrean wards that divine gifts can't effectively be used against them.

Whatever the cause, there's something preventing a clean and easy solution here. If you want a particularly elaborate problem, you might use the Court tables in this chapter to brew up the situation.

D12

### Changing A Custom

- 1 A powerful neighbor requires the custom from them.
- 2 The custom has great magical power for local wizards.
- 3 The custom is compelled by the threat of a curse.
- 4 The custom is imposed by fearsome supernatural beings.
- 5 The custom is intrinsic to local religion.
- 6 The custom is symbolic of a cherished ancient victory.
- 7 The custom is thought just punishment to its victims.
- 8 The custom is tied to a crucial social support.
- 9 The last attempt to change it brought a disaster to them.
- 10 The last reformer was an incompetent tyrant, still hated.
- 11 The local ruler's support relies on the custom.
- 12 The richest locals owe much wealth to the custom.

## Clearing A Ruin

The ruins of the Former Empires litter the realms, and hardly any land doesn't sport dozens of these desolate places. Some occupied terrain so useful that people have since built towns and cities on top of the buried wreckage, while others still stand lonely in waste places that once were rich and prosperous. Brave souls seek to plunder their riches now and then, but always fewer return than went out.

The PCs might need to clear a ruin in order to obtain some vital resource it held, whether salvage from celestial engines or some long-lost substance that the Former Empires made in abundance. Other ruins are nests of evil, sheltering monsters or bandits that would be an insurmountable obstacle to whatever plan the PCs are trying to execute if they are not cleared out.

Earlier in the chapter you'll find a more elaborate system for creating and stocking ruins. The problems listed here are ones you can use to flavor those results, or as touchstones for developing the ruin. Some of them involve problems that have nothing to do with the ruin itself, but only with those who claim its riches or threaten interlopers.

D12

### Convincing Someone

- 1 An enemy is poisoning their mind against the PCs.
- 2 The NPC is afraid of the consequences of cooperating.
- 3 The NPC just doesn't like the PC, resenting them.
- 4 The NPC wants a favor that the PCs just can't do.
- 5 They blame the PC or their associates for some problem.
- 6 They want exorbitant payment or help before aiding.
- 7 They're deeply mistaken about the PCs' motivation..
- 8 They're easy to convince, but hopelessly incompetent.
- 9 They're easy to convince, but misunderstand the PCs.
- 10 They're not really the person who must be convinced.
- 11 They're totally distracted by a current problem.
- 12 Working with the NPC means infuriating a dire foe.

## FINDING A THING

- 1 A friendly ally has it but desperately needs to keep it.
- 2 Local rulers have reason to keep the PCs away from it.
- 3 Some powerful foe is currently hunting the thing.
- 4 The map or lead to the thing is in widely-scattered parts.
- 5 The only one who knows where it is hates the PCs.
- 6 The thing can only be had in a narrow time window.
- 7 The thing has a decoy that's actually a trap.
- 8 The thing is actually totally different from what it seems.
- 9 The thing is held by a powerful foe who keeps it secret.
- 10 The thing moves constantly, so locations go stale rapidly.
- 11 The thing's far harder to get rid of than to acquire.
- 12 There are many examples of the thing, all but one fake.

## KILLING A MONSTER

The slaying of monsters is a venerable role for heroes. Noble as it may be, the legends tend to leave out the enormous amount of work that can be involved in tracking down a beast, pinning it in place, and assailing it with enough force to do the job. For this challenge, the PCs may have only a vague idea of the monster's nature or location, and once they find it they might discover that only special measures can give them any chance of defeating it.

Aside from bestial Misbegotten or the more mindless horrors of the Uncreated, the monster might be an intelligent being itself. A parasite god or hostile angel might have far more resources than any brute beast, and the intelligence to hunt its would-be hunters first. Indeed, it might be the expectation of their interference with the PCs' plans that is forcing the pantheon to act against them in the first place.

Such intelligent foes very rarely work alone. They will have trusted lieutenants and mobs of lesser servitors close to hand, and the PCs might have to do substantial scouting and subduing of enemy forces before they're in a position to strike the true threat.

## RALLYING A GROUP

- 1 A holy place has been seized by enemies or disaster.
- 2 A leader has been discredited but still tries to rule.
- 3 An inspiring relic or talisman has been lost to dire foes.
- 4 Bare survival concerns them more than the PCs' wishes.
- 5 Desperately-needed allies refuse to come to their aid.
- 6 Former internal strife has reduced them to misery.
- 7 Their leaders are too weak or poor to aid their people.
- 8 Their leadership has been systematically exterminated.
- 9 They're convinced divine displeasure scourges them.
- 10 They've been utterly crushed by their rivals.
- 11 Trusted friends have betrayed them to their enemies.
- 12 Trusted leaders are imprisoned or lost.

## FINDING A THING

The PCs need a thing in order to progress with their plans, but they have no idea where to find it. This particular thing could be anything at all: a specific celestial relic, a set of royal regalia proving legitimate rule, a key to ancient and persistent wards that interfere with divine gifts, or the missing daughter of a vital political ally. Something is keeping the PCs from easily locating the object, even if they know what it is they're looking for in the first place.

Some Godbound have gifts that are particularly useful for finding things, the Word of Knowledge in particular. For PCs with access to these resources, finding a thing might actually be relatively simple, but the actual *obtaining* of it might be a Stealth and Stealing challenge instead. Be careful not to discount PC abilities in these challenges, particularly when they're very appropriate.

For other PCs, they might have to seek out sages, make contacts with the underworld in a particular area, or conduct lengthy reconnaissance of their own to find a lead. Such efforts always come at a price, whether favors to the mighty or precious time to do their own digging into a case.

## KILLING A MONSTER

- 1 A failed attempt would bring disastrous consequences.
- 2 Getting at it requires opening its prison or sealed lair.
- 3 It has a swarm of spawn or loyal servitors to guard it.
- 4 Killing it would produce an immediate magical disaster.
- 5 Killing the thing requires a secret preparation or item.
- 6 Locals placate the thing with sacrifices and fear its anger.
- 7 The creature always flees a fight it's not sure it will win.
- 8 The creature has hostages or prisoners in its lair.
- 9 The creature is extremely hard to locate or identify.
- 10 The creature is sacred to a powerful community.
- 11 The entity holds back a dire consequence by existing.
- 12 The local ruler is tied to its life or continuing power.

## RALLYING A GROUP

The PCs are faced with a community or institution that is utterly hopeless. These people might be so despairing at a recent reverse that they're useless for anything but waiting to die. They could be so riven with desperate quarrels and old grudges that they can't possibly pull together to serve the PCs' purposes. Or it could be that they've been beaten down and oppressed so long that they have no will to try anything that their masters would not wish them to attempt.

Dealing with these challenges often requires that the PCs either eliminate the source of the fear and oppression or that they somehow convince the people that hope is not purest folly for them. Victories against their enemies, gifts of wealth and prosperity, and the restoration of their trusted rulers and leaders is often needed if the group is to pull together once more.

Sometimes, the rallying force for the group might be one the PCs would rather not engage. It's not always a *good* cause that can pull a community together, and some inspiring means can come to bad ends.

## RESOLVING A CONFLICT

There's a struggle that's tearing apart the community here, or at least making it impossible to effectively pursue the PCs' plans. This conflict is unlikely to be one of simple oppression, as societies can get along quite comfortably in such circumstances. Instead, two or more groups are at each others' throats, and they have enough strength or influence to make that opposition count.

Some conflicts really are simple matters of injustice, but most are more nuanced. Each side can usually give a litany of causes and reasons why their enmity is justified, and not all of these are comfortable lies. Both sides really might be less than sympathetic for the PCs.

PCs can resolve situations like this either by resolving the point of conflict between the groups or by completely shattering one or both sides. The latter might be simpler, but sometimes both groups are needed to carry out the pantheon's plans, and it's not practical to simply remove them from the board.

Some solutions are also more durable than others. Temporary truces and honeyed promises can buy calm for a while, but the bill for such things will always come due in the end.

### D12 SNEAKING OR STEALING

- 1 A map or location needs to be stolen first to find it.
- 2 It's in an extremely remote and inaccessible place.
- 3 It's toxic or dangerous to illicit intruders or thieves.
- 4 Its entrances and exits are one-way or shifting.
- 5 Its known infiltration or loss would cause social chaos.
- 6 The area is constantly occupied by people or beasts.
- 7 The area is heavily warded with magical defenses.
- 8 The object or location moves around secretly.
- 9 The seeming perils are not the real dangers there.
- 10 Theft or infiltration would infuriate a dangerous foe.
- 11 There are decoy objects or locations, heavily trapped.
- 12 There is a critical time pressure on theft or infiltration.

## UNDOING AN ENCHANTMENT

The Former Empires left sorceries littering the realms, some good and more bad. Curdled sorceries, ancient curses, blessings gone feral and dangerous... these things can scourge a community and make it difficult to accomplish great ends there. Most people will welcome the aid of the Godbound in lifting whatever blights trouble their people, though this relief can come at a dire price.

The exact effects of the enchantment aren't as important to an adventure as the means by which it can be lifted. Ordinary gifts or miracles might immunize a hero or lift the curse briefly, but to really undo it requires performing some great deed or breaking some ancient engine of misfortune. Particularly terrible blights might even require the repair of a damaged celestial engine in some long-lost shard of Heaven, necessitating a Night Road journey and the over-coming of whatever dire creatures now nest in the shard.

Some enchantments have two edges, being both blessing and curse. Lifting them isn't always entirely appreciated by the locals.

### D12 RESOLVING A CONFLICT

- 1 A major line of business has grown around the conflict.
- 2 A single gadfly is driving most of the conflict.
- 3 Deeds in the fight are what legitimizes their leadership.
- 4 Each side claims ownership of a now-lost relic of rule.
- 5 If united, the group would be a menace to others.
- 6 Old debts of blood or land are preventing resolution.
- 7 One sub-group is bitterly set on bloody revenge.
- 8 The conflict is driven by religious differences.
- 9 The conflict is extremely lucrative for a third party.
- 10 The leaders fear they'd be deposed if the conflict ended.
- 11 The less sympathetic side is actually basically justified.
- 12 They're disputing over a vital, genuinely limited resource.

## SNEAKING OR STEALING

There are very few places that can seriously challenge a Godbound infiltrator's more roguish ambitions. The gifts of Deception or of Night can penetrate any conventional wards, and the arts of Journeying can break open even magical barriers and enchanted seals. If sneaking or stealing is to really be a challenge for such heroes, it's going to take more than a locked door and a dozen night-watchmen.

Of course, not all sneaking and stealing *should* be a challenge for such PCs. If they've focused their concept and abilities around stealthy infiltration, then they should be able to steal the sort of things that a thief-god could steal. The complications given here often revolve around more than the strictly mechanical aspects of thievery, and add difficulties that don't necessarily relate to a quiet step and an opened lock.

Heroes that have specialized in thievery might be able to bypass many of these dangers, and should be allowed to do so if they can explain the relevant use of their talents. Even if it is easy now, such heroes tend to push their luck until they find a truly worthy danger.

### D12 UNDOING AN ENCHANTMENT

- 1 A local faith uses it as evidence of its truth and rights.
- 2 A particular magical entity must die to lift it.
- 3 A powerful local is making money off it somehow.
- 4 It persists as long as a particular family still rules.
- 5 It's coming from something in a dangerous ancient ruin.
- 6 It's keeping a dire enemy at bay with its presence.
- 7 Local society has become symbiotic with it in a way.
- 8 The secret for undoing it is kept in a lost magic library.
- 9 The secret of its dispelling is of military value to a rival.
- 10 Things will be very bad for a few years after its undoing.
- 11 Undoing it also undoes a benefit to a neighboring group.
- 12 Undoing it requires traveling far to a dangerous place.



# CHANGING THE WORLD

Godbound are proto-divinities, and such men and women are naturally going to have a dramatic effect on the world around them. Their goals, ambitions, hates, and loves will leave marks on the realm, and there are several ways these changes can come to pass. A GM needs to be properly-equipped to handle these kind of grand schemes and sweeping alterations, as divine god-heroes are unlikely to leave their campaign world unmarked by their passage.

## THE TOOLS OF RULE

Heroes have three main resources for enacting changes in the world around them. The first is that of their natural gifts and the Words of Creation they've bonded. Their gifts and miracles are convenient for making direct, immediate changes that require little management.

Heroes also have **Influence**, abstract points representing the force of their full attention and regular management of a situation. Like Effort, Influence is only ever committed, not expended. A hero has Influence equal to one plus their character level, possibly a few points more depending on the special gifts they may have mastered. A player uses Influence when they want to represent their hero's regular tending of a situation and their "off-screen" use of gifts and miracles.

Heroes also have **Dominion** points. These points are used to represent their divine mandate and their instinctive ability to mold the world around them to fit their will. Unlike Influence, Dominion is lost when expended, but can be used to change situations and local circumstances in miraculous ways, alterations that last until some other power comes along to knock them down. Heroes start with no Dominion, but gain it for performing mighty deeds and through the worship of their cults.

## THE NATURE OF FACTS

Heroes use their gifts, Influence, and Dominion to change **facts**. Facts are exactly as labeled; they're the basic truths about a place or situation in the game world. Some might be called out specifically in the description of an area, but most facts are just implicit in the setting or circumstances. A poor Raktian farming village is going to have different facts than a prosperous industrial town in the Bright Republic, but most of these facts will only arise when it becomes relevant. The Raktian village is going to be cruelly taxed by its lord, and the Bright Republic town is going to have electricity and modern plumbing, but the GM won't be going through their notes to write down every possible fact about both places before the game. The great majority of them will just be assumed or implicit.

Heroes who seek to affect the world will try to change these facts. *How* they do so matters, but the ultimate goal of their efforts is to change a place or situation. Perhaps they want to extinguish slavery in a nation, or bring prosperity to a village, or establish a fortress against an invading horde, or depose a corrupt lord. Any large-scale attempt to build, destroy or alter the realities of a locale can be treated as changing a fact.

Some facts are harder to change than others, and some facts might not be possible to change at all without some heroic deed or perilous adventure. Simple alterations that aren't opposed by any major powers can be accomplished with little more than gifts or Influence, but heroes who would defy kings, brace divinities and bend the laws of nature are going to have to work harder than that.

## WAYS OF CHANGING THINGS

The simplest way for a Godbound to make a change in the game world is to just do it. If a Godbound has the necessary gifts to raise a comfortable manor house over the course of a few hours of work, then they can make a manor house whenever they have a spare afternoon. If they have the power to control the minds of men and delicately adjust the village mayor's attitude toward their suggestions, then the mayor will give whatever orders they want him to give. It is not necessary to bring in any more complication than that, and many changes can be settled just with the use of a gift or miracle. These changes cost nothing in Influence or Dominion as they are direct, immediate acts.

Sometimes, however, the change that the hero wants to make is too far-reaching for the simple exercise of gifts, or too complicated to be managed with a simple miracle. A city's lord might be as susceptible to the powers of command as a village mayor, but the substantial body of officials and courtiers around him may prove more complicated to direct, particularly if they suspect their lord is being ensorcelled. The Godbound can then exert their powers over the courtiers, of course, but it eventually comes to a point where the hero would have to spend a significant amount of his or her free time just to keep their plans in motion. It's up to the GM to determine when a task is too complicated for the simple use of a gift or miracle.

Exerting this sort of abstracted effort is represented by the use of Influence. The amount of Influence the hero and their allies must expend depends on how improbable or difficult the task is, from one point to make a plausible change in a village, to more than sixty to enact a realm-wide reality that is otherwise impossible. Provided the hero can explain how their Words and skills can attain their end, they and their friends usually don't need to do more than commit the Influence and work for a reasonable amount of time to enact the change. Assuming no outside forces are opposing them and no major challenge needs to be first overcome, the change will simply happen.

This Influence needs to *stay* committed, however, or else the natural pressures and complications of the situation will soon erode away whatever alteration they made. New industries might fall apart under outside pressure or lack of direction, while obedient governments might turn rebellious as unfettered new officials rise in power. This decay usually takes a while, but it's almost inevitable once the Influence is withdrawn.

For situations where the hero wishes to make lasting changes that persist without their personal oversight, Dominion must be spent. The hero performs this exertion much as they would expend Influence. They use their gifts and miracles and natural talents to bring out the desired end, but the Dominion makes it permanent. It subtly alters the outlines of the situation and changes the flow of fate so that the alterations that the Godbound makes are persistent, and will continue until some grave disaster or fierce outside force overthrows it.

With Influence or Dominion, true marvels can be created that would otherwise be impossible. Fabulous palaces of luxurious modern conveniences can be raised next door to mud-walled village huts, and springs of molten gold can be coaxed from barren rock. Harmonious workshops of fabulous productivity or iron soldiers that march and fight as real warriors can all be conjured forth by heroes with applicable Words. For truly great wonders and dramatic changes, however, equally great deeds must also often be performed as well.

## CHANGING FACTS WITH GIFTS AND ACTIONS

Some changes the PCs want to accomplish can be performed instantaneously, just by exerting their gifts. If a Godbound of Health comes across a disease-stricken village, one tremendous burst of his *Ender of Plagues* gift is enough to change that fact. Unless there's some outside source of the sickness that will refresh the suffering, that single action is enough to make a lasting result.

In the same vein, a Godbound of Earth who wants to raise a fortified keep with her *Builder of Mountain Peaks* gift can simply do so, spending a few hours conjuring up the walls and sculpting the interiors to suit her preference. She may not have much in the way of soldiers to man the keep's walls, but she can certainly fabricate the structure itself without any additional effort.

These instant changes are usually enough to alter a situation in the PC's favor, but they're usually not well-equipped to make lasting or complex alterations. The Godbound of Health could instantly purge a village of sickness, for example, but that moment's purification won't stop the stream of diseased refugees from the surrounding plague-raddled communities. Without a longer-term solution, the village will likely fall back into sickness before too long. In a like fashion, that powerful stone fortress the Godbound of Earth raised might be a valuable fortification to help the locals withstand a bandit attack, but neighboring rulers are going to be very uncomfortable with its existence until their own men are in control of it.

In many situations, however, an immediate change or fix is all the players need. If a community is starving, a Fertility blessing can get them enough food to make it through to spring. Perhaps they'll have more trouble then, but the PCs have other things to worry about, and an immediate patch is good enough for the moment. A haughty duke's cooperation in a matter can be coerced with a word of Command, and provided the PCs are done with the affair before his courtiers realize their lord has been mind-bent, any unfortunate consequences can be dodged.

And, of course, the heroes can simply achieve any of these ends the old-fashioned way. Rather than forcing the duke to obey their will, they can honestly persuade him with favors or threats, or engage in court intrigue to have a more pliant heir put in his place. They can cut deals with neighboring rulers to leave the fortress to the villagers, and build protective quarantines around their newly-cured villages. Changes can always be accomplished by the usual ways in which heroes and people get things done.

## CHANGING FACTS WITH INFLUENCE

Influence abstracts a PC's attention and off-screen labor to accomplish a more complicated, enduring change. These changes last as long as the PC is still around often enough to maintain their handiwork; once the hero leaves town permanently, the natural forces of entropy and social inertia will take hold.

The plague-raddled village mentioned earlier could be kept permanently free of sickness by the Godbound of Health, if he stuck around to cleanse it every so often and fix the inevitable pilgrims who'd seek his divine mercy there. Doing so would involve committing Influence to the situation, allotting some of his limited free time and attention toward the maintenance of the village's health.

The Godbound of Earth who wanted to make sure the fortress they raised was only used by the villagers could likewise commit Influence, making it clear to aspiring conquerors that the village and *only* the village would be permitted to use the fortress, or else it would rap-

idly cease to be a fortress and become an extremely elaborate tomb. Watching over the situation and keeping things working the way she wished would require some amount of her attention, but would keep affairs stable.

Coercing the duke's lasting friendship would likewise require an Influence commitment, not only to keep the duke pliant, but to manage his heir, his courtiers, and his functionaries, all of whom might rebel if they think the duke is acting unreasonably. Judicious use of further mind-bending powers, reasonable suasions, and careful bribes all take up the Godbound's time and focus, and if they stop committing Influence to it the situation is liable to degenerate.

In general, keeping Influence committed to a situation keeps the Godbound in control of it. Bad things might happen to it, but it will be because someone else is acting against them, not because the situation is naturally degenerating. The Godbound is spending their off-screen time taking care of business, and they're going to get basically the results they expect to get out of it.

When the Godbound withdraws Influence, however, the forces of human nature and natural events will take over. For small changes or unobtrusive alterations, this might not mean anything. If the Influence was used to get the duke to cooperate in a mutually-advantageous pact with a neighboring city-state, then the newly-liberated duke might not even realize he was controlled, and credit his own wise foresight for the excellent results. If the Influence was used to get the duke to abdicate in favor of his puppet heir, on the other hand, things are liable to get bloody in a hurry.

## WITHDRAWING INFLUENCE

As the GM, how do you adjudicate a situation when a PC withdraws Influence? Just look at the situation and see if there's any particular force or group that's opposed to what the PC accomplished with their Influence. If there is, they'll wreck or undo it over a logical amount of time.

Is what the hero made somehow better or more advanced than what the locals could maintain without the Godbound's help? Magical factories, advanced infrastructure, and educational facilities fall into this heading, and will fall apart soon after the PC moves on. This doesn't mean that the devices the factories built will burn up or the students the school trained will suddenly lose their knowledge, but goods will be scattered, students will turn to their own goals or move elsewhere, and the situation will slope back down to the status quo ante.

Did the hero use their Influence to make some major event happen, such as shepherding a duke into conquering a neighboring state? These facts will still exist, but they're no longer under the PC's control. The more that the ensuing situation depended on the PC's own involvement, the more chaotic and fragile the aftermath is going to be. If the duke was seriously considering invading anyway, there may be no fallout at all, while the sudden betrayal of an ancient ally is going to cause fireworks when the Godbound finally takes their hands off the wheel.

Don't let this decay be a surprise to the player. If they make a change with Influence, let them know how likely it is to be survive once they're no longer personally shepherding it. In most cases, this should be fairly obvious to the Godbound, and they may choose to moderate their goals or to not make some Influence changes at all if they think the eventual blowback will be too great.

Social changes and human institutions are particularly vulnerable to crumbling when Influence is taken away. New schools, enlightened laws, magical manufactories, and other complex human activities almost always collapse soon after their divine patron moves on. In some cases it's because the mortals just don't know how to maintain things, while in other cases the weight of societal inertia or the greed and ambition of its members will tear the institution apart without a divine hero to keep things in check.

## Changing Facts with Dominion

Dominion is the most powerful means of altering a fact, and represents a Godbound's direct mastery of their Words of Creation. Utterly impossible changes and wholly magical alterations can be performed by spending Dominion and invoking a suitable Word, though the most drastic changes will require some heroic deed to be accomplished to clear the way for the new fact.

A Godbound of Health who wanted to maintain a village's health in perpetuity could spend Dominion to banish sickness entirely from the boundary of the village forever after. The locals would simply never grow sick again. Optionally, he might share his powers in a limited way with chosen acolytes among the villagers, granting them the ability to cure any sickness and accomplishing the same general effect in a different way.

The more drastic, expansive, and impossible a change that Dominion makes, the more costly it is to enact. The opposition of other supernatural forces in the area can hinder these changes, as can the presence of mundus wards in the area to be affected. If these limits are overcome and a sufficient amount of Dominion is expended, almost any change can be wrought on a group of mortals or a piece of terrain.

Dominion expenditures take time, and generally aren't fast enough to be useful whenever time is an issue. Dominion expenditure can't imbue an army with permanent water-breathing abilities when it's suddenly crucial they pass a strait, but given a few weeks of divine manipulation and a sufficient amount of Dominion, the change can be worked. Most Dominion changes take no more than a month to accomplish, and that only for the more complex and involved alterations.

Once a Dominion change is enacted, it remains until some power destroys it. If this involves Dominion expenditure, then the opposition must spend just as much Dominion as the creator did to undo the change. If it involves more physical violence, the enemy might have to simply kill all the acolytes of Health or strew the village confines with magical curses. A splendid magical academy established by Dominion might be undone by a rival spending enough Dominion to blight its students and curdle its teachings, or they might simply march an army through the halls, knock down its towers, and kill all its faculty. Without organized opposition, however, a change made with Dominion will persist indefinitely.

Dominion changes that alter living creatures are constrained either by location or by lineage. The power either changes the creatures so long as they continue to be born in the same area, or it changes them so that so many generations of their offspring will share the blessing. In both cases, the scope of the change determines the breadth of the effect; a hero who forges a race of intelligent animals could extend the effect to an entire region, causing their offspring to be born intelligent so long as they are born inside the region, or they could extend the power to a region's worth of descendants wherever they may be born. In the latter case, the gifts of the bloodline would gradually fade out of following generations once the population maximum was reached.



## Determining the Cost

To find out the Influence or Dominion cost of a particular change, the GM should look at its scope and its magnitude. The wider the change and the more dramatic the alteration, the harder it is to execute. This cost assumes, of course, that the hero isn't able to simply make the change with the casual exertion of their gifts.

The basic cost of a change depends on how far-reaching it is. A change that affects only a village, neighborhood, or other small community of people, or no more than ten or twenty square miles, has a base cost of 1 point of committed Influence or spent Dominion. One that affects an entire city or a hundred square miles or so has a base cost of 2 points. Affecting an entire province of a nation, a small nation-state, or a geographic region within a state costs 4 points, and affecting an entire kingdom worth of people or land costs 8 points. Attempting a change that reaches an entire realm costs 16 points, and doubtless requires many great deeds on the way.

### Scope Cost

|         |    |                                              |
|---------|----|----------------------------------------------|
| Village | 1  | Villages, a few square miles, 1,000 people   |
| City    | 2  | Major city, ten miles square, 100,000 people |
| Region  | 4  | Province, a thousand square miles, 1 million |
| Nation  | 8  | An entire kingdom, 100 million people        |
| Realm   | 16 | The whole world, Billions of people          |

Once the base cost is decided, this is multiplied by the difficulty as the GM sees fit. A change that is modest and plausible, that does not require violating the laws of nature or angering local powers is a Plausible change with a x1 multiplier, costing no more than the base cost of the effort. Convincing a lord to take a course of action that is not obviously harmful, establishing a new industry in a location that might reasonably support it, banishing a harmful social custom that doesn't underpin local society, or discovering new resources that might possibly be found all are all examples of a Plausible change.

Implausible changes that require bending the rules of nature or human behavior are Improbable, and have a x2 multiplier. Convincing a lord to take a course of action that probably will bring him harm, establishing a new industry that the locals have no original skills in whatsoever, adding a new social custom that harms the elite of society or would upset the common people, or calling up new resources that have no natural place anywhere around the site would all be changes of an Improbable level. Complete violations of nature or political behavior aren't possible at this level, but most acts that don't rise to that pitch of implausibility can be done with this expenditure.

Extraordinary changes that are politically unthinkable or physically impossible are Impossible changes that add a x4 multiplier. The only limit to this level of change is what the GM finds plausible in a hero's description of their efforts, and even then a sufficient number of great deeds and mighty labors can overcome reservations. Convincing a lord to undertake a suicidal crusade, establishing a new magical industry that produces something impossibly advanced or enchanted, upending a society's entire value structure in favor of a radically contrary model, and calling up miraculous new resources that have some magical effect are all examples of this kind of change.

Impossible changes usually require at least one mighty deed to be accomplished in order to find the necessary components, persuade reluctant locals, discover needful lore, or best an opposing force. Particularly dramatic impossibilities might require several feats.

## MUNDUS WARDS

The ancients of the Former Empires knew the dangers of unconstrained divinity, and so their theotechnicians devised special wards to hinder the hostile use of divine power. These "mundus wards" took many different shapes, from deep-carved runes consecrated in esoteric rites to physical engines that spun to bleed off celestial power. Most of these wards have long since decayed or been forgotten, but enough have survived to be a hindrance.

A mundus ward has a rating from 1 to as much as 20. The ward's rating increases the base Influence cost to any changes made within the ward, before any multipliers. These wards are subtle, and they do not interfere with immediate use of gifts or miracles. Over the time necessary to enact larger changes, however, they sap away the force of the Godbound's efforts. When a working includes multiple wards, only the highest rating is used.

Godbound can bypass a ward either by completely destroying it, which may be difficult should the ward be hidden or dispersed, or by discovering its key. A person in possession of a ward's key can ignore its protections, as can any allies they permit to attune to it.

Most long-standing cities have mundus wards, though they may not even realize what they are or that they're still functioning. These relics usually range from 1 to 4 points in strength. Those nations that carefully maintained their wards might have cities with barriers of up to 10 points, or even more. The ancient ruins of the former days also often have functional wards, complicating any efforts to enact changes on the lands surrounding them.

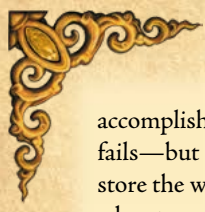
## Using Influence and Dominion

Once the GM has determined the cost of the change, the player needs to explain how they're using their Words and natural abilities to enact the work. Their allies can aid in this, also contributing Influence or Dominion if they can explain how their efforts are helping the cause. Such work assumes that the allies are also contributing their free time and effort towards maintaining the work, and if they choose to withdraw their Influence it will collapse if the others can't fill the gap.

The Godbound don't need to cite specific gifts or powers when describing their efforts. A Godbound of the Sun doesn't need to specify a gift when she describes how she's using the illuminating light of the Sun to reveal the crimes of a corrupt city bureaucracy. It is the nature of the Sun Word to reveal the truth, and so using it in a way that fits with its nature is suitable for exerting Influence. That Godbound might have a harder time explaining how she uses the Earth Word to do the same thing, and some Godbound might just not have any Words suitable for the task they want to accomplish. In such a case, they'll need to hope one of their allies can do the work, and think of ways that their own Words might aid the plan their ally devises.

Dominion is spent in the same way, though the player is free to describe permanent changes. In such a case, the Godbound might summon up the blazing truth of the Sun to illumine the offices of the bureaucracy, causing false documents and forged papers to blacken as if burning. Any attempt to lie in writing is futile there, and even after the Godbound leaves, the city's bureaucracy will be incorruptible by all ordinary measures. The only way to undo the work is to physically destroy the building or work some even greater miracle.

Heroes can spend both Influence and Dominion to accomplish an end. So long as the total is sufficient for the work, the change is



accomplished. If the Influence is then withdrawn, however, the effort fails—but the Dominion spent remains, and future attempts to restore the work need only make up the difference. If a mighty deed or adventure needs to be accomplished before the change can be made, the effort must be completed before the hero can finish committing their Influence or Dominion to the cause.

## Opposing Changes

The Godbound aren't the only actors of importance in the realm, and not all of their changes are welcome. Sometimes there are difficulties in accomplishing a change even beyond the natural scope and magnitude of the work.

Mundus wards are the most common problem when working changes on cities and other places of importance. The rating of a mundus ward is added to the base difficulty of the work. Thus, if an Improbable working is attempted in a city with a rating 4 mundus ward, the total cost would be 12 Dominion instead of 4; a base of 6 x 2 for an Improbable change instead of a normal city base of 2.

Rival Godbound, skilled mages, or other potent enemies can move to interfere with the work as well. Many powerful supernatural entities have the occult arts to hamstring any attempt to change their domain in a displeasing way until they are overcome or persuaded to cooperate. These enemies act the same way as mundus wards, adding a penalty to the base cost of a change, but they also stack with wards. If multiple Godbound or entities oppose the work, use the worst penalty, +1 for each additional significant resister.

| RESISTANCE | TYPE OF ENEMY                                 |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 1          | Minor spirits, lesser undead, angry priest    |
| 2          | Skilled mage, Strong local ruler, Misbegotten |
| 4          | Eldritch, Uncreated hulk, Major bestial thing |
| 6          | Minor parasite god, fresh NPC Godbound        |
| 8          | Major parasite god, veteran NPC Godbound      |

Thus, a minor parasite god trying to stop a change in a city that's also protected by a level 4 mundus ward would result have a total base cost of  $6+4+2=12$ , making even a Plausible change cost 12 Influence or Dominion and an Improbable one a full 24 points. Such interference would make most changes very difficult, obliging the PCs to either destroy the parasite god, drive it away, or force it to back down.

## Expanding Changes

There will be times when a hero wants to expand on a change or adjust its details. Provided the new condition is within the same scope of area and magnitude as the original change, they adjust it as they wish. If they've managed to bestow modern technological conveniences on a place via a painstakingly-constructed infrastructure, it's not necessary for them to exert themselves further just to assure running water in every home. If they've suborned the ruling council of a city, they don't need to enact a new change every time they want the council to issue a new ordinance. Changes within the scope of the initial working can simply be assumed.

If the change expands on the existing state, affecting a wider area or creating a more drastic alteration, then they must pay Influence or Dominion for the difference between the two costs. It may also be necessary to perform some manner of heroic deed in order to overcome the obstacles to expanding the change's area of effect.

## NPCs and Enacting Change

NPC creatures don't use this system when they want to change something. Instead, the GM simply decides whether or not they have the necessary powers and resources to enact the change. If the PCs are present when it tries to do so, let them know that something is going on, even if they don't realize the true source of the change. If the heroes then resist, the NPC must either subvert, destroy, or drive them off before it can succeed in its plan.

## Mighty Deeds and Grand Adventures

Whenever a hero wishes to achieve an Impossible change, or sometimes even one of the more Improbable changes, they must accomplish a mighty deed related to their work. These deeds take the form of adventures, often ones that absorb an entire gaming session, though smaller tasks might be handled by the group as an interlude in other play. These adventures also count for purposes of gaining experience and Dominion, quite aside from their use in justifying the change.

The specific nature of the deed will depend on the change being attempted. For an impossible social or political change, the Godbound is going to have to win the cooperation of whatever social groups are opposed to their new regime. Nobles must be cowed, the leaders of a ruling caste must be enlisted, or whatever economic or military situation that currently maintains the social order must be undone. This may not be possible through sheer brute force; the heroes might have to perform enough favors or become sufficiently indispensable to the elites that they have no choice but to cooperate.

For Impossible artifices, transformations and constructions, the undertaking will require ancient relics, lost lore, and celestial components. Usually, this means that at least one celestial shard will be needed for the change, using the shard descriptions given in the Treasure chapter. Some of these might be salvageable from lost ruins, while others could require perilous expeditions into the Night Roads to scavenge the fallen halls of Heaven. There's usually a clear pointer toward a potential source of these parts, but the heroes might have to do extensive and dangerous exploration of the site to actually find them.

Establishing impossible new organizations or groups gifted with some unique advantage might require components of both types of adventures, both to enlist the new members and to equip them with the tools or transformations that make them what their creator desires. Some similar group might have existed in the distant past, and it could be necessary to find and plunder their ancient stronghold in order to revive their arts. Creating Impossible new creatures is particularly taxing, and can require a great many adventures to get needed parts.

In all cases, the heroes might have to overcome a powerful entity that is opposed to their plans. They might have all the support and components they need to achieve their end, but if some leech-god is opposed to it or some rival Godbound despises the idea, they're going to have to destroy, co-opt, or drive off the enemy before they can perform their work.

Failure in this adventure doesn't necessarily foreclose the change, but it does mean that it's going to get harder. The Influence cost might rise, or the secondary source for what they need might be even harder to reach. Very little should permanently forbid a possibility to an ambitious Godbound, but much can make it more difficult to achieve.

Tools for building these adventures are provided later in this chapter. A GM might elect to brew up a few of these challenges at the start of the campaign, just changing names and specifics when they need some material for a hero's sudden ambition.

## The Limits of Change

Changes that work within the limits of possibility aren't too difficult for a GM to judge. It may be improbable to turn all the peasants of a simple farming village into crack warriors, but a Godbound of the Sword could conceivably do it without violating any laws of nature. The resulting three hundred farmer-soldiers might count as 2 hit die warriors, representing their elite veterancy, but such talent isn't beyond imagining and doesn't grant any magical powers. In the same vein, that same village might be able to build a magnificent castle under the guidance of a Godbound of Artifice. It's highly improbable that they'd all become excellent stonemasons and quarrymen, but it's within the scope of human capability. The castle is splendid, but it isn't beyond the local culture's powers of architecture.

But what do you do when the Artificer wants to build a tireless army of brass farmers to tend the fields and fight off enemies? Or when the Godbound sage with the Sorcery Word wants to teach the locals to master some innate magical power? Both of these changes are clearly impossible, but they don't sound unreasonable given the focus of the Words involved. How does a GM decide just how impossible a change can be? Here are some basic guidelines for keeping things reasonable for your campaign.

## Empowering and Creating Beings

Some changes will involve granting people new skills, new abilities, or new physical forms. Other changes might create entirely new forms of life, or result in the building of automatons and golems.

Teaching people common skills up to an adequate level of proficiency is usually a Plausible change with a x1 difficulty multiplier. They can gain new mundane talents or the proficiency of 1 hit die warriors. For NPCs, assume that they gain a Fact relevant to the teaching. Doing this repeatedly can start to stretch the boundaries of probability, however, as the people become remarkable polymaths.

Teaching people rare or esoteric skills or extremely pronounced expertise in a normal field is usually an Improbable change with a x2 difficulty multiplier. Turning a village of turnip farmers into trained practitioners of a low magic tradition or expert hydraulic engineers or 2 hit die elite warriors is theoretically possible, but highly unlikely.

Creating new beings, building automatons, or gifting people with outright impossible abilities qualifies as an Impossible change, with a x4 difficulty modifier. Monsters or creatures can be built with a maximum hit dice equal to 2 plus half the Godbound's level, rounded up, or humans can be empowered or altered into creatures of such hit dice. Innate magical powers can be granted; a good guideline is to look at monsters of similar hit dice and pick abilities from them, or give abilities that mimic low magic tradition spells of up to Master level.

Alterations that are impossible but relatively modest might just have the x4 difficulty modifier. Vast changes might be even more difficult, forcing a x8 multiplier and obliging most Godbound to work with small numbers of creatures in order to make it feasible. Impossible changes will also usually require at least one adventure to acquire the necessary components, celestial shards, breeding stock, or knowledge to correctly enact the change. Molding a village's worth of them might take one adventure, doubled for each step higher. Thus, populating an entire region with these creatures would take at least four adventures to get the necessary components, lore, or celestial shards.

Note that augmentations of this kind don't work on Godbound or other powerful supernatural creatures. Only the weaker essential substance of mortals is malleable enough to be changed so easily.

## CREATURE MODIFICATIONS

*If the changes are heritable and Plausible or Improbable*, then they are inherited normally by descendants. Altering your chosen people to bear certain physical marks or give them an unusual knack for war is something that will be passed on indefinitely, fading out only with large admixtures of other lineages.

*If the changes are heritable and Impossible*, then you need to decide whether they apply to an area or a total number of descendants when choosing the scope of your changes. If you choose an area, like a particular city or province, then only offspring born within that area inherit the changes. If you choose a population, then only a total number of descendants equal to the scope inherit the change, over however many generations they may reproduce. After that, the alteration is diluted away.

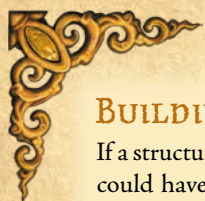
Thus, giving your chosen people wings or imbuing animals with human intellect is something with an intrinsic limit in how far the magic can reach. If you wanted to turn a village of faithful cultists into transhuman warbeasts, for example, you might choose an area scope of just that village. The changes will then breed true, but only for subjects born in that village. Conversely, you might choose a population scope equal to that of a full region, changing only that first few hundred but ensuring that up to a million heirs will share the blessings before they start to fade.

*If you create intelligent creatures*, you usually need to start with a human base. It would be a tremendous feat of divine power to actually ignite an ensouled intellect out of nothing, and the possibility and difficulty of such a thing is up to the GM. Sufficient work can transfer human souls into new bodies, if volunteers or victims are available. Some divinities have created races of intelligent animals by such grafting, as once the creature is enkindled it can reproduce more of its kind. Unintelligent or non-sentient automatons can be created *ex nihilo* without difficulty.

*Changes taught by an institution* provide enough worthy graduates to supply an area equal to the scope chosen. Thus, if you didn't want to embed war-skill in the soul-gene of your chosen people and instead just wanted to make a military academy that taught them their gifts, you could do so. If you build that academy with a regional scope, you'll create enough war-wise followers to supply that entire region with soldiers and commanders, and this supply will continue as long as the institution stands. Graduates could leave the area, of course, but there wouldn't be enough of them to make a major difference in the armies of other lands. It's up to the GM to decide what gifts can plausibly be taught, and which have to involve the direct blessing of the divine.

*Powerful creatures can be made as individuals*. If the Godbound restricts themselves to making no more than one creature at a time, they can build major supernatural entities with hit dice equal to 5 plus twice their level, one attack for every three levels they have, one action per round for every five levels they have, and straight damage equal to 1d8 per attack. These creatures have Effort equal to the creator's level and one appropriate lesser gift per three levels. Fractional character levels are rounded up.

Such creatures might be made from nothing or be imbued champions. Each one costs 8 Dominion to create. Innately loyal entities are less potent; halve their creator's effective level for purposes of determining its stats if it is created to be obedient.



## BUILDING EDIFICES, MAGIC, AND TECH

If a structure, enchantment or technology is something that the locals could have built with their available knowledge, low magic practitioners, and manpower, then it's a Plausible change with a x1 difficulty multiplier. While a backwater village might not have an engineer among their number, if the culture they belong to knows how to build aqueducts, it's not too much of a stretch for the village to do so. If they have low magic healers to hand, then local immunity to disease might be possible with sufficient vigilance among the adepts.

If a structure, magic or technology is something that at least one culture in the realm could theoretically have built, or if it's just very much larger than the available materials or manpower would seem to allow, then it's an Improbable change with a x2 difficulty number. The local culture may not know how to build a university with excellent indoor plumbing, but if the humans of the realm have this technology in general use *somewhere*, then the building isn't impossible. A village might not reasonably have enough people or quarried stone to construct a great citadel, but they could theoretically do it if they had far more time, so it qualifies as merely Improbable. Note that for those using the example realm in this book, the technology of the Bright Republic is dependent upon their etheric nodes, and those nodes are beyond their power to build. As a consequence, any attempt to replicate their tech elsewhere in the realm is not merely improbable, but Impossible.

Actually creating Impossible technology, exotic magical enchantments, or structures that defy the basic laws of nature has a x4 difficulty modifier. The amount of technology or enchanted objects created by a change is enough to make it available to all the natives within the scope of effect, whether that's a village, a city, a region, a nation, or the entire realm. The workshops or ritual centers that fashion the wonders are busy repairing, maintaining, and producing replacements, and can't offer more than a small number of these marvels for export elsewhere, assuming it's not just a pervasive enchantment.

Such extravagant wonders can replicate science-fiction technology or magical marvels equivalent to the works of theurgy. The buildings they create might float, or be made of some magical adamant, or have sorcerous defenses beyond any normal ward. The Godbound could create magical railways or a network of flying vehicles to carry their people throughout the affected land. Effects that take the form of a pervasive blessing or enchantment shouldn't be much stronger than theurgy of the Way, or some other old-school Vancian magical spell of levels 1-3. More powerful effects are possible at the GM's discretion, perhaps with additional mighty deeds performed in finding components and lost lore.

Players might be tempted to outfit their Godbound with marvels created this way. Unfortunately, producing wondrous things on a large-scale basis prevents any of them from being especially potent. Weapons and armor created by changes are usually limited to +1 magical equivalents, and other magical devices should produce effects that are subtle, narrow, or location-dependent rather than being particularly useful for adventures. If the heroes want to create useful adventuring artifacts or powerful magical equipment, they must follow the guidelines in the Treasure chapter of the book.

Whether possible or impossible, constructing these things happens much faster than normal. Individual buildings are fashioned in a week or two, large complexes or huge structures in a month, and entire cities in a season or two. Fabricating objects and enchantments happens in a similarly quick way.

## FACTION PROBLEMS AND CHANGES

While Godbound heroes can create marvels with their gifts, mortal societies can have a hard time coping with the changes. If you're using the faction rules, every time the Godbound adds a new Feature to a faction with their Influence or Dominion, the faction gains a one-point Problem related to the undesirable consequences of the change. Local merchants might be put out of business by cornucopian blessings, gentry might be upset at newly-educated peasants and their insolence, or some other backlash that is inevitable when great and rapid changes are afoot.

## CHANGING SOCIETIES AND GOVERNMENTS

Altering the peripheral details of a society or goading a political force into making a plausible decision qualifies as a Plausible change, with a x1 difficulty multiplier. The Godbound can add new traditions, banish old customs, alter laws, inculcate new values that aren't contrary to their culture, persuade rulers to make satisfactory decisions, and change diplomatic standings between groups. The key distinction at this level is that none of the changes offend or threaten the powerful of the society or offend the masses of the people. Convincing a lord to forgive the taxes of an impoverished village might cost the lord some money, but only a small amount, and it's hardly worth his concern. Convincing a lord to cease collecting taxes at all, or to start taxing his noble vassals as if they were peasants, is much less probable. The changes would deeply upset powerful groups within society.

Even so, these upsetting changes can be pushed through, albeit the change then becomes Improbable with a x2 difficulty modifier. Changes made here start to hurt people of importance or offend large numbers of commoners, either costing them wealth, social standing, or personal danger. Convincing a city to make war on a powerful rival with whom they have no existing quarrel would be such a task, as would convincing a society to abandon important economic practices such as slavery or serfdom.

Truly unthinkable alterations to a society or political situation count as impossibilities, with a x4 difficulty modifier. Convincing a lord to abdicate in favor of an unknown hero, uprooting slavery from a society utterly dependent on it, turning a pacifistic group of herders into brutal Spartan imperialists, or banishing a normal human behavior from society would all count as such a feat. Anything that violates fundamental qualities of human nature or the interests of the whole society would require this degree of investment.

## USING WEALTH FOR INFLUENCE

Money can serve as a replacement for Influence, albeit not Dominion, as sufficient amounts of coin can make up for a lack of applicable arts. A Godbound can spend one point of Wealth to provide one point of Influence in any cause where money might be useful. Each additional point of Influence increases the Wealth cost by one point; thus, to muster three points of Influence, six points of Wealth need to be spent. Multiple Godbound can contribute their savings to the same cause, but costs are based on the total Wealth spent; three Godbound each contributing a point of Wealth would produce two points of Influence, not three.

This Influence vanishes with the loss of other Influence. If the Godbound does not remain present to monitor the use of their money, the situation will rapidly fall back to its original state.

# GODBOUND CULTS

Once the Apotheosis gift *Receive the Incense of Faith* is obtained at second level a Godbound can accept willing disciples and begin to benefit from the reverence of their faithful. This worship strengthens their divine authority, allowing them to form a cult faction and use it to gain Dominion points each month, quite aside from any Aid an Ally faction actions the cult might perform on their behalf. The more demanding the faith, the more abundant the Dominion it grants its god.

## THE FAITHFUL

Any intelligent mortal being may choose to become a worshiper of a Godbound possessing the gift *Receive the Incense of Faith*. The Godbound need not be present, or even in the same realm; all that is required is that the aspiring devotee know who the Godbound is and voluntarily choose to pledge themselves to the divinity. This choice cannot be magically compelled, but more mundane inducements can be used to "encourage" a new believer. The Godbound can always tell whether or not a given person is their worshiper.

This dedication can take place without the Godbound's specific attention. If the Godbound is then displeased with a devotee, they can always reject them at any point. Once rejected, the worshiper may not return to the fold without the Godbound's specific permission.

A mortal can be dedicated to only one Godbound at a time. If they give worship to a full pantheon, their devotion is given over to the Godbound of the pantheon most fitting to their personality and desires. If there's no obvious reason to rule otherwise, a group of mortals pledged to a pantheon are evenly divided among them.

Once pledged to a Godbound, a worshiper cannot voluntarily leave their service. They might leave the cult, they might serve a new faith, they might make war on their former deity, but they are still treated as worshipers of the Godbound for purposes of their gifts of Apotheosis. This leaves apostates in a very vulnerable position, prey to whatever rebuke their gods might deliver to them. Only by finding another Godbound or divinity willing to accept them as a worshiper can they be free of their former allegiance.

## FORMING THE CULT

A Godbound needs at least one village worth of devout adherents before they can form a useful cult. Smaller numbers may provide all manner of useful mundane services, but a minimum of one village's worth of believers is needed to fuel their patron with a flow of Dominion. These adherents must be willing to accept the rituals, sacrifices, and laws of the cult. Backslidden, suppressed, or careless believers are still believers, but only religiously-active worshipers count toward a Godbound's cult.

This number of believers forms a faction with a Power of 1 and one beneficial Feature related to the Godbound's values and beliefs. Thus, the devotees of a Godbound of the Sword might have the Feature, "The cult has a strong martial tradition," while one of Wealth might be "The cult is very wealthy." The player chooses the Feature with the GM's approval. This new faction has no existing Problems, except for those burdens that the Godbound might choose to deliver as part of their new holy writ.

Cult Power increases at the GM's judgment, when the PC has managed to accrue enough new believers to merit a Power increase. They must have some formal association with the existing cult to count.

## HOLY LAWS AND DOMINION GAINS

Once the Godbound has mustered a cult faction, they can begin to give them holy writ, sacred teachings, or other religious instruction. For some Godbound, these religious strictures are very much about living a life in line with the hero's beliefs, dutiful obedience to a moral code, and outward-focused obligations to the world around the believer. For other Godbound, these strictures might involve meditation, group worship, glorification of their name, or more ego-satisfying demands. A Godbound can lay almost any set of rules or demands on their cult, so long as the focus is ultimately the Godbound and their glory or desires for the world. The more exacting and demanding the cult's strictures, the more generous the flow of Dominion it grants.

A Godbound decides how harsh and demanding their holy laws might be, and the cult gains a number of Problem points related to these requirements, as described under the faction rules on the following pages. These Problems can never be solved or lessened; they're intrinsic to worshiping the Godbound. A Godbound can spend a faction turn changing their theology, but this stress inevitably costs the faith one point of Power as it shrinks due to the loss of traditionalists and the surge of heretical interpretations.

A Godbound who makes only nominal demands on the worshipers in terms of sacrifices and personal behavior doesn't need to add any Problem points. Worshiping them is easy and low-commitment. Their cult grants them Dominion equal to its Power each month.

A Godbound who makes only a few sharp demands from their believers, such as occasional costly sacrifices or some firm, restrictive code of personal conduct will have a cult with related Problems equal to a quarter of the cult's action die, rounded up, increasing as it grows in power. These cults grant an extra point of Dominion each month, however, compared to more clement faiths.

A truly grueling faith with many harsh requirements has Problems equal to half the action die but grants an extra two Dominion points per month. Cults with so many requirements and sacrifices that the believers can hardly function without direct divine oversight have Problems equal to three-quarters of the action die, rounded up, but grant an extra three points per month. Such cult factions are likely to need their patron to actually get anything done, and can explode into chaos if they suddenly get a few more Problem points from some cause.

## FREE DIVINITIES

Not all Godbound are suited to having followers. Some might be naturally independent, while others might have players who don't want to bother with a cult. At the player's discretion, a Godbound can become a free divinity rather than one that cultivates a faith. This decision is made when the character reaches second level, and may only be changed afterwards if the GM finds it appropriate. Even then, a great deed or adventure might be needed to change it.

Free divinities lose all the usual gifts of the Apotheosis Word. Instead, they preserve their own celestial force, becoming self-generating fonts of Dominion. A free divinity gains one point of Dominion each month, plus one more for each three full character levels they possess. No cult is necessary to generate this power, and indeed, free divinities cannot even have true worshipers, though they might have a few devoted allies and enthusiasts who consider themselves faithful. If their pantheon forms a Paradise, they can participate in it as usual.

# Factions, Nations, and Organizations

Godbound heroes being what they are, it's very likely that at least some of the PCs in a group will become the patrons or rulers of nations, cults, organizations, cities, or other large groups of people. It's also likely that the general heroics they perform or the random instances of chaos might have substantial effects on a community or group. While many GMs and players are perfectly content with narrating these changes on a purely ad-hoc basis, others enjoy a more structured way of running nations and putting large groups at odds with each other.

This section is meant to provide those rules, along with helping a GM add some life to a campaign setting. The conflicts and strifes of major groups can keep going even when the PCs aren't involved, thus adding an extra degree of vitality to a world and churning up situations that can interest and engage the PCs. It's not necessary to make a formal faction out of every nation or group in the campaign setting, but mechanizing a few of the most important can give a GM some background activity to engage the players and add verisimilitude to the setting.

## PARTS OF A FACTION

A **faction** is any group or community which is intended to be an important actor in your campaign. Factions can be nations, religions, communities, secret cabals, rebel movements, or any other substantial organization of NPCs. These faction rules are best used only with the active, important groups in your campaign; not every nation should be started up as a faction, nor every sinister conspiracy. Only the ones that seem most interesting or relevant to the campaign deserve the extra effort of writing them up.

Factions have **Power**, representing their size and scope. Power is rated from 1 to 5 as per the table below. A faction's Power gives it a particular **action die** which it rolls when it tries to accomplish something or overcome difficulties. A faction's Power only changes when the GM decides it's a rational outcome of their efforts and setbacks. This may never happen during the course of a normal campaign, though PC involvement can boost or degrade a faction rapidly.

| POWER | SIZE                                  | ACTION DIE |
|-------|---------------------------------------|------------|
| 1     | Village, neighborhood, guild, cabal   | 1d6        |
| 2     | City, regional faith, major institute | 1d8        |
| 3     | Province, region, widespread faith    | 1d10       |
| 4     | Nation, realm-wide faith              | 1d12       |
| 5     | Empire ruling an entire realm         | 1d20       |

Factions have **Cohesion** equal to their Power. Cohesion measures the resilience, unity, and durability of the faction's identity. If enemy action reduces a faction's Cohesion to zero, the group breaks apart under the strain of events. Nations might splinter into warring provinces or succumb to an invading power, while villages might be abandoned as the surviving locals flee for better places.

Factions have **Features**, which they use to accomplish things and resist hostile actions. A Feature is something that is a useful or resilient quality about the membership or their available assets, usually expressed in a single sentence. "The village has a much-respected school of martial training with many capable students." is a Feature,

for example, as is "The townsmen are fiercely proud of their city's independence, and prize that freedom above their own self-interest." Features represent those things that can be used by the Faction to accomplish things or resist outside influence.

It's possible for exceptionally important Features to be made up of several parts, such as "The Patrian Empire has magnificent heavy foot troops. They are stoutly loyal to the Emperor's will. Their morale is superb, and they're convinced that no force in the realm can withstand them." That Feature is actually made up of three different sentence-parts, and an enemy that wanted to degrade it away would have to corrupt or destroy all three parts to render it completely useless.

Factions have **Problems**, which are the opposite of Features. These are afflictions or difficulties that make it harder to accomplish anything useful or withstand outside pressure. Problems are usually expressed in a sentence or two and have a point value attached to them to describe how severe the problem is. "The slaves of the Patrian Empire are restive and prone to rebellion in the rural provinces." might be a 2-point Problem, while "The etheric energy nodes of the Bright Republic are breaking down with no possibility of repair." might be a 4-point calamity. Most problems are only worth 1 or 2 points.

The sum of a faction's Problems is its **Trouble** score. If the Trouble score ever equals the faction's maximum action die roll, the faction will collapse from its many problems. Thus, if a village ever accumulates 6 points of Problems, one of them is going to prove too much for the locals. In the same fashion, if a major nation ever builds 12 points of calamities, it's going to fall apart.

Factions also have **Interest** in other factions. Interest represents the faction's ability to interfere or aid in another faction's activities, and might involve the work of spies, intense cultural influence, overt mercantile ties, benevolent foreign aid organizations, or marriages of state between important families. It's not always negative to allow another faction to build Interest in an organization; if they're trustworthy allies, they can use their ties to aid the faction as easily as harm it. A faction can have no more points of Interest in any single rival than twice its own maximum action die roll, as there's only so much of a push a small faction can exert on its bigger neighbors.

Lastly, factions have **Dominion** points just as Godbound heroes do and can use them to make changes just as the PCs can. Unlike divine avatars of celestial principles, however, factions can't accomplish Impossible changes with their Dominion. They have to restrict themselves to Plausible and Improbable changes. If they want to accomplish something really outre', they need to prepare the situation by building enough Plausible and Improbable changes beforehand to finally make that Impossible feat a more plausible outcome.

## CREATING A FACTION

Building a faction for your campaign isn't difficult at all. Just follow the steps below and you'll have a suitable vehicle for your campaign's sinister plans in no time.

First, just write a few paragraphs of description for the faction in natural language. Name it, describe its geographical details, write about its people or membership, and make some notes about the goals and general ambitions of its leadership.

Next, assign it a Power based on how large it is. Villages and small local organizations should have a Power of 1. Cities and organiza-

tions that span an entire nation should have a Power of 2. Provinces, large regions, and international organizations should have a Power of 3. Powerful nations and major, widely-supported international organizations or religions should have a Power of 4. Realm-spanning empires of unquestioned might should have a Power of 5. The faction's Cohesion points equal its Power.

Now pick its Features. A faction should usually have about one useful Feature for each point of Power, possibly one or two more or less depending on its situation. Only the most hopeless communities should lack even one useful Feature. These Features can be anything that could meaningfully contribute to the group's advancement, and it should be possible to describe them in about one sentence. A very important Feature might have multiple parts, with different sentences describing different helpful qualities of the Feature. A hostile force trying to cripple the Feature would have to break each of its individual parts before the Feature became wholly useless.

Now it's time to pick its Problems. Most well-run and decently prosperous factions have a total number of points of Problems equal to about a quarter of their maximum action die roll. Thus, a village with a d6 action die has one or two points of Problems, while a nation with a d12 might have three points of difficulties. Factions that are beset, weak, or impoverished but not in active crisis have about a third of their maximum action die in points, while those that are facing some immediate, alarming catastrophes have anywhere from half to three-quarters of their maximum die roll. Any total higher than that usually betokens a faction that's doomed without outside help.

When you know how many points of Problems you're going to assign, just divide the points up into one or more different afflictions. A humble village with two points of Problems might have "Bandits regularly harass outlying farms" for one point and "The community is impoverished due to scant harvests" for the other. Particularly harsh problems can be worth more than one point, such as a city having "Relentless ethnic factionalism between the Patrian and Dulimbaian communities has almost paralyzed the city council" for two points, or "The land is cursed to bring forth monsters" for more still. Arrange these problems in a list, recording their point values next to them, and note down the total as the faction's Trouble score.

If you have any other factions already created, take a moment to decide if any of them have Interest in the faction, or if the faction has any Interest in them. Ties of Interest represent some means of influence the faction has over its neighbors, or some leverage its neighbors have over it. Long-term allies probably have Interest in each other equal to their respective action die maximums. Thus, two villages that were old confederates would each have 6 points of Interest in each other. Ancient rivals would be expected to have about the same amount, built up over years of fencing. Take a moment to write down a sentence or so about the nature of this Interest, so that when the possessor spends it on an action, you can describe what happens.

Lastly, record any Dominion points the faction might have on hand. An existing faction should probably start with Dominion equal to its Power, while one that's just been created by local heroes or actors starts with no stockpiled Dominion.

The above steps are all that are necessary to brew up a faction, whether it's a write-up for an existing nation or detailing the latest polity forged by Godbound PC heroics. Remember that not every nation or group in your campaign will need to be written up. You should save your effort for defining those factions that are likely to be active in the campaign or acted-upon by PC ambitions.

## Faction Turns, Trouble, and Conflict

Factions do things during the *faction turn*. It's usually safe to run a faction turn once per game month, though in times of great excitement it might be run more often, or less often for larger factions that don't change with the rapidity of a village in motion. The GM decides when it's time to run a faction turn and what factions should act during it.

Factions act in random order each turn. Every turn, the faction can perform one *internal action* affecting their own internal state of affairs, and one or more *external actions* affecting their neighbors. A faction can take as many external actions in a turn as they have Power, but they can't use more than one action on a specific neighbor in a turn.

Some actions require *Trouble checks*. To make a Trouble check, roll the faction's action die. If the number rolled is greater than the faction's Trouble score, it passes the check. If equal or less, it fails. You can compare the roll to the faction's list of Problems to find out which Problem was instrumental in causing the check to fail, or simply pick an appropriate one to blame.

Other actions require *Contests* between factions. For a Contest, each faction rolls their action die and the higher score wins, with ties going to the higher-Power faction, or the defender if both are equal.

## Uneven Conflicts

Sometimes the Features used in a Contest will be grotesquely mismatched. The defenders might have a village militia, while the attackers are using the enchanted flying riflemen of a Godbound's celestial nation. Under most circumstances, the Contest should still be rolled normally; failure by the riflemen might not mean they were driven back by the peasants, but only that *something* happened along the way to delay, complicate, or foil the intended plans.

If you want to play up the difference involved, you can roll the Contest normally, but add a bonus to a side's roll for each of the following situations that apply to the Feature they're using.

- Add +1 if it's a vastly larger Feature than the opposing one, involving far more troops or personnel, or a far bigger institution.
- Add +1 if it's a vastly qualitatively superior Feature than the one it's currently opposing.
- Add +1 if the Feature has got magical qualities or supernatural powers relevant to the Contest.
- Add +1 if it was created by an Improbable project, such as the elite fighters trained by a Godbound of the Sword's guidance.
- Add +2 if it was created by an Impossible project, such as a sorcerously-molded organism or some magical factory that churns out goods.

These bonuses don't apply if the side rolls a natural 1, as bad luck happens to everyone. Thus, against the village militia, the army of enchanted flying riflemen would add +5 to their roll, as they are vastly larger in number, superior warriors, they have powers of flight that aid them in battle, and their creation was the work of an Impossible project by their Godbound creator. Their victory over mere human militia would be *almost* certain. A natural roll of 1 might mean that the militia somehow miraculously drove them back, but it's more likely that some other circumstance interfered with their success.

## Common Faction Actions

The faction turn actions below are just a sample of the ones most likely to prove useful to a GM. The leaders of a faction can take other actions if they seem plausible to the GM. To determine whether such novelties are an internal action or an external action, just look to see if it involves an outside faction. If it does, it's an external action.

**Aid an Ally (External):** This action allows the faction to give support to another friendly faction. The exact form of the aid might vary, but as long as it seems plausibly helpful, this action can be applied. The actor may send any number of its own Dominion points to an ally or to a Plausible or Improbable project being pursued by a friendly Godbound. Doing so requires a Trouble check by the sender; on a success, it works, and on a failure, the culprit Problem spoils things and the Dominion points are lost.

**Attack Rival (External):** This action allows the faction to cause obvious trouble for a rival power. The assailant picks a Feature they want to use to afflict their rival and describes the change they want to exert. An army might be sent to invade an enemy, or a corps of secret agents might assassinate important officials, or a group of powerful trade guilds might strangle their mercantile dealings. This change must fit the nature of the Feature used to enact it, and a poor fit may apply penalties to the attempt.

Once the assailant chooses a Feature to use offensively, the defender must choose a Feature with which to resist the change. They might mobilize their own army to resist the invasion, call on their magical inquisitors to root out the secret agents, or invoke their magnificent natural resources to draw different merchants to their markets. As with the offensive Feature, the defense has to be at least colorably relevant to the resistance being attempted. A faction with no usable Features automatically fails to resist the attack.

The assailant and the defender then roll a Contest. If the Feature being used is only marginally relevant to the attack or defense being mounted, the faction rolls their action die twice and takes the lowest result. If the defender wins, the change is repulsed successfully and nothing happens.

If the assailant wins, the defender must make some choices. They may choose to lose a point of Cohesion, fending off the change at a cost in their faction's stability and strength. They may choose to sacrifice the Feature, allowing it to become ruined or scattered in the process of overcoming the attack. Or they may choose to allow the change to occur, gaining a new one-point Problem related to it, or increasing a relevant Problem by one point.

Larger factions inflict more damage on smaller ones. If the assailant has a higher Power than the defender, add the difference to the Problem points inflicted. Thus, a nation-sized faction with Power 4 would inflict four points of Problems on a village-sized faction with Power 1, likely wiping it out in a stroke unless the village was already largely problem-free. Such a smaller victim can still avoid damage by sacrificing the defensive Feature or losing a point of Cohesion.

Note that a single Inflict Problems action may not be enough to achieve some changes completely. The invaders might *want* to conquer their equal-sized rival's capital city, but a success just means they're one Problem point closer to achieving that. Eventually, their victim will either run out of Cohesion or get too many points of Problems and will collapse, indicating that the military campaign finally succeeds in destroying all resistance. The precise details of the collapse are up to the GM to describe as seems appropriate.

## INTERNAL ACTIONS

|                         |                                                   |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Build Strength</b>   | <i>Build up Dominion points</i>                   |
| <b>Enact Change</b>     | <i>Create a useful Feature or solve a Problem</i> |
| <b>Restore Cohesion</b> | <i>Regain lost Cohesion and societal unity</i>    |

## EXTERNAL ACTIONS

|                        |                                                        |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Aid an Ally</b>     | <i>Give Dominion points to an ally</i>                 |
| <b>Attack Rival</b>    | <i>Harm a rival with overt hostile actions</i>         |
| <b>Extend Interest</b> | <i>Increase their Influence over another faction</i>   |
| <b>Remove Interest</b> | <i>Decrease a rival's Influence over their faction</i> |

## SPECIAL ACTIONS

|                       |                                                    |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Spend Interest</b> | <i>Aid or harm a faction by spending Influence</i> |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------|

**Build Strength (Internal):** This action allows the faction to marshal its resources and work toward its goals. Make a Trouble check; on a success, you gain half your faction's Power in Dominion points, rounded up. On a failure, the culprit Problem has spoiled the effort.

**Enact Change (Internal):** The faction uses this action to create a change in their polity, just as a Godbound would, by spending the appropriate amount of Dominion for the scale of change desired.

If used to solve a Problem, a special Trouble check is rolled, with the goal being to roll *equal or under* the total Trouble of the faction. The more problems the faction has, the easier it is to mitigate at least one of the afflictions. On a success, the Problem in question shrinks by one point, perhaps vanishing entirely. On a failure, the spent Dominion is wasted as things go awry.

If used to create a new Feature, a Trouble check is rolled. If it fails, the Dominion is lost and the Problem that foiled the attempt increases by one point as the polity struggles with the effort. If it succeeds, the Feature comes into existence, but an existing Problem increases by one point or a pertinent new Problem appears at one point. Investing effort in improving a faction's resources is a hazardous undertaking for those that already have internal strife.

Features created by Enact Change can elaborate or add on to existing Features. Rivals who want to eliminate such a Feature must destroy all its constituent parts before it is ruined and useless.

**Extend Interest (External):** This action allows the faction to build their Interest with a neighbor or rival, gaining a greater ability to exert their control over a rival's actions and the power to siphon off a measure of their wealth and power. Interest need not be used in a hostile fashion, but most factions are leery of allowing their neighbors to have too much of a say in their own internal affairs.

The Extend Interest action works much like the Attack Rival action, except that the assailant uses their Feature to describe a way in which they are gaining more control over their target. A merchant guild might be used to gain more control over their financial affairs, while secret agents could suborn and bribe their officials. The defender must use a Feature that can counter this kind of skulduggery; without a relevant Feature, the defender cannot resist the attempt.

If both factions have relevant Features, they roll a Contest. If a Feature is only marginally related to their desired outcome, they roll their action die twice and take the lowest roll. If the defender wins,

the assailant's attempt to extend their Influence fails and nothing happens. If the assailant wins, their attempt is a success and they gain one point of Interest over the target. They can later use this Interest with the "Spend Interest" special action, while the victim can try to pry it out with the "Remove Interest" external action. A faction can't have more Interest with a rival than twice their own maximum action die. Thus, a village can't have more than 12 points of Interest in a neighboring faction.

In some cases, the target will *want* the attempt to succeed, such as when a neighbor sends active support in the wake of some disaster or they are forming a close alliance for some greater purpose. In that case, the Extend Interest action is automatically successful.

**Remove Interest (External):** This action is used to eliminate a rival's Interest over the actor's own faction should they no longer be trusted or if they prove to be an outright enemy to the faction. If the Interested faction consents to withdraw, the action is automatically successful. Otherwise, both sides roll a Contest. If the removing faction wins, the influencing faction loses a point of Interest. If they lose, then there is no change.

Note that even if the target faction consents to this withdrawal, only one point of Influence is dismantled every time this action is used. It takes time to provably deactivate and unwind a faction's agents and infrastructure in an area, and until it is rooted out, the controlling faction can still change their mind.

**Restore Cohesion (Internal):** The faction uses this action to restore its spirit and unity after a time of crisis, naming a Feature it's using to aid itself. A faction with no usable Features cannot restore Cohesion. The cost is a number of Dominion points equal to that needed for an Improbable change: 2 points for a village, up to 32 points for a realm-sized empire. Once paid, a successful Trouble check will restore a point of Cohesion. Even on a failure, the points are spent.

**Spend Interest (Special):** This is a special action that can be taken at any time, even during another faction's turn, albeit only once per turn per target faction. Thus, if a faction had Interest with three neighbors, they could use this action up to three times to interfere with their rivals, once with each neighbor.

The enactor can spend Interest they have with a rival faction to steal Dominion points up to the number of Interest points spent. If they do this just as the target is trying to perform an action that requires Dominion, the target must still have enough Dominion left afterwards to complete the action, or it fails entirely.

The enactor can instead spend Interest they have with a rival faction to increase or decrease its Trouble rolls or Contest rolls, up to a maximum equal to the Interest points spent or the acting faction's own action die, whichever is less. If they make this adjustment before the roll is made, it costs only Interest. If they decide to spend Interest after the roll, they must spend an equal amount of Dominion as well.

For example, two villages have an old alliance built up over years, with both of them having 12 Interest points with each other. A city-state sends their militia to seize one of these villages with the Attack Rival action. The city-state rolls an 8 on their action die, while the village rolls a 5. Normally that would be a failure, but their old friend spends 4 Interest points and 4 Dominion to boost their ally's roll and give them the victory. On the next turn, the outraged village attacks the city in turn. Before the roll, their ally spends 6 Interest points to boost their comrade's attack, the maximum allowed for a faction with a 1d6 action die. It costs no Dominion to do so because they spend it before the die is rolled, acting preemptively to aid their ally.

## Faction Goals

Factions run by NPCs will act according to their goals. If their ambitions aren't obvious, the GM can pick or roll on the faction goal tables below, using whatever model of behavior best fits the faction.

### DIO DESPOTIC TYRANTS

- 1–2 Enact a change dedicated solely to glorifying the tyrant, one that's totally useless as a Feature.
- 3–4 Inflict a military defeat on a troublesome rival, doing at least one point of Coherence or Problem damage.
- 5–6 Eliminate a point of Problem related to resistance to the despot's rule.
- 7–8 Enact a change to create a Feature that's exceptionally useful for rooting out internal dissidents.
- 9–10 Expand the faction's reach, either by annexing unclaimed land as an Improbable change or seizing a foe.

### DIO MARTIAL CONQUERORS

- 1–2 Beat down a smaller, weaker rival into either a supine tributary state or a smoking pile of wreckage.
- 3–4 Build or expand a military Feature, one designed to threaten a specific neighboring rival.
- 5–6 Build half the maximum possible Interest in the rival they're most likely to next invade.
- 7–8 Solve a point of Problems related to military difficulties or inefficiencies in the state.
- 9–10 Use a non-military Feature to Coerce a Rival into losing one of their military Features.

### DIO SELF-ABSORBED SURVIVORS

- 1–2 Take no external actions for as long as possible, at least until targeted by a Coerce a Rival action by a foe.
- 3–4 Solve one point worth of Problems, prioritizing those that have to do with external entanglements.
- 5–6 Enact a Change to create a Feature that's useful for maintaining their survival against outside powers.
- 7–8 Stockpile Dominion for future use, accumulating twice as many points as the faction's Power.
- 9–10 Coerce a Rival with a non-military Feature in an attempt to bloodlessly deny them some external ambition.

### DIO Scheming Manipulators

- 1–2 Build the maximum possible Interest in the most likely foreign rival or threat.
- 3–4 Increase the Problems of a rival by at least one point using non-overt Features to do it.
- 5–6 Convince another faction to act on your behalf by threats or offered Aid an Ally actions.
- 7–8 Enact a Change to create a Feature that looks harmless, but will be used for self-aggrandizing ends.
- 9–10 Lessen a Problem by means of a non-military Feature, solving it through some cunning plot.

## EXAMPLE FACTIONS

The example factions described below can serve as templates or stand-ins for a GM in need of some quick large-scale actors in a campaign.

### A MINOR PARASITE GOD CULT

|                  |                                        |                    |     |
|------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------|-----|
| <b>Power:</b>    | 1                                      | <b>Action Die:</b> | 1d6 |
| <b>Cohesion:</b> | 1                                      | <b>Trouble:</b>    | 2   |
| <b>Features:</b> | Their god deals savagely with threats. |                    |     |
| <b>Problems:</b> | Neighbors fear and hate them.          | 1 point            |     |
|                  | Their god makes cruel demands.         | 1 point            |     |

### A COMMON FARMING HAMLET

|                  |                                        |                    |     |
|------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------|-----|
| <b>Power:</b>    | 1                                      | <b>Action Die:</b> | 1d6 |
| <b>Cohesion:</b> | 1                                      | <b>Trouble:</b>    | 2   |
| <b>Features:</b> | The farmers trust and help each other. |                    |     |
| <b>Problems:</b> | Armed ruffians prey on them.           | 1 point            |     |
|                  | The soil is tired and grows little.    | 1 point            |     |

## GODBOUND PCs AND FACTIONS

The actions and interplay between factions are meant to provide a background for events in your campaign. You roll some dice, see what was attempted and why it failed or how it succeeded, and decide how to describe the exchange as rumors, news, or observations the PCs might notice. Factions will wax and wane, and the PCs might consider them to be background noise or may wish to get involved.

The mighty deeds and heroic changes accomplished by PCs override the faction system. If a faction has the Feature "A brilliant Eldritch sorcerer serves the king," and the PCs go and kill that sorcerer in the course of an adventure, then that Feature is lost to the faction. No die rolls are involved; the NPC is dead because the PCs killed him. By the same token, if a PC spends the Dominion to enact a change in the nation and create a powerful war college of magically-imbuéd pupils, then that nation gets it as a Feature, assuming the PC is cooperating. PC adventures and heroism can directly change the Features or solve the Problems of the factions they deal with.

As the GM, you should embrace this. When the PCs hear that a sympathetic faction is in trouble, it's free adventure content for you. All you need to do is apply statistics to the relevant NPCs in the situation, brew up a quick challenge or two that fits what they're trying to overcome, and you've got a decent chunk of gaming content ready for deployment. If the PCs succeed, they can immediately see results when their allies gain a new Feature or are freed of a lurking Problem.

Great changes come with a price, however. When a Godbound creates a new Feature with their actions, the faction automatically gains a one-point Problem related to the backlash the change causes. Somebody who lost out in the change is angry, or some locals are upset with the new order, and the PCs will have to either calm the situation or endure the increased disorder in the community.

### AN IMPOVERISHED RAKETIAN VILLAGE

|                  |                                              |                    |     |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----|
| <b>Power:</b>    | 1                                            | <b>Action Die:</b> | 1d6 |
| <b>Cohesion:</b> | 1                                            | <b>Trouble:</b>    | 4   |
| <b>Features:</b> | No Features aid the desperate villagers.     |                    |     |
| <b>Problems:</b> | Nezdohvan nobles raid the village for sport. | 1 point            |     |
|                  | Their lord taxes them cruelly.               | 1 point            |     |
|                  | The villagers have lost all hope.            | 2 points           |     |

### XILONG, A CITY IN THE DULIMBAI REGENCY

|                  |                                                                                                                                                               |                    |     |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----|
| <b>Power:</b>    | 2                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Action Die:</b> | 1d8 |
| <b>Cohesion:</b> | 2                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Trouble:</b>    | 2   |
| <b>Features:</b> | The famed Bronze Collegium there teaches arts both magical and mundane. Xilong is a proud jewel of the Regency, and the Regent is inclined to aid it in need. |                    |     |
| <b>Problems:</b> | Collegium sorcerer-academics scheme to seize control of the city's ruling magistrate.                                                                         | 1 point            |     |
|                  | Patrian agents of terror strive to disrupt the city's trade and peace.                                                                                        | 1 point            |     |

### THE UNITARY CHURCH OF PATRIA

|                  |                                                                                                                            |                    |      |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------|
| <b>Power:</b>    | 3                                                                                                                          | <b>Action Die:</b> | 1d10 |
| <b>Cohesion:</b> | 3                                                                                                                          | <b>Trouble:</b>    | 3    |
| <b>Features:</b> | Most Patrians are loyal servants of the faith. The church is extremely wealthy. Many secrets are confessed to its priests. |                    |      |
| <b>Problems:</b> | The Patrian emperor tends to view the church as his property.                                                              | 2 points           |      |
|                  | Reformist priests are disrupting the church with their demands.                                                            | 1 point            |      |

### THE ULSTANG SKERRIES

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                         |                    |      |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------|
| <b>Power:</b>    | 4                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Action Die:</b> | 1d12 |
| <b>Cohesion:</b> | 4                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Trouble:</b>    | 5    |
| <b>Features:</b> | The Witch-Queens have mighty magics. Ulstang raiders rule the northern waves. Draugr thralls labor with blind obedience. Outsiders find it very hard to blend secretly. |                    |      |
| <b>Problems:</b> | Their neighbors seek their ruin.                                                                                                                                        | 2 points           |      |
|                  | The Witch-Queens squabble constantly amongst themselves.                                                                                                                | 2 points           |      |
|                  | Ulstang's living inhabitants scorn honest work as degrading.                                                                                                            | 1 point            |      |

## AN EXAMPLE OF FACTION PLAY

The miserably impoverished village of Kistelek in the Raktine Confederacy, has turned out to be of consequence. One of the PCs hails from the place, and has mentioned that their goal is enriching their friends and neighbors. To simplify things, the GM lifts the example poor village writeup from the opposite page for the faction's statistics.

As the game starts, the PCs are too busy dealing with their newfound powers to pay much attention to Kistelek. The GM decides to run a faction turn with just the village to see how they do alone. Rather than pick a goal from the lists, the GM decides that Kistelek's leaders are just trying to pull themselves together. They take no external action, and take the internal action of Build Strength. The GM rolls the village's 1d6 action die in a Trouble check, and rolls a 4. This is equal or less than the village's Trouble, so the effort fails. By comparing the result to the village's Problems list, the GM sees that the villagers' general hopelessness defeated their headman's attempt to rally them, and nothing useful was accomplished.

At the end of the first adventure session, the heroic PCs have driven back a mechanical Nezdohvan boyar and his pack of artificial hounds. The GM decides that this smashing defeat eliminates the village's related Problem. No die rolls or Trouble checks are needed, because the outcome was simply the natural result of PC actions.

Furthermore, one of the PCs, a Godbound of the Sword, is determined to help the village, and wants to raise a corps of trained warriors from the village folk. This is the sort of thing a Godbound of the Sword should be able to do, and it's not implausible as a feat. The Godbound isn't trying to make them exceptionally skilled, so the GM calls it a Probable change, with a cost of 1 Influence to enact.

The Godbound Commits the Influence. If he leaves for good, the militia will crumble, but for as long as he's there to hold it together, Kistelek now has a Feature: "The village has a band of trained warriors." If he wanted it to last beyond his departure, he'd have to pay Dominion to cement the act.

This change affronts the neighboring boyar, however, and so the village gets a 1-point Problem, "A Nezdohvan boyar considers them a threat." The GM decides he is a major noble, and his domain counts as a Power 2 faction. One Feature it has is "A band of autocossacks serves the boyar". He sends it to burn Kistelek to the ground.

The PCs are away on other business when the autocossacks clank in. The boyar's desired change is "The village has been burnt." The villagers oppose the autocossacks with their trained band; without it, they would have lost the Conflict automatically. They roll a 4, however, while the boyar rolls a 7. He wins the Conflict.

The villagers could take a point of Cohesion damage, but that would destroy the village. They could accept another point of Problems in "All our huts have been burnt.", leaving them shivering. Instead, the village elders sacrifice the young warriors, who fight desperately to the last spearman and drive off the automatons. The village loses the Feature they so recently gained.

The PCs return to the wailing of the widows and the weeping of orphans. Furious, the Godbound protector wishes to raise a new band of warriors, but with so many dead, he must draw from the old and the less fitting. It becomes an Improbable change, requiring 2 Influence points to be committed, and makes the boyar even angrier, making him a 2-point Problem. The village has 5 points of Problems now; one more, and it will collapse into chaos.

Together, the PCs agree that this brass boyar must die to save the village. They tell the GM of their plans, and the GM spends the

downtime between then and the next session to brew up a proper challenge for them, using the Court creation tools and automaton statistics from the Bestiary chapter. The heroes hammer the pitiless brass tyrant during the next session's adventure and scatter his minions to the Nezdohvan winds. The village's boyar Problem vanishes entirely, leaving it only with its grasping lord and its own habit of despair.

As part of the denouement of the adventure, the PCs offer the village's Raktian lord a large chunk of the boyar's wealth to relinquish his claim on the hamlet. Seeing the consequences of angering the pantheon and greedy for gold, the lord finds it prudent to give control of the village over to the PCs. The GM decides that this sudden liberation has fired the villagers with hope. They're too inured to sorrow to lose all their native despair, but the GM reduces that Problem to 1 point. Thus, the village has only a single point of Problems left and no immediate enemies in the vicinity.

These recent adventures have earned the PCs some Dominion, and they're determined to spend it making Kistelek into a proper jewel of divine oversight. The Godbound of the Sword spends 2 Dominion to cement their training of the local militia, making it a persistent Feature that will last even after they leave and are no longer in a position to run regular drills with their Influence.

Creating permanent Features puts stress on a faction, however, as indicated on page 132. The GM decides that the Kistelek militia is a little *too* enthusiastic about their newfound martial prowess, and their brash flexing of might is causing quarrels with their neighbors. The GM adds a "The militia is making trouble with neighbors." Problem at a 1 point value.

Another Godbound has just achieved second level, and decides that it's time to start pulling together their cult. They consider trying to add that fact to Kistelek, but they decide that the rest of the pantheon may not be too enthusiastic about them grabbing the worship of the villagers for their own benefit. Instead, they enlist the serfs of the defeated boyar, who are suitably overwhelmed by the terrifying might of the PCs. The would-be divinity performs several beneficial miracles with their Word of Fertility, and soon the hungry serfs have mustered enough courage to defy the priests of the Unitary Church and the wrath of the metal nobles of their land.

It's not the most auspicious start to a cult, but there are enough serfs to form a Power 1 Faction as the Godbound's cult. The Godbound decides that their demands are relatively few; they insist on a basic moral code and a weekly day of worship, but it's no great burden on the believers. This easygoing faith inflicts no extra Problems on the new faction, but it also means the Domain it offers is minimal, granting the new divinity only 1 point of Dominion each month.

The GM also decides that certain Problems are inevitable for the cult's Faction, given its environment. The GM assigns a 2-point Problem, "The priests of the Unitary Church are outraged at this apostasy", as the Church is powerful in Nezdohva. The neighboring boyars are likely to be equally upset at the violent disposal of one of their own kind, so the GM adds another 2-point Problem of "The neighboring boyars plot to destroy the cult." That leaves the new-born cult with four points of Problems, when six points is enough to destroy it. If the troubles overwhelm it, the PC will have to find fresh devotees.

The other heroes want to start their own cults as well, but it's clear that the neighborhood is not friendly to religious innovation. The group discusses this, and soon enough it's decided to make friends with the boyars. With this decision, the GM now knows to prepare a few Court challenges for next time, and the session ends.

## EXAMPLE FACTION FEATURES

A faction's Features include all the tools it usually uses to deal with its problems and advance its own interests. Not every Feature is useful for dealing with every problem or accomplishing every change, but Features represent those qualities that can actually get things done in a faction. A faction without any Features is too dispirited, uncoordinated, or enfeebled to accomplish much.

Some factions may mention powerful resources in the written description you make of them. A Black Academy in the Raktines might have a half-dozen mighty sorcerers among their number, along with powerful magical artifacts and a universally-dreaded reputation among their neighbors. If these things aren't called out as Features, however, they're not things that the academy can effectively control and direct toward its shared advantage. The sorcerers won't cooperate, the magical artifacts are too dangerous to control, and the dire reputation makes people fearfully resist them as often as they submit.

Other Features are made of multiple parts. The Black Academy might have a Feature such as "The Academy has three powerful Eldritch sorcerers in their service, each of whom can use the theurgic invocations hidden there." As the GM, you might decide that means that all three sorcerers have to be eliminated before the Academy can no longer use the Feature. Optionally, you might specify it down more exactly, giving each of those three sorcerers a different magical specialty. This would increase the scope of the Feature and make it applicable to more situations, but the loss of a specific sorcerer would then make the Feature useless for their manner of magic.

The examples here provide some suggestions for appropriate Features. As always, you should tweak these to fit specific faction realities.

### D20 ECONOMIC FEATURES

- 1 A great merchant prince is part of the group
- 2 A large supply of some rare resource is there
- 3 A lineage of magically-gifted artisans is there
- 4 A magical blessing produces a kind of wealth
- 5 A useful industry has many artisans working there
- 6 All walks of life are efficiently employed there
- 7 An ancient factory produces something rare
- 8 Artisan guilds exist and are all obedient to the rulers
- 9 Many groups owe them a great deal of money
- 10 The people have a very rich standard of living
- 11 The rulers can easily raise taxes without strife
- 12 Their banking connections summon gold at need
- 13 Their land is remarkably rich and fertile
- 14 They are skilled at smuggling and its prevention
- 15 They endure hardship and want without complaint
- 16 They have great funds of stored wealth
- 17 They have multiple trade pacts with neighbors
- 18 They have vast herds of livestock and horses
- 19 They make goods other locations can't produce
- 20 They produce an addictive pleasure for export

### CULTURAL FEATURES

- 1 A habit of guile aids them in secret schemes
- 2 A profound sage and their disciples live there
- 3 A religious cult is absolutely loyal to the rulers
- 4 A school there teaches to great fame elsewhere
- 5 A sense of honor protects against conspiracies
- 6 A strong missionary religion is headquartered there
- 7 An exquisite art is crafted only by them
- 8 Disputes are peaceful and open rather than bloody
- 9 Medical and hygienic knowledge is excellent there
- 10 People trust each other and merit that trust
- 11 Some religious or social service is only had there
- 12 The people have faith in their leaders' wisdom
- 13 The rulers have enormous historical legitimacy
- 14 Their cultural prestige attracts many visitors
- 15 Their people are famed for seductive charm
- 16 They are a well-educated and rational people
- 17 They have adamant confidence in their customs
- 18 They're united in a spirit of shared sacrifice
- 19 They've a musical or performance tradition of fame
- 20 Useful exiles and usurpers find safety there

### D20 MILITARY FEATURES

- 1 A band of mercenaries is loyal to the ruler's coin
- 2 A chokehold exists on a militarily-critical pass or river
- 3 A magical beast or similar entity fights for the faction
- 4 A mighty refuge they have is reputed to be untakeable
- 5 A particular lineage of locals has tremendous prowess
- 6 A protective blessing blights hostile invaders
- 7 A tradition of martial prowess is honored by the people
- 8 Excellent scouts alert them in time to respond
- 9 Exceptional fortifications exist around vital points
- 10 Old defenses were built along the usual invasion lines
- 11 The faction has a corps of fighters with odd weapons
- 12 Their forces mobilize and respond with extreme speed
- 13 They have a small but extremely proficient military
- 14 They have masses of shoddy but expendable troops
- 15 They have very mobile troops, via horse or vehicle
- 16 They've a guerrilla tradition that invaders dread facing
- 17 They've a well-trained group of professional soldiers
- 18 They've an old alliance with a major local military force
- 19 They've caches of advanced weaponry, possibly magic
- 20 They've protective pacts with a mighty entity

# EXAMPLE FACTION PROBLEMS

Every Problem that a faction has should be a seed for adventure. Every affliction that troubles a group should have room in it for PC involvement, either as a source of help or as a weak point in an enemy faction's armor. Problems help add color and flavor to a faction's travails, but their real value to you as a GM is as an easy adventure hook.

The Problems listed here are just a brief selection of the possibilities. When possible, you should personalize a Problem and give it a face the PCs can focus on. If you've got a bandit group plaguing a village, spare a few words about the bandit chief leading them. If you've got a nefarious band of sinister religious "reformers" undermining a city's major temple, give the chief a name and description. If the PCs decide to go after the Problem, it makes it easier to direct their focus, and even if they don't it helps give you a name to hang recent events on.

If it looks like the PCs are going to end up clashing directly with a Problem, you might want to take a little time to prep some statistics for it, whether in combat stats for the leadership and enforcers, a mini-dungeon of some major headquarters they use, or a court challenge for a more political problem. That way, if the PCs take it into their head to deal with the problem on a more personal basis, you won't have to pause to fabricate the details in play.

It usually takes a session's worth of play to solve one point worth of Problems. If the difficulty is far beneath the PCs' scale, such as a bandit chief versus a pantheon of Godbound, they might be able to extinguish it entirely in just a few scenes. Even much larger problems can be wrapped up rapidly if the PCs are able to find out who's responsible for them, and then deal with them in the fashion for which PCs are famously known.

## d20 ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

- 1 A major chunk of the populace is kept nonproductive
- 2 A major religion teaches scorn for material goods
- 3 A parasite class has the right to loot the faction's wealth
- 4 Guilds are both strong and careless of the faction's need
- 5 Productive work is sneered at as base and contemptible
- 6 Religious tithes or customary taxes beggar many
- 7 Ritual demands and sacrifices cripple local industry
- 8 Technical expertise is jealously guarded by its keepers
- 9 The faction has a social structure that creates poverty
- 10 The faction has very little cash in circulation
- 11 The faction is desperately short of natural resources
- 12 The faction is paying off a crippling foreign debt
- 13 The faction's technology is extremely backward
- 14 The local currency is debased and near-worthless
- 15 The most productive sub-group is scorned and despised
- 16 The people enviously pull down the successful
- 17 The rulers are trying to run the economy, badly
- 18 The rulers keep wasting wealth on selfish indulgence
- 19 The wealthy and the rulers are in constant conflict
- 20 Vital production relies on a restive serf or slave class

## d20 CULTURAL PROBLEMS

- 1 A hostile neighbor propagandizes the faction's people
- 2 A local religion is pushing for a very bad idea
- 3 A local religion makes constant, painful demands
- 4 A sub-group is convinced it should be ruling the polity
- 5 A sub-group nurses a bitter grudge against the rulers
- 6 A tedious local custom slows and hinders projects
- 7 Decadent leadership is always seeking new vices
- 8 Ethnic strife boils up on a regular basis in the faction
- 9 Idealistic reformers are tearing down vital institutions
- 10 Leadership is divided between uncooperative rivals
- 11 Multiple religious factions are always feuding
- 12 The commoners are ignorant, brutish, and venal
- 13 The faction lacks confidence and falls easily into despair
- 14 The local nobility is corrupt and does anything for cash
- 15 The people demand the rulers seek an impossible goal
- 16 The rulers are blindly convinced of their own wisdom
- 17 The rulers have very little actual control over the people
- 18 The ruling class is impressively incompetent
- 19 Their neighbors send agents to destabilize them
- 20 Two or more castes are constantly fighting each other

## d20 MILITARY PROBLEMS

- 1 A grasping noble is embezzling vital military funds
- 2 A rival power is launching deniable raids
- 3 A terrible monster scourges the faction
- 4 Bandits are plaguing the faction's periphery
- 5 Hostile migrants seek to claim land in the polity
- 6 Mercenaries are running amok after not being paid
- 7 Rebel guerrillas are striking deep within the faction
- 8 Soldiers have been used as workers until they can't fight
- 9 The army extorts the citizenry like a pack of bandits
- 10 The army has a reason to hate the current rulers
- 11 The army is led by a discreet would-be usurper of rule
- 12 The army is led by an irreplaceable well-born idiot
- 13 The army is so disorganized that it's near-useless
- 14 The army is so underfunded it's practically starving
- 15 The army's hidebound with antiquated gear and habits
- 16 The faction holds soldiers and warfare in contempt
- 17 The military is broken into mutually-hostile factions
- 18 The military is locked in constant low-level policing
- 19 The military lacks morale after a terrible defeat
- 20 The elite are painfully reluctant to employ needed force





# FOES OF HEAVEN

## A BESTIARY OF GRIM OPPONENTS AND DIRE ENTITIES

A hero is most often measured by the might of their opposition. The ordinary run of men and women can never hope to challenge the might of a determined pantheon of Godbound, so a GM in search of more martial challenges is obliged to look farther afield. A mob of angry peasants might be enough to concern a lone, inexperienced Godbound, but a pantheon of more hardened heroes will need foes worthy of their celestial steel.

This chapter will give you a selection of worthy enemies to pit against your heroes and provide the tools for fashioning your own grim enemies and fell-handed foes.

### PLAYER CHARACTERS AND THE REST

Enemies and other non-player characters use slightly different rules than player characters. In most cases, it's just not important to flesh out these entities with all the details and subtleties of a player character. The origins, professional background, and personal relationships of Bandit #12 are going to be potentially relevant for the half-second it takes for the Burning Sword Queen to avulse his component parts, and if you spent ten minutes of prep time developing these things, that's ten minutes of prep time you've spent in vain.

The statistics and rules in this section help you build the simpler, more playable stat blocks of monstrous foes and faceless minions, focusing on only those things that are most likely to be important during combat. While it's possible to build Godbound enemies as you would a player character, that kind of effort is unlikely to be fruitful if the PCs are only ever likely to encounter their enemy on the field of battle.

But what of more peaceful pursuits? How is a GM to determine what an NPC can do off the battlefield? What powers do they have to mold their surroundings, and what special abilities do they possess that haven't any relationship to martial struggle?

As the GM, you'll decide these things when and if they become relevant. Your time and energy is limited, and it's important not to spend a half-hour brewing up content that you'll never use at the table. If it's enjoyable for you, that's another matter, but if you're building a foe for purely pragmatic ends, let your energy be turned toward the parts that are most likely to be important during play. Background details should be saved for the times when they really are important.

### SUPERNATURALS AND MORTAL ENEMIES

Most of the potential combatants the PCs are going to encounter will be perfectly normal mortals. Normal mortals have no special combat abilities, no supernatural powers, and usually no more than 1 hit die. Lone mortals pose almost no threat to a Godbound, and it's only in large Mobs that they start to concern those demigods who haven't made a point of honing their combat skills.

The real opposition for the PCs will be monsters or supernatural entities of some variety. These foes will usually have magical powers and uncommon hardihood, and be fearsome enough to make even divine heroes sweat. Some monsters might be minor beasts or lesser aberrations that have few hit dice and pose little threat, but the greater enemies can send a full pantheon running.

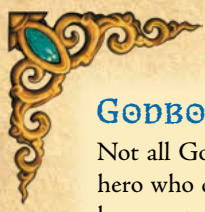
Powerful supernatural foes usually have the following basic powers:

- Only magical weapons can harm them, along with spells, gifts, open flame, and other magical or energy-based attacks.
- Their attacks always count as magical weapons for purposes of overcoming such defenses.
- They can Commit Effort to automatically succeed at saving throws, just as Godbound can.
- Many such foes roll attack damage dice "straight", applying the full total of the dice and not comparing it to the damage chart.

A creature qualifies as a "powerful supernatural foe" if it has 10 or more hit dice and the GM thinks it's appropriate. Lesser foes may have some or all of these abilities as well, and some otherwise-mighty foes may lack some of these gifts.

It's possible for ordinary men and women to gain some of these powers if they are truly heroic examples of their kind. The great heroes of a nation almost all can Commit Effort to succeed on saves, for example, and they may have access to techniques and skills that mimic the gifts of a Word. Some entities that were born human might eventually qualify as a supernatural foe thanks to their relentless acquisition of magical powers or their determined self-cultivation.





## Godbound In Combat

Not all Godbound are particularly focused on combat prowess. A hero who chooses the spheres of Fertility, Wealth, and Knowledge has a vast number of options for manipulating the world, but they're going to be shorter on direct combat capacity than their peer who chose Sword, Endurance, and Alacrity. Even so, every Godbound has a certain degree of martial capacity, and as the GM, you should be ready to remind a new player of these options when necessary.

The two biggest universal tools are the *Divine Wrath* and *Corona of Fury* universal gifts. Every Word has access to these gifts, and even heroes who haven't picked them up can use them as miracles for a lengthier Effort commitment. With them, every Godbound can reliably inflict substantial damage every round they use the power, melting away major opponents in a hurry. *Corona of Fury* is particularly effective in clearing out Mobs, as its area-effect damage is rolled straight against Mobs that have significant numbers within its blast.

The main limits on both of these gifts are that neither of them can be used two rounds in a row, and each of them require Effort commitment at least for the scene, if not for the whole day if used as a miracle. They're good powers to invoke when facing a major opponent or in some dire personal combat, but they're too expensive as miracles to use casually.

Non-combatant Godbound still have the power to invoke useful miracles or suppress hostile gifts with appropriate Words. While the war-gods are wading into the fight, the more peaceful heroes can be stamping down on enemy gifts and using their abilities to shape the battlefield and boost their allies. This can exhaust them quickly if they don't have any appropriate gifts mastered, but the extra actions they provide a party can be crucial in a major combat.

Finally, every Godbound still has their Fray dice. Against lesser foes, even a strictly pacifistic hero is still defeating a certain number of hit dice worth of them every round just by being on the battlefield.

## Judging Appropriate Opposition

It can be tricky to figure out what level of opposition is appropriate for a given pantheon of Godbound. Even if you're creating strictly sandbox-style enemies, where the opposing force is whatever it would logically be rather than an enemy scaled to the PCs' capabilities, a GM generally wants to know how tough a given opponent will be if the PCs end up fighting them. A few basic rules of thumb can help you figure out whether or not a foe is a serious fight.

A creature meant to be a serious threat to a pantheon should have at least one attack per PC per round, and this attack should do straight damage. Thus, a creature with two actions per round and three attacks per action is a fit match for a six-PC pantheon, assuming those attacks do straight damage. You can be an attack short or long on this, but a drastic mismatch means that the creature can't put out enough damage to threaten the PCs before they swamp it.

For conversion purposes, count 2-3 normal attacks as being equal to one straight-damage attack. Thus, if there are four PCs, 8 attacks doing 1d10 or 1d12 normal damage or 10 attacks doing 1d6 or 1d8 damage would be a significant threat to the group.

For hit dice, the creature should have a total of ten hit dice, plus twice the total levels of the PCs. Thus, if a pantheon of three third-level PCs needs a real fight, the foe should have at least 19 hit dice. Dial this total up by 25% or so if the creature hasn't got any minions or other distractions for the PCs to throw their attacks at; if it's the lone target in the fight, it's going to get hammered hard.

## Creature Reactions and Parleying

While the creatures in this section all have combat statistics, not every encounter is going to instantly devolve into a bloody struggle. Even in the depths of a sinister ruin, intelligent entities will respond to intruders as seems wisest, and that doesn't always mean a mob attack from the dark.

When you need to determine the general attitude of a potential foe, first decide what the most likely outcome of the exchange will be. This might be an instant attack, or a wary retreat in search of better grounds for an engagement, or a cautious demand to know what the heroes are doing in the place.

Next, roll 2d6. A roll of 7 means that the creature acts in the most likely way. The lower the roll, the more violent and hostile the reaction, with a roll of 2 meaning the creature is as hostile as could be plausible for the exchange. A high roll means that the thing is friendlier than usual, with a 12 resulting in the most peaceful or sociable result likely for the encounter. If the PCs appear friendly and are trying to negotiate with the thing, apply the negotiator's Charisma modifier to the roll, along with any spot modifiers you might choose for particularly persuasive or unappealing diplomatic efforts.

Magical gifts or appropriate Words might factor into a reaction roll. Persuasive Words can easily calm any but determined enemies.

Keep in mind the overall desires and intentions of these entities. The adventure creation section of this book helps you brew up monstrous groups with their own plans and desires, and if the PCs look like they'd be assets in that, an intelligent group of creatures will try to enlist them. The wealth of the ruin, secrets known to the group, or offers of free passage or aid might all be made in exchange for the PCs' help with whatever it is the entities are trying to accomplish. Only the most savage or territorial creatures will just blindly attack intruders unless they've already penetrated into the group's home terrain and threaten their more vulnerable or important members.

Even when negotiations break down into violence, creatures will respond to it in a rational way. If the heroes carve a bloody road through the group, they're not going to simply stand there and take it until they're wiped out entirely unless they're mindless or fanatical. Survivors will flee and concentrate on avoiding the intruders, waiting until they're safely away to resume their old territory, or leaving entirely for fear that the awful heroes might return. Other groups might seek aid from neighbors, banding together in mutual fear.

## MORALE

Morale is a special score only recorded for NPCs. When a foe finds itself pressed by grave danger, it must make a Morale check, rolling 2d6 and trying to roll equal or less than its Morale total. If it rolls higher than its score, it loses its will to fight. It might flee, seek cover, make a withdrawal, or do anything else that seems likely to save its hide. PCs never make Morale checks, even those obliged by a gift.

The circumstances necessary to trigger a Morale check will depend on the creature and the situation. Ordinary civilians need to make one as soon as the prospect of lethal violence is presented, while soldiers and experienced combatants can usually keep going until one of their comrades is actually killed. Further severe losses or an overwhelming foe might force an additional Morale check, but any group that manages to make two Morale checks will usually keep fighting until it's obviously pointless. Truly fanatical or desperate warriors might even fight to the death, though most normal humans will prefer not to throw their lives away if any hope of mercy remains.

# DARK AND TERRIBLE FOES

The pages that follow give a taste of some of the more ominous foes that a pantheon of Godbound might encounter in their realm. While these creatures are by no means the only perils they might face, they give a GM a general idea of the kind of opposition a band of young demigods might duel. Further rules after the monster listing give tips on creating your own horrific enemies of divine justice.

## CREATURE STAT BLOCKS

Each enemy is listed with a block of statistics describing the average example of their kind. As the GM, you can always adjust these statistics to fit the particular situation, especially when foes might have better armor or more novel weapons than those usually expected.

Some foes have multiple attacks per round, usually expressed as something like “+10 x 3 attacks”. This means that for every action the creature takes to attack, it can make three attack rolls at +10 to hit. They can spread these attacks among any creatures within range.

The movement rating of a creature indicates how many feet it can travel with a single round’s movement. If it chooses to use an action to move again, it can add an additional increment of distance to the movement. Foes locked in melee with an enemy need to spend an action disengaging before they move away, or else they draw a free attack from any melee enemy as they pull away from it.

Some powerful foes are noted as having more than one action in a round. Where ordinary combatants can move and act once in a turn, these enemies can move and act two or more times. Each action can be a full attack sequence, an additional move, a use of a gift or special power, or any other activity that takes about six seconds to complete.

## CREATURE TACTICS

Many foes are provided with a tactics table describing some of the things that creature might do during a round of combat. Intelligent creatures will usually pick the wisest course for their situation, but you can roll on it if you wish to reflect a creature that might be taken up in the excitement of the moment, or one that lacks a human intellect.

Unless otherwise specified, the results on the tactics chart take up only one action of a creature’s round. Thus, enemies that have multiple actions each round might use the table several times, or just use it once and save the rest of their activity for smiting their insolent foes.

## CREATURES AND GIFTS

Some creatures are noted as having gifts at their disposal. For these creatures, you should flip through the Word section of the book and pick a few gifts appropriate to the entity’s theme and nature, choosing those most likely to matter in a confrontation. Use half the creature’s hit dice for level-dependent effects of the gift, rounded up, up to a maximum of 10 for gifts used by creatures of 20 hit dice or more.

Other creatures have access to entire Words, and may Commit Effort for the day to create miracles in line with those powers. You might want to print off the relevant Word page for quick reference at the table, or else spend a few minutes scribbling down a few likely Word miracles it might use in your notes.

In most cases, these powers aren’t actual Words or actual gifts; they’re just convenient shorthand for describing how their powers work. Major supernatural creatures may wield forces capable of matching a Godbound’s gifts, but most ordinary foes with these lesser talents treat them as inferior to true gifts when attempting to

dispel or overcome divine magic. As the GM, decide whether or not these abilities really are divine when brewing up the foe.

Powerful supernatural foes can burn Effort to automatically succeed at saving throws they’d otherwise fail, just as Godbound can do. This is a crucial ability for avoiding one-shot save-or-die powers.

Most extremely powerful entities also have access to a wide variety of other thematically-appropriate powers when it comes to shaping their lairs, controlling their servants, or influencing the environment around them. These are left for the GM to rule as needed, as they aren’t normally the sort of powers that can be used in combat.

## UNTOUCHABLE FOES

Most powerful supernatural creatures require the use of magical weapons to harm them. Low magic spells, theurgy, open flame, or other magical or energy-based sources of harm can also usually harm these entities. Extremely dramatic mundane trauma can also sometimes qualify, at the GM’s discretion, should some Eldritch sorcerer-king decide to stick his head in the muzzle of a magnetic cannon.

Such supernatural creatures always count as using magical weapons with their own attacks, even if they’re nothing more than the impossibly-sharp claws of an Uncreated horror or the eldritch blasts of a parasite god’s wrath. The attacks of a Godbound PC only count as magical if they are actually using a magical weapon or have a gift that imbues their attack with magical power.

Most mortals will have no way to defend themselves from such entities. Salvaged magical weapons from the Former Empires or newer products of arcane artificers might be salvation for those few who possess them, but most peasant villages have nothing but useless superstition and garbled hedge-spells to fall back on.

When faced with such horrors, most communities are forced to call for aid from their overlords or make bargains with such roving defenders as the Raktine Curse-Eaters or the Invocatant Knights of Ancalia. In some cases, the villagers find themselves forced to make other kinds of bargains, offering the creature whatever it desires in exchange for the lives of their families.

## ENEMIES DOING STRAIGHT DAMAGE

Most major enemies roll their damage straight, doing the full die result instead of comparing it to the damage table. Why is this the case?

From a strict design perspective, it’s because five PCs versus one nemesis would be a very short fight otherwise. Major foes need straight damage to hurt a full PC pantheon badly enough to cancel out the pantheon’s advantage in numbers.

From a narrative viewpoint, there are two reasons. Some entities are just so incredibly powerful that their attacks are overwhelmingly strong. Angelic tyrants, Made Gods, powerful parasite gods, and other mighty divine entities are just so strong that their blows do straight damage.

For lesser foes, it’s a function of focus and self-restriction. These enemies have made dark pacts, or sacrificed their supernatural potential, or focused their abilities so completely that their attacks are exceptionally powerful. A PC Godbound that tried to do the same might attain such power eventually, but only at the cost of sacrifices that would cripple their potential as a hero.

# ANGELS

The angels are the dwellers in the shadow of God. The first-formed children of the One, most served for uncounted ages in the luminous halls of Heaven, maintaining the order of creation and sustaining the celestial engines. Others guarded the gates of Hell and stoked the flames of purification by which sinful souls were burnt clean. They were not perfect in their contentment, imperfect creations that they were, but they served, and they were satisfied.

This all changed when the ancients stormed the walls of Heaven and unleashed the Made Gods on the celestial realm. The angels fought desperately to preserve their charges, but the Made Gods were too strong and their human servants too numerous. The angels were driven from Heaven and forced to take refuge in the flames of Hell below.

There they have nursed their bitterness, and Hell has been the worse for it. Its flames no longer cleanse the wicked and its engines of redemption no longer turn. The angels have decided that if humanity is determined to destroy all creation with their hateful meddling, then it is only proper that their souls be trapped here to receive the fruits of their usurpation. No soul is to be allowed to transcend. The angels will not rest until every human is safely and eternally chained within the fires of Hell.

It is difficult and dangerous for an angel to ascend to the crumbling world above, but some risk the journey to plant the seeds of false faiths and empty cults. They present themselves as gods and saints and strive to corrupt any creed that might keep a believer's soul away from Hell's flames. The most powerful of the Host can even pry loose those souls protected by true rituals, though few angels of such power can fold themselves into the fragile shapes of the mortal world.

Still, not every angel is an enemy of humankind. Some still hold to their ancient purpose, determined to carry out the will of the One even if the Creator is no longer to be found. The greatest of these loyalists is the Warden of Hell, Sammael, the archangel of death. While he and his fellows are not strong enough to stand against Hell's new masters, they use their old knowledge to hide in Hell's hidden places and aid those who would free the damned or set Hell's purification engines back into motion. Sammael despises his brethren for their perversion of his old domain, and will go to great lengths to aid heroes who work to restore it.

## ANGELS IN PLAY

Angels are extremely dangerous foes, and even the least of them is a threat to an entire pantheon of novice Godbound. They were born directly from the will of the One, or some source akin to that, and still retain a shadow of the implacable power of their creator.

Angels are usually found alone, carrying out some errand in Hell or seeking to perform some sabotage in Heaven. They no longer seek the preservation of the world, and now try to wreck the engines and destroy the pillars that uphold the decaying realms. The sooner that everything is reduced to Uncreated Night, the sooner they can raise a perfected world free from human evil.

A very few angels are found in the realm, most often masquerading as a god or secretly guiding a faith to some perverse new practice. The more stained and sinful the souls they receive, the easier it is to keep them trapped in Hell. The angels care nothing for the suffering such evil causes in the world above. The only thing that keeps these agents from revealing their natures more directly is the knowledge that other powerful entities can find many uses for their ichors and parts.



## ANGELIC POWERS AND APPEARANCE

Every angel has the following special abilities, in addition to whatever additional powers might be granted by its nature or cunning.

- **Unmade:** A wrathful angel is an engine of supernal destruction. All damage dice it inflicts with its normal attacks are read straight.
- **Unfettered:** An angel has an invincible defense against all effects that read or affect its mind or emotions. It can give false readings to any effects that would pry into its thoughts or true nature.
- **Unborn:** Angels were created, not born, and they were created to maintain an aspect of natural law. They may create miracles related to that aspect as if they were a Godbound bound to that Word, at the usual cost in Effort. Powerful angels often develop gifts similar to those of the Godbound.

Angels appear in many different guises, and some have the power to take seemingly human forms. Most were never meant to pass for mortal, however, and appear as gigantic humanoid entities, usually twice as tall as a man and burning with the inner light of their natures. Even the inhuman and bestial ones have an alien beauty to them that speaks of their harmony with creation's first intent.

Angels do not communicate with humans unless there is some way to advance their purposes in doing so. When such conversation is necessary, an angel in its natural form communicates by means of overwhelming images and concepts that convey its will. While it understands all mortal speech, few angels are inclined to negotiate.



## ANGELIC GUARDIAN

|                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 3                   | <b>Move:</b> 60' flight            |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 10            | <b>Save:</b> 10+                   |
| <b>Attack:</b> +10 x 3 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d8 weapon straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 11              | <b>Effort:</b> 3                   |

While among the least of angels, guardians are also among the most commonly encountered by Godbound who dare the ruins of Heaven or the fires of Hell. They usually appear as armored warriors wielding weapons that blaze with caustic light. Most are sworn to purposes that echo the Words of the Sword, Bow, or Endurance, and may take two actions every round.

### d6 GUARDIAN TACTICS

- 1 Fly 60' to a better position on the battlefield.
- 2 Attack the most obnoxious target within 200 feet.
- 3 Invoke a miracle for invincible defense against weapons until the start of its next turn as an action, then attack.
- 4 Invoke a miracle to automatically hit on all attacks made this round, then attack with its other action.
- 5 Use all actions to kill the last foe to harm it.
- 6 Invoke a miracle to inflict 1d10 damage to all foes in sight. This damage is rolled normally, not straight.

## ANGELIC REGENT

|                                |                                      |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 5                   | <b>Move:</b> 120' teleport           |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 20            | <b>Save:</b> 5+                      |
| <b>Attack:</b> +10 x 2 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d12 psychic straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 10              | <b>Effort:</b> 6                     |

More subtle by far than the usual run of angels, a regent is most often found manipulating mortal believers or engineering atrocities. It can flawlessly adopt the appearance and seeming of any mortal creature, and usually displays miracles of Deception and Command. Most have several mobs of hopelessly beguiled human minions willing to lay down their lives in its defense. It takes three actions every round.

### d6 REGENT TACTICS

- 1 Teleport up to 120' away from danger.
- 2 Attack what seems to be the strongest foe, using a crushing urge to cower in submission as a weapon.
- 3 Invoke a miracle to lash its minions into a frenzy, granting them all an immediate free round worth of actions.
- 4 Invoke a miracle to force attackers to suffer the same damage they inflict on it until its next turn.
- 5 Use all actions to kill the last foe to denounce its lies.
- 6 Invoke a miracle to utter a command; any who disobey it before the next round starts suffer a 1d6 damage die of normally-rolled damage.

## ANGELIC RAVAGER

|                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 1                   | <b>Move:</b> 60' run               |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 15            | <b>Save:</b> 8+                    |
| <b>Attack:</b> +10 x 3 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d10 bolts straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 10              | <b>Effort:</b> 5                   |

Once charged with preserving and maintaining one of the vital celestial engines, ravagers now roam the halls of Heaven seeking to destroy its remaining supports, especially those engines related to their former Word. Many are affiliated with the Word of Artifice, and craft cunning and terrible relics. They may act twice every round.

### d6 RAVAGER TACTICS

- 1 Scuttle away from the nearest melee attacker.
- 2 Target a ranged foe with their energy bolt attacks.
- 3 Invoke a miracle to negate the next gift or miracle targeted at them, then attack.
- 4 Invoke a miracle to gain an invincible defense against melee attacks until the start of its next turn, then attack.
- 5 Use all actions to kill the foe with the finest equipment.
- 6 Invoke a miracle to launch an unerring bolt at each foe within sight, inflicting 1d10 normally-rolled damage, doubled against foes in melee range.

## ANGELIC TYRANT

|                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 2                      | <b>Move:</b> Any location in sight  |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 50               | <b>Save:</b> 3+                     |
| <b>Attack:</b> Two automatic hits | <b>Damage:</b> 1d12 weapon straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 9                  | <b>Effort:</b> 15                   |

One of the greatest lords of the Host, an angelic tyrant commands an entire circle of Hell and once stood guard over a major concept of reality. Time, death, wealth, seasons, and other elements all had their rulers, though many were destroyed during the fall of Heaven. Those that remain plot ceaselessly against the hated humans. Each has a Godbound's command over their chosen Word and a handful of related principles. Tyrants may act three times every round.

### d6 TYRANT TACTICS

- 1 Teleport next to the weakest or worst-hurt enemy.
- 2 Attack the nearest foe, preferring wounded enemies.
- 3 Invoke a miracle to become invulnerable for a round, simply watching its minions fight the PCs.
- 4 Invoke a miracle to command a foe; if disobeyed, the tyrant's attacks do double damage to them for the fight.
- 5 Use all actions to kill the most insulting foe in sight.
- 6 Invoke a miracle to fill the area with their Word's force, inflicting 5d6 damage rolled normally on all enemies present, with a Hardiness save at -4 for half.



# The Eldritch

Eldritch foes are those who have gained their powers through their mastery of theurgy or some other profound sorcerous power. They are no petty low magic wizards, but wielders of the forces of creation and mighty paragons of the arcane arts. While they usually lack the supernatural durability of other great foes, their magic hits with tremendous force and they are almost invariably well-protected by minions, wards, and sorcerous preparations.

The arcanists of the Black Academies in Raktia usually qualify as Eldritch foes, as do lich-lords or successful bargainers with the mad powers of Uncreated Night. Ordinary mortal sorcerers might also painstakingly reach the heights of Eldritch power with enough time, talent, and magical resources.

## Eldritch Powers

All Eldritch are treated as possessing the Word of Sorcery and initiation into at least one level of theurgy. Pick two or three theurgic invocations of each level they know to represent those arts they have at their immediate disposal, while other invocations might be available for more leisurely use. Individual Eldritch might have other powers based on their nature; a lich-king is unlikely to need to eat or breathe, while a fractal sorcerer-automaton may have a mind so alien that it is impervious to thought-reading or mind-affecting powers.

Eldritch all have access to at least one additional Word representing the focus of their magic or their particular specializations. Their spontaneous magical exertions are treated as miracles of this Word, and a few might be so attuned to it that they've developed actual gifts like those of the Godbound. The basic magical attacks made by an Eldritch have their damage dice rolled straight, inflicting the full score as points of damage. Their Words and other spells roll their damage normally.

Sorcery and other powers invoked through this Word are treated as divine gifts, too potent to be overcome easily by lesser dispellings or resistances. A PC hero with the right theurgic dispellings might be able to shut them down, but abilities that protect against low magic or other sub-divine incantations are of no use against them.

## Eldritch Minions and Resources

Eldritch are wizards, and as such can accomplish marvels of unnatural workings if given enough time and resources. When designing their lairs and defenses, you should feel free to insert any effect that matches their particular specialty Words or fits the general theme of "master of magic".

Every Eldritch with any time or opportunity will have built, summoned, or beguiled minions to serve them. These minions can be highly unusual in appearance after the Eldritch has had time to adjust them to the wizard's personal tastes or theme. Most of them are somehow useful in furthering the Eldritch's magical studies as well as being convenient for defending them. Most can be treated as varieties of mortals, though lesser Misbegotten are common creations as well.

Not all Eldritch are monstrous inhuman sorcerers or wretches who've patched for Uncreated power. Some attain this level of mastery through sheer talent, determination, and scholarly opportunity. High priests of a religion can often be treated as Eldritch, empowered by the parasite god or demi-deity they serve, or even infused with their abilities by the ancient rituals and practices of their faith. Such Eldritch often have enormous resources available in their co-believers.

## Lesser Eldritch

|                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 5                   | <b>Move:</b> 30' run               |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 16            | <b>Save:</b> 9+                    |
| <b>Attack:</b> +10 x 2 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d10 magic straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 10              | <b>Effort:</b> 6                   |

These are superlatively-gifted mortal magi, lesser adepts of the Black Academies, high priests of lesser faiths, and court wizards of powerful rulers. They can be treated as adepts of a single Word in addition to that of Sorcery and have mastered the theurgic incantations of the Gate. They are able to take two actions per turn.

## Greater Eldritch

|                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 4                   | <b>Move:</b> 60' fly               |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 22            | <b>Save:</b> 6+                    |
| <b>Attack:</b> +11 x 2 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d12 magic straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 10              | <b>Effort:</b> 8                   |

Great magi of the Black Academies, patriarchs of the Unitary Church, court wizards to emperors, lich-lords of ageless learning, and other great figures of magic qualify as greater Eldritch. They are adepts of at least two Words in addition to Sorcery and can have theurgic invocations of the Gate or the Way. They get two actions per turn.

## Master Eldritch

|                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 2                   | <b>Move:</b> 120' teleport         |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 36            | <b>Save:</b> 3+                    |
| <b>Attack:</b> +15 x 3 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d12 magic straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 11              | <b>Effort:</b> 15                  |

These are the sorcerer-tyrants of whole realms or the arcane hermits who dwell in the shattered halls of Heaven. Every degree of theurgy is open to them, in addition to at least three Words aside from that of Sorcery. They get three actions per turn.

d6

### Eldritch Tactics

- 1 Reposition to place minions or some barrier between them and their enemies. Some Eldritch move themselves, others move or create the terrain.
- 2 Use a Word or invocation to blight, snare, or otherwise debilitate their enemies.
- 3 Hit the most sorcerer-like rival on the battlefield with the heaviest attack they have available.
- 4 Use an area-effect power to try to blast as many different enemies at once as is possible.
- 5 Boost their minions with a Word, granting them an immediate extra action and inflicting 1d12 damage on all foes from the Word's side-effects.
- 6 Do nothing but draw power for a full round; next round, all their attacks automatically hit and do maximum damage and all spells have maximum effects.

# Made Gods

Of the countless Made Gods created so long ago, only a handful remain in existence. The rigors of their war against each other, the perils of Heaven, and the fury of its angelic defenders have all combined to winnow their numbers. Those few that have managed to maintain their existence usually do so in isolated shards of Heaven or fortified theocratic realms, guarding against the implacable vengefulness of the angelic Host. A few still shelter in the celestial Paradises they crafted for their people, they and their dead both perpetually repelling the assaults of angelic invaders.

Made Gods were usually the sole divine representative of their creators, divinities built to embody the ideals and philosophies of their makers. They were the noblest and finest exemplars of all that their people held holy. Their divine might was meant to spread these ideals throughout the world and extirpate the evil of lesser, viler ways, ones embraced by their enemies and their rivals. Any peace between the Made Gods of different nations was only ever a temporary truce.

Not all Made Gods were created with ideals of conquest and forced conversion, of course. Such violent deities were simply the only ones left standing after the first few centuries of struggle. Gods of peaceful coexistence and harmonious sharing were summarily annihilated by the more numerous and more violent gods of less pacifistic cultures. A few such paragons of peace might still survive, hidden deep within the broken halls of Heaven, but the Made Gods that live today are the ones built for holy war. The only factors that keep them from resuming their conquests are the constant threat of angelic attack and the crippling damage that many have suffered over the long centuries.

## The Faces of God

Made Gods are all constructs, though some were built out of living humans rather than cold theurgic components. Even the most human-seeming Made God has an air of artificial perfection about them, a symmetry that speaks more of divine law than human flaws. Most of them are obviously inhuman, twice the size of a man or more. Golem-like bodies, animal parts, excessive eyes or limbs or other such symbolic anatomy, and flesh fashioned of some living elemental force are all common traits of a Made God's shell.

## Divine Rights

Made Gods embody the ideals of their creators, usually expressed through one or more Words. They have effectively unlimited Effort, and may use gifts and miracles of those Words freely. Made Gods cannot offensively dispel gifts, however; they can only dispel defensively.

The personal attacks of a Made God roll their damage dice straight. Gifts and miracles they invoke roll damage dice normally. If they use a gift that modifies their base attack, such as one that doubles the damage done, then the damage done is rolled normally rather than straight.

Made Gods embody the remorseless victory of their ideals. All creatures of 1 or 2 hit dice within sight of a Made God are utterly subject to its will for so long as they remain within the god's presence. The presence of another Made God cancels out this effect, as does the presence of a defiant Godbound.

A slain Made God will explode as their divine energies escape through their shattered shell. The explosion may not be physical in nature, and may instead warp natural laws, inflict a hideous curse, or create some permanent magical monument. Physical detonations inflict 10d8 damage on everything within ten miles of the location.



## Made God

|                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| AC: 0                      | Move: 120' by favored mode  |
| Hit Dice: 50               | Save: Always successful     |
| Attack: Two automatic hits | Damage: 2d10 blast straight |
| Morale: 11                 | Effort: Special             |

Made Gods are almost always found in the company of their theotechnical cults, which they require for their maintenance and spiritual upkeep. Gods without such a cult are prone to decay and malfunction, but even a decayed Made God gets three actions per turn. Defeating a Made God is almost impossible without careful preparation.

d6

## Made God Tactics

- 1 Reposition to take a commanding location on the battlefield, suitable for overawing their enemies or smiting a distant foe.
- 2 Spend a round exulting in its own power, using its Words in a dramatic but not necessarily useful way.
- 3 Target a single foe and hammer it with everything the god's got. Insulting foes are picked over dangerous ones.
- 4 Scatter or disorient the enemy with a miracle, moving them away from the god or creating barriers between.
- 5 Spread the divine wrath around, using each action against a different foe and using a different kind of attack or miracle each time.
- 6 Demand the foes worship it, using debilitating miracles that weaken or subvert the enemy without risking its unconverted death.

# The MISBEGOTTEN

The natural order of the world has been broken for a thousand years. For ten centuries, the realms have given birth to creatures and entities never intended by nature, their forms fashioned by sorcery, dark artifice, or the simple misfortune of some cursed birthplace. These are the Misbegotten, entities plagued by dangerous anomalies of mind and form.

Not all altered creatures are considered Misbegotten. Amid the steady decay of the celestial engines, many men and women are touched in small ways by the loosening of physical laws. Small peculiarities of color, texture, or body parts are viewed with some dismay in most circles, but so long as their bearers seem otherwise no different than their peers, they are usually accepted by their community. A few societies hold a harder line, however, and cast out any who are born with the marks of anomaly on them. Some even exile those unfortunates who change later in life, either due to a slow-manifesting anomaly or because of exposure to some curdled source of old magic.

True Misbegotten are identified chiefly by their danger. Animals cursed with the condition are usually savage and bloodthirsty, their natural instincts confused and infuriated by their altered bodies. Humans who experience excessive physical alteration usually have mental changes to match, ones that instill uncontrollable urges or bestial instincts. These Misbegotten are monsters, pure and simple, and even the most desperately regretful among them are lashed on by compulsions they simply cannot contain for long.

## TWO KINDS OF AFFLICTIONS

Misbegotten come in two major varieties in the realms. The first are those created intentionally by some ancient magic or more modern experimenter. The sort of beings who create chimeras out of humans and beasts are rarely of the most humane temper, and their creations are usually instilled with a native fury and savage urge to violence. With their creators dead, some of these creatures breed true, creating long-standing populations of dangerous monsters. Occasionally these beasts require the particular magical environment they were first spawned in, restraining their spread, but others can expand to be found throughout a realm.

The second kind of Misbegotten are the products of simple misfortune. They are those cursed by half-spoiled magic left over from ancient days, mutated by the rotting remnants of some forgotten spell. Many such unfortunates die from the changes, but some live, and it's not uncommon for such drastic magical transformations to give them a kind of immortality. Such accidental monsters could live for centuries as a threat, perhaps with others of their kind of the magic is particularly strong and persistent. A few of these beasts breed true and are sufficiently calm to be trained by steely-willed owners. Many of the wild Howler tribes of the realm of Arcem have herds of Misbegotten beasts bred for meat, mounts, and vicious guardians.

Misbegotten of both kinds tend to be loosely tethered to natural law. Many of the longest-surviving varieties require much less food than creatures of their size might usually need, or have magical abilities to capture prey. Intelligent Misbegotten are usually smart enough to stay away from large groups of humans, though their urges or their simple hunger might compel them to hunt at the edges of human settlements.

Misbegotten organization depends both on their intelligence and their instincts. Weak Misbegotten usually form packs of similar creatures, while strong ones are often lone alpha predators in their area.

## MISBEGOTTEN POWERS

Aside from those minor Misbegotten that are little more than unhappily-deformed animals, every Misbegotten has at least one magical power or trait. You should thumb through the Words and pick a particular gift or two that suits a Misbegotten's nature or type of origin and assign it to the beast accordingly. Some powers might require the creature to Commit Effort to trigger them, while other natural abilities might be constantly available to the beast.

When assigning powers, it's generally best to leave it at just one or two significant abilities unless the creature is intended to be a major opponent for the heroes. Mobs of lesser Misbegotten can be cumbersome to run if they all have several different abilities they could trigger, so one characteristic offensive power and one constant defensive benefit is usually as many as can be conveniently managed in combat.

## USING MISBEGOTTEN AS FOES

During play, you'll usually need one of two types of Misbegotten: minor enemies as mob fodder, and dangerous semi-divine beasts that should threaten an entire pantheon. You'll want to build these two types of enemies differently.

For minor enemies, you'll want creatures with few hit dice, limited powers, and large numbers of friends. The Mob rules in this section are often applicable to foes of this type, and can make even an individually trivial enemy into a significant threat in sufficient numbers.

## MINOR MISBEGOTTEN

**AC:** 7 to 9

**Move:** 40' run

**Hit Dice:** 1 to 5

**Save:** 15+

**Attack:** +Hit Dice

**Damage:** 1d6 or by weapon

**Morale:** 8

**Effort:** 1

These Misbegotten are vile and twisted creatures, whether warped beasts or altered humans. Specific types of them will usually have the same armor class and hit dice, though their alphas and chieftains might be larger and more dangerous. Intelligent Misbegotten will usually be using weapons of some sort. Their hit bonus is equal to their maximum hit dice.

### d6

### MINOR MISBEGOTTEN TACTICS

- 1 Run away from a foe that hurt it or its comrades during the last round, preferring instead to attack a different enemy. If no other enemy, cower back for a round.
- 2 Circle the target, curse, and otherwise make a threat display. Intelligent creatures may try to coerce surrender.
- 3 Attack a nearby target, preferring one that's also being engaged by a comrade.
- 4 Attack the nearest wounded enemy, or one that's in a compromising position.
- 5 Use their offensive power on a suitable target. If no power is available, strike the nearest enemy.
- 6 Tear flesh from a downed foe, killing them, or otherwise express its natural urges in a frenzy of mindless indulgence or violence.



## TITANIC BEAST

|                         |                                |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| AC: 2                   | Move: 60' by favored mode      |
| Hit Dice: 15            | Save: 8+                       |
| Attack: +10 x 3 attacks | Damage: 1d10 physical straight |
| Morale: 10              | Effort: 5                      |

These horrific creatures can overwhelm any ordinary mortal foe and can even threaten a pantheon of novice Godbound. Most have only a feral sort of intelligence, but their natural attacks roll damage straight, and they can act three times every round. Most have several gifts.

### d6 TITANIC BEAST TACTICS

- 1 Savagely charge the biggest enemy in sight, automatically hitting with its first attack. If impossible, just attack.
- 2 Use its natural environment against its foes, either by means of a gift or by simple smashing or scattering.
- 3 Charge a ranged opponent that hurt it last round, automatically hitting with the first attack. If no such foe exists, then attack the nearest enemy.
- 4 Activate one of its natural gifts against a nearby enemy, preferring the largest foe.
- 5 Make a furious threat display against the most aggravating enemy as an action. Its next attack sequence against that enemy hits automatically all three times.
- 6 Hunch down and use defensive gifts. No attacks this round, but if anyone attacks it, it automatically counterattacks after the blow lands.

## TWISTED OGRE

|                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| AC: 3                     | Move: 40' run                  |
| Hit Dice: 20              | Save: 5+                       |
| Attack: One automatic hit | Damage: 1d12 physical straight |
| Morale: 9                 | Effort: 7                      |

These kinds of Misbegotten are intelligent, and usually fueled by cravings both hideous and alien. While they're personally capable of fighting several Godbound at once with three actions per round, they usually rely on mobs of lesser servants to soften up opponents first.

### d6 TWISTED OGRE TACTICS

- 1 Reposition on the battlefield to get away from the most dangerous opponents.
- 2 Command its minions to screen it from danger, granting all allies an immediate free round of action.
- 3 Use one of its gifts on some object or terrain feature it prepared beforehand, triggering a trap or using a natural feature as a hazard to its foes.
- 4 Use an offensive gift directly on an enemy, following it up with the rest of its actions for the round as attacks.
- 5 Sacrifice an individual minion or 1d6 hit dice worth of an allied Mob to distract or hinder a foe, allowing the ogre's next attack on them to do maximum damage.
- 6 Use every action this turn in invoking gifts against its enemies. If not enough Effort, then attack the weakest or most badly-wounded enemy within easy reach.





# MOBS

A Mob is a pack of foes who might be individually contemptible yet are dangerous in swarms. Rather than pitting dozens of individual soldiers, ancient constructs, monstrous spawn, or other petty enemies against the PCs, the GM can simply represent the pack as a Mob. A Mob possesses most of the characteristics of the main creature type that participates in it, but it has a few adjustments to make it a more worthy foe and one easier for the GM to run in combat. It's always up to the GM as to whether a particular group of foes should be treated as a Mob or as individuals.

## CREATING A MOB

Mobs are treated as single opponents, usually subject to enemy attacks and actions as if they were a single target. To turn a swarm of enemies into a Mob, make the following adjustments.

Decide whether or not the Mob is Small, Large, or Vast. A Small Mob has enough foes to fill a large room. A Large Mob can block a street, and a Vast Mob is the size of a military unit on a battlefield. Don't worry about counting exact numbers of enemies; if the foes are minor enough to make up a Mob, a few more or less don't matter.

A Small Mob has hit dice equal to ten plus twice the creature's base hit dice. Thus, a Small Mob of 1 HD soldiers would have 12 hit dice. A Large Mob has twice this number, and a Vast Mob has three times this number. A military regiment of 4 HD spirit-possessed vessels would therefore be a Vast Mob that has 54 hit dice.

A Mob has an attack bonus equal to the creature's usual attack bonus. Sword-swinging soldiers of an ordinary cut would thus make a Mob that had a +1 attack bonus, and those 4 hit die vessels would probably have a +4 attack bonus.

A Small Mob has a number of attacks equal to its usual attack sequence. A Large Mob has twice this sum, and a Vast Mob has three times as many attacks. A Small Mob of human soldiers would thus have a single attack, while a swarm of savage Misbegotten, which might usually have two claw attacks, would have six of them when marshaled into a Vast legion.

A Mob has an armor class equal to that of its base creature type. Its morale, saving throws and other statistics are also equal to that of the base creature type. Its movement is the same as well, though this usually isn't terribly important unless the Mob is chasing something.

Mobs also have any special abilities possessed by their base creature type. If the Mob is mostly made of one type of creature, but has a significant number of other beings involved, the Mob might have access to the special powers of these allies. Otherwise, don't worry about altering a mixed Mob's statistics. Just use the predominant creature type and its usual available Effort.

## RUNNING A MOB

Mobs act and fight just as any other creatures do, with a few major exceptions to reflect the way that vast swarms of foes can threaten even mighty heroes.

Mobs don't usually need to move; they simply occupy a space. If a small mob is in the room, one or more of its members are assumed to be anywhere they need to be in the room. A large mob can dominate a street or large building, while a vast mob can be wherever they need to be on a battlefield. As a consequence, most PCs in the area will be in reach of a mob unless the heroes do something to put themselves out of range.

Mobs can make one full round of attacks against any foes within reach each round. Thus, a single Mob pitted against four Godbound heroes can attack each of the four heroes every round. If a Vast Mob has six attacks per round, as a Vast Mob of Misbegotten might have, then every foe within its reach will be attacked six times every round.

Mobs with special powers, such as the innate magical gifts of sorcerous spawn or Mobs with abilities granted by their training, can use one of these powers each round against any single target. Thus, a Mob of witch-led draugr slaves might have the armored corpses wield a crushing blow ability against one PC, while the witches hurl a curse of ice at another. The same power can be used against multiple PCs, but only one power can be targeted at any single hero each round. The GM might make an exception for auras, miasmas, or other ambient effects that just happen without effort by the Mob. Using an ability does not cost a Mob its attacks for the round.

Mobs under some semblance of control can also do one non-combat action a round, such as breaking down a door, building a barricade, or otherwise doing the sort of things that a swarm of people could accomplish in a round. Mobs without firm leadership are unlikely to be able to pull off such feats of coordination, and will instead just blindly blunder in the direction of their shared interest.

Mobs usually have to check morale as soon as they're reduced to half hit dice. Mobs of undisciplined peasants or wild animals must also check morale as soon as they take any damage at all.

Area-effect powers roll their damage straight against Mobs or roll a 1d6 straight damage die per point of damage done if the power simply inflicts a flat amount. Thus, a Godbound who calls down a *Corona of Fury* on a swarm of angry peasants just does their damage roll in points of damage, without referencing the usual chart. Powers that disable or render harmless all victims within a large area inflict the equivalent of 3 hit dice of damage per level of the Godbound or per hit die of the creature inflicting them, up to 30 at most. This sort of effect might happen if a Godbound uses a gift to terrify or beguile listeners, or traps them in a snare of sudden vines. The Mob might get a saving throw against some effects, however, if allowed one.

## MOB ABILITIES

Mobs sometimes have special abilities based on their sheer numbers, foaming zealotry, or synergy created by their coordination. The abilities described below are examples.

**Overwhelm:** The vast numbers of the mob can threaten a foe otherwise far beyond the mob's power to harm. Once per turn, the mob can use this ability as a free On Turn action against a single foe they are engaging, rolling an automatic damage die ranging from 1d4 to 1d20 depending on the ferocity of the swarm. Foes can make a saving throw to negate this damage, with the type depending on the nature of the mob. Packs that fight with brute force require a Hardiness save, those that use projectile attacks or swarms of small foes require an Evasion save, and those that use eldritch powers compel a Spirit save.

**Blood Like Water:** In place of an attack, the mob swarms over its foe, utterly heedless of casualties. The mob automatically hits all targets in contact with it. This violence comes at a price; any victims of *Blood Like Water* treat any of their attack rolls made against the Mob in their next turn as automatic hits. This ability is usually only possessed by mindless foes or fanatically determined enemies. This power substitutes for a single attack each time it's used.

# EXAMPLE MOBS

## FURIOUS PEASANTS

|                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| AC: 9                      | Move: 30' run              |
| Hit Dice: 12 / 24 / 36     | Save: 15+                  |
| Attack: +0 / +0 x2 / +0 x3 | Damage: 1d6 average weapon |
| Morale: 7                  | Effort: 1                  |

This wild Mob might be one incited by the PCs or one hurled against them by a demagogue or beguiling foe. It can also be used to represent any random mass of ordinary citizens without particular martial talent. The Mob is made up of 1 hit die creatures, and is susceptible to powers and Fray dice that affect such foes.

## TRAINED SOLDIERS

|                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| AC: 6                      | Move: 30' run              |
| Hit Dice: 12 / 24 / 36     | Save: 15+                  |
| Attack: +2 / +2 x2 / +2 x3 | Damage: 1d8 average weapon |
| Morale: 9                  | Effort: 1                  |

These soldiers are well-trained, and can represent regular field troops or veteran city guardsmen. In addition to the usual abilities of a mob, they also have the *Overwhelm* ability which they may use against a single engaged target once per round. Such swarmed foes suffer a 1d6 damage die automatically unless they make a successful Hardiness save. The mob is made up of 1 hit die creatures, and is susceptible to powers and Fray dice that affect such foes.

## ELITE WARRIORS

|                            |                       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| AC: 4                      | Move: 30' run         |
| Hit Dice: 16 / 32 / 48     | Save: 14+             |
| Attack: +4 / +4 x2 / +4 x3 | Damage: 1d8+2 average |
| Morale: 11                 | Effort: 1             |

Most military forces don't have enough elite troops to field more than a few Small Mobs of them, though those groups blessed by divine favor or formed by an exceptionally martial society might have more. This mob's *Overwhelm* ability inflicts 1d10 damage on a single enemy within engagement range when targeted at a foe, though a successful Hardiness save allows the victim to resist. The mob is made up of 3 hit die creatures, and is susceptible to powers and Fray dice that affect such foes.

## BRAZEN LEGION

|                            |                        |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| AC: 4                      | Move: 30' run          |
| Hit Dice: 20 / 40 / 60     | Save: 13+              |
| Attack: +7 / +7 x2 / +6 x3 | Damage: 1d10+2 average |
| Morale: 10                 | Effort: 1              |

Mass-produced warbots or battle-golems might use these stats, each one a fearsome warrior capable of slaughtering an ordinary soldier with ease. Golems without self-awareness will have a Morale of 12 and the *Blood Like Water* ability, while those with some sense of self-preservation will *Overwhelm* for 1d20 on a failed Evasion save.

## UNDEAD HORDE

|                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| AC: 7                      | Move: 30' shamble          |
| Hit Dice: 12 / 24 / 36     | Save: 16+                  |
| Attack: +1 / +1 x2 / +1 x3 | Damage: 1d8 average weapon |
| Morale: 12                 | Effort: 1                  |

A shambling mass of lesser undead takes the field in this horde. While utterly fearless and hard to put down, they lack the intelligence and flexibility of living troops, and fail to show much self-preservation. They do, however, have a mindless lust for violence, and gain the *Blood Like Water* ability which they may use against its foes in lieu of an attack. Small Mobs can use this power once per round, Large Mobs can use it twice, and Vast Mobs can use it three times per round. The mob is made up of 2 hit die creatures, and is susceptible to powers and Fray dice that affect such foes.

## VERMINOUS SWARM

|                        |                  |
|------------------------|------------------|
| AC: 9                  | Move: 30' crawl  |
| Hit Dice: 12 / 24 / 36 | Save: 15+        |
| Attack: Special        | Damage: 1d6 gnaw |
| Morale: 10             | Effort: 1        |

Whether giant rats, a carpet of gnawing insects, or a writhing mass of tentacular creatures, this mob relies on sheer numbers and voracity to bring down its foes. It has the *Blood Like Water* ability, which Small Mobs may use once per round, Large twice, and Vast three times. The mob is made up of 1 hit die creatures, and is susceptible to powers and Fray dice that affect such foes. The swarm only attacks with *Blood Like Water*, and not with conventional hit rolls.

## When To Roll Damage Straight

Mobs take damage straight when it's inflicted by an area-effect attack. Thus, *Corona of Fury* rolls its damage straight, because it's clearly labeled as an area-effect power. But what about the marginal cases, when it's not clear whether or not a gift should be rolled straight against a ravening Mob? Just check the guidelines below to find the answer.

- Is the power listed as affecting all creatures within a particular area, and a meaningful chunk of the Mob is in that area? Roll it straight.
- Does the power harm everyone who attacks or closes on the user, such as *Nimbus of Flames*? Roll it straight, since a large number of faceless Mob NPCs are getting hit by it.
- Does the power have a listed damage that's done to Mobs, like the 1d20 die from *Mantle of Quietude*? Use that. The Mantle, for example, just rolls a 1d20 die normally.

Just follow those three guidelines, and you'll know whether or not to roll an ability's damage straight against a Mob.

## MORTAL FOES

Ordinary men and women rarely pose much threat to a Godbound unless they appear in vast swarms. Common soldiers, ordinary thugs, and even dangerous mundane beasts all are scythed down quickly by all but the most pacifistic demigods. Even so, it can be useful for a GM to have some idea of what normal men and women look like in comparison to the mightier denizens of the realm.

The statistics given here cover some of the more common varieties of human and animal foes. During play, it's usually not worth it to track mere individuals of this level, but these statistics can be useful if Mobs of a particular enemy are needed.

Not all wholly mortal foes are trivial, however. Some warriors or gifted sorcerers manage to hone their abilities to a level that can give a novice Godbound pause. While they lack the flexibility of the Words, they might have mastered certain gifts thanks to their innate talents or their mastery of the secret martial practices found across the realm. For these exceptional foes, the GM can assign a more generous number of hit dice, a hit bonus to match, add a gift or two relevant to their focus, and grant them two actions per round.

### MORTAL HIT DICE

Normal men and women have one hit die. Hardened veterans and unusually skilled soldiers will have two hit dice. Elite operatives and the finest normal combatants in a city will have three hit dice. Totals above that indicate some degree of magic, long practice, or superlative talent. Even the most tremendously talented and capable normal human will not exceed ten hit dice without substantial magical augmentation.

For mortal creatures, hit dice are a measure of how hard they are to defeat in a conflict, not just how physically impressive they may be. A cow has one hit die, because even though it might weigh a quarter of a ton, it's not a beast much inclined to violent struggle. A perfumed fencing-master might have an extremely high hit bonus, but if he's totally disconnected from the bloody business of actual murder, he might not have more than one or two hit dice.

Powerful politicians and social figures do not necessarily have a big stack of hit dice. Most of them are perfectly ordinary men and women in matters not related to their expertise, and so they can be expected to have one or two hit dice. Grizzled veterans of savage political maneuvering or scarred warrior-kings raised to the throne on the point of their swords, however, might have as many as seven or eight hit dice.

### MORTALS AND GIFTS

For simplicity's sake, rather than spend time sculpting out unique abilities and tricks for individual mortals of importance, it's easier to just grab a gift from an appropriate Word and use it to represent the mortal's particular talents. These arts might come from their native ingenuity, their magical powers, their martial arts study, or some other suitable source.

These abilities are not true gifts, however, and cannot be used to overcome the powers of a Godbound. They usually require Effort to trigger, and unless you decide otherwise, you can assume that a mortal has only one point of Effort available at any one time.

Most mortals are mown down in combat quickly enough that it's not worth the time to elaborate their combat statistics too much. They usually have enough time to trigger one gift, and then that's it. Choosing something from Sword or Bow is thus recommended.

## A SELECTION OF HUMAN FOES

These statistics cover some of the sorts of people that Godbound are most likely to encounter. Individuals will vary, of course, depending on their particular aptitudes.

### Common Humans

|                  | Civilian      | Warrior       | Veteran       |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>AC:</b>       | 9             | 7 to 5        | 5 to 3        |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> | 1             | 1             | 2             |
| <b>Attack:</b>   | +0            | +1            | +4            |
| <b>Damage:</b>   | 1d2 or weapon | 1d2 or weapon | 1d4 or weapon |
| <b>Move:</b>     | 30' run       | 30' run       | 30' run       |
| <b>Save:</b>     | 15+           | 15+           | 14+           |
| <b>Morale:</b>   | 7             | 8             | 10            |
| <b>Effort:</b>   | 1             | 1             | 1             |

Ordinary humans are of little consequence in combat, though more experienced fighters can occasionally hinder a Godbound if they're sufficiently armed and armored. Most of the time, humans of this sort will be found in Mobs if they mean to slow down a hero.

### Exceptional Humans

|                  | Minor Hero | Major Hero      | Skilled Mage |
|------------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>AC:</b>       | 4          | 3               | 7            |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> | 4          | 8               | 6            |
| <b>Attack:</b>   | +6         | +10 x 2 attacks | +5           |
| <b>Damage:</b>   | 1d10+2     | 1d8+5           | 1d6 blast    |
| <b>Move:</b>     | 30' run    | 40' run         | 30' run      |
| <b>Save:</b>     | 13+        | 11+             | 12+          |
| <b>Morale:</b>   | 11         | 11              | 9            |
| <b>Effort:</b>   | 3          | 4               | 6            |

Humans of this caliber are usually found as individual opponents. A minor hero is individually a speed bump to a combat-focused Godbound, but several of them can be a problem. Major heroes are among the mightiest warriors of a nation, and can possibly overcome a novice Godbound if their target isn't well-made for war.

Minor Heroes should have one combat-relevant gift to reflect their particular talents, and are able to Commit Effort to make saving throws in the same way as Godbound. Choices from the Sword, Bow, or Endurance Words are most likely applicable to their skills, though heroes with supernatural blood might have ties to a more exotic art.

Major Heroes should pick three gifts that match their skills, usually one offensive gift, one defensive one, and one that has something to do with movement or manipulation of the environment. They are allowed two actions per round.

A skilled mage represents a duke's sorcerous vizier or one of the most powerful wizards of a city. Aside from being an archmage of some low magic tradition, they should pick three appropriate gifts as their immediately-available spells. They also get two actions per round.

## BESTIAL PERILS

Normal animals aren't usually a problem for Godbound. Primal opposition most often appears as Misbegotten beasts or denizens of strange realms. Even so, some shapeshifting Godbound might need the statistics of more mundane beasts, or the heroes might find themselves assailed by a Mob of natural fauna. Normal domestic animals almost always have only 1 hit die and no meaningful combat statistics.

### PACK ANIMALS

|                  | Petty Vermin | Pack Hunter | Big Hunter |
|------------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| <b>AC:</b>       | 8            | 7           | 8          |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> | 1            | 1           | 3          |
| <b>Attack:</b>   | +1           | +2          | +5         |
| <b>Damage:</b>   | 1d4 bite     | 1d6 bite    | 1d8 bite   |
| <b>Move:</b>     | 20' skitter  | 40' lope    | 40' lope   |
| <b>Save:</b>     | 15+          | 15+         | 13+        |
| <b>Morale:</b>   | 7            | 8           | 9          |
| <b>Effort:</b>   | 1            | 1           | 1          |

Petty vermin are almost always found as Mobs when they're meant to be a meaningful threat to a Godbound. They're waves of rats, swarms of insects, or other hordes of small, biting foes.

Pack hunters include wolves and other larger beasts that attack in groups. Mobs are also usually applicable for them, and in a Mob they should have a gift reflecting their talents when working together as a coordinated group. Riding horses also use these statistics, but will only fight in self-defense.

Big hunters are creatures like lions or other pack hunters of exceptional ferocity and size. They don't necessarily need to be in a Mob to cause problems for novice heroes, as even a half-dozen of them can complicate life in a hurry. They should also be given one gift to represent the benefits of their pack cooperation. Warhorses can also use these statistics, and will fight alongside their rider.

### LONE BEASTS

|                  | Lone Hunter    | Big Grazer  | Predator King   |
|------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|
| <b>AC:</b>       | 7              | 7           | 6               |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> | 4              | 7           | 12              |
| <b>Attack:</b>   | +7 x 2 attacks | +9          | +10 x 3 attacks |
| <b>Damage:</b>   | 1d8+2 bite     | 1d10+2 kick | 1d10+2          |
| <b>Move:</b>     | 40' run        | 30' run     | 40' run         |
| <b>Save:</b>     | 13+            | 12+         | 9+              |
| <b>Morale:</b>   | 8              | 7           | 9               |
| <b>Effort:</b>   | 2              | 1           | 3               |

Lone hunters are tigers, sharks, or other fearsome predators that usually hunt alone. All of them should have one gift appropriate to their nature. Big grazers can be used for elephant bulls, cape oxen, and other ostensible herbivores that have a habit of kicking problems into pulp. They may or may not have a gift useful in combat. Predator kings are the heroes of the animal world, grizzled beasts of terrible wrath. They may act twice a round and have two pertinent gifts.





# PARASITE GODS

The damage inflicted on the engines of Heaven by the Last War was deep and wide-ranging. Some damage produced obvious catastrophes, sundering nations and throwing natural laws into chaos. Other troubles were more subtle in their consequences. The parasite gods are one such symptom, misfortunate monsters created by a broken world.

Certain regions of the world have suffered subtle damage to the engines that maintain their natural laws. The power of the engines is not being directed correctly, and crackles off into the created world in invisible tongues of celestial force. Sometimes these stray sparks brush against a human or other creature within the realm, and a connection is forged. These unfortunates are known as “parasite gods”, for they draw into themselves the energies that were meant for the maintenance of natural law.

The effects of these forces vary wildly. Physical transformations are usual, and instances of madness or mental devolution are not uncommon. Above all, however, is the terrible thirst that this connection induces in the host, an unquenchable desire for more power. The parasite god was never meant to receive such celestial energies, so no amount of power can ever truly fill the void within them. Most of them instinctively try to recreate patterns of worship and service in the humans around them in order to amplify the amount of divine energy they receive.

Parasite gods are not intrinsically evil, but even the noblest of them suffer under a constant, gnawing thirst for celestial energy. Some have sufficient willpower to resist the temptation to seek more, but most of them eventually give in to the addiction within a few years of its first manifestations. These addicts become obsessed with creating elaborate edifices of worship and brutal, follower-consuming rituals of devotion. Their minions are sent to gather new worshipers and force others to become devoted servants of their insatiable god.

As the parasite god grows in power, the natural laws of the land they command become weaker and more erratic, particularly in ways that reflect the god’s nature or focus. A powerful parasite god doesn’t just siphon off the free energy of the celestial engines, their worshipers act to drain additional power that the engines need to maintain the world. Cysts of dangerous magic and the open sores of Night Roads are common in lands afflicted by a powerful parasite god.

One small saving grace is that parasite gods are usually geographically limited to a particular area. They are tethered to the celestial flaws that feed them their power, and leaving this area causes them to wither and die within days. Some such areas can be small as a single building complex, while others extend over entire nations. A sufficiently powerful or numerous group of worshipers in another area, however, can create similar celestial damage with their rituals and sorcery, expanding the parasite god’s reach. Only the most powerful or cunning gods know the necessary techniques for producing this contagion. Many more have their minions out searching for it.

There is no known cure for divine parasitism. It is possible to cut a parasite god off from its powers by repairing the celestial damage that created the original link, but reaching the correct shard of fallen Heaven and repairing the engines is a feat to tax a Godbound’s power. Even if successful the parasite god will still suffer their undying thirst, though they can no longer use their former powers. It may be that some great feat of divine power might be able to purge the effects of divine parasitism from a victim, but discovering such a means would be a great achievement even for a pantheon of Godbound.

## PARASITE GODS IN PLAY

Parasite gods are meant to be worthy opponents for an entire pantheon of Godbound. PCs can discover a parasite god almost anywhere, often trapped within some ancient ruin or lurking in some long-forgotten temple to its glory, surrounded by the bones of its slaughtered faithful. Their geographic restrictions mean that even such powerful creatures can’t readily dominate a realm, as they’re forced to remain within their own territory if they’re to survive.

Parasite gods are addicts. Their goal is to receive a larger flow of celestial power, and they do that by setting up cults, temples, and all the paraphernalia of worship. Even animalistic or half-mad parasite gods know to do this, as the necessary patterns of behavior and worship are imprinted on them at an instinctual level. Parasite gods will always have swarms of worshipers nearby if at all possible.

Parasite gods initially offer aid and help to prospective worshipers, using their celestial powers to help the faithful. Some of them might even intend to be benevolent deities. The constant pressure of the thirst soon erodes the kindness of all but the most determined god, however, and these cults usually degenerate into brutal tyranny. Miracles and wonders are provided to the faithful, but only with the intent of expanding the god’s power and influence.

Parasite gods might be locational threats, terrifying monsters that dwell in forgotten places and lust for new slaves. They can also be schemers of a kind, plotting to build a foreign cult powerful enough to break the engines of Heaven and expand their territory. A few might even be sympathetic, providing a potential ally to Godbound who can deal with their unslakeable thirst.

## PARASITE GOD ABILITIES

Parasite gods leech their powers from the broken elements of natural law. Most of these gods draw on only one aspect of nature, but a few are born from multiple disasters and can draw on several Words. When building a parasite god, you should pick one Word to represent its main focus. Most of its miracles and abilities should clearly relate to that Word.

Every parasite god is unique, even down to their physical appearance. Two gods might draw from the same aspect of reality, but they will each tend to express that power in their own way. You should pick three or four lesser gifts from the Word to represent abilities likely to be relevant in combat, including at least one weapon or offensive power, one defensive measure, and one trick related to their Word that could be useful in a fight. The parasite god has the same miracle-working abilities as a Godbound in their Word, so they could use any of its gifts in a pinch, but these three powers will give you an immediate clue as to what to do with them in a fight.

Their tactics table includes an entry for *divine ecstasy*. The flow of celestial power is intoxicating to these creatures, and sometimes they get lost in it when embroiled in the excitement of combat. When a parasite god falls into ecstasy for a round, they spend it exerting their thematic powers on their surroundings in the most flashy and dramatic way possible, careless over whether it actually helps them in the fight.

Parasite gods are much weaker outside their territory. They cannot regain Committed Effort while outside their flaw’s borders, and will die within 1d4 days if they do not return. Traveling more than a day’s normal journey from their territory is impossible for them.

## Weak God

|                                |                             |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 3                   | <b>Move:</b> 30' run        |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 15            | <b>Save:</b> 10+            |
| <b>Attack:</b> +10 x 2 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d8 straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 9               | <b>Effort:</b> 5            |

This god is freshly-formed, or draws its power from a small disorder in Heaven. While it's likely strong enough to overcome a novice Godbound, a full pantheon should be sufficient to kill it or drive it into hiding. If it has an active cult, it's probably small and with only a few Small Mobs of peasants or zealots to obey it. Even a weak parasite god is tremendously dangerous, however, especially to those without magical aid. Weak gods can take two actions during a combat round.

## Established God

|                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 2                   | <b>Move:</b> 60' mode of choice |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 25            | <b>Save:</b> 6+                 |
| <b>Attack:</b> +10 x 2 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d12 straight    |
| <b>Morale:</b> 10              | <b>Effort:</b> 10               |

This god has had time to build its power, and is now a serious threat to a pantheon. Combined with a vigorous hierarchy of servants, it's probably more than the PCs can handle unless they're also veteran divinities. This god should have at least one high priest or chief lieutenant, most likely with Eldritch statistics, plus a Large Mob or two of minions. Defeating them will likely take careful planning if they're to be separated from their acolytes and rendered vulnerable. Established gods can take three actions during a combat round.

## Dread God

|                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 1                      | <b>Move:</b> 120' mode of choice |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 40               | <b>Save:</b> 3+                  |
| <b>Attack:</b> Two automatic hits | <b>Damage:</b> 1d12 straight     |
| <b>Morale:</b> 11                 | <b>Effort:</b> 15                |

This parasite god has metastasized into a monster. Enormously strong, it probably has an entire nation or realm devoted to its service, with literal armies of minions and a circle of fearsome lieutenants to carry out its insatiable will. PCs can't hope to defeat such a monster without significant preparation and careful planning. Dread gods can take three actions during a combat round.

### d6 PARASITE GOD TACTICS

- 1 Move to engage the target who most obviously defies the parasite god's divine authority.
- 2 Unleash physical attacks on their current foe.
- 3 Wield a divine gift against their present target.
- 4 Indulge in divine ecstasy for a round, blindly invoking their powers with no concern for tactical wisdom.
- 5 Invoke a miracle that's useful to them in this combat.
- 6 Invoke a miracle to bolster minions or allies, letting them fight instead. If no allies, hinder the foes with it.

## An Example Parasite God

The deity given below is intended to be a fair match for a party of four first level Godbound. At very low levels, a party is susceptible to being overwhelmed by straight damage attacks, so as the GM, you might want to be careful about allowing the god extra minions or giving it the chance to ambush the heroes and deny them their automatic initiative. If this god can catch the pantheon by surprise or when they're already weakened, it might well destroy them all.

## The Buried Mother

|                                |                             |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 4                   | <b>Move:</b> 30' burrow     |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 15            | <b>Save:</b> 10+            |
| <b>Attack:</b> +10 x 2 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d8 straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 10              | <b>Effort:</b> 5            |

In a former age, before the end of the Last War, when the Polyarchy of Kham still ruled much of Arcem, the Buried Mother was an ordinary woman. As a simple worker for her ideotribe, she composed praise-songs for their champions and stitched ritual vestments for these heroes in their fight against the Ren invaders to the south. It was pure misfortune that she was caught by the aftershocks of a celestial engine damaged in a Night Road skirmish between the two sides.

The Buried Mother was touched by celestial power and infused with the weaving of stone and soil. She bonded the Word of Earth and became insatiable for more elaborate stitchings and bindings to channel yet more of this power from the broken engine. Her fellows in the weaving-house were terrified into offering her their obeisance, and her power became a danger to her ideotribe. Before their heroes could destroy her, a Ren incursion slaughtered the entire community.

For the past thousand years, the Buried Mother has lurked in these lost ruins, shaping cultists of stone and draping them in asbestos-cloth vestments. She is agonizingly hungry for worship, and the few adventurers who stumble across the ruins are swiftly trapped and forced to pray and abase themselves until they perish from her frantic demands. She cannot leave the ruins for long, but sometimes she prowls the surrounding wilderness to search for victims to carry off.

The Buried Mother appears to be gigantic middle-aged, dark-skinned woman dressed in fabulously intricate weaving of jeweled cloth. She is only ever seen from the waist up, as she remains half-buried in the earth at all times; even so, her upper half is at least seven feet tall. Aside from her crushing blows, divine miracles, and two actions per round, she can call on several specific powers.

**Rocky Snare:** As an action, she can conjure up a wall of stone up to fifty feet long, ten feet high, and one foot thick. She often uses this snare to seal intruders in with her or escape with a new "worshiper".

**Stony Grasp:** In lieu of an attack action, she can grab a foe within ten feet. On a hit, the target is gripped and cannot escape or use physical attacks without succeeding in a Strength attribute check at a penalty of -4, an act which requires their full turn's action.

**Swim the Earth:** She can pass through stone and soil as if it were water, diving into the earth if necessary. She can't take prisoners with her, however, and she is too desperate for worship to release them from her grip, even if her existence is at stake.

**Topple the Stones:** She can hurl loose stones and topple support pillars on enemies as her action for a turn. This attack affects all enemies in a ten-foot wide line out to sixty feet, inflicting 1d12 normal damage from the falling rubble.

# RELICTS

Relicts are the remnants of the dead past. The denizens of crumbled empires, the inhabitants of toppled realms, the strange life of Heaven's dying shards... all these creatures are relicts, leftover life from some world that no longer exists. They exist by the laws of their former homes and the terrible compromises they have had to make for survival's sake, and they are almost invariably dangerous foes.

Relicts come in a wide range of potential power, from the verminous swarms of beast-life that scavenge the bones of dead realms to highly-developed proto-deities forged in some forgotten empire's theotechnical laboratory-temples. Some of these creatures are self-replicating, and can maintain their species in the harsher, poorer conditions of their old home, while others are simply one-offs and sports of nature made by some careless creator long ago. Heroes often have to learn the distinctions between these creatures the hard way.

## The Timeworn

Timeworn relicts are the product of realms that have collapsed into chaos due to the incursions of Uncreated Night, the decay of the celestial engines that supported it, or the reckless use of cataclysmic magic. These creatures were once human, perhaps, but their desperate new circumstances have forced them into terrible alterations and degenerations in order to survive their new environment. Even the beasts of a dying realm might become timeworn through the influence of malignant auras or the desperate engineering of surviving sorcerers.

Timeworn relicts are shaped to survive their current environment. Realms where gravity has failed will have relicts capable of flight or self-generated gravity, while those that have become airless will have creatures that have no need for breath. Some will be able to synthesize the necessities of life out of bare rock or weak sunlight, while others will have tremendous powers of regeneration to survive a world gone mad with violence. A few will simply breed so quickly that they outrace extinction by sheer velocity.

The timeworn are defined by hunger. They live in privation and need, and their entire existence revolves around scraping out more of whatever painfully rare resource enables them to live. Outsiders who seem to have that resource will be pursued insatiably, while timeworn who manage to find a Night Road into a fresher world will be raiders of unparalleled rapaciousness.

Charismatic Godbound might be able to negotiate with timeworn, if only under the prospect of bloody destruction. Others might have the power and determination to actually repair whatever catastrophe has rendered the timeworn's native realm so hostile. Any pantheon that is able to redeem such a place would undoubtedly win an entire race of fanatically devoted servitors to their worship.

## The Automaton

The second major variety of relict are the automatons, the artificial life forms left behind by a dead civilization. These creatures are animated with magic or some forgotten technology that still functions in this latter day of decaying natural law. Some adhere to their original purpose, while others have developed something akin to free will in the long centuries since their masters died.

Automatons are found both in conventional ruins and in the broken shells of dead realms. They might remain inert until intruders are detected, or they might have been corrupted by the damaged celestial engines and the subtle warping of the natural law that went into their

creation. Once activated, they will attempt to carry out their original purpose, one which usually involves protecting the site or serving those it recognizes as lawful masters.

## The Lusaë

Perhaps the most wretched relicts are the lusaë, the "jests" of an uncertain natural law. These relicts have been twisted by the local metaphysical environment and the failure of the celestial engines. They have been subject to generations of warped natural law and are now molded into something much less than their original state.

Time can make strange any living thing, and these lusaë tend to be utterly bizarre in their appearance and motivations. If they were ever originally human, they've usually lost most recognizable human traits, and often have bodies only nominally humanoid in outline. Bestial lusaë can look like anything at all after ten centuries of mutation.

## Relict Powers and Use in Play

Lesser relicts might have no combat-relevant powers, but they're usually shaped to survive their surroundings in some special way. They're most useful in Mobs, or as occasional lieutenant-grade minions for more powerful entities.

Automatons and lusaë can make decent mid-level opposition for the players, as they're often more individually powerful and can be given several relevant Word gifts to represent their special abilities. Their ordinary abilities aren't flexible enough to grant them full access to a Word's miracles or to overpower Godbound gifts, but they can still harry an inexperienced or unprepared pantheon.

## Timeworn Survivor

AC: 5 to 7

Move: 30' run

Hit Dice: 1 to 3

Save: 15+

Attack: +Hit Dice

Damage: 1d4 or by weapon

Morale: 8

Effort: 1

These survivors are most likely to be a threat in Mobs, or if they have access to powerful relic weaponry and devices. Such devices mimic a gift, but function only once before needing a recharge. Most have no combat-relevant special abilities aside from tremendous desperation.

d6

### Timeworn Survivor Tactics

- 1 Snatch up food, valuables, or even marginally useful detritus from the surroundings and the dead.
- 2 Attack the target that seems richest in such things that the timeworn values, or at least the tastiest-looking foe.
- 3 Move to join up with the nearest group of allies, attacking whomever they're fighting.
- 4 Savage a downed enemy, killing them and taking their possessions or carving off chunks of meat.
- 5 Use a device or technology they've salvaged, or use an innate power if they have one. Otherwise, just attack.
- 6 Charge an appealing enemy with frenzied desperation, gaining a +4 bonus to their hit roll but being automatically hit by the next attack made against them.



## GUARDIAN AUTOMATON

|                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 3                   | <b>Move:</b> 40' run               |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 12            | <b>Save:</b> 10+                   |
| <b>Attack:</b> +10 x 2 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 2d12 smash or blast |
| <b>Morale:</b> 12              | <b>Effort:</b> 4                   |

This particular relict was built for defense, and is enough to provide a mild challenge for a novice pantheon or a serious opponent for a single young Godbound. It usually has at least two or three combat-relevant gifts and may act twice per round.

### d6 GUARDIAN AUTOMATON TACTICS

- 1 Self-repair 1d6 hit dice of damage. This requires both of its actions for the round.
- 2 Attack the nearest target, using both of its available actions to hammer them down.
- 3 Trigger a gift against the most threatening target around the automaton.
- 4 Assault the most badly-wounded or otherwise weakest-looking enemy in the area.
- 5 Spend an action calling for reinforcements or alerting its masters, even if they've been dead for centuries.
- 6 As one action an electrical surge, burst of radiation, crackle of arcane magical force, or other sudden exhalation does 3d6 damage to all foes within melee range.

## ANCIENT LUSUS

|                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 4                   | <b>Move:</b> 60' run              |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 20            | <b>Save:</b> 8+                   |
| <b>Attack:</b> +14 x 3 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d12 bite straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 9               | <b>Effort:</b> 6                  |

This ancient lusus has survived centuries of strange existence in its forgotten corner of the world, and can overcome a novice godbound or tax an inexperienced pantheon. It has two or three gifts and access to an appropriate Word and its miracles. It acts twice per round.

### d6 ANCIENT LUSUS TACTICS

- 1 Use one of its gifts against the opponent who has most aggravated it so far.
- 2 Trigger a miracle to somehow use the surrounding environment against its attackers.
- 3 Do something that seems utterly irrational or eerily human in nature for one round.
- 4 Hurl itself into a frenzied assault on a nearby victim. This uses both actions, but all three attacks auto-hit.
- 5 Flail wildly, spreading its available attacks evenly over all enemies within reach.
- 6 Goad its lesser brethren on, granting any feral allies a free action. If none are present, spend an action attacking a nearby foe, then use the other to get out of reach.



# SHAPESHIFTERS

Many of the Former Empires dabbled in experiments of human form, and some of these went so far as to make their experiments heritable. Human bloodlines were tainted with polymorphic potential, or entirely new creations were lit with human souls and released to reproduce after their own fashion.

A portion of these shapeshifters were given their powers in the course of their civilization's transhuman experimentations, but many more were made as they were to serve as infiltrators and assassins against a hostile foe. With their ancient enemies long dead, these shapeshifting survivors now exist as purposeless relics, many still programmed to serve masters that are long since dust.

Aside from these natural shapeshifters, there are also those humans who gain shapeshifting power as part of obscure low magic disciplines or particularly virulent curses. The former can usually control their instincts when adopting different forms, but the latter are often no more than ravening beasts when the curse bites deep.

## VETERAN MANY-SKINNED ASSASSIN

|                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| AC: 4                   | Move: 30' run        |
| Hit Dice: 15            | Save: 8+             |
| Attack: +10 x 2 attacks | Damage: 1d8 straight |
| Morale: 10              | Effort: 5            |

The Many-Skinned are a particular strain of shapeshifter found across several realms. They are born and grow as seemingly normal, unremarkable members of their society, but on their eighteenth birthday, a programmed revelation irresistibly takes over their thoughts. Their ancient gene-coding comes to the fore, and they become killers.

A Many-Skinned man or woman can adopt the form, voice, and clothing of any humanoid they can imagine ranging from three to eight feet in height, doing so as an On Turn action. They are always treated as worthy foes for purposes of resisting mind-affecting or reading powers and can Commit Effort to resist such things. On a successful save against a telepathic power, they return whatever reading is least suspicious. The Many-Skinned do not age, and some have grown superhumanly skilled over the course of centuries.

Unfortunately, the programming that created them imbues them with an irresistible compulsion to kill "the enemy"... which in most cases is the ethnicity of people they were raised among. Most Many-Skinned are horrified by this craving, and resist it as long as possible, but even the iron-willed among them can't go longer than a month between killings before becoming obsessed with carrying out a murder. A few have found ways to simply *convince* themselves they have killed one of the targeted group, in which case the genetic programming is satisfied for a time.

Others simply give in to their urges and become terribly effective assassins. Some of the best hired killers of a realm are often Many-Skinned, even if their patrons never realize as much. High-value targets often are protected by sorcerers and wards that can detect shapeshifters, but less privileged victims have almost no chance of avoiding a Many-Skinned's knife. The Many-Skinned given statistics here is a veteran of centuries of murder. Aside from their listed statistics, a GM should pick two or three lesser gifts for them from the Sword, Deception, or Alacrity Words and allow them two actions per round in combat.

## PC SHAPESHIFTERS

A Godbound who uses a gift or miracle to adopt a different shape normally acquires only the external seeming of that shape. If it can breathe water, fly, run quickly, or navigate some other, more exotic environment then the Godbound's new form can do so as well, but any other special powers or senses the creature possesses that aren't necessary for its basic survival are not obtained. Magical abilities are certainly not acquired automatically, even if those are necessary for it to live in its natural environment; special gifts are needed for that.

A transformed Godbound or mortal otherwise retains their attributes, attack bonus, hit points or hit dice, armor class, and other statistics. If using a creature's natural weaponry to attack, small but dangerous creatures use a 1d6 damage die, wolf- or bear-sized ones use a 1d8 damage die, and larger creatures use a 1d10 damage die. Thus, transforming a peasant farmer into a war elephant doesn't make him an unstoppable gray titan of war, it just makes him a badly-coordinated elephant that faints or dies after one good spear thrust.

Transformed creatures retain their intellect and identity unless the power that transforms them indicates otherwise. If their identity is lost in the transformation, it can be restored by undoing the change. Those who lose their human intellect will behave in whatever way the creature normally does, with intelligent creatures fabricating a prior life story instinctively and responding very unkindly toward attempts to disprove this prior history.

Some gifts may allow for a shapeshifter to Commit extra effort to gain additional abilities from the form they adopt. In some cases these abilities will function a particular way regardless of the creature's hit dice, such as a monster's lethal gaze that turns victims into stone. If the effect does dice of damage, however, it can't do more dice than the original creature's level, or half their hit dice if they don't have levels; a 1 HD peasant made into a dragon breathes a 1d8 fire breath.

Possessions that the shapeshifter is carrying either vanish when they change form or remain with the shifter if they're capable of carrying or manipulating the objects in their new form. Thus, a spear-carrying lycanthrope that shifts from a human into a wolf-man form would still have his spear, while transforming entirely into a wolf would cause the spear to vanish. Such items reappear when the shifter turns back or is killed.

If the shifting power is meant for purposes of disguise, such as an ability that lets the user take the form of another person, their possessions also shift to match an appropriate costume or equipage for the form they are impersonating. Only mundane equipment changes this way, and objects of notable value cannot be mimicked, but the change is permanent until the shifter reverts it. Thus, it's not possible to detect a shifter by stealing his mandarin's hat and seeing if it transforms into a dirty skullcap once it's away from him.

## SHAPESHIFTING FOR COMBAT POWER

Shapeshifting alone isn't intended to be a way to augment a creature's combat abilities. Turning a village of peasants into lions might be impressive, but they'll still be lousy combatants. Godbound might shapechange as a point of style during combat, or disguise, or as ambush preparation, but the shape itself shouldn't grant significant combat perks. As for transforming followers, use the rules on page 131 to augment large groups of minions.

# SPIRITS

Not every enigmatic spiritual entity in the world is a parasite god or restless ghost. Many realms teem with spirits of a different order, intelligences and entities that are woven of sorcery or long-vanished theotechnical artifice. These "spirits" come in many different varieties and degrees of power, and a far-faring band of heroes can expect to have their share of encounters with them.

Spirits originate in several different ways, sharing common traits based on their manner of creation. Three types are particularly common, along with a host of less-familiar varieties. **Elementals** are non-sentient accretions of magical power, entities that evolve from the ambient magical energies of a place. These spirits are usually appear as primal expressions of untamed arcane force of a kind linked with their place of origin. **Eidolons** are intelligent entities related to greater undead, appearing when a person deeply linked with a particular place, institution, or bloodline dies. Their soul bonds with the iconographic energies of their locus and they become a guardian spirit of that anchor. **Animas** are artificial spirits, ones created by ancient theurgy or theotechnical engineering to serve particular roles that may no longer have meaning in the modern world.

Spirits are almost always fundamentally insubstantial creatures. In order to interact with the mundane world, they need to use special abilities or inhabit appropriate material shells. For elementals, this is usually a lump of the appropriate physical matter or elemental energy, while eidolons often possess human intruders or cultists, and anima normally have physical bodies fashioned by their creators. Without these shells, spirits have great difficulty in manipulating the material world and cannot use their powers on physical targets.

Elementals are usually no more than natural hazards. They attack intruders out of a vague predatory instinct, but rarely pursue targets outside their natural range, as few can survive far from a place of natural elemental power. Eidolons are obsessed with the preservation of their locus, often with a desire for its advancement and expansion. The eidolon of a cathedral will fight to defend it from defilers and invaders, while the eidolon of a particular noble family will lend its aid to protect and advance their kindred. Anima have their own purposes, some still determined to follow ancient instructions while others have broken free to be self-willed entities.

It's not unknown for spirits to seek worship from mortal cultists, if only to provide them with a convenient supply of minions to further their desires. A few are capable of gaining power through such worship, though this is rare and the amount gained is usually much smaller compared to that of a Godbound or a parasite god. Most spirits are content to dwell in their own natural habitat, rising from slumberous inattention only when petitioned by those wise to their ways or when they are affronted by some intruder's slight.

## SPIRIT ABILITIES

For a given spirit, pick two or three lesser gifts, though they can only affect the world with them when materialized. Major or mighty spirits may have powers equivalent to a bond with a Word. Spirits are immaterial by nature and when dematerialized they can only be harmed by magical effects, not by physical weapons or gift-empowered blows. Dematerialized spirits are invisible to senses that cannot detect magic.

Spirits require a shell to materialize. Elementals can make one from appropriate energies or matter, while animas are usually reliant on one fashioned for them by their creators. In these cases, the spirit uses its

own hit dice and combat statistics when operating its shell. Creating these shells takes at least a day for an elemental, while anima shells take a day for a Godbound of Artifice to fabricate. Theotechnical adepts can make a minor anima's shell in a week, masters can make a major anima's shell in a month, and archmages can make a mighty anima's shell in a year. Most animas cannot create their own shells.

Eidolons must possess living subjects, and can spend an action to take over a lesser foe that fails a Spirit saving throw. If the spirit is possessing a living creature, it uses the hit dice and armor class of the creature, but its own hit bonus and damage. Eidolons of wild places often inhabit monstrous carnivores or tribal shamans.

Spirits who are operating a shell when it is destroyed or killed are automatically reduced to 1 hit die and are stunned and helpless for one round. Spirits forcibly expelled from a living host by magic or a Word are likewise stunned for a round, but retain their hit dice. A spirit who wishes to intentionally disengage from a shell must spend an action to do so. Most victims of eidolons remember nothing of what they did while possessed.

## SPIRITS

|                  | Minor      | Major           | Mighty        |
|------------------|------------|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>AC:</b>       | 5          | 4               | 3             |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> | 5          | 15              | 30            |
| <b>Attack:</b>   | +5         | +10 x 2 strikes | Two auto-hits |
| <b>Damage:</b>   | 1d6 strike | 1d12 strike     | 1d8 straight  |
| <b>Move:</b>     | 30' drift  | 60' drift       | 90' drift     |
| <b>Save:</b>     | 13+        | 8+              | 5+            |
| <b>Morale:</b>   | 9          | 10              | 11            |
| <b>Effort:</b>   | 2          | 8               | 12            |

These spirits cover three of the common degrees of might for their kind. Minor spirits are very dangerous to ordinary humans, but of little consequences to Godbound. Major spirits might be the tutelary eidolons of major noble houses or holy places, while a mighty spirit may be acting as a false god to an entire nation or great city. Major and mighty spirits can take two actions per round.

### d6

### SPIRIT TACTICS

- 1 Use one of its gifts against the last opponent to damage its shell.
- 2 Trigger a miracle to use elemental energy, an anima's fashioned purpose, or its host's abilities against a foe.
- 3 Do something that serves its purpose or focus, even if it's tactically imprudent or pointless.
- 4 Savagely assault the most obvious opponent of its purpose or nature, using all attacks against them.
- 5 Target the first intruder or initial enemy to catch the spirit's attention with all its attacks.
- 6 Use a gift to boost itself, heal damage, or otherwise empower itself. If it's defending a particular area, draw on the area's power or nature as flavor for the effect.

# Summoned Entities

The arts of the low magic traditions sometimes include spells of summoning and invocation. The adepts of the Cinnabar Order are notable for their power to summon creatures of primal flame, while any well-trained theotechnician can build golem-like drones to obey their will. The other common traditions of Arcem lack any established tradition of summoning, but reckless magi or natural prodigies sometimes develop ways of bending their arts to call up arcane minions.

## Summoning Minions with Low Magic

Of the low magic traditions described in this book, only the Cinnabar Order and the theotechnicians have common traditions of summoning or minion creation. Other traditions might be able to call up similar entities, but the knowledge would be the jealously-guarded lore of masters of the path or a secret to be unearthed from a long-lost grimoire. PCs would need to obtain such knowledge before they could summon creatures with the art. As a general rule, adepts can summon 2 HD minions, masters can call 4 HD ones, and archmages can summon 8 HD servitors with superior abilities.

A few magi are reckless or foolish enough to make pacts with potent Uncreated powers from beyond the borders of the realm. These entities are difficult to contact, but any competent sorcerer can make the invariably-bloody attempt to catch their notice.

Those sorcerers who find an Uncreated entity willing to receive their service become pacted devotees of the being, often gaining substantial amounts of arcane power and acquiring the ability to summon Uncreated shades with their spells. Adepts can summon 3 HD shades, masters can summon 6 HD shades, and archmages of a low magic tradition can call forth a terrible 10 HD Unbidden. Uncreated summonings usually require some form of blood sacrifice, either immediately or afterwards, before more entities can be called.

Pacted sorcerers can go for years without paying any price for the aid they receive, but those who live long enough inevitably find their patron demanding dreadful services. This obedience slowly warps both their magic and their bodies with the influence of Uncreated Night. Most are forced to flee to isolation before their brethren recognize what monsters they've become.

## Summoning Minions with Words

A Godbound or a major supernatural entity might be able to directly use the powers of the Words to call up minions of their own. Both the Cinnabar Order summons and the golems of the theotechnicians can be used as examples of the kind of creatures that a Godbound can summon, reflavored for whatever Word the summoner is using.

Barring some specialized gift, these minions last only one scene. Miracles that call up minions require the usual Committing Effort for the day, while even a gift probably requires that the Effort be committed for at least the scene. Minions are totally loyal to the PC.

As a general rule, Godbound can summon minions of hit dice no greater than twice their character level, up to a maximum of 10 hit dice, and cannot call Uncreated minions. These entities should not normally have any abilities that the Godbound doesn't have, or else the GM might find the PCs conveniently calling up servitors that have exactly the powers they need for the situation at hand. Summoned creatures should not normally have gifts or other powers more fitting to a true divinity. The creatures started here provide examples of what these summoned minions might look like.

## CINNABAR SPARK

|                              |                               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 5                 | <b>Move:</b> 30' flight       |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 2 or 4      | <b>Save:</b> 14+ or 13+       |
| <b>Attack:</b> +Hit Dice x 2 | <b>Damage:</b> 1d6 flame bolt |
| <b>Morale:</b> 12            | <b>Effort:</b> 1              |

The incandescent sparks summoned by the Cinnabar Order are dangerous, unpredictable creatures that are almost as hazardous to their summoner as to their supposed targets. The sparks obey no orders except to burn, (or not burn) particular targets, and vanish at the end of the scene. They are intelligent, but do not communicate in any comprehensible way. At least a gallon of water hurled on a spark with a hit against AC 9 will inflict a 1d8 damage die on it.

### d6

### SPARK TACTICS

- 1 Fly 30' to a better position on the battlefield.
- 2 Attack the most flammable-looking target
- 3 Burn the most flammable unattended object in range
- 4 Use its action to gout forth a halo of flame, inflicting a 1d4 damage die on everything within 10 feet
- 5 Commit Effort for the scene to blaze forth as an Instant action, forcing all hit rolls against it to roll twice and take the worst until the beginning of next round.
- 6 Expend one hit die to make two extra bolt attacks

## CINNABAR CONFLAGRATION

|                               |                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 5                  | <b>Move:</b> 60' flight        |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 8            | <b>Save:</b> 11+               |
| <b>Attack:</b> +8 x 2 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d10 flame bolt |
| <b>Morale:</b> 12             | <b>Effort:</b> 3               |

An entity of quintessential fire, the Conflagration can be called forth only by an archmage of the Cinnabar Order. It is exceedingly dangerous if it is allowed to run wild; it will continue burning or trying to burn something every round it exists. If its summoner is killed or knocked out, it will rampage indiscriminately for the rest of the scene. Water can harm it just as a spark is harmed.

### d6

### CONFLAGRATION TACTICS

- 1 Fly 60' toward the largest amount of burnables present.
- 2 Use its action to drop a firebomb on a point within sight, doing a 1d10 die of damage to all within 20'.
- 3 Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant to shimmer with heat, gaining immunity to non-magical weapons until the start of its next round.
- 4 Use its action to attack a target. If it hits, it clings like napalm, automatically hitting the next round as well.
- 5 Commit Effort for the scene as an action to enshroud a foe, automatically doing a 1d12 damage die.
- 6 Expend one hit die to make two extra bolt attacks.



## Theotechnical Drone

|                              |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 4                 | <b>Move:</b> 30' flight or 60' wheel |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 2 or 4      | <b>Save:</b> 14+ or 13+              |
| <b>Attack:</b> +Hit Dice x 2 | <b>Damage:</b> 1d6 blades or bolt    |
| <b>Morale:</b> 12            | <b>Effort:</b> 1                     |

These drones can be fashioned in both wheeled and flying versions, and require 1 Wealth point worth of components for their creation. While non-sentient, they respond intelligently to their creator's orders. Miracles of Artifice can deactivate them as an act of offensive dispelling, though they can be re-enchanted without further cost.

### d6 DRONE TACTICS

- 1 Approach nearest target to engage.
- 2 Focus fire on the largest enemy present.
- 3 Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action to minimize incoming damage, decreasing all sources of harm by 1 point until the start of the next round.
- 4 Focus fire on the most obviously injured target present.
- 5 Focus fire on the last creature to damage it.
- 6 Commit Effort for the scene to spray projectile fire, gaining an extra two bolt attacks for the round.

## Theotechnical Iconodule

|                               |                                   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 3                  | <b>Move:</b> 40' run              |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 8            | <b>Save:</b> 11+                  |
| <b>Attack:</b> +8 x 2 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d8 bolt or blades |
| <b>Morale:</b> 12             | <b>Effort:</b> 3                  |

These looming humanoid automatons stand half again as tall as a human, inscribed with the guttering sigils of dead gods. The iconodule is powered by remnants of worship which their theotechnician creator has harnessed. Iconodules are notoriously unstealthy creations, as they constantly thrum with half-comprehensible echoes of ancient unanswered prayers. Building an iconodule requires the expertise of a theotechnical archmage and 2 points of Wealth in components. Very old iconodules are known to sometimes develop a form of self-will.

### d6 ICONODULE TACTICS

- 1 Charge the most insulting or impertinent enemy.
- 2 Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action to become immune to non-magical weapons or sources of harm until the start of your next round.
- 3 Distribute attacks evenly among all visible foes.
- 4 Commit Effort for the scene as an On Turn action to crackle with electricity. Each melee hit it takes inflicts 1 damage on the attacker until the start of the next round.
- 5 Focus fire on the most visibly injured foe in sight.
- 6 Commit Effort for the day as an action and restore 2 hit dice of damage suffered during this scene.

## Uncreated Shade

|                              |                                  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 5                 | <b>Move:</b> 40' run             |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 3 or 6      | <b>Save:</b> 14+ or 12+          |
| <b>Attack:</b> +Hit Dice x 2 | <b>Damage:</b> 1d4 claw straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 10            | <b>Effort:</b> 2                 |

Uncreated shades are summoned in countless monstrous shapes and forms, all brought to reality by the reckless summoning of a pacted sorcerer. They usually disappear at the end of the scene, to reappear in some far place as a free-willed monstrosity, but some pacted sorcerers can make offerings terrible enough to convince it to linger.

### d6 SHADE TACTICS

- 1 Scuttle toward the weakest-looking target in sight.
- 2 Launch attacks randomly at foes within reach.
- 3 Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant to defensively dispel the next incoming gift or miracle used against it.
- 4 Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant to ignore physical barriers between it and its target.
- 5 Rip and tear at a downed foe, ignoring active enemies.
- 6 Utter a horrific shriek or blasphemous utterance that forces all NPCs of 3 hit dice or less to check Morale.

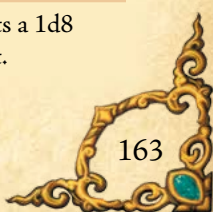
## Uncreated Unbidden

|                                |                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 5                   | <b>Move:</b> 60' flight          |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 10            | <b>Save:</b> 10+                 |
| <b>Attack:</b> +10 x 2 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d6 bolt straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 12              | <b>Effort:</b> 4                 |

The Unbidden are horrific entities brought forth only through the work of the most accomplished pacted sorcerers. They come in as many shapes as their lesser shade brethren, but all of them are gruesomely misshapen or warped. Unbidden serve their summoners for a set period before obtaining their freedom to do as they will; quick summons only ever last a scene, but a sufficiently large offering can persuade an Unbidden to serve for a year and a day. Careless summoners can find themselves more servant than master to an Unbidden.

### d6 UNBIDDEN TACTICS

- 1 Commit Effort for the scene to create 1 point of the *Cold Breath* as per the Uncreated creature description. It can do this only once per scene.
- 2 Focus all attacks on the most badly-injured enemy.
- 3 Focus all attacks on an otherwise-unharmd foe.
- 4 Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant to negate the next gift used against it as if by defensive dispelling.
- 5 Commit Effort for the scene as an action to automatically hit a foe with a 1d8 straight damage entropic blast.
- 6 Exhale a cloud of corrosive smoke that inflicts a 1d8 damage die on everything within 30 feet of it.



# The Uncreated

The endless chaos of Uncreated Night gouts forth strange life from time to time. These creatures curdle into existence deep within the void, but sometimes they find a way into more terrestrial spheres through the Night Roads, or infest shards of Heaven or the outer precincts of Hell. Some sages believe that they are a product of the friction between the created world and the void beyond, which explains why they so often have shapes and minds that are at least partially comprehensible to humans. Unfortunately, they are universally malevolent and hostile entities.

Uncreated look like warped and monstrous creatures, often assembled from seemingly-random parts and misshapen fragments. They usually have an overall theme to their outline, like that of a human or mundane beast, but the individual components are mismatched and twisted. They are innately horrifying and disorienting to behold, their very presence curdling the mundane reality around them.

Uncreated have strange and hostile purposes within the realm, clustering around Night Roads or striking out to defile places that are important to a realm's coherence. They seem to exist for purposes of entropy and negation, with this world's natural laws as loathsome to them as their own congealed madness is to humanity. They appear to have human intellects, if not more so, yet their reasoning is often bent to purposes that appear arbitrary or pointlessly sadistic.

Uncreated are known for sometimes striking bargains with reckless sorcerers, offering secrets from beyond the borders of the realm and liberty from the constraining laws that fetter their magical powers. While the power they offer is real, the price in obediences and transformation is often an unendurable one.

## Stalking Horror

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| AC: 6                  | Move: 40' slink    |
| Hit Dice: 7            | Save: 11+          |
| Attack: +8 x 2 attacks | Damage: 1d12 claws |
| Morale: 10             | Effort: 3          |

This variety of horror is rarely found alone, usually acting in small groups to stalk and slaughter its prey. Some are intelligent enough to mimic humanity for short periods of time, and have Words of Deception to trick others into bloody misfortunes. In the worst cases, they appear as full-fledged Mobs of monstrously hungry foes.

### d6 Stalking Horror Tactics

- 1 Vanish into a shadow or other place of concealment. So long as it doesn't attack, it takes a saving throw to see it.
- 2 Use a gift against the most concealed or sheltered of its foes, preferring enemies in the back lines.
- 3 Leap, teleport, or dart as liquid shadows toward a distant foe and attack them with all available actions.
- 4 Use a miracle of its Word to baffle, misdirect, or influence its enemies into attacking or tangling each other.
- 5 Assault a single foe in a hysterical frenzy. Every attack it makes that action will invariably hit, but it's automatically hit by any enemy attack until its next turn.
- 6 Create painful divine feedback with an action. The next gift used by a Godbound does 1d8 damage to them.

## Uncreated Powers and Suppression

To Godbound, the most disturbing trait of the Uncreated is their ability to absorb and suppress divine power. These abilities are usually expressed in two special powers possessed by almost every Uncreated.

**The Black Consumption** is an Uncreated's native power to absorb Godbound gifts. If the creature is directly targeted by a Word's gift or miracle, it can Commit Effort for the scene to negate it as if it were dispelled by a successful defensive miracle. Every Uncreated has this ability, making them extremely dangerous foes to the divine.

**The Cold Breath** makes it harder for any Godbound to use their abilities in the creature's presence. Depending on the power of the Uncreated and the GM's discretion, a Godbound must Commit from 1 to 5 points of Effort to overcoming the Cold Breath before they can Commit Effort for any other purpose. If multiple Uncreated are present, only the strongest Cold Breath must be overcome. The Effort can be reclaimed once the creature is defeated or the Godbound flees.

Aside from these two abilities, most Uncreated have effective access to several gifts and a Word related to their nature. Words expressed by the Uncreated are always perverted in some way, with Fire's flames burning black and cold, Water expressed as a torrent of half-congealed gore, and Night bringing a suffocating sensation of burial alive rather than simple darkness. These effects are largely cosmetic, but the Words of an Uncreated can always be used to counter Godbound gifts as if its miracles were appropriate to the purpose.

Individual Uncreated may have additional powers or traits. Scholars have identified some general types to the entities, but there seem to be an unlimited number of uniquely hideous examples of their kind.

## Hulking Abomination

|                         |                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| AC: 3                   | Move: 50' lurch             |
| Hit Dice: 30            | Save: 5+                    |
| Attack: +15 x 3 attacks | Damage: 1d12 smash straight |
| Morale: 12              | Effort: 10                  |

This might be a roiling blob of tentacular, acidic protoplasm or it might be a towering colossus of night and tangible screams. The very sight of it forces a Morale check in NPCs. Some of these abominations are known to force humans to set up cults around their worship, parodying the devotions of the faithful. It can act twice per round.

### d6 Hulking Abomination Tactics

- 1 Smash the earth or a nearby structure, opening a crack into Night that does 4d6 damage to all nearby.
- 2 Charge the most defiant enemy present and strike with all available attacks.
- 3 Sweep a blow around itself as one of its actions, giving it an attack against all foes within 10 feet.
- 4 Use its Word to debilitate or snare an enemy with one action; use the other action to attack this foe.
- 5 Utter a blasphemous, maddening phrase; all who hear it must save or make a free attack on a nearby ally.
- 6 Devour a downed foe and gain its maximum hit dice as healing. If no corpses in nearby reach, vomit caustic entropy on a target for 5d10 damage.

# UNDEAD

The undead of the realms are products of fear, longing, and dark sorcery. Ever since the fall of Heaven and the corruption of Hell the prospect of an agonizing afterlife has filled countless men and women with dread. While the rites of the Unitary Church, the ancestor cults, and other true faiths can serve to anchor a soul to its native realm in peaceful sleep, not every spirit has the advantage of that shelter. Those who die alone and far from solace might still cling to this world for fear of what comes next.

Others simply cannot endure the idea of leaving their work unfinished, and are sealed to their decaying corpses by their unquenchable will. Even when a spirit is absent and only the dead flesh remains, a skilled sorcerer can imbue the husk with a kind of half-life to create a mindless servitor.

## LESSER AND GREATER UNDEAD

Undead come in two kinds: lesser and greater. Lesser undead are purely corporeal in nature, dead bodies animated by magical power and imbued with a kind of half-intellect by the spell. They are not sentient, nor are they aware of the corpse's prior life save in vague, brief flickers of habitual action.

Lesser undead obey their creator. When left to their own devices, they ape the habits of the living as their animating force expresses human urges in strange, dangerous ways. The urge to eat is a particularly violent one, but their other fumbling efforts can be even more horrific. The raising of lesser undead is usually outlawed in most societies, though special permission can sometimes be granted to politically-connected wizards or the priesthood of important gods.

Greater undead are qualitatively different. They have a human soul at their core, either animating a decaying corpse or manifesting as an insubstantial wraith. Their minds are usually dulled by the decay of their flesh or the confusion of their death, but they can remember their living days and reason as humans do. Spells to create them are substantially more difficult, and most necromancers must take care to keep greater undead safely bound.

Most societies are even more firmly opposed to the creation of greater undead, but a few view them in a more ambiguous light. Some cultures permit their most exalted members to exist in the eternal half-life of undeath, while some ancestor-worshippers physically enshrine their beloved dead as undying councilors.

Greater undead vary widely depending on the spells or processes that create them. Some are relatively clear-minded and able to think and act freely, while others have terrible thirsts for flesh or blood to sustain their decaying remains. However clear-minded they begin, however, most grow steadily more alien over the centuries as their undying nature separates them further from the humans around them.

## UNDEAD IN COMBAT

Lesser undead are mostly useful in Mobs to delay or wear down the heroes. Particularly large or powerful lesser undead can make good lieutenant-minions for necromancers, and might have a gift or two to represent the spells that have empowered them.

Greater undead usually range in power from lesser individual foes, such as the war-draugr of the Ulstang raiders, to extremely potent undead warlords or mummified high priests. High-end greater undead usually have several gifts to mimic whatever special abilities they wielded in life.

## ANCEALIAN HUSKS

|                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 9       | <b>Move:</b> 30' stagger |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 1 | <b>Save:</b> 15+         |
| <b>Attack:</b> +1  | <b>Damage:</b> 1d6 gnaw  |
| <b>Morale:</b> 12  | <b>Effort:</b> None      |

The eruption of the Night Roads in Ancalia has produced the dreaded Hollowing Plague which makes risen corpses of its victims. The desperate husks of those slain rise now as lesser undead, swarming in Mobs to devour the living. They lack any tactic more sophisticated than piling onto a living creature, but persistent rumors speak of stranger varieties that have terrible powers and far more hardihood.

## WAR-DRAUGR

|                    |                                   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 3       | <b>Move:</b> 40' lurch            |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 5 | <b>Save:</b> 12+                  |
| <b>Attack:</b> +7  | <b>Damage:</b> 1d12 smashing blow |
| <b>Morale:</b> 12  | <b>Effort:</b> 1                  |

The biggest and best-preserved of the wretched draugr of Ulstang are swathed in mail and iron plates to become war-draugr. These greater undead obey a raid's war-captain and his lieutenants, and sometimes display a gift from the Sword or Endurance Words as a reflection of their living might. Most are desperate for their own destruction in battle, fearing Hell less than the torment of their current existence.

## DRIED LORD

|                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 3                   | <b>Move:</b> 50' shamble           |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 25            | <b>Save:</b> 5+                    |
| <b>Attack:</b> +15 x 2 attacks | <b>Damage:</b> 1d12 crush straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 12              | <b>Effort:</b> 10                  |

This greater undead corpse houses the burning soul of a great warlord or mighty high priest. More magically-inclined undead are better treated as Eldritch, but this entity probably has at least a half-dozen gifts reflecting their living talents, and perhaps even a Word. It can act three times per round and imperil even a full pantheon.

d6

### DRIED LORD TACTICS

- 1 Order its minions into battle, granting them a free action. If no servants, attack the nearest enemy.
- 2 Trigger an offensive gift against the most threatening enemy in the opposing group.
- 3 Relive an ancient moment of glory, reminiscing about it and using a gift now as it did back in the former event.
- 4 Inhale the life force of the creatures around it as two actions, inflicting 4d6 damage on all enemies present.
- 5 Lay about with its weapon or bolts of deathly force, spreading its attacks evenly over all foes present.
- 6 Exhibit incredible resilience. This takes two actions, but leaves it with an invincible defense against physical damage until the start of its next round.

# CREATING NEW FOES

Given the habits of heroic player characters, it's inevitable that you'll need to conjure up a substantial number of new monsters, malefactors, vengeful deities, and tragically misled local heroes for the PCs to face. This section equips you with the necessary tools and information for brewing up such suitably trenchant foes.

The table below offers a few basic stat lines for some of the more common enemies that the heroes might face. Very few of them are capable of giving a pantheon of Godbound a significant challenge alone. Most of the minor enemies will need to appear as Mobs in order to give a decent fight to the PCs, while even the more powerful entities will need a thick buffer of cultists or minions in order to keep them from being swamped by focused PC fire.

Even so, these minor foes need to exist in your world. If the only enemies the PCs ever face are parasite gods, furious angelic tyrants, and mighty theurge-Eldritch of yore, they're going to start to feel like very small fish in their particular pond. Regular encounters with foes that really aren't in the same league as even a novice Godbound will help give the proper sense of proportion to your world, and encourage the PCs to see themselves as the mighty heroes they are.

Of course, the frequency of their encounters with such enemies will be largely up to the players. Godbound who keep a low profile, avoid antagonizing the rulers of a realm, and who shun direct confrontations with their enemies might very rarely find themselves in a fight. The most fastidious might save their divine wrath exclusively for those enemies that are truly worth the best they can give in a fight. Even so, when a band of light cavalry or a tribe of Misbegotten mannikins decides to make war on these new demigods, you'll want to have something on hand.

When brewing up your abominations, don't forget the tremendous wealth of existing monstrosities to be found in the old-school gaming material that already exists. Much of it is available for free on the net, or in low-cost print editions, and you can import almost all of it for use in *Godbound*. A passage at the end of this section will help you make the modifications necessary to turn it into a suitable nemesis for divinely-imbued heroes, though you can always use such entities as Mob fodder or the swarming lieutenants of a greater evil.

## Using This Section

To use these tools, first decide what it is you need to create. Give your creature a rough description, one heavy on adjectives. You want to be able to see this creature in your mind's eye and imagine how it should look and act when confronting the heroes.

Next, decide whether or not to use an example stat line from the table below. If you want to brew up something more powerful than is depicted on the table, use the guidelines on the opposite page to assemble your creature's stat block.

Now draw up a tactics table for the creature. Usually six entries is enough to cover what you need to remember at the table. The following pages offer various suggestions on what kind of powers, movement modes, or attack patterns the creature might have. Because powerful foes often have more combat options and special powers than a standard grubby bandit, it's often handy to have the reminders that a tactics table can provide you during play. With that, you now have a newly-polished abomination ready to hurl upon the PCs.

## BALANCING MONSTERS

When you're first starting out with *Godbound*, it's almost certain that you're going to misjudge the effectiveness of a foe against the pantheon. You're going to make up something that shreds the PCs mercilessly, or you'll bring out a fearsome foe that gets hammered to pulp in a round by judicious use of the PCs' gifts.

This is a natural step in getting to know your pantheon and the game. Different groups of heroes are going to have very different levels of combat capability, and a pantheon brim-full of deities of war is going to mulch things a lot faster than a pantheon that focuses on powers of restoration and creation.

If the PCs end up trashing the foe more quickly than you expected, there's no harm done. PCs being PCs, they'll inevitably push on to greater enemies, and you'll have the chance to benefit by what you've learned. Conversely, if you find you've accidentally overdone the challenge and given them a foe much too powerful to fit the role it should play, you can always encourage the heroes to beat a noble retreat. Even the gods themselves must sometimes find valor in divine discretion.

| Types of Foes           | HD     | AC | Attack          | Dmg          | Move | ML | Save | Effort |
|-------------------------|--------|----|-----------------|--------------|------|----|------|--------|
| Common Human            | 1      | 9  | +0              | 1d6          | 30'  | 7  | 15+  | 1      |
| Elite Normal Human      | 2 or 3 | 5  | +4              | 1d10         | 30'  | 9  | 14+  | 1      |
| High-end Mortal Hero    | 8      | 3  | +10 x 2 attacks | 1d8+5        | 30'  | 11 | 11+  | 4      |
| Great Hero of a Land    | 12     | 3  | +10 x 2 attacks | 1d6 straight | 30'  | 11 | 9+   | 6 ☐    |
| Savage Pack Beast       | 1      | 8  | +2              | 1d6          | 40'  | 8  | 15+  | 1      |
| Savage Lone Predator    | 4      | 6  | +7 x 2 attacks  | 1d8+2        | 40'  | 8  | 13+  | 1      |
| Minor Monstrous Vermin  | 1      | 8  | +1              | 1d6          | 30'  | 8  | 15+  | 1      |
| Minor Humanoid Monster  | 2      | 7  | +3              | 1d8          | 30'  | 9  | 14+  | 1      |
| Monstrous Chieftain     | 7      | 4  | +9 x 2 attacks  | 1d12         | 40'  | 10 | 12+  | 2      |
| Angry Spirit            | 6      | 5* | +7 x 2 attacks  | 1d8          | 30'  | 12 | 12+  | 2 ☐    |
| Hulking Undead Thing    | 12     | 6* | +10 x 3 attacks | 1d12         | 40'  | 12 | 9+   | 4 ☐    |
| Greater Undead Revenant | 10     | 5* | +10 x 2 attacks | 1d6 straight | 30'  | 11 | 10+  | 3 ☐    |
| Divine Monstrous Beast  | 20     | 7* | +10 x 3 attacks | 1d8 straight | 60'  | 10 | 8+   | 5 ☐    |

\* these creatures can be harmed only by magical weapons. ☐ these creatures should have Words or appropriate gifts.

# ASSEMBLING THE CREATURE'S STATISTICS

## CHOOSE HIT DICE

Normal human beings and lesser monsters shouldn't have more than five hit dice, and ordinary humans should rarely have more than one without some special hardihood or martial talent. These foes aren't likely to be much concern to a hero if they're not in a Mob, and that's entirely acceptable; there's no point in being a demigod if you're never encountering lesser foes for your powers to overwhelm.

Creatures meant to be meaningful solo threats to the pantheon should have a minimum of twice the pantheon's total levels in hit dice, plus ten. Anything fewer, and they're liable to get mowed down by focused fire from *Divine Wrath* or similar expensive "alpha strike" powers. If the creature uses its Effort on judicious defensive dispellings, however, this many hit dice should keep it alive long enough to fight.

## CHOOSE ITS ARMOR CLASS

Normal humans have an AC of 9. Soldiers and other martially-equipped sorts should have ACs of 5 to 7, as should bestial foes with tough hide or notable agility. Armor classes lower than that should be the preserve of especially armored enemies, such as warriors in heavy plate armor or monsters with supernatural hardihood. Even the toughest foes shouldn't have an AC lower than 0 unless their incredible resilience is a special and noteworthy trait.

## CHOOSE ITS NUMBERS OF ATTACKS

Normal human beings get to roll one attack per attack action. Heroic mortal warriors might manage to bump that up to two or even three attack rolls per action, distributed as they see fit among available foes. Wild beasts and terrible monsters often get multiple attacks, but you usually don't want to give them more than three attacks per action. Frenetic enemies that strike even more quickly than that might exist, but it should be a distinctive trait for them.

## CHOOSE ITS ATTACK DAMAGE

Pick an appropriate description from the table below and decide whether the creature has a particularly weak or strong attack. Assign the listed damage die to the creature's attacks. If it has multiple attacks per action, you might make two of them weaker than the third.

If the creature is meant to be a major enemy that rolls damage straight, drop one die from its damage roll. If it only has one damage die, shrink the die by one step, so a 1d8 normal attack turns into a 1d6 straight damage die.

| Foe                 | Weak | Medium | Strong |
|---------------------|------|--------|--------|
| Ordinary Human      | 1d4  | 1d6    | 1d8    |
| Trained Fighter     | 1d6  | 1d8    | 1d10   |
| Dangerous Beast     | 1d4  | 1d6    | 1d10   |
| Magical Beast       | 1d6  | 1d8    | 1d12   |
| Mighty Hero         | 1d8  | 1d10   | 1d12   |
| Minor Monster       | 1d4  | 1d6    | 1d8    |
| Significant Monster | 1d8  | 1d10   | 1d12   |
| Dire Monster        | 2d6  | 2d8    | 2d12   |
| Divine Enemy        | 2d8  | 2d10   | 3d10   |

## PICK A MOVEMENT RATE AND TYPE

For ordinary humans, this is 30' per movement action. This step is only really consequential if the creature should have a drastically faster movement rate than a normal human, or if it has some unusual movement mode, such as flight, teleportation, burrowing, or other novelty. The page that follows offers some suggestions for spicing up the more exotic enemies.

## DETERMINE ITS MORALE

Common civilians have a Morale of around 7, and are probably going to flee the moment a Godbound starts unleashing their more blatant powers. Only worry about Morale checks for them if they have some compelling reason to stand and fight. Ordinary soldiers who are at least somewhat inured to battle should have a Morale of 8, and hardened human veterans should have a Morale of 9. Scores above that are the province of the elite and the desperately determined.

For monsters and other supernatural entities, mindless foes should have a Morale of 12, while other entities should be judged based on their own degrees of personal confidence or cautious prudence. A failed Morale check for such an entity doesn't necessarily mean a terrified rout. Powerful entities might simply decide that this is a bad situation to fight in, and make a calculated retreat in anticipation of a second, more favorable match.

## SET ITS SAVING THROW

Most creatures should have a saving throw of 15, minus 1 for each 2 full hit dice it has down to a minimum of 9 or better. If the creature is exceptionally powerful, you might let it go lower, but anything lower than 5+ should be reserved for truly fearsome enemies that you don't want to have pecked to death by a wave of save-or-lose powers from hostile Godbound. While any major enemy can still Commit Effort to auto-succeed on a failed save, if their saving throw is too high, they can end up bleeding away their Effort just fending off the miracles and gifts that the PCs throw at it.

## PICK WORDS, GIFTS, AND SPECIAL ABILITIES

The pages that follow include suggestions for special powers that you might give a creature. Minor foes might have one, or two at most, while major enemies might have bound entire Words and have several combat-relevant gifts to record. Great enemies should always have at least one Word bound, or some ability that lets them dispel Godbound gifts defensively. Otherwise, they can easily get swamped by a volley of *Divine Wrath* gifts launched by a pantheon.

Give major enemies multiple actions in a turn. Significant foes should have two, while very great enemies should have three. For each action, the enemy can move and use its entire attack sequence, or else trigger one of its offensive abilities.

## DETERMINE ITS EFFORT

Finally, give it an Effort score. Normal humans have 1 point of Effort, but they can't use it for much. It only matters when someone tries to use magical healing on them, as that usually requires that the recipient Commit Effort for the day to benefit from the healing. For monsters, divinities, heroic humans, and other creatures that have more use for Effort, about 1 Effort per 3 hit dice is a good balance.

# ATTACKS, DEFENSES, AND MOVEMENT

A perfectly standard hit roll and damage die can serve for a lot of foes, but for important enemies, you'll usually want something more interesting. The tables here provide some suggestions for novel movement modes, attack patterns, and defensive abilities for a major foe. You can also use them for less important enemies who might have a trick or two to complicate the heroes' lives.

The attack patterns here describe potential tactics for the creature. If it doesn't have enough attacks to carry out a particular pattern, like targeting several of them at an unarmed foe, you can either modify the tactic or simply give the creature a special ability that triggers when it uses the tactic.

A creature's defenses are often associated with its other powers. An angelic entity of living flame is unlikely to be harmed by fire, for instance, and a storm-spirit is not apt to be injured by a lightning strike. Other defensive abilities are oriented more toward avoiding a hazard or sidestepping attacks, possibly in conjunction with the creature's novel mode of movement. A teleporting entity might simply vanish out of the way of things liable to harm them.

## d6 MOVEMENT OPTIONS

- 1 It moves through conventional walking or running. Optionally, choose an adjective to flavor your description of its movement, such as skittering, loping, crawling, lurching, pouncing, or gliding
- 2 It flies, whether by physical wings, visible currents of energy, or seemingly sourceless levitation. Natural creatures will usually have to land to fight, or else rely on swooping dives that might make them immune to melee counter-attacks unless the victim waits to strike
- 3 It teleports. Some creatures simply vanish from one place and appear at another within range. Others move through a specific medium, such as leaping into one shadow and emerging from another. Some might be able to appear in special surroundings, such as a prepared location. A few might be called by particular rituals, or even appear in the presence of a specific thought
- 4 The creature is effectively immobile, either too slow to move meaningfully in combat or actually fixed in place. Some creatures might be restricted to a very narrow area by magic or necessity. The creature will need ranged attack options or an environment that forces melee engagement if it's to prove a significant challenge
- 5 It inhabits an unusual medium, whether swimming through water or navigating through clouds of fire, passing through stone walls, or existing only in areas of darkness. Some creatures may have a different means of ordinary movement, but can treat this particular medium as easily passable
- 6 It moves abruptly from place to place, but passes through the space between. It might shoot weblines and swing around, or jump rapidly to locations within sight, or move with tremendous speed from one spot to another. Some creatures might require a particular medium between these locations, such as an unbroken body of water or cloud of smoke

## DIO

## ATTACK PATTERNS

- 1 It throws Strong attacks at single targets, or Weak area attacks on several foes. The principle here is that single-target attacks should be stronger than attacks that hit multiple targets. These might be weapon strikes, energy bolts, cleaving blows at nearby enemies, flurries of projectiles, or explosive detonations of energy
- 2 It assails its last target, stepping the attack up a rank from its normal intensity as its momentum builds
- 3 It alters the environment in some way to make it a Weak damaging attack to foes within the zone or inflict an Average impairment on them
- 4 Its attack delivers an impairment one rank stronger for a round if it hits
- 5 It launches multiple Medium attacks at different targets
- 6 It launches several Weak attacks at the same target
- 7 It launches several Strong attacks at an otherwise unharmed opponent
- 8 It inflicts a Strong impairment on foes in melee range, or lobs it as an area effect on ranged assailants
- 9 It uses a Strong attack against the last foe to attack it
- 10 It inflicts a Medium impairment on an area with its powers and gets a free Medium ranged attack on anyone who then leaves the area

## DIO

## DEFENSIVE ABILITIES

- 1 The creature's impervious to a type of energy it uses or a particular hazard it employs as an attack
- 2 It's so ferocious that damage done to it is deferred by a round, allowing it to keep fighting for a round after being reduced to zero hit dice
- 3 It's extremely adaptive, gaining immunity or resistance to the last type of damage it's suffered
- 4 In packs, it's superbly coordinated and able to ensure that wounded members are shielded from attacks by uninjured allies
- 5 It can coordinate with its allies to gain bonuses to armor class or restrict the number of attacks that can target it in a round
- 6 It counterattacks when struck, or produces some noxious consequence for being harmed
- 7 It gets faster as it's hurt, gaining extra actions or attacks when reduced below half its maximum hit dice
- 8 It can sacrifice actions to throw up a strong defense, gaining an AC bonus or reducing incoming damage
- 9 It automatically nullifies certain gifts or magical powers that target it, possibly by Committing Effort
- 10 It plays dead or defeated when reduced to zero hit dice, but springs up a few rounds later, healed to a degree

# IMPAIRING POWERS

A straight attack is useful for peeling hit points off the heroes, but for complicating their lives further an impairing power is often most convenient. These abilities usually take an action to trigger, but can change the battlefield, curse the target, or invoke some other calamity on the foe.

The examples below are broken into three different degrees of impairment: weak, medium, and strong. When using them or building your own, there are a few basic guidelines to keep in mind.

Weak impairments shouldn't cripple or eliminate aspects of the target. They should inflict die penalties, hinder movement, lower the damage the target can inflict, or otherwise weaken the target in non-prohibitive ways. If the penalty is so great as to make a targeted quality useless, the impairment is stronger than a weak impairment should be.

Medium impairments can foreclose certain sorts of actions, but shouldn't be so strong as to take a target entirely out of the fight. A power that fixes the victim in place might eliminate their ability to move, but it still lets them use ranged attacks or other abilities not reliant on closing with a foe. Medium impairments can also inflict serious penalties on a target's traits, such that the victim is easily overcome by attacks on that crippled trait.

Strong impairments can take a hero entirely out of the fight. Such fight-ending powers should usually involve a saving throw, which will allow Godbound PCs to Commit Effort to save if they fail the roll. Those who run out of Effort are susceptible to catastrophe, however, if their comrades don't have an action free to offensively dispel the effect when the enemy launches it.

Strong impairments can also launch damaging or hindering effects that effectively doom the PC to rapid death if they're not dispelled or resisted. It's more permissible to make these no-save effects, as the PC does have a few more rounds to close out the fight before they get worn down or use a relevant miracle of their own to cleanse the effect.

Weak monsters shouldn't usually have strong impairment powers, though it's possible to have otherwise-feeble creatures who can still be fearsomely dangerous if they're given a chance to fight. Some monsters might have powers that work extremely well on ordinary mortals, but have lesser effects on Godbound or other supernatural foes.

If you want to temper an impairment's power, limit the number of times the creature can use it, or link its use to some special circumstance or condition. If you want to amplify it, allow it to affect an entire pantheon at once, or make it "sticky" in the form of a zone that creates the impairment or an effect that repeats each round.

| DIO | WEAK IMPAIRMENTS                                                                                                                         | MEDIUM IMPAIRMENTS                                                                                                                                              | STRONG IMPAIRMENTS                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | <b>Hinder divine power.</b> Victim must Commit one Effort for the scene in order to activate their non-Constant gifts or invoke miracles | <b>Block divine power.</b> Victim must Commit Effort for the scene every time they activate a non-Constant gift                                                 | <b>Seal divine power.</b> Victim must Commit Effort for the scene each time they activate a non-Constant gift or miracle, and also takes a 1d10 damage die each time |
| 2   | <b>Slow movement.</b> Victim's movement speed is cut by half                                                                             | <b>Pin.</b> Victim can't move under physical power. Optionally, it may instead block supernatural or abnormal movement modes. The victim can still act in place | <b>Scathe.</b> Victim always takes the maximum possible result on damage rolls                                                                                       |
| 3   | <b>Continuing Damage.</b> Victim takes 1d4 damage each round while the impairment lasts                                                  | <b>Severe Continuing Damage.</b> The impairment inflicts 1d8 damage each round                                                                                  | <b>Lethal Continuing Damage.</b> Victim takes a 1d12 damage die at the start of each round                                                                           |
| 4   | <b>Dull senses.</b> Victim takes -2 to all hit rolls for the duration of the scene                                                       | <b>Blind.</b> Victim rolls all attacks twice and takes the worse hit roll. Their assailants roll twice and take the best                                        | <b>Subvert.</b> Victim is controlled by assailant if they fail a relevant saving throw. Usually, a new save is allowed each round                                    |
| 5   | <b>Targeting.</b> The assailant gets +4 to hit the victim so long as they don't attack anyone else                                       | <b>Exposure.</b> The victim's armor class becomes 9 for the scene's duration                                                                                    | <b>Fated Injury.</b> Attacks always hit the victim unless fended off with magic                                                                                      |
| 6   | <b>Defense Break.</b> Victim's armor class worsens by 2 points for the duration of the scene                                             | <b>Stun.</b> Victim must make an appropriate saving throw to take any action on a round                                                                         | <b>Incapacitate.</b> Victim can't take any action at all                                                                                                             |
| 7   | <b>Misfortune.</b> Victim takes a -2 penalty on saving throws                                                                            | <b>Curse.</b> Victim rolls saving throws twice and takes the worse result                                                                                       | <b>Doom.</b> Victim is always treated as rolling a failure on saving throws unless they spend Effort to auto-succeed                                                 |
| 8   | <b>Dazing.</b> Victim always acts at the end of the round                                                                                | <b>Compulsion.</b> Victim takes 1d10 damage if they do anything except a particular action that round                                                           | <b>Sap.</b> Victim takes a 1d20 damage die each round they take any action at all                                                                                    |
| 9   | <b>Enervation.</b> Victim takes 1d6 damage from exhaustion if they try to do anything vigorous                                           | <b>Vulnerability.</b> Victim takes double damage from an attack type used by the assailant                                                                      | <b>Barrier.</b> The victim can't attack assailant                                                                                                                    |
| 10  | <b>Impair healing.</b> Victim cannot regain hit points for the duration of the scene                                                     | <b>Susceptible.</b> Damage on the victim is rolled twice, and the larger result is taken                                                                        | <b>Leech.</b> Hit points lost by the victim are gained by the assailant                                                                                              |

## STYLING POWERS AND ABILITIES

Here are some ways that Words of Creation can be used to flavor attacks, defenses, or impairments. While the enemies the PCs face might not be other Godbound, you can use this list as an inspiration for how entities themed around a particular power might wield their abilities. The mechanical details of their powers can be altered based on the needs of the game and the particular power levels of the foes.

Remember that most foes won't last long enough to drag out an entire array of different abilities. It's best to focus on a relative handful that an enemy might reasonably get off in combat before being reduced to mincemeat by angry demigods. Particularly powerful foes might be expected to last long enough to unleash several of these abilities before they're overcome... or before they send the heroes fleeing.

Most of these powers should probably require the creature to Commit Effort to trigger them, but as such they should also do something more interesting than a standard attack. If a major foe is hurling two 1d10 straight damage blasts at the pantheon with every attack action it takes, you'll want to make sure that using one of its special gifts is actually a worthwhile investment of its action and Effort for the round.

Such extra powers should be useful in ways that amount to something more than "It does more damage." Powers that just slather on more pain to a single target tend to be uninteresting in a fight. Abilities that harm multiple targets, create a hazard that demands PC attention, or somehow force a tactical choice on the PCs are more engaging.

If you're making up a tactics table for the creature, take a moment to note down the style details of a power in its tactics table entry. Even just a few words can remind you of how the power is supposed to look, and give you hints as to how it might be affected or dispelled by the heroes.

**Alacrity:** Blindingly-fast strikes, Charges that hit everyone in passing, Snatching projectiles from the air, Dodging incoming blows, Tying up or snaring foes before they can react

**Artifice:** Eldritch guns or projectile weapons, Hurled explosives, Mechanized armor, Automaton minions, Impairing rays or auras

**Beasts:** Swarms of attacking vermin, Transformation into bestial war-shape, Impervious scales or shell, inhuman vitality, Clouds of musk or debilitating venom

**Bow:** Bolt penetrating multiple foes, Hyper-accurate archery, Shooting projectiles out of the air, Firing to make a melee assailant pull back, Shooting important gear or making precise debilitating shots

**Command:** Commanding a foe to commit suicide, Ordering a group to attack each other, Commanding an assailant to halt, Ordering bystanders to be human shields, Commands that linger and force listeners to resist them for several rounds

**Death:** Cause death to a living target, Drain the life from a group, Fuel healing with vampiric force, Defy wounds that should cause death, Compel the spirits of the dead to impair foes

**Deception:** Backstab a victim from surprise, Trick foes into attacking each other, Hide behind illusions, Turn invisible, Confuse and impair targets

**Earth:** Hurl stones, Kill groups with sudden stone spikes or gnashing cracks, Exhibit obduracy of stone, Summon stone barriers against foes, Trap or impair foes with clinging rock, toxic earth vapors, or sudden mud

**Endurance:** Strike foes with unrelenting vigor, Leap into a group to let their blows pass through you and into each other, Contemptuously

ignore hits, Fight on regardless of wounds, Exhaust enemies with unnaturally relentless attacks

**Fertility:** Induce hideous cancers on a foe, Strangle a group with sudden plant growth, Conjure plants to shield you, Spawn minions to defend you, Snare or poison foes with obedient plants

**Fire:** Cause a foe to spontaneously combust, Hurl balls of fire at groups, Melt incoming attacks, Drive foes back with a wall of fire, Scorch, suffocate, and blind foes with heat and light

**Health:** Strike a person down with a sudden lethal disease, Infect a group with a hideous plague, Instantly heal from a wound, Regrow lost or damaged body parts, Infect with disease or siphon health from a foe

**Journeying:** Bring a distant calamity to the foe, Force a group into the way of some natural hazard, Be elsewhere and away from a blow, Bring allies from afar to defend you, Make foes lost and wandering even in familiar surrounds

**Knowledge:** Blast a victim's brain with unendurable insight, Overload a group with incapacitating knowledge, Be aware of where to stand to avoid an attack, Know how to block a strike, Impair a victim's understanding of the situation

**Luck:** Kill someone with a ridiculously implausible accident, Set a group accidentally murdering each other with their blows, Luckily avoid an attack, Their foe fumbles the assault, Enemies suffer impairment from bad luck

**Might:** Smash a foe with tremendous strength, Hurl something big at a cluster of enemies, Leap vast distances to escape or engage, Create barriers to enemies by toppling obstacles in their paths

**Night:** Dissolve a foe into darkness, Melt a group into fading shadows, Cloak in defensive shadows, Disappear into the darkness, Blind foes with primal night

**Passion:** Enslave an enemy with an overwhelming sensation of love, Daze a group by sapping all desire from them, Force bystanders to attack by infusing them with focused rage, Send enemies scattering by appearing as an eidolon of unendurable terror

**Sea:** Blast a victim with high-pressure water, Drown a group in clinging water, Deflect blows with watery shields, Flow like liquid around an attack, Drag and impair foes with flowing currents

**Sky:** Smite a target with lightning, Tumble a group with raging winds, Turn aside attacks with gusts of air, Fly out of the range of attacks, Beat down foes with rain, hail, and storms

**Sorcery:** Blast a victim with an eldritch bolt, Conjure a foe to assault a group, Invoke a defensive shield, Summon a meat-shield minion, Curse victims with magical impairment

**Sun:** Ignite an enemy with solar light, Scatter a group with a torrent of killing radiance, Dazzle an attacker and force them to miss, Melt or drive back an attack, Blind and exhaust foes with terrible light

**Sword:** Skewer a foe in melee, Leap into a group and slaughter them all with a few sweeping strokes, Parry an attack, Redirect a blow, Cut straps, slash tendons, or knock the breath out of foes

**Time:** Bring a future death to a foe, Slaughter a group with future wounds, Foretell an attack in time to dodge, Slow an attack in time to evade it, Hinder foes by slowing time or foretelling their actions

**Wealth:** Bury a target in heavy wealth, Hurl molten gold or jagged diamond spikes, Bribe a group to kill each other, Pay spirits to defend you, Create barrier of gold, Impair targets with suddenly-failing material possessions

# MANAGING COMBAT

Running combat in *Godbound* can be somewhat frenetic compared to the usual pace of an old-school game. Monsters that would usually take five or six rounds of steady hit point ablation are mowed down in a round or two by the mighty blows of the heroes, and almost every major foe the PCs face will have one or more Words or gifts that can produce a wide range of supernatural effects. To help manage these wild affrays, there are a few things you can do to ease your burden at the table.

First, make a 3 x 5 card note for every major enemy the PCs are likely to face. Put the creature's combat stats on one side of the card, and scribble down its tactics table on the other side. You might also just print off a foe's Bestiary page from the game PDF, first turning off the art layer so as to make it printer-friendly. You want the creature's statistics close to hand during combat.

Next, have a clear idea of the creature's favorite gifts or Word miracles. When the tactics table says to fire off a gift or a miracle, you should have something in mind. The opposite page offers some ideas for flavoring combat powers or special magical tricks, but you can also sift choices from the gifts listed in this book. You can make these powers look like something appropriate to the enemy, and just use the mechanical framework to describe its effects.

If the creature has certain powers that involve Committing Effort for a constant effect, just assume that the powers are always in effect and lower its maximum Effort accordingly. Unless it's a very important fight, it's not worth letting NPC enemies selectively turn their defensive or boosting gifts on and off to fuel their other abilities.

When a creature Commits Effort during a fight, just tick it off their card and assume it's gone for the scene. In the case that the fight breaks off and the creature has time to recover its strength, then you can give it back some Effort, but for most monsters, all Committed Effort is effectively gone for the day, because they won't be around long enough to care about getting it back.

**Remember defensive and offensive dispelling.** Major enemies risk getting mowed down in the first round or two as the PCs hurl their strongest gifts or most damaging miracles at them if they can't defensively dispel incoming effects. Remember that defensive dispelling is an Instant action, so the enemy can use appropriate miracles to block or negate incoming magic as long as its Effort holds out.

Remember also that defense won't win against a pantheon of *Godbound*; a half-dozen demigods have more Effort than a single major enemy does, and can keep up their attacks longer than the enemy can keep up their dispelling. It's crucial that the foe go on the offensive as quickly as possible. The straight damage that many major entities roll can put down PC *Godbound* in a hurry, especially if the creature has multiple attacks or uses a gift to boost its offense. Many high-end fights are going to end with one or more *Godbound* on the floor, and the survivors badly mauled.

Lastly, don't hesitate to let the players know when it's time for them to run. Due to the way damage works, it's very hard to one-shot a *Godbound* hero, and even a very bad situation usually has a round or two for the PCs to respond to their circumstances. If it's clear that they're facing the pantheon's own personal Ragnarok, you should make sure that the players see this as clearly as their PCs do. If it's still early in the fight, the PCs should still have enough Effort left to pull off any miracles they need to get free from their enemy's tender attentions and run for safer ground.

## USING CREATURES FROM OTHER GAMES

*Godbound* is designed to make it a simple matter to import enemies from other old-school RPGs. With a few small tweaks, you should be able to crack open any traditional old-school monster handbook and scoop out creatures to throw at your brave heroes.

The big distinction to keep in mind is between individually worthy foes and Mob fodder. Most creatures from normal monster handbooks will only ever be mooks to *Godbound*. They might be dangerous in Mobs, but as individuals or small groups, they won't be much more than speed bumps. Be ready to crank up a monster's hit dice and actions per turn to make it a worthy individual foe. In general, you can follow the steps below.

- Creatures with fewer than 10 hit dice are apt to be treated as speed bumps by the pantheon if encountered solo. If you want to use such a creature as a meaningful solo opponent, perhaps as a unique Misbegotten horror, you'll want to multiply its hit dice by a factor of three or four.
- For a creature's hit bonus, just use its hit dice, with a soft cap of +10 to hit. Very fearsome creatures should just automatically hit with their attacks, forcing targets to use gifts to deflect damage or miracles to negate attacks. Note that the hit bonus cap means that most of the major enemies the PCs face will be able to hit them around half the time or more.
- Extremely low armor classes should be rare; anything below AC 0 should be highly unusual. "Normal" humans and other foes shouldn't have armor classes below 5 as a general rule, unless they're explicitly heavily-armored creatures. Monstrous beasts and other dire terrors shouldn't have an AC below 0 unless their nigh-invulnerability is a specific trait to be emphasized.
- Special abilities can usually be brought over verbatim, including any spellcasting powers the thing might have. Just use the spells as written in the original game, though you'll want to cap damaging effects at 10d6 or so unless the enemy is meant to be a truly tremendous foe.
- Saving throws are usually 15+, minus 1 for every 2 full hit dice of the creature down to a minimum of 9+ for rank-and-file monstrous foes. Boss-type enemies can go lower still, but anything below 5+ is likely to be frustrating and make the use of save-dependent powers against the creature useless.
- If the creature is meant to be a serious threat to a pantheon, it needs to have around one attack per round per PC. Thus, a creature with two actions per round and a three-attack hit sequence should be a challenge for a six-PC pantheon. These major enemies should roll their attack damage straight.
- Major enemies usually have enough spell-like powers to keep them interesting, but don't hesitate to add Words or individual gifts as needed. It can also be worth the time to sketch up a quick tactics table for reference during play.





# TREASURES BEYOND PRICE

## WEALTH, MAGIC ITEMS, AND DIVINE ARTIFACTS

The wonders of a forgotten age lie waiting beneath the earth and hidden within the palaces of the great. Marvels of occult power and ineffable science await those souls brave enough to wrest them from their current owners or unearth them from their long-abandoned vaults. Even the peasants in the fields tell stories of marvelous golden plows that leave abundance in their wake, or of a mighty heroine's sword that could speak and counsel her in a hundred wise ways until its last terrible treachery. Stories of magic and lost science pervade the tales of the realms.

They are much less common in daily life. It has been a thousand years since the Shattering and the collapse of the Former Empires, and most of their baubles and treasures have been lost to hard use in the centuries since. Few villages have even the smallest wonder in their possession, and even in great cities and noble palaces a magical object is to be treasured. Hawkers in the market sell charmed beads and magical elixirs and scraps of parchment inked with auspicious signs, but few of them have any real purpose but to line their maker's pockets. Items of true power are rare in almost every land.

Even where these treasures can be found, they are not normally for open sale. Kings and princes see no reason to permit their subjects to wield the powers of the ancients when that might be better in royal hands, and so most nations allow only the favored of its rulers to possess significant artifacts... and it is the ruler who decides what is significant. Even in less controlled lands, there are sufficient thieves, swindlers, and avariciously grasping nobles to make the ordinary sale of magical items impractical.

In the absence of easy markets in most realms, the best way to get an item of power is the oldest way; the seeker goes out and finds it in an ancient ruin. Surface structures have usually been picked clean over the centuries, but those brave enough to pierce the depths or venture into remote lands can sometimes find marvels there for the taking. More often they find death between the jaws of nameless abominations, but such is the price of avarice.

Other heroes acquire their equipage through favors to the great. A magical artifact may be too valuable to sell, but not be too valuable to trade for some mighty deed or desperate act that could save its owner from catastrophe. Such rewards are done quietly, the better to make sure that thieves and inquisitive monarchs do not look too closely at

any of the parties involved. Heroes who want to acquire a particularly rare treasure might have to persuade its single known owner of the value of their assistance.

The last alternative is impossible to ordinary artisans, and that is to create the artifact yourself. Certain masterful theotechnicians and arcane artificers are still able to create magical items, such as the clockwork weaponry of Vissian maestros or the intelligent automatons of the Guild of Artificers in Nezdohva. Even less gifted souls can brew magical elixirs and petty charms, though the great majority of such offerings are no more magical than the ditch-water that was used to make them.

For true artifacts, however, only Godbound and other entities of primal power are able to bind the magic. Only they have the Dominion necessary to reshape the world and turn some length of sharp metal into a weapon of legend, or fashion a scrap of silk into a banner that would draw a nation behind it.

Such power never comes without a price. For the creator, that price is in the expenditure of their own power and the use of precious celestial shards salvaged from the broken engines of Heaven. These fragments of calcified natural law provide the vital link between the artifact's mundane shell and the empyrean power of the Words. An artificer must often delve deep within the ruins of the world and the hidden vaults of Heaven's fallen halls to accumulate enough shards to build some grand enterprise.

For the mortal wielder of an artifact, this price comes in dissolution and distortion. Mortal flesh was never meant to channel the celestial power of the Words, and extended use of an artifact almost always has some disastrous effect on its unfortunate mortal wielder. The lucky ones merely suffer wasting afflictions as the power sears the strength from their mortal frame. The less fortunate are changed by the artifact, becoming little more than the broken debris or terribly-altered victims of its supernal energies.

In this chapter the GM will learn of the more well-known magical artifacts of the realm and how to scatter them prudently through their own campaign. Rules are also provided for making your own artifacts, either for the GM's use or as a special undertaking by a PC artificer. In addition, a selection of tools for the creation of more mundane wealth is provided for a GM in need of some rich cache of ancient plunder.

# TREASURES AND WEALTH

While Godbound have less use for huge troves of wealth than ordinary men and women, a healthy supply of gold can come in handy when dealing with mortals. Even if a hero doesn't need the cash personally, their followers and cult can make use of it, and a lavish application of silver can smooth many awkward affairs. Getting this money is a more difficult matter for those heroes not blessed with the Word of Wealth.

The table below gives examples of the kind of Wealth caches or free coin to be found in the possession of certain persons or the troves of certain ruins. When stocking a lair with Wealth or figuring out how much money a Dulimbaian mandarin is willing to pay for a favor, you can consult the table. This cash represents the subject's liquid available funds. If pressed, they might be able to sell property or call in favors sufficient to triple this amount, if not more, but most NPCs will do this only in matters of life and death, and sometimes not even then if they have heirs to consider.

If you're stocking a ruin, take the Wealth listed there as the total loose treasure to be found around the place. It's probably not all piled together in one central heap. You can put half of it in the possession of the ruin's leader or strongest faction, while the other half can be broken up into smaller packets around the place.

Artifacts and other magic items are not included in the table. Whenever these are added, it should be a conscious choice of the GM, a decision to place some fitting treasure in an ancient ruin or a rich lord's vault. Details of such prizes are provided later in the chapter.

| WEALTH | TYPE OF CACHE OR OWNER                                                                                                                                     |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1      | The wealth of the richest man in a well-off village                                                                                                        |
| 2      | The sum a village can muster in desperate need<br>The property of a well-to-do city merchant<br>The loot of a lightly scavenged ruin of former days        |
| 3      | A minor nobleman or rural lordling's possessions<br>Plunder of a minor supernatural menace<br>A well-off bandit chieftain's accumulated loot               |
| 4      | One of the richest merchants in a modest city<br>Treasure of a temple of long standing in an area<br>Plunder of a minor but unlooted ruin of old           |
| 5      | Wealth of a major government official<br>Free coin of a prosperous noble of no great standing<br>An important merchant in a major trading city             |
| 6      | A great noble, but one without remarkable wealth<br>One of the chief merchants of a trading city                                                           |
| 7      | Plunder of a major unlooted ruin of old<br>The wealth a trading city's rulers could pull together<br>Wealth of a great temple of a major regional religion |
| 8      | A major parasite god's accumulated sacrifices<br>A great noble from a notably wealthy lineage<br>A king of a modest nation                                 |
| 9      | Plunder of a major ancient capital's ruin<br>Loot from a rich shard of fallen Heaven<br>A cache owned by a king of a major nation                          |
| 10     | Emperor of a realm<br>Pontiff of a realm-spanning religion                                                                                                 |

## CURRENCY IN ARCEM

Every settled nation in Arcem has its own currency, usually with silver pennies or copper qian forming the base of the coinage. A silver penny or ten copper qian are usually what a laborer earns in a day's work, and it's barely enough to keep body and soul together without the contributions of spouses and children. Paper currency is found only in the Bright Republic, where the basic unit is whatever currency that is being used in the nation where you're playing the game. Thus, if playing in America, the currency and prices would be in dollars.

A single point of Wealth has no fixed equivalent in cash, but usually represents enough money to support a dozen families for a year.

## ESTIMATING WEALTH POINT PRICES

It's usually not important to know the exact price of a thing, but sometimes the PCs will want to purchase some property or some great service that is clearly worth more than one Wealth point. To get an idea of a proper price for it, check the example cache size table on this page and find a buyer who would have to seriously strain their wealth to purchase something. Thus, if a fine country villa would stress the finances of a rich merchant in a modest city, it should cost about 4 Wealth points.

Note that this does make large piles of Wealth non-linear in their values; the richest men in ten villages certainly aren't going to command the kind of wealth that a realm's God-King might throw around. Unless the players start to intentionally abuse this fact, however, you shouldn't worry about it too much. Since acquiring a given ruin's plunder or doing a particular job usually eats up a session of play, spending ten sessions grubbing up minor treasures will eat up a lot more player effort and attention than executing one major coup.

## MAGICALLY CREATED WEALTH

Some Godbound heroes have gifts or Words that lend themselves to quickly creating valuables. Godbound of Artifice can effortlessly create valuable or useful objects, those of Fertility can conjure up acres of rare herbs or drugs, and heroes of Wealth make the easy production of gold a basic part of their portfolio. How should the GM handle the use of these powers in play?

First of all, they should be *useful* powers. A player who makes a Godbound of Wealth is telling you that they always want to be able to afford things, and they're putting a major chunk of their character resources into being able to do so. If they use their gifts, they should just be able to afford Wealth 1 to 4 items and services without strain.

Second, creating huge amounts of coins, gems, gold, or other precious metal valuables risks inflating the local market painfully. A Godbound of Wealth can usually buy any one extremely costly thing worth Wealth 5 or more before the inflation will hinder further large-scale uses of their gold-conjuring powers for a month or so.

Third, conjuring objects of practical value is less traumatic to the local economy. Conjuring food, or clothing, or pig iron, or other objects of material use doesn't deform the local economy in the same way. Deflation is a possibility, but most gaming groups aren't really concerned with macroeconomic worries. Godbound of Wealth can often call up these things too, but then it becomes an issue of finding a seller willing to give them whatever fabulous prize the PCs want in exchange for a massive herd of cattle or a dozen acres of cut timber.

# DESCRIBING TREASURES

Vast heaps of shining coins are all well and good, but it can get a little tiresome for every great trove of ancient wealth to appear as little metal discs. In some cases the nature of a treasure haul will be obvious, but sometimes you want something a little unusual. The tables on this page offer a GM some tools for spicing up a treasure haul, along with suggestions for tweaking the contents into something a little fresher than the traditional gems, gold, and jewelry.

You can use the origin table to the right to figure out where the treasure originally came from. It might be something native to the ruin, or it could be pelf dragged in by a more recent occupant who used the ruin for a lair.

The physical dimensions of the cache give you an idea of how large and bulky the haul might be. Heroes who are forced to just cherry-pick the best bits of a vast pile of plunder might come away with only a quarter of its true worth. Those who want the whole haul will have to figure out some way of moving it from its location back to their base of operations, and guarding it once it's there.

The defenses around the loot might be obvious from the location in which it's kept, but you can use the table as inspiration when a particular cache doesn't already have a keeper. The table below it gives some ideas for NPCs who might want the loot or feel they have a legal right to it. These souls might work with the PCs to steal it from its current owner, or scheme to trick the heroes out of their reward.

Lastly, the table below gives a few general descriptors for the loot. You can roll or pick one or two and then formulate a treasure that such descriptors might describe. For example, a "Vile Masterwork" might be a statue of something horrifying crafted by the Vissian master sculptor Jacopo Barzetti, near-unsalable to all but the truly depraved.

## D20 DESCRIPTOR OF THE TREASURE

- |    |                                                                  |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Ancient.</b> The loot dates back before the Last War.         |
| 2  | <b>Artwork.</b> It's sculpture, painting, or other art.          |
| 3  | <b>Clothing.</b> It's a piece of clothing or vestments.          |
| 4  | <b>Coinage.</b> It's largely in coins of precious metal.         |
| 5  | <b>Consumable.</b> It's something the user consumes.             |
| 6  | <b>Cryptic.</b> The loot doesn't actually look valuable.         |
| 7  | <b>Data.</b> The loot is actually information of value.          |
| 8  | <b>Exotic.</b> It's something not found at all around here.      |
| 9  | <b>Famous.</b> It's a locally-famous object of great worth.      |
| 10 | <b>Forbidden.</b> The loot is illegal for some reason.           |
| 11 | <b>Jeweled.</b> Large or extremely rare jewels are involved.     |
| 12 | <b>Magic.</b> Some minor but valuable magic is involved.         |
| 13 | <b>Masterwork.</b> A famous artisan crafted it.                  |
| 14 | <b>Owned.</b> Someone else around here has a claim on it.        |
| 15 | <b>Partial.</b> Its real value exists only with all other parts. |
| 16 | <b>Regalia.</b> It's important regalia to a local noble family.  |
| 17 | <b>Religious.</b> It's important to a major local faith.         |
| 18 | <b>Toxic.</b> It harms its owner somehow if held long            |
| 19 | <b>Vile.</b> It's horrible somehow, but only has value intact.   |
| 20 | <b>Wood.</b> It's of a rare wood or exotic plant matter.         |

## D6 THE ORIGIN OF THE TREASURE

- |   |                                                  |
|---|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Hidden by an original occupant of the place      |
| 2 | Brought in by a later inhabitant                 |
| 3 | Stolen from the surrounding locals               |
| 4 | Unearthed or crafted here on-site by inhabitants |
| 5 | Payment for some service the owner rendered      |
| 6 | Tribute to the owner from minions or vassals     |

## D10 THE BULK OF THE TREASURE

- |      |                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-3  | <b>Compact.</b> The treasure consists of a single object or container that's easily carried by a person.                                                          |
| 4    | <b>Bulky.</b> The treasure is heavy or awkward. A person can carry it, but it'll take both hands.                                                                 |
| 5-6  | <b>Vast.</b> The treasure is much too bulky or scattered for a person to carry it. A wagon or other transport must be used.                                       |
| 7-8  | <b>Attached.</b> The treasure is an object that is physically attached to some part of the architecture, and something bad will happen if it's pried loose.       |
| 9-10 | <b>Fragile.</b> A single person can carry the treasure, but if it's put down rapidly or the bearer is hit, it's likely to be smashed and made much less valuable. |

## D10 THE TREASURE'S DEFENSES

- |    |                                                   |
|----|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Sturdy, well-sealed container.                    |
| 2  | Hidden carefully in the owner's territory         |
| 3  | Guardian beast left to keep out thieves           |
| 4  | Magical ward that curses or detonates on thieves  |
| 5  | Behind a door or barrier only the owner can pass  |
| 6  | Intelligent guards that serve the owner           |
| 7  | Fake or bait treasure is left to trick thieves    |
| 8  | Removing it triggers a mechanical trap            |
| 9  | An alarm triggered by magic, mechanism, or guards |
| 10 | Abject terror of the owner dissuades the locals   |

## D10 WHO WANTS THE TREASURE?

- |    |                                                  |
|----|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Its former owner, a denizen of the ruin          |
| 2  | The local human whom it was stolen from          |
| 3  | Heirs to the victim of its theft                 |
| 4  | Local temple, which it once belonged to          |
| 5  | Government official, taxman, or other exciseman  |
| 6  | Supernatural entity bound to the loot            |
| 7  | Local noble who owned or thinks he should own it |
| 8  | A greedy local ruin denizen who knows of it      |
| 9  | The local ruin's boss, who wants it as tribute   |
| 10 | A desperate human thief who wants to steal it    |



# ARTIFACTS

Devices of wondrous magical power once littered the realms. Most of these objects were relics of the ancient theurges and their subtle arts of enchantment, their ateliers busy with the creation of magical swords, blessed armors, devices for far speech, and baubles and trinkets that conjured some wonder on command. The distant past was careless with things that are marvels in these latter days. Most of these devices have been broken or worn out over the centuries since the Last War, but a few can still be found in the hands of the great or buried deep within some forgotten ruin.

Modern sorcerers have more limited arts. Hedge wizards can brew elixirs of subtle power, and determined theotechnicians can still create magical prostheses and wondrously sharp blades, but these things require both exquisite skill and extravagant expense to fashion, and so only the richest and most powerful of the realms can afford them.

A few societies have still retained enough of their ancient arts to make certain types of wonders more practical to create on a larger scale. The Artificers Guild of Nezdohva still possess the secrets of animating automatons and giving them consciousness and free will. The process is costly enough to beggar a minor noble, but they can do things with artificial sinew and flesh that are impossible elsewhere in Arcem. The clockwork maestros of Vissio have similar arts, albeit ones focused on the marriage of living flesh to mechanical augmentations. The grandees of their city-states often have an artificial hand or eye or subtler implant to demonstrate their wealth and influence. And of course, there is the Bright Republic, which draws on its etheric energy nodes to power an entire civilization of modern technology, a scant few items of which can be hardened to function even off that blessed isle.

## ARTIFACTS DON'T HAVE PLUSES

Artifact weapons and armor do not normally grant bonuses to hit rolls, damage, or armor class. While they may have a supernaturally-sharp edge or adamant plating or some other dramatic physical quality, their power is simply too great to be expressed in a slight bonus to hitting things. Either the artifact's power is not being used, in which case its benefits are too minor to be meaningful to Godbound, or else it is being used, in which case the gift it's expressing is probably doing something dramatic.

A peasant hero who picks up the Red Sword of the Bleeding Emperor doesn't gain a +5 bonus to his hit and damage rolls. He either has an unearthly weapon of bone and coagulated gore which is extremely disturbing to use in a fight, or he bonds with it by Committing Effort and triggers the *Emperor's Red Hand* gift to hack every human standing within thirty paces into a crimson vortex of liquefied meat. Holding a tool of the gods in his trembling hands does not change his situation in small, marginal ways, it produces *dramatic consequences*.

It's theoretically possible to give an artifact some Constant gift that grants a blanket bonus to hit rolls or armor class, but such "buff gifts" tend to be both extremely bland and extremely desirable, changing nothing about how a Godbound fights but marginally improving whatever it was they were going to do in the first place. Unless you want your PCs to be strongly tempted by such generic benefits, it's inadvisable to allow such artifacts.

For the most part, however, magical items are things to be recovered from the past rather than made in the present. Even those who possess them must be cautious about offering them for sale in the open market; local rulers have no reason to like the idea of some private citizen holding an object of occult power. Assuming the ruler doesn't seize it for their own use, they tend to permit such things only to nobles and other favorites who can be trusted not to misuse them... or at least, to misuse them only in customary ways. There are no "magic shops" in Arcem or similar realms. Those who want a wonder must find a serviceable crafter and deal privately with them, or make quiet arrangements with someone who needs gold more than magic.

Yet beyond these ancient relics and modern baubles, there is a different degree of power. *Artifacts* are not the product of modern magical techniques, or even the debased theurgy practiced in the present day. They are works of divine power, each one authored by a Made God or an ancient arch-theurge, and they offer fantastic power to their wielders. Only creatures possessing an innate bond with the Words of Creation can fashion artifacts, and their use by lesser entities can have terrible consequences for those who handle these tools of the gods.

## THE NATURE OF ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are a form of prosthetic divinity, one allowing the wielder to employ the power of a divine gift whether or not they have actually mastered the gift, or even bound the Word it draws on. Made Gods first fashioned these tools to widen the scope of their power, while later parasite gods and Godbound have used them to store extra celestial energy to fuel their abilities. The powers of an artifact come in several forms, and many have more than one special ability. Most artifact powers are broken down into two basic forms.

- The artifact grants access to a gift that the wielder may use as if they have mastered it, allowing them to Commit Effort from the item or automatically gain the steady benefit of a Constant gift.
- The artifact provides a pool of Effort that can be used to fuel the gifts it contains. This Effort can't be used for other purposes, such as powering the wielder's own gifts, even if they're the same.

While tremendously useful to a divinity, wielding an artifact is not without cost. The user must exert some of their energies to harmonize with the artifact and integrate its powers into their own divine essence. The first time the wielder handles the artifact in any 24-hour period, they need to Commit Effort for the day to use it. If they decline to do so, the artifact is useless to them, and they cannot use any of its abilities or benefits, nor can they try to bond again for 24 hours.

Mortals who attempt to bond with an artifact can expect to suffer severe side-effects from the process, assuming they're even capable of Committing the Effort. Their fragile forms were not meant to channel the tremendous power of divinity, and consistent use of an artifact's power will almost always result in the progressive transformation, derangement, or debilitation of the user in some way reflective of the artifact's power. Some artifacts are designed to be wielded by human champions of a deity, and so their side-effects are limited, but even in those cases, most gods prefer their holiest relics be used only rarely and at great need.

## CREATING ARTIFACTS

When a Godbound hero wants to create an artifact, the first thing they need is a justification. They must have a Word or a Fact related to the artifact they intend to create, and its powers must reflect their abilities. Godbound of Artifice are particularly talented with artifact creation, however, and are treated as having justification for almost any artifact, though they can't create ones that allow free miracle access to other Words.

Creating an artifact costs Dominion. The various options listed on the adjacent table describe those costs. At least half the cost of an artifact must be paid by its creator, though allies can help with the rest if they have some justification for it with their own powers.

The first step in the process requires the crafter to pick one or more gifts to be contained in the artifact. These gifts can be any appropriate to their Words, and need not be ones they've mastered. Constant gifts and gifts that require no Effort to use are more costly to add than those powers that require Effort to trigger, as the latter are limited by the artifact's available Effort, while Constant gifts in an artifact are as useful as if they were possessed by the wielder personally.

Next, the crafter decides how many points of Effort the artifact is to store. The wielder of the artifact can use this Effort to fuel the gifts it contains. All Effort the artifact commits is for the day, and the gifts it triggers don't last longer than a scene. Artifacts regain committed Effort at dawn each day. An artifact can contain no more Effort than half the creator's level, rounded up. Barring some rare power, an artifact's wielder cannot use their own Effort to fuel its gifts.

Next, the crafter decides if the artifact is to confer any special abilities. If it gives the bearer the benefits of bonding with a Word, like the bottomless purse of the Wealth Word or the unlimited ammo of the Bow Word, it adds to the item's cost. Such abilities do not normally require Effort to trigger, granting their benefits to anyone who bonds with the artifact.

If it allows someone to dispel hostile magic as if with a miracle of one of the creator's Words, that also costs more. The most potent artifacts, the ones that can replicate any miracle of a particular Word, cost more still. In both cases, Effort must be expended from the artifact. As usual, offensive dispelling takes up the wielder's action, while defensively negating a power used against the bearer is an Instant response.

Once the total Dominion necessary to craft the artifact is determined, the creator needs to assemble the raw materials. A suitable physical shell for the artifact must be fabricated or found, but this is usually a relatively simple matter. More difficult is the acquisition of the necessary number of celestial engine shards to connect the new artifact to the primal power of the Words. Every artifact requires at least one celestial shard, plus one more for every six full points of Dominion it took to build it. These shards are destroyed in the creation process.

A single artifact can contain only so many gifts and special abilities. The artifact can contain as many gifts as the creator's level. Conjuring any miracle of a Word counts as five gifts, a Word's special abilities count as two, and greater gifts or dispelling powers count as three. Effort is capped at half the creator's level, rounded up.

Artifacts use their gifts at an effective level equal to their creator's level or their wielder's level, whichever is greater. If the wielder is an NPC with hit dice instead of levels, use a third of their maximum hit dice as their level, up to a maximum of 10. Such details are likely to be irrelevant unless the artifact uses a gift that has an effect that hinges on the wielder's level, such as *Divine Wrath*.

### COST

### ARTIFACT POWERS

|    |                                                           |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 2  | For each lesser gift                                      |
| 4  | For a lesser gift that is Constant or requires no Effort  |
| 4  | For each greater gift                                     |
| 8  | For a greater gift that is Constant or requires no Effort |
| 3  | Gives the special abilities of a bond to a specific Word  |
| 6  | Allows dispelling effects as if with a specific Word      |
| 10 | Allows any miracle permitted to a specific Word           |
| 2  | For each point of Effort contained by the artifact        |

Other abilities for an artifact are possible with GM permission, and the table above can be used as a guide for appropriate pricing.

Forging an artifact requires one month of effort in some surrounding suitable to the undertaking. Temple-citadels are a popular choice, but any location that echoes the creator's bound Words will serve for the imbuing of the artifact. If the process is interrupted, it must be started over, but the Dominion is not spent until the artifact is completed. Once fabricated, a creator forever after retains a subtle bond with the artifact, and can get an impression of its distance and general location at all times. Only an artifact's creator can easily destroy it; others who wish to break the object must often go to heroic lengths to find some celestial engine or long-lost ritual to unbind its mighty elements.

## USING ARTIFACTS IN A CAMPAIGN

Artifacts should be rare plunder for a pantheon. A ruin probably has no more than one of them, if any at all, and the majority should be found in far, dangerous places such as abandoned shards of Heaven or the flaming circles of Hell. Heroes should most often have to intentionally seek out an artifact to obtain it, rather than stumble across it in some random chest, and whoever owns the artifact will almost certainly use it in their own defense.

## STARTING PLAY WITH ARTIFACTS

At the GM's discretion, a PC can start play with an artifact. One of their Facts has to be exclusively about how they acquired this mighty relic, and that Fact can't be used to benefit rolls—the PC trades the benefits of it in exchange for starting with the artifact. Such a relic probably shouldn't be worth more than eight Dominion points and must meet with the GM's approval. If the artifact is particularly important to the PC's concept, the GM might allow them to later spend Dominion to improve it, though such expenditures should cost about twice as much as creating an entirely separate artifact.

## EXAMPLES OF DIVINE ARTIFICE

The following pages include examples of seven mighty artifacts created in the days before the Shattering. All of them are currently lost somewhere in the trackless depths of the realms, and sufficiently determined heroes might be able to salvage them from whatever fell hands currently wield them.

Each entry provides a description of the artifact's history, its available effort, the amount of Dominion it cost to create it, and an explanation of its innate gifts. As with many artifacts, the powers they grant are unique. A determined Godbound might be able to duplicate these gifts with their own abilities if they have a serviceable Word and are willing to pay the price to master them.



## The City-Seed

A peaceful Made God of a long-lost people fashioned the City-Seed as a shelter for their nomadic people. In a vain attempt to avoid the hostility of the more martial Made Gods, they sought to take their people wandering through the realms, seeking a refuge from the strife of their domineering brethren. The City-Seed would be a tool for survival if they were ever forced to scatter.

In time, the creator was destroyed by more violent Made Gods and their people were dispersed as it had feared. One wandering band was forced to flee by difficult ways through the Night Roads, with only the City-Seed to help build them defenses from the denizens of Uncreated Night. In time, these too died, and the City-Seed was left in some forgotten stretch of Night Road or in some silent tomb-realm.

More modern users are apt to find it a pragmatic source of instant fortresses and fortifications, or the building of free urban infrastructure in a matter of weeks or months. The mental corruption caused by its use is subtle, and the day or two it takes to raise a strong fortress may not be enough time to show its effects, particularly if a different user is employed for each construction. Once the City-Seed's obsession latches on to a user, however, their edifices are apt to become murderous deathtraps for anyone who would prevent them from delving deeper into the earth with the under-passages of the seed and spreading its stony branches wider over the surface.

## Etheric Energy Node

The ancient etheric energy nodes are the heart of the Bright Republic's culture and technology. Without the stabilizing effect on natural law that they provide, the tiny perturbations caused by the decaying celestial engines would render the Republic's technological base useless, and in a stroke turn them from the strongest nation of the northwest into an island of desperate rioters.

Unfortunately, these artifacts are decaying. Centuries of hard use with only the limited theotechnical knowledge of the latter-day maintainers has created a cascade of failures that are only growing worse. No node has actually failed yet, but they are consuming an enormous amount of spare parts in order to keep them functional, and the strain of it is beginning to impact the Bright Republic's economy. If the influx of raw materials from Patria, Dulimbai, and Vissio were to end, disaster would be visibly impending.

A Godbound of Artifice could theoretically repair these artifacts. Some of them are only somewhat worn, so the application of the correct gifts could restore the damaged works. The largest and most important of them, however, the half-dozen which serve the greatest fraction of the population, will require celestial shards to fix. Worse, they may have to be taken off line for a time in order to complete the repairs, and any interruption of the power would have catastrophic consequences on Bright Republic cities.

Neither the public nor the Bright Republic government is ready to admit that there's a real problem with the nodes. Talk of the increasingly-common power flickers is dismissed, but zoning actions are being taken to forcibly rearrange populations around the best-functioning nodes without explaining the true reason behind the moves.

## Powers of the Seed

**Effort:** 4

**Creation Cost:** 18 Dominion

**Birth of the Metropolis (Greater Gift):** When the city-seed is planted in a location, buildings and infrastructure of the user's choosing gradually grow up around it, forming out of the bedrock of the surrounding area. One day's growth provides housing, commercial space, defensive walls, sewer, water, and paved roads for up to five hundred residents, conjuring up deep springs of fresh water where needed. The seed can create military fortifications if desired, and the character and particulars of the architecture is at the user's discretion. For every day the seed remains planted in an area, facilities form for an additional five hundred residents. Any faction attempting to make a Feature of what the city-seed creates may treat the attempt as a Plausible effort.

**Heart of the City (Lesser Gift):** With an action and Committing Effort for the day from the artifact, the possessor of the City-Seed can perceive clearly any specific location built by the seed, and speak so as to be heard there. Optionally, they may speak so as to be heard by everyone in such a community. The perception and speech lasts until the wielder spends their action doing something else.

Every day in which a mortal uses the City-Seed compels them to make a Spirit saving throw. After three unsuccessful saves, they become obsessed with building the city wider and deeper, and will act to kill any who try to prevent them from expanding the work.

## Powers of the Node

**Effort:** 2

**Creation Cost:** 14 Dominion

**Rectification of Names (Greater Gift):** The node stabilizes natural law within a 30-mile radius and broadcasts subtle waves of etheric power, allowing the operation and powering of advanced mundane technology such as that created in the Bright Republic. Any attempt to create a change related to using or building that technology within the node's area of effect is treated as a Plausible change. Larger models of the energy node duplicate this gift several times; each additional *Rectification of Names* gift imbued into the artifact doubles the radius affected by it.

**Focused Flow Control (Lesser Gift):** With an action and Committing Effort for the day from the artifact, the controller can selectively depower devices in areas powered by the node. Individual devices can be shut down, or all devices of a type. Magical tech items hardened so as to function away from a node are not affected by this.

The etheric energy nodes of the Bright Republic are the size of large industrial buildings, and are unusual in that they're perfectly safe for mortals to operate as long as they don't attempt to use the *Focused Flow Control* power. Slow, careful reallocation of the node's energy can be done over the course of a day or two to eliminate power in areas influenced by the node, but a bound mortal wielder of the node who attempts an immediate shutdown with *Focused Flow Control* must save versus Hardiness at a -2 penalty or be killed by the sudden flux of etheric energy.

# FLUTE OF THE JOYOUS TYRANT OF BRIGHT FEATHERS

The Joyous Tyrant, the Lady of Bright Song, was the Made God of a forgotten feathered people. By her will her devotees flocked as one and overwhelmed her many enemies with their bodies and their fervor. The sacrifice of multitudes meant nothing to the Joyous Tyrant, who was wholly absorbed in the glorious unity of will she inspired and the beauty of a song sung with the throats of a nation. While the feathered people were eventually exterminated by their enemies, the Joyous Tyrant is said to still persist in a shard of Heaven composed entirely of crystallized song.

The flute itself is a thing fashioned of gleaming, closely-set feathers of innumerable bright colors. The slightest current of air around it coaxes a subtle melody from the instrument, one that somehow complements the mood of its bearer even as it makes stealth somewhat difficult when it is not carefully wrapped. It was originally intended to be borne by the Second of the Flock, the Joyous Tyrant's beloved mate and hierarch, but it was lost in the general downfall of the feathered people.

## POWERS OF THE FLUTE

**Effort:** 3

**Creation Cost:** 12 Dominion

**Mistress of Sweet Song (Lesser Gift):** As an action, Commit Effort from the artifact and play the flute to summon all small birds within fifty miles, absolutely command all small birds within sight, or communicate with avian life. Sky-darkening masses of small birds are largely ineffective weapons, but if used to harm exposed targets they'll inflict 1 point of damage to all within sight after five minutes of pecking, or 15 points against Mobs, before being exhausted or killed. Victims able to get under sturdy cover can avoid this damage.

**Plucking Carrion (Lesser Gift):** A violent trill of the flute performed as an action summons spirit-crows to pluck and tear at a visible enemy's exposed wounds. The victim must already have suffered at least one point of damage, but if so, they suffer an automatic 1d10+1 damage die from the phantom crows. A portion of the user's spirit is used to beckon the crows, however, and so they suffer 1 point of damage to use this power.

Extensive use of the flute by a mortal gradually dissolves their sense of individuality, leaving them docile and obedient to the will of whom ever they originally considered their superiors. This dissolution is accompanied by a feeling of great joy and serenity, until nothing could be more delightful than doing as their superior directs.

# THE GOD-KING'S RESPLENDENT BARGE

The theurge known as the God-King Zereus used this vast flying barge as a floating palace for his empire, skimming from city to city to ensure that his priest-officials were obeying his august will. The origins of the barge itself are lost in ancient history, but it's supposed to have been the handiwork of some solar Made God, likely an early casualty of the Last War. Zereus himself was certainly incapable of making such a marvel, though he was a powerful theurge in his day.

The barge is a vast, flat-bottomed vehicle of shining bronze metal, perhaps seven hundred feet long and three hundred feet wide. A multi-leveled structure at the back of the barge provides housing for the occupants and the heavily-guarded control room where a mortal pilot sits on the golden throne that commands the barge. While the God-King himself could have easily helmed the ship, his business below had him delegating the work to his most trusted minion, a trust encouraged by the will-sapping effect of the barge's controls.

While a swift mode of transportation, the barge is also capable of being used as a weapon of war. Zereus used it to put down several rebellions, either with its flaming weaponry or with projectiles hurled from over the barge's rail. The barge is obliged to show some caution, however, as it can't climb higher than 3,000 feet above sea level, and so is susceptible to attacks that can hit objects within visual range. This maximum operational ceiling also obliges it to steer around the very highest mountain ranges.

The current whereabouts of the Resplendent Barge are unknown, though stories persist of a hidden shard of Heaven with a Night Road wide enough to admit the barge back into the realms, if only its ancient defenders can be defeated.

## POWERS OF THE BARGE

**Effort:** 5

**Creation Cost:** 24 Dominion

**Adamant Keel (Greater Gift):** If attacked directly, the barge has an effective armor class of 3, 30 hit dice, and is impervious to non-magical weapon attacks. Attempts to control it with the Word of Artifice can be resisted automatically by Committing Effort for the day from the pilot or the barge itself.

**A Chariot of the God-King (Greater Gift):** The barge is capable of carrying a thousand passengers in relative comfort and can fly at a speed of twenty miles an hour, ignoring all but magically-empowered ill weather. A passenger may be replaced by up to five hundred pounds of cargo.

**Ever-Renewed Hull (Lesser Gift):** The pilot of the barge may Commit Effort for the day from the artifact to repair 10 hit dice of damage as their action for the round.

**Rebuke Those Below (Greater Gift):** As an action, the commander may Commit Effort for the day from the artifact to launch a spray of solar flames at an area below up to 100 feet in diameter. Everything not under non-flammable cover suffers 5d6 fire damage.

The divinity who built the barge preferred docile pilots. A mortal who binds this artifact is unable to resist mind-controlling effects induced by anyone aboard the barge.



## The Impervious Panoply of Lady Yelem

The Made God Yelem embodied the idealized protector of her people; a glorious mother-conqueror, sternly chastising the reckless barbarian nations before mercifully forgiving their errors and permitting them to obey her enlightened directions.

In time, the theology of Yelem came to emphasize her protection of her people as a whole rather than its individual members, and the Lady sent forth vast human tides to crush her foes for the "health of the people". The individual human casualties were tremendous, and the people began to revere Yelem's sacred offspring as protectors of their individual lives. These Thousand Daughters of Yelem were only partially human as people recognized the term, but they took an interest in individual temples and towns, and their personal devotees could pray to them for succor.

In the end, this sacred division spelled the end for Lady Yelem. Her daughters revolted against their god-mother, and when they came to destroy her, she had not a single mortal worshiper left to sacrifice themselves for her. Her mighty panoply was unable to defend her from the attacks of her offspring, and she was destroyed. Of course, the Thousand Daughters fell to fighting shortly afterwards and their realm was lost to Uncreated Night, but it is possible that the armor remains undiscovered in some tomb-realm or shard of fallen Heaven.

The armor itself is heavy regalia armor, fancifully worked and seemingly wholly impractical for the wearer. So long as the bearer has a sufficient supply of zealots in their company, however, it can be impossible to actually hurt them.

### Powers of the Panoply

**Effort:** 4

**Creation Cost:** 22 Dominion

**A Stainless Hauberk (Greater Gift):** As an Instant action, any hit point damage suffered by the wearer can be transferred to a willing ally within one hundred feet. The ally dies on the spot, but the wearer is unharmed.

**Impervious Splendor (Lesser Gift):** The panoply is treated as heavy regalia armor for the wearer, granting AC 3 but without any saving throw penalties. The armor automatically resists any attempts to change its appearance, expending Effort to dispel the effect until it is removed.

**Never A Drop of Red (Lesser Gift):** The wearer never appears to be injured, wearied, besmirched, or otherwise discomfited regardless of their current health or surroundings. As an Instant action, the wearer may Commit Effort for the day from the artifact or their own reserve to completely negate one physically damaging attack or effect. Powers that do damage via mental effects or non-physical injuries cannot be repulsed by this power.

Mortals who wear this armor become progressively more convinced of their own invincibility, while ordinary men and women around them become equally certain that they cannot be harmed. Eventually, the wearer dares the most outrageous acts in their overconfidence, while normal mortals around them cower back without even trying to resist their impositions. Only a heroic mortal of 7 or more hit dice or a supernatural entity can resist this hopelessness.



# The Red Sword of the Bleeding Emperor

A people who cherished the concept of self-sacrifice raised up the Bleeding Emperor for their Made God. This naked titan-god was perpetually scarred and bleeding, his holy blood the sacrament of numerous cult rites. The Red Sword was forged as a tool to enlist the fractious barbarians into the pious work of self-sacrifice that the Emperor embodied. They, too, would be taught to give up their lives to the greater cause, to shed their limited lives to an unlimited end.

This relentless self-sacrifice was subverted by the Tikkat Entity, a hive-mind culture of humans who had abandoned their individuality in favor of a symbiotic relationship with colonies of beetle-like insects. Tikkat parasite-warriors infected enough of the Bleeding Emperor's followers to corrupt his theology, and legends suggest that the Bleeding Emperor himself was eventually captured and parasitized by the Entity. This outcome is debatable, but far voyagers of the realms have encountered living Tikkat, and the survivors report the presence of Bleeder cultists among the symbiotic warriors.

The sword was lost during the conflict and has since shown up in more than one realm. Its bearers rarely keep it for long, as the consequences of its use are not conducive to long life. Mortal wielders soon become distracted by the pleasures of their suffering, and become willing tools of whatever cause or master can promise them more extravagant opportunities for pain.

## Powers of the Sword

**Effort:** 5

**Creation Cost:** 22 Dominion

**Red Hand of the Emperor (Greater Gift):** As an action, the wielder can Commit Effort from the artifact to launch a single attack with the sword against every creature within sight, doing a minimum of 1 point of damage even on a miss. Mobs are automatically hit for 1d10+15 damage rolled straight.

**Font of Invigorating Gore (Greater Gift):** For every quarter of their maximum hit points received in damage by the wielder, either they or the Red Sword regain one point of Effort they'd committed for the day, choosing which is to be refreshed at their discretion.

Mortals who wield the Red Sword come to feel a certain ecstasy at bodily suffering, eventually becoming unable to determine the actual extent of their own wounds without pausing to examine them. This delight leaves them careless with their corporeal form. They start every day 1d6 hit dice down from their maximum, to a minimum of one hit die.

# The Seal of Ten Thousand Suns

The origins of this heavy black ring are lost to history, but the glimmer of lights within the band mark it out as an obviously magical artifact. One who dons the ring instantly becomes aware of its powers, though mortals also usually find themselves assailed by the whispered words of the Uncreated and their incessant promises.

For centuries, it's dipped in and out of the chronicles of many realms, always an unexpected find by some common adventurer or inquisitive sorcerer, always the herald of some grim consequence. Some records have been found in drifting tomb-realms that were completely overwhelmed by the Uncreated let in by the Seal, a tattered collection of despairing histories that speak of the corruption of the Seal's bearer and the doom that followed in its wake.

Other times, the Seal has been sought as a tool of regal aggrandizement. Realm-ruling emperors have dreamed of further shores of conquest, and the Seal has offered them the chance to forge new roads to untouched worlds. A few of these god-rulers had sufficient will to ignore the blandishments of the Uncreated, but even they inevitably opened one Night Road too many, and the destruction poured in on their people from some far-distant nightmare world.

Most disquietingly, there are some sorcerers who seek the Seal not for its power of opening a Night Road, but for the bargains they mean to make with the Uncreated. They are perfectly willing to sacrifice a realm or two to the malevolence of these abominations if it means they will receive the rewards that only the Uncreated Night can grant.

## Powers of the Seal

**Effort:** 3

**Creation Cost:** 12 Dominion

**Bearer of the Black Key (Lesser Gift):** The user may Commit Effort for the day from the artifact to open or close a Night Road's seal as if using the appropriate theurgic invocations.

**Wound the World (Greater Gift):** The user may Commit three points of Effort for the day from the artifact to instantly create a Night Road opening where they stand, even in the heart of a populous human community. The road leads to a realm or Heav- enly shard known to them or studied in the appropriate ancient records. The road does not manifest with any seal in place, and the destination may well be invaded by unfriendly entities. The Seal can create, unlock, and seal Night Road breaches, but it cannot completely destroy them.

A mortal incautious enough to use the seal becomes the focus of tremendous interest from the Uncreated. The wretched victim is bar- raged with suggestions and visions from deep within Uncreated Night, ones that offer all manner of delights in exchange for opening a Night Road to a realm infested with the Uncreated. All but the strongest mortals will inevitably succumb to the psychic pressure unless they discard the seal somewhere beyond their own reach.





# ITEMS OF LESSER MAGIC

Mighty artifacts are hardly the only magical items to be found in the realms. Most of these lesser enchantments, however, are too weak to be of use to Godbound. The innate divine energies of such heroes commonly drown out the lesser enchantments of mortal arcanists, and the tools that might be so useful to a mortal hero are so much inert steel and common wood to the Godbound. Still, heroes might find use in giving such tools to their cultists and allies, or might face them in hostile hands on the battlefield.

## MINOR MAGICAL ITEMS IN GODBOUND

GMs who want to introduce minor magical items into their campaigns can easily plunder the thousands of pages of old-school magical items that are available in existing OSR products or the original games from which they were drawn. Everything from the ubiquitous *sword +1* to the trusty *potion of healing* to mighty staves and +5 magical armors can be pulled directly from these games and inserted into *Godbound*. As many of these OSR games are free for download, it would be rather profligate with page count to reprint them here. A selection of uniquely Arcemite minor magical items are given on the opposite page, but for the most part you can pull your minor magics from the existing corpus of the hobby.

## GODBOUND AND MINOR MAGIC

"Minor magic items" include everything that isn't an artifact. Some minor items function normally for Godbound, and all of the example items on the opposite page can be used freely by Godbound heroes. Certain effects almost always fail for these mighty beings, however.

- Magical "pluses" from magical weapons, armors, and shields never work for Godbound. A *sword +3* might be a magical weapon in the hands of a Godbound, but it doesn't grant its usual +3 to hit and damage rolls in their hands.
- Healing potions and other healing items do not normally work on Godbound. Their vital force is too strong to be replenished by such minor magics.
- Magic that grants bonuses to hit rolls, damage rolls, or other Godbound die rolls doesn't work. A magical blessing might boost the hit rolls of mortals, but Godbound are too powerful to be augmented by these enchantments.
- Items that give extra actions don't function for Godbound. Very powerful artifacts might allow extra actions at a high cost or specific circumstance, much as the gifts of Alacrity allow, but ordinary magical items can't hasten a Godbound user.

These limits also usually apply to similar mighty supernatural entities, such as parasite gods, angels, greater Eldritch, and other creatures that are capable of bonding a Word. Less imposing foes such as ordinary mortals and minor supernatural enemies can use these items normally, and might benefit from being given them by a patron or master. Perhaps more consequentially, they also work just fine in the hands of mortal foes of the PCs, and can make common mortal opponents into much more dangerous enemies.

## CONVERTING MAGIC ITEMS

Most magic items from other OSR games can be pulled in verbatim from their source game without much in the way of conversion. Still, there are a few adjustments you should make when importing certain types of magic.

- Items that inflict multiple dice of damage shouldn't do more than 10 dice at a time and should probably have charges. If you don't want them being used to spam down major enemies, make their effects useless against powerful supernatural foes, and remember that major enemies can always use an appropriate Word's Instant defensive miracles to stifle mortal magics used against them.
- Healing items shouldn't normally work on Godbound unless they're produced by artifacts. For mortals, weak healing items should roll their healing dice as if they were damage dice, and heal that many hit points or hit dice of damage in the user. Strong healing items should be rolled "straight" to heal that many points of damage. In both cases, it should usually be necessary for the recipient to Commit Effort for the day to benefit from the healing, in order to put a hard cap on how much healing anyone can soak up in a day.
- Items that replicate a gift or give a constant useful benefit shouldn't normally be usable by Godbound, as it ends up tempting players to start Christmas-treing their PCs with as many such magic items as possible. A cloak that allows you to fly is a good deal cheaper than permanently investing your limited gift points in a gift that grants flight.

In general, minor magic items you introduce into your campaign should usually be loot the PCs can use to bribe or enlist mortals, charged or single-use items that give the PCs a limited resource to expend when needed, or minor enchantments with niche non-combat uses. The main magical treasures the PCs should be interested in should be artifacts, and they ought to be rare enough that acquiring one is a major effort rather than the casual byproduct of ruin pillaging.

A gauntlet that sprays a bolt of flame might gutter out on the hand of a divine wielder, but its torrent of fire can scorch the demigod quite handily when activated by a cultist of a rival deity. Minor magic items can amplify the threat of an otherwise marginal group of mortal assailants.

## BUYING AND SELLING MAGIC ITEMS

Whether or not your realm has anything like a "magic shop" is up to you as the GM. Some realms certainly ought to have such establishments, while other groups prefer to keep even minor magic items in short supply in their game. Prices for magic items usually start at 1 Wealth point and go up steeply from there for permanent items or powerful works of magic.

Those worlds without such shops, such as Arcem, leave aspiring buyers in need of finding a local sorcerer able to make such a work and paying them extravagantly for the crafting. That accomplished, it also means dodging the careful eye of the local rulers, who rarely have any reason to allow such magic to any but their supporters.

## CRAFTING MINOR MAGICS

Any Godbound with a relevant Word or Fact can create a minor magic item, with Godbound of Artifice being able to craft almost anything. The raw power that the Godbound wield is not very conducive to fixing the small sparks of magic that imbue minor items, however, and it's not unlike trying to build a watch with a forge hammer.

A Godbound who wants to create a minor item should describe its function, either lifting a magic item from an existing old-school game or formulating a new effect. If the item replicates a gift, it should probably be an artifact instead, but such distinctions are for the GM's judgment. If the item is acceptable, the Godbound then crafts or acquires the physical object to be enchanted and expends Dominion. Potions and single-charge items cost 1 Dominion, minor permanent items or charged items with multiple charges cost 2 Dominion, and major permanent items cost 4 Dominion. Very powerful items of minor magics might cost 8 points, though at that level they're perhaps better treated as artifacts. Potions and trifles can be brewed in a day, while other minor items take about a week to imbue. A Godbound can create twice as many of these items by adding an extra point of Dominion. Thus, a Godbound who wanted 32 magical *swords +1* for their personal friends would spend 2 points for crafting a minor item, and 5 more to double it five times, finishing them all in one week.

Godbound who want to equip everyone in a region or group with a particular magic item can enact it as a change, as given on page 132. A Godbound who wanted to give a village militia magical *spears +2* could thus enact it as an Impossible change for 4 Dominion points, much more cheaply than personally crafting however many spears they'd otherwise need. Such large-scale work is easier and more natural for a divinity's celestial might than the fashioning of individual trinkets on a piece-by-piece basis.

## EXAMPLE MINOR MAGICS

All of the items below can be used by Godbound and will affect them normally. Most of them are as rarely found as any other magic item, though womb-drying salts can be found in any substantial community, magnetic guns are a commonplace in the Bright Republic, and regalia armor was so common during the Last War that many suits still survive as heirlooms today.

**Blood Compass:** This small golden disc requires that the user feed it some portion of their blood before it will function, inflicting 1 hit point or hit die of damage. Creatures with 1 hit die will perish if they use this item. Once fueled, the compass points in the direction of a particular creature named by the holder, one that they either love or hate. The compass' accuracy is better the closer they are, and it will remain pointing at the target for 24 hours after being fed. Changing the desired target requires feeding the compass once more.

**Hardened Tech:** The advanced technology of the Bright Republic is usually dependent on the etheric node installations of that island in order to function correctly. Hardened technology has been reinforced with theotechnical components to allow it to function elsewhere in Arcem, also providing it with integral power. Such technology is most often found in the form of vehicles or small electrical power generators, and given the difficulty of creating it, it is prohibitively expensive for all but the wealthiest and most profligate elites of other societies.

**Magnetic Guns:** The Bright Republic eschews gunpowder weaponry, preferring magnetic guns that fire iron slugs with the statistics

given on page 13. Most models have sufficiently large magazines to make reloading unnecessary during a single firefight. While the iron ammunition is relatively simple to craft anywhere, the guns only function in the Bright Republic unless they've been built as hardened tech. The guns themselves are easily mass-produced by Republican factories and are in common currency among the populace and military forces. The latter group has larger versions mounted on tanks or used as coastal defense artillery.

**Poppet:** These humanoid dolls come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, from child companions no larger than a teddy bear to full-sized models meant for more adult pastimes. Poppets are directed by their ancient expert systems to behave according to their roles and their long-lost cultures. They are incapable of learning new functions or developing true sentience, but can conduct conversation related to their roles and navigate the execution of their duties.

Poppets can be keyed to obey particular owners by a competent theotechnician or other artificer-wizard. Unfortunately, an undetectable 1% of these devices were originally intended for criminal ends, and will wait for a convenient opportunity to murder their owner before fleeing and positioning themselves where a new owner can find them. A larger percentage are relics of cultures where certain modes of behavior were perfectly normal in ways that would be shocking, injurious, or occasionally lethal in the modern day.

An ordinary poppet has 3 hit dice, an AC of 7, and cannot fight. Assassin models fight as an automaton relict as described in the Bestiary, and cannot be created intentionally in these latter days.

**Regalia Armor:** The holy warriors, philosophy-crusaders, exalted champions, and imperial harem guards of the Former Empires often placed symbolism and aesthetic preferences over the practicality of thick steel. The fashioning of regalia armor was devised as a method to flaunt a particular philosophy's style or symbols without costing the wearer the benefit of sturdy protection. Regalia armor is wildly impractical at first sight, ranging from massive suits of impossibly heavy steel plate to mere thimble-sized vials of ever-replenished body paint that protects its bearer. Even so, it functions as normal armor of its intended type: light, medium, or heavy, regardless of its visual appearance. Medium and heavy regalia armor apply saving throw penalties just as their normal varieties do. While basic versions of regalia armor are comparatively simple for enchanters to fashion in the modern age, most Former Empire examples are enchanted to at least a +1 bonus, as their mortal wearers were persons of great status or import.

**Womb-Drying Salts:** These salts are relatively easy to manufacture for a trained hedge-mage or market alchemist and are within the reach of even the modestly affluent. Even so, their use is tightly regulated in most societies as they are a form of poison that renders a female human permanently sterile. The salts are a tasteless, odorless powder that can be mixed into food and drink. A small dose is difficult to notice but allows a Hardiness saving throw to resist its effects. A larger dose is unmistakable but will invariably work on the consumer. The salts produce sweating, weakness, and violent cramps, with 5% of the users dying over an increasingly painful week of affliction. Those who survive cannot be cured of their condition by anything short of a divine miracle. These salts are most often legally restricted to the use of licensed prostitutes, but their use as poisons by otherwise-dispossessed stepchildren and heritors is a commonplace in tragic stories. A version that works on men, *spring-stilling powder*, is known to some alchemists.



# CELESTIAL ENGINES

High within the halls of broken Heaven are the engines of the world. These enigmatic devices maintain the natural laws of the realms and preserve them against the constant hunger of Uncreated Night. Once they were tended by the angelic Host, legion upon legion of celestial beings to preserve their perfect function and mystic order. Now they run down in slowing cycles, those that have not been broken, scavenged, or sabotaged by Heaven's bitter exiles.

Each engine maintains a particular natural law or geographic structure for a particular realm. There may be an engine for a particular mountain, or for the natural progression of seasons, or for the happiness that wells in a mother's heart at her newborn infant's smile. Engines can stand responsible for vast concepts such as "gravity" or tiny details such as the color of sunlight on gold. If the engine is broken, that concept will cease to function correctly in the world or that phenomenon will become deranged. Perhaps secondary engines exist to support it in a haphazard fashion, or perhaps in that realm gravity or that particular mountain will unravel away into nothingness—or an even worse consequence. A Godbound with a Word related to the engine's function can discern what it's doing and what realm it is supporting. Those without this insight can only guess or hope for nearby information inscribed by long-vanished angelic keepers.

A celestial engine is unmistakable. Some appear as crystalline matrices, others as gears that burn with solar fire, some as impossibly subtle meshes of flowing energy that speak of profound truths below. The physical embodiment of an engine is always magnificent, whether it fills an entire shard of Heaven or exists only as a single perfect fist-sized sphere. Godbound and other Word-bound entities recognize such engines on sight, and can feel their proximate presence even from miles away. This discernment isn't fine enough to lead the entity to the engine, but alerts it that one exists nearby.

## Placing Engines

An intact celestial engine is usually only to be found in a shard of Heaven, though there are some realm-bound engines that can be located physically within a domain. Every Godbound within ten miles can tell that there is an engine somewhere nearby, though they can't determine its exact location without suitable miracles of knowledge or the right ancient maps and instructions.

When an engine is placed, the GM should decide whether it's intact or broken, and if it's intact, whether or not it's maintaining anything important in the PCs' own realm. Particularly ruthless heroes might be willing to smash an engine and loot its shards if the disastrous consequences will come down on some unknown realm. Truly heartless saboteurs might intentionally destroy an engine if it's supporting some vital element of an enemy nation or people, trusting that the side-effects won't reach their own kindred as well.

If an engine is broken, the GM should choose whether or not it's already been salvaged. Some broken engines have been plundered by the Made Gods who shattered them or later theurges who craved their power, but many others still retain a useful number of celestial shards. These shards tend to attract attention from supernatural entities, even if they're not capable of making use of their magical potency. The simple presence of the shards is invigorating and pleasing to creatures of magic, and the bold explorer of Heaven can often tell that something precious is near when monstrous foes abound.

## Destroying and Repairing Engines

Some celestial engines have been intentionally destroyed. In the beginning, this havoc was wrought by the Made Gods and their servitors, either to plunder precious celestial shards for their terrestrial war machine or to inflict crippling metaphysical damage on the realms and nations of their enemies. Later, bitter angelic powers abandoned their ancient duties of protection in order to break the engines and avenge themselves on humanity's usurpation.

Word-bound creatures can wreck an engine with a suitable miracle. Any used violently against the engine can break it, though the celestial feedback involved invariably does 5d10 damage to the saboteur that cannot be deflected with Word-based gifts. Most engines collapse when shattered, though some might explode or produce drastic changes in the immediate environment based on their original purpose.

Fixing an engine requires either the Word of Artifice or a Word related to the engine's original function. The would-be repairer also needs a number of celestial shards equal to those originally salvaged from the engine. The actual repair requires only one round to execute if the necessary parts and Word are available, as the engine's existence is a thing devoutly desired by natural law. The repairer must do so from the heart of the broken engine, however, and some enemies might take pains to make that as difficult as possible.

## Celestial Shards

A wrecked engine will provide from 1 to 6 celestial shards to a salvager. These shards are priceless to the Godbound, being necessary not only for the creation of artifacts as per page 177, but also for the enacting of many otherwise impossible changes in a realm, as described on page 130. Shards can be used interchangeably in a project, and the original purpose of their engine doesn't need to relate to their later use.

Celestial shards are small, usually no more than fist-sized fragments of the broken engine. A Word-bound creature recognizes a celestial shard on sight, and can feel the general presence of a shard if they come within fifty feet of it. A Godbound who needs Dominion more than they need the shard can absorb its celestial energy, gaining 4 points of Dominion instantly at the cost of destroying the shard.

Shards aren't always found directly in the wreckage of a celestial engine. Some are located in treasure caches below, either as spare parts kept in an ancient Former Empire ruin or as more modern trinkets prized by their wealthy owners for their gleam and unnatural splendor. They are sufficiently rare, however, that buying them on the open market is impossible in most realms.

As the GM, you should make sure that the PCs have the opportunity to gain celestial shards if they set their mind to it. They may need to hunt down rumors of earthly caches at low levels, until they're strong enough to fight through a Night Road and reach a shard of Heaven they can plunder. Without the chance to scrounge up some shards, they won't be able to craft artifacts or perform major Impossible changes in their domains.

As a general rule of thumb, most major treasure caches should contain a celestial shard. It may have been mistaken by its owner for a large jewel or a strange piece of jewelry, but the PCs can tell its true nature. If the group wants more, they can make a point of pursuing tales and dusty histories in search of more of the precious shards, or prepare an expedition through the Night Roads.

# WARDS

There are two kinds of major wards most often found in places of importance throughout the realms: *mundus wards* and *empyrean wards*. Both serve to check the power of the Made Gods, and by extension, the divine energies used by Godbound and other potent supernatural creatures. Their original creators intended for the wards to protect them from the hostile attentions of the Made Gods of rival civilizations, but some have persisted down to the present day. Their creation is impossible to the entities of the modern day, though some say the secrets might yet be found in some forgotten hall of Hell.

## MUNDUS WARDS

Mundus wards protect a region from the supernatural influence of Made Gods and other divinely-connected entities, including Godbound. They subtly drain away the celestial forces used by these entities, making it much more difficult to create long-term or large-scale changes in the area.

The strength of a mundus ward is rated from 1 to 10, with very few modern wards stronger than 4 or 5, and most of the existing ones ranging from 1 to 3. Cities and villages founded since the Last War and the fall of the Former Empires usually have no mundus wards, but older ruins, ancient capitals, and venerable fortresses almost all have at least a modest ward. If more than one mundus ward exists in an area the divinity is trying to alter, only the strongest ward applies.

The rating of a mundus ward is added to the base difficulty of any change made in the area by Influence or Dominion, as described on page 129. Thus, making an Improbable change on a city would usually cost 4 Dominion-2 for the base cost of affecting a city, multiplied by 2 for an Improbable change. With a rating 3 mundus ward on the city, however, it would cost 10 Dominion, with 5 for the base cost multiplied by 2 for the difficulty.

## EMPYREAN WARDS

Empyrean wards are a more powerful, restricted form of ward reserved for ancient strongholds and high-security buildings. These wards actually negate the divine energies of a Word-bound creature, suppressing miracles and gifts and making it impossible for weaker Godbound to trigger their abilities.

Like mundus wards, empyrean wards are rated from 1 to 10, though only the very strongest wards exceed 3 or 4, and the great majority of wards remaining from the Former Empires have decayed to 1 or 2-point strength. Empyrean wards only ever protect specific buildings, structures, or complexes; even the largest empyrean ward is barely big enough to cover a village.

Inside the ward, a supernatural creature must Commit Effort equal to the ward's strength before they can use any gift or ability that requires Effort. Their Constant and intrinsic gifts and abilities continue to function, as do auto-saves, but anything else that requires them to Commit Effort can't be done until they've overcome the suppressing buffer. They can reclaim the Effort as soon as they are finished using their abilities, and any changes or effects produced will still remain.

Empyrean wards do nothing to interfere with sorcery, whether in the form of low magic, theurgy, or minor magical items. These spells and devices function normally within their protected zones, even if they require the magus to Commit Effort to trigger their effects or quickly cast them.

## A WARD'S FOCUS

Every ward is built around a physical focus. In some cases this is a single specific object kept in some heavily-guarded place. It might be a sacred idol, a holy mandala, or an enigmatic machine churning away without visible effect. In other cases, the physical focus is more dispersed, taking the form of sanctified obelisks in the area, carvings embedded in local buildings, or buried anchors of sacred symbols at geomantically-important points.

So long as this physical focus remains largely intact and inside the area covered by the ward, the ward will stay up. A ward's focus can handle a certain amount of damage and defacement before it starts to degrade. Wards focused on a single object are easier to defend, but an enemy who gets close enough to shatter the holy idol or burn the mandala will snuff out the ward in a moment. Dispersed carvings and monuments are harder to protect, but it usually takes at least a day's steady, obvious violence against it before any significant harm can be done to so many dispersed points of importance.

A ward's focus requires trained theotechnicians for its repair and maintenance. Without this regular tending, the ward will tend to degrade over time, though it rarely ever vanishes entirely until the focus is destroyed. Knowledge of ward maintenance was strictly controlled in most of the Former Empires to prevent easy sabotage, and very few modern cultures have preserved the knowledge. Scarce more of them even understand what the wards are *meant* for, and many cities and strongholds don't even realize their wards exist. Only when they're assaulted by some divine power does the ward's effect come into play.

Ward foci always come with a key—a physical object which grants the holder the ability to ignore the ward's effects. Just as importantly, the key-holder can grant or remove immunity to the ward's effects to other people, adding or removing them from the ward's permission list. Those locales that still understand the function of their wards guard their key jealously, and usually make it an element of the ruler's regalia. Those that have forgotten their wards have likely lost the key as well.

## USING WARDS IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Wards are one explanation why assorted supernatural monstrosities haven't already rolled over major cities or ancient strongholds of your campaign setting. Even a low-level empyrean ward is enough to hamstring Godbound or other supernatural entities with limited Effort available, and strong wards can render a city largely immune to the worst powers of their divine foes.

Of course, this just means that more traditional means of conquest are required. Armies of zealous warriors can assault the defenders, ready to tear up the ward once they're able to reach its focus. Hostile entities can cultivate neighboring powers, building them up and using them as indirect weapons against the warded region. And of course, dark secrets of theurgy can cut through the protections, assuming some daring band of heroes isn't ready to steal the ward's key.

Not every city or region should have wards. It can frustrate a group of heroes when their every attempt to enact large changes is stymied by a heavy mundus ward, or when every two-bit border kinglet is sitting in an ancient palace with a four-point empyrean ward protecting him. It's best to save wards for places of great importance in the campaign, ones that should require more than casual effort from the PCs to overcome their defenses and overwhelm their inmates.





# SECRETS OF ARCEM

## MORTALS, GODWALKERS, PARADISES, AND OTHER ESOTERICA

The pages that follow are a special reward for you, noble reader. Your generous purchase of this book ensures that your humble scribe will continue to spend late hours at his toils, dealing with all those innumerable painful tasks that come between the flight of imagination and the tangible reality of a finished document. I cannot continue to do it without your support, and that support is *richly* appreciated. With that said, what has your generosity won you? In this section, I reveal the deeper secrets of seven additional topics to expand your game and provide new avenues of excitement for your players.

**Creating Mortal Heroes** gives your players the tools for creating mortal characters, whether hard-bitten freebooters of no special grace or heroically-gifted paragons of mortal talent. These mortal PCs can be used as sidekicks or minions of Godbound heroes, or a group might wish to play out an entire campaign revolving around the desperate heroism of wholly mortal protagonists faced with a world of tremendous danger.

**Cybernetics and Clockwork** explicates the secrets of Bright Republic cybertech and the magical clockwork prostheses of the Vissian maeztros. These augmentations are of greatest use to mortal characters, but they can also provide additional options for Godbound heroes, or flavor the abilities of mortal antagonists. These gifts do come at a price, however, and GMs might choose not to include them in their own campaigns, or leave them as flavoring for NPCs. It may even be that you'll want to add more of your own creation.

**Divine Supremacy** details the means by which a Godbound or a pantheon can ascend to become the supreme deity of a realm. Some PCs will attempt this as a prelude to the creation of a divine Paradise, while other heroes will find themselves fighting a desperate war against some titanic foe who is dangerously close to achieving this goal in their own home realm.

**Godwalkers** describes the tremendous engines of war devised in the waning years of the Last War. These titanic walkers, vehicles, and stranger armatures serve to channel celestial forces onto the battlefield, allowing their mortal pilots to stand as threats even to the might of a Godbound or other great supernatural foe. While few godwalkers survive in this present age of darkness, heroes might find an operational one in some long-lost corner of the realm, or dream of rebuilding the theotechnical infrastructure needed to forge their own.

**The Martial Strifes** provides a new set of combat abilities that Godbound and other supernatural entities can pursue. Diligent heroes and gifted mortals can unlock the secrets of celestial conflict with these supernatural martial arts, channeling cosmic principles of struggle onto mundane battlefields. Gifted masters can teach lesser versions of these arts to trusted mortal minions, or even imbue them with the power of the True Strifes if they're willing to invest the divine Dominion necessary for such a gift.

**Paradises** reveals the methods by which a Godbound or an allied pantheon can forge a divine refuge for themselves and the souls of their believers. A Paradise can be molded as its masters choose, the laws of reality and the shape of the land far more mutable to their will than any more terrestrial realm. Building a Paradise can be a long-term goal of a pantheon as they strive to ensure the safety of their followers in the afterlife, and work to preserve their stronghold against the machinations of mighty foes.

Lastly, **Themed Godbound** will show you how to create new types of Godbound to flesh out your own campaign setting. You'll find advice for developing the concept and mechanics of these new variants, and a wide selection of example traits to adjust the way they play. Moreover, you'll find several example varieties of themed Godbound already created and ready for you to drop into your own game as you see fit.

These seven sections are meant to be used as you wish for your own game. Not all of them will fit every campaign, and you shouldn't feel obliged to include everything here simply because it's in the book. These tools have been written to be balanced, functional new options that shouldn't overturn most games by their inclusion, but only you fully understand the kind of experience your players are looking for and the kind of campaign you want to run for them.

Above all, you should take these sections as encouragement to make your own changes and build your own additions to the game. In this, you should follow the same guidelines used for creating anything else in a sandbox; make it if you need it soon or if you're having fun with it. **Godbound** is meant to be a sandbox, both in what the players can accomplish and in what you, the GM, can feel comfortable in creating. Don't hesitate to try things out and experiment in play. If it's not working, then change it or remove it, but if you and your group are willing to try something then **Godbound** has room to give it a spin.

# CREATING MORTAL HEROES

Some groups might have an interest in playing strictly mortal heroes in a *Godbound* campaign, either as the prelude to their eventual awakening as Godbound or as a full-fledged campaign. Such a game might play out in the history of a realm before the coming of the Godbound or it might be a tale of grim valor in the shadow of new-born demigods and a great changing of the age. Whatever the specifics, such groups will want a little guidance on how to put together mortal PCs.

## USING MORTALS PCs IN PLAY

The mortal rules given in this section are meant to produce player characters, and so they don't use the exact same enemy rules for mortals as are given in the Bestiary chapter. The PCs that the players use need a little more individuality and customization possibilities than Generic City Guardsman #16, or a Faceless Mortal Hero-Leader. The mortal PCs created by this method should possess roughly the same power and abilities as these NPCs, but with more detail to their characters and more room for player customization.

The world of *Godbound* is a harsh one for mortals. Common adventurers and ordinary villagers can't expect to last long against the abominations of the world, and even budding mortal heroes are often desperately hard-pressed by a foe that a Godbound hero might dismiss with a wave of their implacable blade. Many of the creatures listed in the bestiary would spell instant doom for a party of mortal adventurers, and even lesser rabble or Mobs of common foes can wreak havoc on a group of ordinary mortal freebooters.

Yet with time, cunning, and the desperate wit of those often in fearsome danger, mortals can grow to be threats even to such as Godbound. While they may be no match for a Godbound one-on-one, a party of grizzled champions can bring down an unwary divinity or bloody the nose of a monstrous titan, earning themselves the everlasting glory that comes when the weak rise up to smite the strong.

## TYPES OF MORTAL PCs

Mortal PCs come in two kinds: *common mortals*, and *heroic mortals*. It's up to the group to decide which kind of mortals their PCs will be. If the group is looking for a classic "dirt farmers go adventuring" campaign where ordinary PCs are constantly faced with the risk of death and hideous failure, then they might choose to roll up common mortals. If they're looking for a more cinematic, action-hero sort of campaign with powerful mortal protagonists who are less concerned about every ruffian with a knife, they might choose to make heroic mortals for their game.

Common mortals are just that: common men and women of no special gifts or remarkable talent. They might be rich, or influential, or good in a fight, or gifted in their trade, but their abilities aren't remarkable in the world and their natural gifts are limited. A life of adventure is filled with terrible danger for a common mortal, but one who manages to survive these trials has accomplished a grand feat.

Heroic mortals are blessed with special virtues, either by grace of enormous natural talent, magical blessings, an exotic lineage, or some remnant of ancient magical transhuman augmentations. While still very much human, their talents are flatly better than common sorts.

It may be that the GM decides to start PCs out as common mortals. If they survive to third or fourth level, they might then be gifted with the benefits of heroic existence, having proven their mettle.

## TALENTS AND MORTALS

In *Godbound*, mortals distinguish their particular abilities and aptitudes with *talents*, particular powers or gifts that they have by virtue of their upbringing, training, or natural gifts. Rather than taking "classes" or acquiring pre-made bundles of special talents, players choose individual talents for their mortals and assemble their abilities out of these particular gifts.

A new-made mortal gets to pick two talents. Common mortals can only pick from the common talent list, which is comprised of relatively basic knacks and aptitudes that any ordinary man or woman might be expected to develop. Heroic mortals can choose from the common list or the heroic talent list, the latter containing some graces that are flatly better than what common mortals can take, or talents that grant abilities completely beyond those of ordinary human beings. As the mortal increases in character level, they can learn new talents that fit with the Facts they've established about themselves.

The talents listed here are only examples of the possibilities. Particular organizations, communities, or training schools might offer talents of their own, or the player and GM might come up with new talents specifically suited to a player's interests. The existing talents can be used as guidelines for what might fit as a new talent.

## LEGACY TALENTS

Some talents are listed as "legacy" talents, the product of ancient magical alterations or sophisticated arcane engineering. Most of these alterations have been bred out of the human populace over the past thousand years, with bloodlines fading into the general population and manifesting at most as small quirks of appearance. Most societies tolerate these petty novelties, though major physical differences invite fear and distrust, and some polities are adamantly suspicious of any deviation from expected norms.

Some alterations, however, are persistent or significant enough to give a mortal real benefits. These legacies might be part of an existing family found in the mortal's homeland or they might be a one-off novelty conjured up by chance genetic or magical recombination. Some might be tokens of alien lineage, with some non-human creature in the hero's family tree. Mortal PCs can take these legacy talents to reflect the special traits of their own bloodline or magical nature. Legacy talents must usually be taken when the character is created, though later manifestations can be permitted by the GM if the PC can explain how they arise, or if the PC searches out the strange treatments and alien lore needed to provoke the awakening of their latent gifts.

Any PC who takes a legacy talent, however, is marked by some clear and visible stigmata of inhumanity. It may be something as relatively minor as an unnatural hair, eye, or skin color, or something as drastic as extra limbs or a non-human body configuration. Whatever the detail, most societies have seen enough legacy-bearers that they'll be recognized as such on sight, even if the mark is relatively minor. In most communities this will earn a PC extra watchfulness from the locals until it's clear that they're no latent Misbegotten. In other societies, the PC might be marked as a natural slave to normal humans, or elevated as one specially blessed by the ancients. Some small polities even have noble classes composed exclusively of those that bear a legacy, either because of the genuine superiority of their natural gifts or because of the mere assumption that it is so.

## CREATING A COMMON MORTAL

Common mortals are the turnip farmers, rat catchers, personages of easy virtue, candlemakers, city watchmen, and other ordinary men and women of the world. While they're not often blessed with much innate aptitude for adventure, the constant nearness of death can push them to heights of cunning and desperate resourcefulness that can see them through seemingly hopeless situations. To create a common mortal, follow the steps below.

1. Roll the PC's attributes with 3d6 six times, put in whatever order you wish. If you want to use an array, you can use 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, and 8 for your attributes, placed as you like. Calculate your attribute checks and saving throws as normal.
2. Choose four Facts. One Fact should be about the PC's origins and home community. The second should be about their profession or chosen trade. The third should be some unusual personal talent, relationship, or training, and the fourth should relate to some important organizational membership, family relation, or group enmity they have.
3. Choose two talents from the common talents list. These talents must somehow relate to at least one of the Facts you've chosen. You can't decide to be a Hardened Combatant, for example, if none of your Facts have anything to do with fighting or violence.
4. Your common mortal has one hit point, modified by your Constitution modifier and any talents that might apply. Even a Constitution penalty can't drop you below one hit point.
5. You have a maximum Effort of 1, but no use for it unless you have a talent that specifically uses it, or you need to Commit it to benefit from magical healing. You have no Influence.
6. Take whatever weaponry, armor, and other personal belongings are appropriate to the Facts you've chosen. Without some special talent, your base attack bonus is +0. Barring some unusual circumstance, you start with 0 Wealth.

And with that, you have a common mortal ready to find their fate in the waiting realm beyond. It may not be a particularly *happy* fate, but if you're choosing to play a common mortal, you're probably not looking for an easy time in the world.

## CREATING A HEROIC MORTAL

While even heroic mortals are no match for Godbound, such men and women have a distinct edge on their less gifted brethren, even when they're just starting out their heroic career. Follow the steps below to conjure up this brave soul.

1. Roll the PC's attributes with 4d6 six times, dropping the lowest die and placing them in whatever order is desired. If you want to use an array, you can use 16, 14, 13, 13, 10, and 8 in any order you want. Calculate attribute checks and saving throws as usual.
2. Choose four Facts. One Fact should be about the PC's origins and home community. The second should be about their profession or chosen trade. The third should be some unusual personal talent, relationship, or training, and the fourth should relate to some important organizational membership, family relation, or group enmity they have.
3. Choose two talents, picking from either the common talents list or the heroic talents list. Many of the latter talents are strictly better than their common versions. The talents you pick must somehow relate to at least one of the Facts you've chosen.
4. Your heroic mortal has four hit points, modified by your Constitution modifier and any talents that might apply.
5. You have a maximum Effort of 1. Unlike common mortals, you can Commit this for the day to automatically succeed on a failed saving throw, just as a Godbound can do. Also like a Godbound, you are automatically counted as a worthy foe against all enemies and their nefarious powers, making you immune to Fray dice and many overwhelming gifts. You have no Influence, however.
6. Take whatever weaponry, armor, and other personal belongings are appropriate to the Facts you've chosen. Without some special talent, your base attack bonus is +0. Barring some unusual circumstance, you start with 0 Wealth.

With these steps taken, you now have a hero ready to face the savage world. Assuming this budding legend lives long enough to attain higher levels, they might someday become fearsome enough to give even a Godbound pause.

## DESIGNING NEW TALENTS

The talent options offered in this section are meant to cover many of the more likely concepts for a mortal hero. It's quite probable that you'll want to come up with some more of your own, however, either at the request of a player or to flesh out your own world. There are a few guidelines to keep in mind when doing so.

First, avoid talent trees. A really nice ability like Master-level low magic might be gated behind a few lesser levels of competence, but avoid this whenever possible. Put a minimum PC level on a talent if you want to keep it out of novice hands, but talent trees tend to be punishing to those who don't map a PC's progress in advance.

Second, don't sweat too much over fine details of balance. The PCs are mortals in a *Godbound* campaign. They will never run short of horrible things that can slaughter them. At most, try to make sure that talents don't render another PC useless in comparison.

Third, try to make a talent work by default when possible. A widely-applicable talent like *Hardened Combatant* or *Expert Thief* might only grant a bonus to a roll or a reroll option, but more focused talents should just work barring serious opposition. Abilities that add new options to a player's choices tend to be more interesting than marginal improvements to a common action.

## Common Talents

**Blessed Luck:** Once per day, you can choose to automatically succeed at a saving throw, even after failing a roll. This talent may be taken more than once, allowing this ability to be used an additional time each day.

**Carte Blanche:** It may be due to bribes, or familial connections, or favors you've performed, but you and your immediate companions are very hard to arrest. If the carte blanche applies to an entire nation, you or your friends can shrug off a property crime, trespass, or burglary offense once a month. If it applies only to a city or sub-region, you can escape justice even for murder, provided you don't kill anyone important to the local rulers.

**Cybernetic Adaptation:** Assuming your GM is allowing cyber in their campaign, you gain two integration points, as described in the Cybernetics section of this chapter. If you're a newly-made PC, you can pick two points of already-implanted cyber to start play.

**Desperate Strike:** You can Commit Effort for the day as an Instant action to hit a target with a physical attack. The blow connects on any roll other than a natural 1.

**Diehard Will:** You can keep functioning for one round after falling to zero hit points. When mortally wounded, common mortals don't die unless struck again or the scene ends without their wounds being tended. Heroic mortals don't die of their mortal wounds unless injured again while so crippled. Otherwise, they regain consciousness an hour later with 1 hit point.

**Expert Thief:** You roll attribute checks related to stealth and larcenous activities twice, and take the better roll.

**Extra Effort:** You gain one additional maximum Effort. You can take this talent as often as your opportunities allow.

**Flurry of Blows:** When you take an attack action, you can make two attacks. These attacks may have the same target or be split among foes within range. You must be at least 5th level to take this talent, and you can only take it once.

**Hardened Combatant:** You've seen plenty of fighting or have the innate instincts of a killer. When you take this talent, your base attack bonus becomes half your level, rounded up. If it's already that good, as from a prior purchase of the talent, it becomes equal to your level.

**Influential:** You know how to convince others to cooperate, and which strings need to be pulled to get things done. You have a maximum Influence equal to your character level, though you can only use it to accomplish Plausible changes that might be achieved with persuasion or bribes you make. If you have a Fact related to what you're influencing, you can make Improbable changes as well.

**Know the Type:** Pick a trade or social class, such as merchants, nobles, sailors, farmers, slaves, or the like. You can find a friendly and helpful member of that class whenever they gather.

**Legacy/Arctic Adaptation:** You are impervious to normal environmental levels of cold, and subtract one point of damage per die from all supernatural or weaponized cold. You can see heat sources even in darkness out to your normal sight range, perceiving them accurately enough to target them with attacks or identify general body shapes.

**Legacy/Desert Adaptation:** You need not drink more than once a month, and ordinary non-dehydrated foods amply supply your usual needs. You are impervious to normal environmental cold or heat and to non-magical flames smaller than a bonfire.

**Legacy/Inherited Prowess:** A trace of the magical transhuman modifications the Former Empires enacted still can be found in

your blood. Increase an attribute to 16, or to 18 if it's already 16 or higher. Common mortals can take this talent only once, while heroic mortals can take it as many times as they wish.

**Legacy/Mindspeech:** You have an intuitive ability to communicate telepathically with anyone you can see, regardless of conventional language barriers. If you've spent at least a week in the company of a person, you can contact them even when out of sight, provided they're within 500 feet of you.

**Legacy/Natural Weapon:** You possess some impressive natural weapon, such as retractable claws, razor-sharp teeth, or a massive shell-plated fist. If the weapon is retractable or concealable, it does 1d8 damage on a hit. Larger, unconcealable body weaponry does 1d10. You may use either Strength or Dexterity to modify the weapon's hit roll and damage. Even if the weapon is concealable, you still bear some mark of your legacy.

**Legacy/Tough Hide:** Whether through an exceptionally resilient skin or uncanny agility, you have a base armor class of 5. You gain no benefit from wearing armor of equal or worse AC, but shields still help you.

**Legacy/Void Adaptation:** You do not need to breathe, eat, or drink provided you get at least an hour of sunlight a day. You are impervious to hard vacuum and radiation. You can ignore the thermal conditions of deep space, but cold or fire used as a weapon disrupts your adaptive measures and causes damage normally.

**Legacy/Water Adaptation:** You can breathe, see, and move freely in water, and ignore high pressure and cold temperatures above freezing.

**Lesser Old-School Ability:** This special talent can only be taken with the GM's permission. You gain one class ability or special perk from another class of their choice drawn from another old-school game. Repelling Undead, a knight's ability to heal with a touch, monastic disease immunity or the like may be selected. See the following pages for details on this talent.

**Lesser Strife Training:** Each time you take this talent, you learn one degree of a lesser Strife of your choice. Taking it three times would thus allow you to master the lesser Strife. Heroic mortals would take the Lesser Strife Mastery talent instead, which grants them all three levels of a lesser Strife at once.

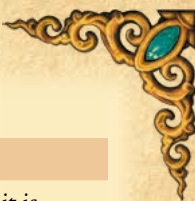
**Low Magic Training:** You've learned the apprentice arts of a low magic tradition. If you already know the apprentice arts and take this talent again, you are now an adept in it. A third purchase will make you a master, which is as much expertise as a common mortal can attain in a tradition.

**Nine Lives:** Once per day, you evade or block a physical attack that would reduce you to zero hit points. The damage is not inflicted and the attack is treated as a miss. This ability cannot protect against spells or environmental harm.

**Parallel Life:** You have a complete second identity of a profession and details of your choice, one which has no known ties to your real identity. You can don or doff an appropriate disguise in no more than thirty seconds. Only those who see you change, use magic to learn the truth, or are presented with obvious evidence of the connection will realize the truth.

**Professional Expertise:** Pick a specific profession. Whenever you roll attribute checks related to it, roll twice and take the better result.

**Sacred Steel:** All your attacks, unarmed or weapon-based, are treated as magical weapons. Pick one class of enemies each time this talent is taken: undead, Uncreated, sorcerers, or some other magical class of foe. You gain +1 hit and damage against those enemies.



## Common Talents

## Benefits of the Talent

|                                  |                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Blessed Luck</b>              | Once per day, auto-succeed on a saving throw you've just failed.                                            |
| <b>Carte Blanche</b>             | You and your friends are above the law. The narrower the area this works in, the more potent it is.         |
| <b>Cybernetic Adaptation</b>     | You gain two integration points for adding cybernetics. Starting mortals get cyber to fill these points.    |
| <b>Desperate Strike</b>          | Commit Effort for the day to automatically hit with an attack on anything but a natural 1.                  |
| <b>Diehard Will</b>              | Keep fighting for a round after losing all your hit points. Take longer to bleed out afterwards.            |
| <b>Expert Thief</b>              | For stealth and thieving activities, roll any attribute checks twice and take the better result.            |
| <b>Extra Effort</b>              | You gain one additional maximum Effort.                                                                     |
| <b>Flurry of Blows</b>           | When you take an attack action, you get two attack rolls. You must be 5th level to take this talent.        |
| <b>Hardened Combatant</b>        | Instead of being +0, your base attack bonus is equal to your level.                                         |
| <b>Influential</b>               | You have maximum Influence equal to your level, albeit you can only talk people into Plausible acts.        |
| <b>Know the Type</b>             | Pick a social class or profession; you can always find a friendly one of them where they congregate.        |
| <b>Legacy: Arctic Adaptation</b> | Ignore environmental cold and see heat as if with infrared vision out to your normal sight range.           |
| <b>Legacy: Desert Adaptation</b> | Ignore environmental heat and cold, drink once a month, and ignore flames smaller than a bonfire.           |
| <b>Legacy: Inherited Prowess</b> | Increase an attribute to 16, or to 18 if it's already 16 or higher. Common mortals can take this once.      |
| <b>Legacy: Mindspeech</b>        | Gain short-range telepathic communication with friends or people you can see.                               |
| <b>Legacy: Natural Weapon</b>    | You have a retractable natural weapon that does 1d8, or an unconcealable one that does 1d10.                |
| <b>Legacy: Tough Hide</b>        | Your natural armor class is 5. You benefit from shields, but not from light or medium armor.                |
| <b>Legacy: Void Adaptation</b>   | You don't need to eat, breathe, or drink so long as you get sun. You ignore deep space conditions.          |
| <b>Legacy: Water Adaptation</b>  | You can breathe, see, and move freely in water, and ignore the sea's cold and pressure.                     |
| <b>Lesser Old-School Ability</b> | Pick a class ability from a character class in an old-school game and gain it at your level.                |
| <b>Lesser Strife Training</b>    | Master one level of a lesser Strife: initiate, disciple, or master.                                         |
| <b>Low Magic Training</b>        | Master one level of a low magic tradition: apprentice, adept, or master. You can't be an archmage.          |
| <b>Nine Lives</b>                | Once per day, block or evade a physical attack that would reduce you to zero hit points.                    |
| <b>Parallel Life</b>             | You have an alter-ego with a separate identity that's unconnected to you.                                   |
| <b>Professional Expertise</b>    | Pick a profession. All attribute checks related to that trade are rolled twice, and the better roll used.   |
| <b>Sacred Steel</b>              | Your attacks count as magic weapons. Pick a class of supernatural foe and gain +1 to hit/damage.            |
| <b>Skilled First Aid</b>         | Heal 1 point of damage on yourself or allies immediately after being injured.                               |
| <b>Storm of Blows</b>            | As Flurry of Blows, but it grants three attacks. You must be 9th level and have Flurry of Blows.            |
| <b>Swift to Act</b>              | You get a second full action every turn, allowing you to move and attack twice. You must be 9th level.      |
| <b>Toughness</b>                 | Common mortals get 1 bonus hit point every odd-numbered level. Heroic ones get one each level.              |
| <b>Vancian Caster</b>            | This special talent gives access to an old-school spellcasting class' spell list. See special rules for it. |
| <b>Wealthy</b>                   | You're rich, and can afford anything that costs 1 Wealth or less. Spend more once per game session.         |

**Skilled First Aid:** You're very good at mending combat injuries and similar traumas. Provided you have your medical tools with you, you can cure one point of damage on yourself and each of your allies after every scene in which they were injured. This takes about five minutes per person, and if not done within an hour after the injury, it's too late to help them this way. The subjects need not Commit Effort to benefit from this healing.

**Storm of Blows:** When you take an attack action, you can make three attacks. These attacks may have the same target or be split among foes within range. You must be at least 9th level to take this ability and must already have Flurry of Blows. The abilities don't stack.

**Swift to Act:** You must be at least ninth level to take this talent, which allows you to take a second full action each round immediately after

your first. Powers or talents that grant multiple attacks don't apply to any attack made with this second action.

**Toughness:** Common mortals gain a bonus hit point at every odd-numbered level, including those earned before this talent was taken. Heroic mortals gain one bonus hit point per level.

**Vancian Caster:** This special talent can only be taken if the GM is including spell lists from other old-school games in their campaign. See the special rules for this talent.

**Wealthy:** You're from a rich family or have command of a great deal of wealth. You can always afford anything that costs 1 Wealth or less, and once per game session can spend up to your level in Wealth points. This Wealth must be spent on a particular good, service, or property and cannot be stockpiled as pure coinage.



# HEROIC TALENTS

**Adept of the Gate:** You are capable of using theurgic Invocations of the Gate. You must be an archmage of at least one low magic tradition to take this talent. If you cast a theurgic invocation in a round, it must be your only action, and casting the spell too quickly can result in damage as per the usual rules for fast-cast invocations. You may pick three invocations of the Gate to know when you take this talent. Others must be learned through exploration or teaching.

**Adept of the Throne:** You have mastered all that a human can know of theurgy. You must be at least tenth level and an Adept of the Way to take this talent. You learn one invocation of the Throne as part of your initiation. Other invocations must be acquired from other sources.

**Adept of the Way:** You are capable of using theurgic Invocations of the Way. You must be at least sixth level and have the Adept of the Gate talent. When you take this talent, you learn two invocations of the Gate as part of your initiation. Others must be learned normally.

**Heroic Alacrity:** You must be at least fifth level to take this talent, which allows you to take a second full action each round immediately after your first. Powers or talents that grant multiple attacks don't apply to any attack made with this second action. This talent doesn't stack with any other extra-action power, including Swift to Act or The Storm Breaks from the Alacrity Word.

**Heroic Flurry of Blows:** You gain an automatic second attack at fifth level, and an automatic third attack at ninth level, both applicable whenever you take an attack action. These bonus attacks can't be modified by powers that multiply attacks, though the original attack can. Thus, a power that doubles attacks would grant 3 attacks at 5th level; one bonus, plus the doubled original. This talent does not stack with the common talents Flurry of Blows or Storm of Blows.

**Heroic Old-School Ability:** This special talent can only be taken with the GM's permission. The mortal gains one class ability or special perk from another class of their choice drawn from another old-school game. Repelling Undead, a knight's ability to heal with their touch, monastic disease immunity or the like may be selected. Spellcasting powers may not; choose Heroic Vancian Caster in-

stead in that case. Unlike Lesser Old-School Ability, however, the PC can pick any class ability, even one that requires a higher level than they have at present. For abilities that grow stronger with level, treat the PC as 10th level, or the minimum required for the power, whichever is greater.

**Heroic Vancian Caster:** This special talent may only be taken if the GM is including spell lists from other old-school games in their campaign. Consult the special rules for it in this section.

**Innate Gift:** Whether through transhuman modification or sheer amazing talent, you have a single lesser gift from a Word that complements your character's nature, one representing your special ability. A heroic mortal may not take this talent more than once for every three character levels they've earned, rounded up.

**Legacy/Natural Power:** Your abnormal magical talent or ancient altered bloodline has gifted you with a power equivalent to that of a lesser gift. Pick one from any Word or design your own with the GM's approval. Unlike Innate Gift, you may take this talent only once.

**Lesser Strife Mastery:** You've obtained mastery of all three levels of a lesser Strife of your choice.

**Lethal Presence:** You gain a 1d6 Fray die representing your casual blows, absently-hurled weapons, or short sprays of arcane energy if you are a spellcaster. This die can be applied only to lesser foes.

**Low Magic Archmage:** You become an archmage in a low magic tradition in which you are already a master, after having taken the Low Magic Training talent three times.

**Natural Defenses:** Whether through luck, agility, magical blessings, or transhuman alteration, your base armor class is 3. You get no benefit from wearing armor of an equal or worse AC, but shields still help you.

**True Strife Training:** You gain one gift point to spend on a True Strife for which you've already mastered the corresponding lesser strife. Thus, you could learn the initial gift of a new True Strife, or two of the median gifts, or master the final gift in the sequence. Alternately, you can spend this point to integrate the secrets of the Strife, allowing you to mix its abilities with all other Strifes which you have mastered.

## HEROIC TALENTS

|                                  |                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Adept of the Gate</b>         | You can use theurgy of the Gate. You must be an archmage of a low magic tradition to take this.              |
| <b>Adept of the Throne</b>       | You can use theurgy of the Throne, but must be tenth level and an adept of the Way to take this.             |
| <b>Adept of the Way</b>          | You can use theurgy of the Way, but must be at least sixth level and an adept of the Gate to take this.      |
| <b>Heroic Alacrity</b>           | You get a second full action each round, moving and acting twice. You must be at least fifth level.          |
| <b>Heroic Flurry of Blows</b>    | You get extra attacks at fifth and ninth levels, and you can Commit Effort for the scene for another.        |
| <b>Heroic Old-School Ability</b> | With the GM's permission, pick an ability from another old-school class, taking one from any level.          |
| <b>Heroic Vancian Caster</b>     | Gain mighty spellcasting powers from an old-school spellcaster's list, with the GM's permission.             |
| <b>Innate Gift</b>               | You may pick a lesser gift that fits your Facts. You can take this talent once per three levels, rounded up. |
| <b>Legacy: Natural Power</b>     | You may pick a lesser gift that fits your Facts. You can only take this talent once.                         |
| <b>Lesser Strife Mastery</b>     | You've fully mastered a lesser Strife. Heroic mortals only need this talent to completely learn the art.     |
| <b>Lethal Presence</b>           | You gain a 1d6 Fray die which you can use against lesser foes.                                               |
| <b>Low Magic Archmage</b>        | You're an archmage of a low magic tradition. You must be a master of it before you can take this.            |
| <b>Natural Defenses</b>          | Your base armor class is 3. You benefit from shields, but not from armor.                                    |
| <b>True Strife Training</b>      | You have one gift point to spend on learning a True Strife. You must master its lesser Strife first.         |

## The Vancian Caster Talents

To accommodate groups that want to include the classic spellcasting and lists of incantations from existing old-school games, the Vancian Caster talents are available for PCs. It is by no means mandatory to allow a PC to take these abilities; if they don't fit the campaign flavor or if the GM decides they don't match the PC's background or experience then they need not be approved.

A PC who takes the common Vancian Caster talent gains access to one spell level of a spell list of their choice. Thus, a PC who takes the common talent might decide to get access to first level spells from the cleric spell list of their favorite retroclone. The common Vancian Caster talent can't grant access to a spell level higher than half the PC's level, rounded up, and each spell level must be opened in order. Thus, to get access to second level magic-user spells, the PC must be at least 3rd level and have taken Vancian Caster twice.

The PC uses the spell preparation and casting rules of the spell list's corresponding class for a character of their level. Thus, a second level PC who had access to first level cleric spells would prepare and cast them as if she were a second level cleric. As she rises in character level, she's able to prepare more spells, but she can't prepare spells of a level she hasn't opened with a corresponding purchase of Vancian Caster. Thus, even though she might reach 5th level, it doesn't mean she can cast third level cleric spells without having taken Vancian Caster three times to open that level of clerical magic.

The table below lists how many spells of each opened spell level a hero can prepare and cast each day, using the preparation and casting rules from the game the spell list came from. If the spell list is meant for a spontaneous-casting class that can hurl any spell they know, decrease the caster's effective level by one for purposes of spell

| Caster<br>Level | Spell Levels |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|                 | 1            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 1               | 1            | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2               | 2            | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3               | 2            | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4               | 2            | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 5               | 3            | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6               | 3            | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7               | 3            | 3 | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 8               | 4            | 3 | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 9               | 4            | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| 10              | 4            | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| 11              | 5            | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | - | - | - |
| 12              | 5            | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | - | - | - |
| 13              | 5            | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | - | - |
| 14              | 5            | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | - | - |
| 15              | 5            | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | - |
| 16              | 5            | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | - |
| 17              | 5            | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18              | 5            | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| 19              | 5            | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| 20+             | 5            | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 |

preparation, to a minimum of level one. The resultant number on the table is the number of spells of that level they can cast per day. Double it to find out how many spells of that level they can learn and have available for casting.

The Heroic Vancian Caster talent works almost exactly the same as the common Vancian Caster talent but its function differs in two ways. First, it can open a spell level no higher than the hero's full character level, and second, the hero is treated as *twice their level* for purposes of preparing and casting spells from that list. Thus, a ninth-level hero who'd taken Heroic Vancian Caster five times to open up fifth level cleric spells could then take Heroic Vancian Caster to master the sixth level of clerical spells and prepare and cast all such spells as if he were an 18th level cleric. Heroic Vancian Caster doesn't stack with the common Vancian Caster talent, and there's no reason for a heroic mortal to bother with the lesser ability.

If a PC takes the Vancian Caster talent for spells from more than one list, they gain access to both, but don't increase their total number of spells to be prepared each day. Thus, a third level PC who had access to first level spells from both the magic-user and cleric classes would still only be able to prepare two first level spells per day, albeit they could choose from any spells they knew from either class. If one spell list is for a spontaneously-casting class and the other is a spell list that is prepared beforehand, the caster has the fewer slots of a spontaneous caster, but can choose to fill some of them with prepared spells from the appropriate list.

If the spell list usually requires that its practitioners earn or find the spells on the list, such as the usual requirements for building up a wizard's spell book, the PC must do so. When they open the first level of that spell list, they can pick four spells from the list to know from the start, and may pick one more from an opened spell level each time they advance a level. Spells they find as treasure or which are which are taught to them by friendly NPCs may be added to their available choices as usual.

## The Old-School Ability Talents

For some campaigns, it might be appropriate to cherry-pick special abilities or talents from existing old-school games. A player might want druidic shapeshifting talents, for example, or a heroic knight's immunity to fear, or the special weapons tricks of some niche class. The Old-School Ability talents allow them to pick such graces.

The Lesser Old-School Talent lets a PC pick an ability from any class, provided it's available at their current character's level. Thus, if a class gains a special power at 3rd level, the PC must be at least 3rd level to take the power. The Heroic Old-School Ability does not have this limitation. Any power can be chosen, though if it's an ability that gets stronger as the PC advances in level, their effective level for it is treated as the minimum necessary plus their character level. Thus, if a 5th level hero took a power that started to become available at 9th level in the source game, they'd be treated as an effective level 14 for purposes of determining the power's effectiveness.

It's up to the GM to decide what constitutes a class power and whether or not the PC should be allowed to take it. If the PC takes an ability that has its own unique mechanics, such as the thief abilities of an old-school rogue, the GM can decide to either just use those mechanics straight or translate them to automatic attribute check successes in some cases, or +4 to really difficult attempts. Don't worry too much about fine balance. A quivering palm attack is nice, but it's not going to trivialize the kind of foes they'll meet in the world.



## CLASSED MORTALS

Some players might want to go all the way, and just use a character class from an existing old-school game. In most cases, this can be done without great difficulty.

- Common mortals who take a class can't take talents. They get Facts as they advance in level normally, but their abilities are those of the class. Heroic mortals can choose only one relevant talent at first level and one talent at each odd level thereafter. It's assumed that classed mortals will start play that way; if they take a class later in life, they lose any excess earlier talents.
- A common mortal's starting hit points depend on the die the class rolls to determine its hit points. Classes that roll 1d4 or 1d6 start with one hit point, those that roll 1d8 or 1d10 start with two hit points, and those that roll 1d12 or multiple dice start with three hit points. Heroic mortals start with half the maximum hit point roll for the class. In both cases, the totals are modified by Constitution as usual.
- When a common mortal gains a level, they get their usual one additional hit point. When a heroic mortal gains a level, they get a quarter of the class' maximum roll, rounded down, modified by half their Constitution, rounded up.
- Saving throws and attribute checks are determined normally as per *Godbound* rules. If the class has a special bonus on certain types of saving throws, such as +2 to resist poison, this applies to relevant saving throw rolls.
- The PC's base attack bonus is equal to 20 minus whatever the class needs to roll to hit armor class 0. Thus, if a first level fighter needs to roll a 19 or better to hit AC 0, the PC's starting attack bonus is +1. This bonus is recalculated as the character advances in levels and has an easier time hitting AC 0.
- A mortal gains class abilities, spellcasting, multiple attacks, and other class powers as normal for a character of their level. Heroic mortals can apply the Heroic Vancian Casting talent to a spellcasting class' powers to double their effective level for purposes of spell preparation and casting, though the ability has no other effect on a classed PC's spellcasting powers.
- If the class has special powers and abilities that use their own special system for resolution, such as an old-school thief's lock-picking abilities, the GM may decide to just treat such attempts as an attribute check with a +4 bonus for a relevant Fact, or they may choose to use the system as written. Some abilities might just grant automatic success if used in low-pressure situations.
- While the mortal gains all the benefits and abilities of the class, they also gain the limitations. Some classes might not be permitted to use particular types of weapons, or might be restricted from heavy armor. It's up to the GM to decide on particular cases.

Some rough edges are inevitable when adding an old-school class to a *Godbound* mortal, and it's up to the group to come up with interpretations that seem reasonable to all involved.

## MORTAL ADVANCEMENT AND LEVELING

Mortals start at the first level of experience and gain further levels exactly as *Godbound* do, by overcoming challenges and accomplishing goals. Unlike *Godbound*, they don't need to spend Dominion to advance a level, and indeed, they're incapable of accruing Dominion at all. When a mortal PC gains a level, they gain the following benefits.

- Common mortals increase their maximum hit points by one, with no Constitution modifier. Heroic mortals increase their maximum hit points by two, modified by half their Constitution modifier, rounded up.
- Each saving throw goes down by one. Thus, if the PC had a Hardiness saving throw of 14, it becomes 13. Attribute modifiers then apply to this base score just as they would for *Godbound*.
- The mortal may add a new Fact related to their achievements over the past level, training they've received during that time, or relationships they've built with others.
- The mortal may add a new talent related to one of their Facts, including the Fact they've just chosen. Common mortals can only pick from the common talent list, while heroic mortals can pick from both the common and heroic talent lists.
- Heroic mortals gain one maximum Effort at every even-numbered level, such as levels 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10. Common mortals never gain more maximum Effort, barring special talents.

Mortals usually have a maximum level of 10, much as *Godbound* do. If a hard-bitten mortal somehow manages to push beyond this level, they continue to gain all the benefits of their advancement, though their base saving throw scores can't improve beyond 5 or better before applying their attribute modifiers.

## MORTAL INJURY AND HEALING

Mortals take longer to recuperate from injury and stress than *Godbound* heroes do. While hit point loss doesn't always mean that the victim was physically harmed, the exhaustion, strain, and accumulated dark omens of constant fighting can take a toll on a mortal that can require a long period of recuperation to ease. Just as mortals take longer to recover their hurts than *Godbound* do, they're also much more fragile when given a serious wound.

Both common and heroic mortals heal at the rate of one hit point per good night's rest. If they spend the day relaxing, carousing, or otherwise disporting themselves with careless pleasure, they can recover an additional hit point. An uninterrupted week of reveling, indulging, or resting is sufficient to heal all lost hit points for any mortal.

If a common mortal is reduced to zero hit points, however, they have been mortally wounded and will die 1d6 rounds later unless an ally is able to spend a round's action succeeding at a Dexterity or Intelligence attribute check to plug their spurting wounds. Heroic mortals last longer, and will die at the end of the scene if left untreated. Both common and heroic mortals require 1d6 months of recuperation to recover from such brushes with death. They will always bear some sort of scar or mutilation from the injury, though it's rarely hindering to a PC. Any amount of magical healing will put a mortal back on their feet immediately with no lasting scars or debilitated recovery period.

## MORTAL BONUS ACTIONS AND ATTACKS

Godbound are forced to manipulate and direct tremendous forces, powers so great that it is very difficult for them to respond as quickly as some mayfly mortal hero. Unlike most Godbound, there are certain ways for any experienced mortal to gain extra actions in a round or extra attacks when making an attack action. Several talents grant these benefits, and there are a number of old-school spells that also boost a hero's agility. These special perks have their limits.

**Powers, gifts, or spells that multiply a subject's actions multiply only the target's original action.** Thus, if a hero had the Heroic Alacrity talent that granted them a bonus action each round, a spell of quickness that doubled their actions would leave them with a total of three per round; their doubled base action, plus the bonus one granted by Heroic Alacrity. If the hero somehow triggered an Alacrity Word power that granted him an extra action during the round, he'd have four actions, as the bonus would not be doubled by the spell.

**Bonus attacks are never multiplied by gifts or spells.** A heroic mortal with the Heroic Flurry of Blows talent might also learn a True Strife technique that allows him to triple his attacks under certain situations. This multiplier would be applied only to his base attack, with the extra blows granted by Heroic Flurry of Blows added on top of that. Under no circumstances would he be tripling his entire allotment of attacks.

These limits are important. Ignoring them doesn't make too much difference at low levels, before the mortal heroes have started stacking on bonus attacks, but a careless GM who allows veteran mortal heroes to multiply their bonus actions and attacks can find the party laying down a withering hail of fire that swiftly defeats foes that ought to be much more of a challenge. Worse, it can encourage players to build characters specifically designed to maximize the number of attacks they get each round, locking these optimizers into a golden cage.

## GODBOUND GAINING TALENTS

As a general rule, Godbound shouldn't be taking mortal talents. Almost everything a talent does, a gift can do better, or else the Godbound's intrinsic abilities are already as good. There are a few nuances to this general rule, however.

Talents that grant extra actions or extra attacks should be entirely restricted to mortals. Their existence is the one way that non-Godbound have the slightest chance to obstruct a Godbound in combat. A legendary hero with 35 hit points, two actions and three attacks per action, and a +16 attack bonus from Hardened Combatant, 18 Strength, and a +3 magic sword in hand, might *possibly* threaten a veteran Godbound. An entire party of such heroes is a serious problem for a god, and that's how it ought to be when a realm's mightiest mortals try to face down a renegade divinity.

Talents that boost Effort, hit points, attributes, or other character scores should also be restricted to mortals. The value of an extra point of Effort is much higher to a Godbound than a mortal who has far fewer ways to commit it, and if you let Godbound dedicate Facts to obtaining talents many of them will find the mechanical bonuses and side perks to be irresistibly tempting.

The one usual case where a Godbound should be permitted to dedicate Facts to learning talents is when it's a matter of organizational benefits or training. If all the knights of the Pavian Order of Analia gain certain benefits from membership, then it's reasonable to let the Godbound get them too, if they're a Pavian knight. A single Godbound Fact dedicated to this should gain all the benefits of the training or organization, even if mortals need several talents to do so.

## MORTALS BECOMING GODBOUND

A GM might plan for a campaign where the PCs begin as ordinary mortals, only to rise to the might of true Godbound during play. There are two general ways to approach this.

In the first, the GM just wants to run a "prelude" with the PCs playing mortals only for a session or two before bonding to the Words. If you want to run a campaign like this, it's best to use the normal Godbound character creation guidelines, but omit picking Words or gifts until the PC awakens to their power. They won't be spending a lot of time as plain mortals, so there's no need to generate them as such.

In the second, the GM wants to run a fairly extensive campaign, with Godbound awakening being an ultimate reward for the PCs once they reach a certain character level, probably around fifth or sixth if they don't want to spend too much of the likely campaign lifespan as mortals. In this case, the GM should run the PCs through whatever common or heroic mortal character creation they wish and let them play normally until they reach the requisite pitch of accomplishment.

Then, turn them into Godbound of a level equal to half their mortal level, rounded down. They lose their talents and get the hit points of a Godbound of their level. Their maximum Facts are now those of a Godbound of that level. Dropped Facts may still be real truths about them, of course, but give no attribute check bonus or special perks.

In most realms of the fallen world, anyone can awaken as a Godbound. One need not be a hero, or a genius, or even particularly competent. The blind blessings of the Words seem to fall at random, and their recipients can sometimes be drastically unsuited to their newfound power. In your campaign, however, you might change things so that the Words only descend on truly worthy paragons. The difference is apt to be minimal, save that Godbound PCs will then have been some kind of impressive person even before their awakening.

## OLD-SCHOOL HEALING SPELLS AND POWERS

Some old-school classes and spell lists offer healing spells, or class abilities that provide healing. These require a little tweaking to fit with **Godbound**, since the spells were meant to heal creatures that had a lot more hit points than **Godbound** creatures have hit dice. With that in mind, these effects use to special rules.

**Old-school healing rolls its healing dice on the damage table, and heals that many hit dice or hit points.** Thus, a curative spell that mends 1d6+1 hit points in the original game will cure 1 to 2 hit dice or hit points in Godbound. One that heals 3d8 will cure between 0 and 6. If the healing does a flat amount of curing, then every 4 old-school hit points cured mends one point of damage, down to a minimum of one point fixed if the healer can't muster a full four HP of healing.

**Godbound need to Commit Effort for the day to benefit from old-school healing effects. Mortals do not.** Old-school healing powers are sharply limited in almost all cases. A cleric has only so many spell slots of healing, and other classes have only so much juice. Obliging mortals to also Commit Effort to benefit from these effects makes them much less useful to the poor, frail creatures. Godbound, on the other hand, don't have a hard time marshaling a crew of dedicated healers if they find it convenient, and letting them soak up such curative powers without Committing Effort would be too great a benefit for them.

If healing is scarce enough in your campaign that a Godbound is never going to be able to simply enlist a coterie of their own priests to patch them up on demand, then you might allow them to receive healing normally from limited-use spells and powers. Just be careful that the group doesn't end up finding such mortal healers mandatory.

# CYBERNETICS AND CLOCKWORKS

While the many lands of Arcem operate largely on a Renaissance or late medieval level of technology, some societies have melded magic and technical artifice to create cybernetic modifications that can vastly improve a mortal hero's capabilities. While these augmentations are of most use to ordinary human operatives, some Godbound might also have implants, either as a legacy of their mortal lives or as an improvement their divine wisdom has seen fit to make.

## SOURCES OF CYBERNETICS

There are only two major powers in Arcem that can offer cybernetic augmentations to the rich and influential. One of them is the island nation of the Bright Republic, which has a highly-advanced theotechnical civilization that is capable of producing miniaturized cybernetic implants for the wealthy. Some of these implants can even be "hardened" to function away from the island's etheric power nodes, though most of the tech only works while on the island. Many of the agents of the island's Special Resources Division have cybernetic implants to improve their utility to their patrons.

Vissian maestros are also adept in the creation of clockwork prosthetics that function in much the same way as Republican cybertech. These clockworks are often baroque and beautifully-ornamented, but they work throughout the realm and require no power source.

In both lands, cybernetics are uncommon and a sign of both money and great personal importance. Minor cosmetic surgery on a par with modern Earth medical standards is common enough, but a brass arm that functions as well as a living one or a skin made of polished steel will always draw whispers from the common folk.

In both lands, strictly offensive cyberware such as springblades, implanted arm weaponry, or Gorgon Stare oculars are illegal for civilians to possess. Also in both lands, the right friends or the right permits can be acquired to allow virtually anything to be implanted in anyone.

## IMPLANTING CYBER

Adding cybernetic or clockwork augmentations to a human always comes at a cost. The integration is never perfect, and there are always side-effects, subtle neural damage, and spiritual maladies brought down by the intimate association of inanimate matter and living flesh. Adding cyber to a human requires that they have a sufficient number of free *integration points* to support the mod and a free slot in the body part the mod occupies.

Integration points measure the subject's ability to integrate with the cyberware. Without enough integration points to support the mod, it's useless, and cannot be effectively controlled. Godbound gain integration points by permanently sacrificing Effort, as the loss of their divine substance and the introduction of this crude substitute matter hinders their control of their own celestial powers. Each point of maximum Effort permanently sacrificed grants them four integration points they can commit to cybernetic mods.

This loss of maximum Effort also applies to most other NPCs who have Effort scores, assuming the GM wants to bother tracking it. If the GM is running a campaign with human mortal PCs, however, the heroes may want to have some cyberware of their own, but lack the Effort to sacrifice. In that case, and for mortal PCs only, the hero may sacrifice a point of attribute modifier to gain three integration points. The attribute score is then lowered to the highest possible score for

the next lowest modifier. Thus, a hero with an Intelligence of 11 and an Intelligence modifier of +0 might choose to sacrifice a point of that, lowering his Intelligence to 8 and giving it a -1 modifier in exchange for three integration points. This can be done as often as the hero is willing to sacrifice, but it cannot be reversed afterwards. Mortal PCs only can also take the Cybernetic Adaptation talent to gain points.

Assuming the hero has the points to implant a new piece of cyber, they also need a free slot to put it in. Most cyber is implanted in one of seven slots: arms, body, brain, left hand, right hand, eyes, or legs. Each slot can normally hold only one piece of cyber, so once the hero implants something in their left hand, no new cyber can fit into that same limb. Arm and leg implants always take up both limbs. A few mods have no slot requirements and don't take up precious slot space.

If a hero decides to change their cyber loadout, they may remove old pieces of tech, regaining the spent integration points and slot space, and replace it with new tech. Effort or attribute modifiers committed to integration points can never be reclaimed; the loss is permanent.

Bright Republic cyber requires a skilled surgical team and a fully-appointed medical clinic to implant. Vissian clockwork requires only one maestro and a workshop. Both require money; cyberware costs twice its points in Wealth to purchase, assuming a seller can be found. Such cyberware is magically hardened for use throughout the realm. If cyber that only works in the Bright Republic is adequate, the Wealth cost is halved.

## CREATING NEW CYBERWARE

If a GM is running a particularly mortal-heavy campaign with many mortal PC heroes, it's quite likely that there will be a demand for new cyberware, either as additional offerings from existing sources or as newly-built tech.

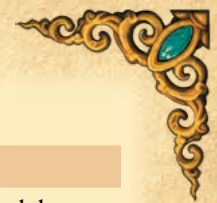
When deciding what the new cyberware should be capable of, restrict it to relatively modest effects. None of it should be as good as a Constant gift, though it might produce effects that automatically subdue or kill lesser foes, and it might be able to match a lesser gift's effects for short periods, under specific circumstances, or at a substantial cost in the user's hit points or Effort to power it.

Use the slot system to prevent excessive hardware stacking. Only give a piece of cyberware the "No Slot" location if you're fine with it being stacked together with other No Slot gear. The Miniaturized Components mod can be used to get around some slot limits, but the high point cost means that it's a major investment for a user.

Use the point cost to grade cyberware's utility. One-point cyberware should be narrow in effect or limited in benefit, while three-point cyberware should do the biggest tricks that cyber can do. Most Godbound will be limited to 4 or 8 points of cyber unless they seriously deplete their maximum Effort scores, so use that as a yardstick.

For Godbound artificers that want to devise new cyber, work with them to make sure that their desired hardware is actually an allowable piece of tech. Tech that only works or is only useful for plain mortals can afford to be more effective than mods that a Godbound might pick up.

Once that's settled, treat it as an Improbable or Impossible Influence project with a scope depending on the number of minions he wants to equip with the tech. Usually this is no more than a Village or Region-scale effort. Replicating existing cyber is usually Improbable.



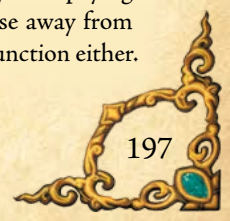
| CYBERWARE                   | POINTS | SLOT        | EFFECTS                                                               |
|-----------------------------|--------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Arm Rams                    | 1      | Arms        | Break down doors, window bars, or wooden walls                        |
| Contractive Launch Boost    | 1      | Arms        | Hurl weapons up to 200 feet away, with a bonus to hit and damage      |
| Duplicate Arms              | 2      | Arms        | Add a second pair of arms under your first set                        |
| Implanted Arm Weaponry      | 1      | Arms        | Conceal a rifle-sized weapon inside an arm                            |
| Inexorable Targeting Link   | 1      | Arms        | Once per scene, automatically hit with a physical attack              |
| Full-Body Hardening         | 2      | Body        | Gain a base AC of 0, though with no Dexterity modifier or touch       |
| Internal Purity Seals       | 1      | Body        | Gain immunity to mundane diseases and toxins                          |
| Redundant Organ Implants    | 2      | Body        | Add two extra hit points per character level, or 25% more hit dice    |
| Slow Shield Generator       | 2      | Body        | Fast projectiles and melee attacks do one fewer points of damage      |
| Warded Skin                 | 1      | Body        | Gain a base AC of 4 that's hard to notice outside combat              |
| Auspicious Linguistic Array | 1      | Brain       | Speak, read, and write any human language you may encounter           |
| Clarity Mandala             | 2      | Brain       | Automatically resist non-divine mind control effects, at a cost       |
| Eidolon Control Node        | 3      | Brain       | Your body keeps operating even after you hit zero hit points          |
| Memory Vault                | 1      | Brain       | Seal away memories where mind-probes can't detect them                |
| Grip of Unseen Force        | 1      | Either Hand | Gain short-range telekinesis that can be used as a shield             |
| Springblade                 | 1      | Either Hand | A concealed 1d8 weapon that automatically hits from ambush            |
| The Red Dot of Condemnation | 1      | Either Hand | Tag a target to know their location for the rest of the scene         |
| Thousand-Fingered Hand      | 1      | Either Hand | Your hand now serves as any one-handed weapon or implement            |
| Thundering Fist             | 1      | Either Hand | Hurl 1d8 lightning attacks up to 30 feet, killing or stunning foes    |
| Agate Eyes                  | 1      | Eyes        | See perfectly in the dark                                             |
| Gorgon Stare                | 2      | Eyes        | Kill lesser foes with a glare or harm greater foes, at some cost      |
| Malocchio Implants          | 1      | Eyes        | Curse targets with the evil eye, forcing a reroll on a success        |
| Piercing Gaze               | 2      | Eyes        | See through up to a foot of solid matter as an action                 |
| Autocossack Conversion      | 3      | Legs        | Replace your lower body with a mechanical centauroid half             |
| Gecko Augmentation          | 1      | Legs        | Cross vertical walls and ceilings so long as you keep moving          |
| Hummingbird Heels           | 1      | Legs        | Fly briefly at a cost, or hover unmoving and ignore falling damage    |
| Skitterback Projector       | 2      | Legs        | Once per scene, teleport 500 feet to a visible or known location      |
| Tread of Tireless Return    | 1      | Legs        | Your legs move without tiring and can carry you to a destination      |
| Cosmetic Augmentation       | 1      | No Slot     | Rework your body to any humanoid form that pleases you                |
| Micronized Ward Weaves      | 3      | No Slot     | Increase the Effort needed to use gifts around you, for mortals only  |
| Miniaturized Components     | 2      | No Slot     | Miniaturize a cyber implant, freeing up its slot for another mod      |
| Prosthetic Limb             | 1      | No Slot     | Replace a missing limb with a serviceable equivalent                  |
| Resonant Echo Cavity        | 1      | No Slot     | Forge telepathic contact with up to three willing allies              |
| Spelltrap Contingency       | 2      | No Slot     | Store a low magic spell in a cell for later willing or contingent use |

The cyberware list given above is simply a collection of some of the more common ware available in the Bright Republic or the Vissian city-states. All of it exists in both Republican cybertech and Vissian clockwork versions which operate identically, though they might look very different on their users.

The Points column lists the number of integration points the mod takes up. A subject can't have more points of cyber than they have available integration points, which Godbound get by sacrificing maximum Effort and ordinary mortal PCs can gain by permanently sacrificing points of attribute modifiers. The Slot entry lists the body slot the mod occupies. No slot can handle more than one mod at a time.

Availability of this cyber will vary depending on the realm. Some worlds may not have it available at all. On Arcem, both the Bright Republic and Vissio have publicly-known cybertech clinics or clockwork ateliers that will do the work for well-regarded patrons or their servants. Black-market clinics and hidden maestros may not be so particular about their clients.

The Wealth cost for buying a piece of cyberware is equal to twice its point cost. If a person is buying Republic cyberware and has no need for it to function off the island, they can get away with paying only half price to omit the "hardening" required for use away from the isle. Inactive cyber won't kill the user, but it won't function either.



## CYBERWARE DESCRIPTIONS

**Agate Eyes:** Carved gemstones replace the user's eyes, allowing them to see with perfect clarity in complete darkness.

**Arm Rams:** Both arms are augmented and hardened, with springs or etheric batteries to provide short boosts of tremendous force. While the bursts are unsuitable for combat, the arms can break through even heavy doors, window bars, wooden walls, or similar barriers, creating a human-sized hole as a single round's action. Researchers have attempted to build similar augments for a user's legs, but are restrained by the strong mythopoeic sympathy of arms with strength.

**Auspicious Linguistic Array:** The implantation of certain minor spirits of knowledge along the interior of the user's cranial cavity grant them an instinctive ability to read, write, and speak any human language they may encounter.

**Autocossack Conversion:** The subject's entire lower body is removed and replaced with a four-legged platform much like that of a centaur. Some models are made to appear like that of a living horse, while others seem entirely clockwork or mechanical. The subject's base movement becomes 90' per move and they can carry the weight of a rider and their gear without being slowed. They also get an additional free Body slot for additional cyberware to represent their now-larger torso space, and a bonus 2 hit dice to their maximum.

**Clarity Mandala:** The user may expend one hit point or hit die to automatically resist any mind-affecting magic or effect directed against them, provided it is not the product of a Word or other divine gift. A clarity mandala can trigger even on effects too subtle to be noticed by a target, but if the user doesn't activate it on the warning they immediately forget its discovery. The resistance a clarity mandala provides is only for that one instance of the power. Repeated targeting must be resisted separately.

**Contractive Launch Boost:** The user's arms are altered to provide a sudden, violent burst of force. All thrown weapons gain a 200 foot range and a minimum 1d6 damage die for anything pebble-sized or larger. Weapons that already have an equal or better damage die gain a +1 damage bonus that doesn't stack with gift-boosted attacks.

**Cosmetic Augmentation:** Expert cosmetic surgeons or inspired maestros can mold flesh and bone into exotic or aesthetic shapes. While minor cosmetic surgery is available in the Bright Republic or Vissio, this level of complete reconstruction is available only to the richest and best-connected—or to their favorite playthings. These augmentations do not change the subject's actual attribute scores, but can make them appear exactly like another human no more than 20% larger or smaller than their original shape. Gender alterations, body sculpting, dramatic coloring or small additional appendages can all be added by sufficiently artful sculptors. Once performed, however, this modification cannot be undone. New shapes can be molded in place of old ones, but the integration point committed to it can never be withdrawn, even if their old shape is restored.

**Duplicate Arms:** A second set of arms, tentacles, or other manipulatory appendages are implanted beneath the user's first pair. While these limbs don't grant the user extra actions or attacks, they can hold and manipulate objects normally, including a shield, and they are impervious to ordinary fire, caustics, or other hostile environments. These limbs can be made to appear much like normal human appendages, or they may be left as obvious clockwork or cyberware.

**Eidolon Control Node:** A simple spiritual eidolon is implanted in the user's sensory and motor-control centers. If the target is reduced to zero hit points but not torn apart or otherwise rendered incapable of

movement, the eidolon pilots the unconscious subject's body toward a predetermined end. The eidolon can cause the body to physically attack, flee, use simple equipment, apply first aid, or navigate a situation about as well as a clever dog. The eidolon doesn't know how to speak, activate gifts or other complex magical powers the user may have, but it can understand simple speech and recognizes friends of the user. The eidolon can keep the body functioning for five minutes or until the body suffers ten more points worth of damage. The eidolon will follow plans or intentions held by the user before their unconsciousness; lacking such directions, it will seek to preserve the user's life by flight or desperate physical combat.

**Full-Body Hardening:** The user's entire skin is replaced with a metallic shell and reinforced joint guards. Their unarmored armor class becomes 0, with no saving throw penalties. The hardening sacrifices all but the most basic sense of touch, however, and is too rigid to allow for a Dexterity modifier to improve the resultant armor class.

**Gecko Augmentation:** Arcane sympathies are worked into the user's legs, granting them the ability to stick to solid vertical surfaces. They can cross walls and ceilings at their normal movement rate, provided the surface can bear their weight, but they have to move at least five feet every round or they'll fall off.

**Gorgon Stare:** The Gorgon Stare system violently desiccates a visible living target's body fluids, catalyzing the effect with the user's own life force. The user expends one hit point or hit die each time this implant is used, instantly killing a visible lesser foe if they fail a Hardiness saving throw. Even on a success, they suffer a 1d10 damage die, as do worthy foes targeted by the Gorgon Stare. A victim can be harmed by the Gorgon Stare only once per scene. Those killed by it leave dried, mummified corpses behind.

**Grip of Unseen Force:** The user's hand can project an invisible short-range telekinetic force, manipulating objects up to 50 feet away as if with one of the user's hands. Objects being used or worn by another person cannot be manipulated without their cooperation. When the hand is free, the force can be formed into a telekinetic shield that counts as a normal shield, improving the user's armor class by 1. The shield also absorbs the first point of physical damage the user suffers during a scene if it's manifested during the attack.

**Hummingbird Heels:** Aerial sigils are carved into the bones of the subject's legs and inlaid with thaumaturgic channeling circuits. At the cost of one hit point or hit die of life energy or by Committing Effort for the day, the user can fly at their normal movement rate for five minutes. Whether the cyber is active or not, they are immune to falling damage, and may hover unmoving in the air rather than fall.

**Implanted Arm Weaponry:** A rifle-sized missile weapon can be implanted in a user's arm, designed to pop out of the apparently-normal limb and fire when needed. The other arm is used for ammunition storage, usually an amount ample for any ordinary firefight. Afterwards, the arm is reloaded through concealed ports. Recoil damping and ocular integration gives the weapon a +1 bonus to hit and damage rolls that does not stack with gift-augmented attacks.

**Inexorable Targeting Link:** A fine mesh of neuromuscular control sutras are woven into the subject's arms, granting them brief bursts of supernatural accuracy. Once per scene as an On Turn action, the user may skip rolling a hit roll for a physical attack and simply treat it as a natural 20. This ability cannot be used after a roll has already been made.

**Internal Purity Seals:** A complex system of digestive and respiration isolation, blood scrubbers, and mucoid seals leaves the subject im-

mune to non-magical toxins, poison gas, and diseases, and grants an extra saving throw against magical afflictions.

**Malocchio Implants:** The user's eyes are modified to project focused beams of misfortune when desired. Once per scene as an Instant action, the user can force any visible enemy to reroll a successful attack roll, saving throw, or attribute check. A creature can be affected by the implants only once per scene.

**Memory Vault:** The user is able to selectively "vault" memories and knowledge, sealing it away from their surface awareness for as long as desired. They remain subconsciously aware of these facts and can act accordingly, but telepathy or other memory probes will detect nothing of these memories. In extremis, the user can encode these memories so that even they can't willingly express the knowledge until it's released by a specific code-phrase.

**Micronized Ward Weaves:** This highly experimental web of miniaturized occult wards requires a laborious series of surgeries to implant, but once in place, it increases the Effort cost of all powers used against the target by 1 point, if any cost exists. Thus, a power that requires Committing one Effort for a scene now requires two, while one that requires Committing Effort for its duration now requires Committing two Effort instead. This surcharge is applied even if the user is just one member of several being affected by a gift or miracle. Due to the wide-spectrum abjurations required by the technology, this implant is only usable by subjects with no intrinsic supernatural powers. Only the worst Effort penalty is applied to gifts used in the weave's presence, so multiple weaves in an affected group still only add 1 point of surcharge.

**Miniaturized Components:** This cyberware doesn't actually do anything of its own; instead, it's applied to existing cyberware, compacting it and aetherializing much of its physical structure. The cyberware then ceases to count for purposes of filling a body location slot, thus allowing another piece of cyber to be put into the same slot.

**Piercing Gaze:** The possessor of these augmented eyes can see through up to a foot of solid matter. The vision of things on the other side of a barrier is not good enough for targeting powers that require line of sight, but it is otherwise treated as normal vision. Focusing through a barrier requires a full action's concentration.

**Prosthetic Limb:** Too expensive for all but the wealthiest of those injured in the Republic or Vissio, this cybernetic or clockwork limb functions just as the original did. It can be made so lifelike that only close tactile inspection can tell the difference. The modification does not alter the user's statistics, but can replace a lost limb.

**Redundant Organ Implants:** Artificial organs and clockwork viscera are implanted in the wearer, making them substantially harder to drop in combat. The subject gains an additional 2 hit points per level. If an NPC, their hit dice increase by one-quarter, rounded up.

**Resonant Echo Cavity:** A small portion of cranial bone is removed and replaced with an intricately-cavitated slab of resonant brass. The user may then nominate up to three persons in sight as allies; until the next sunrise, the four are woven into a telepathic net that allows for instant communication between them and an intuitive sense of each other's physical and mental condition. If the user with the implant is killed or rendered unconscious, the entire net goes down. The net has a maximum range of up to ten miles.

**Skitterback Projector:** Once per scene, the possessor of these implants can use a move action to teleport anywhere within five hundred feet, provided they can either see the location or have occupied it within the past day. The projector can be used more than once a

scene, but each further activation requires a full action and drains a hit point or hit die from the user, the cost increasing by 1 point per further use. Thus, the fourth teleport in the same scene would take an action and drain 3 hit points or hit dice from the user.

**Slow Shield Generator:** Kinetic dumps are implanted in the user's torso, giving them a protective shield against very fast-moving objects. Ranged weapons always do one fewer point of damage to the user, perhaps doing no injury at all, while melee attacks made by those unaware of the shield are also reduced by one point of damage per attack. A melee assailant who recognizes the shield's effects can adjust their fighting style, trading a -2 penalty to hit to bypass the shield with slow strikes and herding strokes if they wish. The shield offers no protection against magical bolts or non-physical projectiles.

**Spelltrap Contingency:** This thamaturgically-absorbent cell can be targeted by any low magic spell cast by a cooperative sorcerer. The cell will soak up the magic and hold it in suspension until the user releases it or a specific simple contingency comes to pass. A healing spell could thus be triggered by the user's mortal injury, for example, or an attack spell by an assault from an enemy. Only one spell can be released per round, even if multiple cells have been implanted, and the user gets as much control over the spell's targets and effects as the caster would have had.

**Springblade:** A forearm-long blade of enchanted steel extends from the user's wrist at their mental command. The blade counts as a magical weapon and inflicts 1d8 damage, using the better of the wielder's Strength or Dexterity for its attribute modifier. If used by surprise against a completely unsuspecting opponent, it always hits.

**The Red Dot of Condemnation:** A beam tagger is implanted in one of the user's digits. The invisible ray it emits as an On Turn action can place a thumbnail-sized dot of red light on a single visible target at a time; for the rest of the scene, the user is always instinctively aware of the target's exact location. The user may break the lock at will, allowing them to designate a different target.

**Thousand-Fingered Hand:** A wide variety of small tools and manipulators are folded into the digits and palm of this hand. The Thousand-Fingered Hand can serve as knife, hammer, lockpicks, chisel, firestarter, lamp, or any other small tool that could conceivably be held in one hand.

**Thundering Fist:** The user's hand becomes an electrical weapon, inflicting 1d8 electricity damage on a target on a hit and using Dexterity or Wisdom as the modifying attribute. Targets reduced to zero hit points can be merely stunned and left unconscious for fifteen minutes if desired, awakening with one hit point. The electrical jolt can also be used as a ranged weapon against a target up to 30 feet distant.

**Tread of Tireless Return:** The user's legs are reinforced with rebuilt muscle and homing processors. The user can continue walking or running without halt, even sleeping while their legs automatically navigate terrain or wake them up in cases of danger or impassible paths. The user can set the legs to seek a particular known destination as an On Turn action, and they'll do their best to carry the subject there, even if they are unconscious or mortally wounded. A second hit on a mortally-wounded user is enough to halt the legs.

**Warded Skin:** Subtle theotechnical wards and subdermal implants grant the wearer an unarmored armor class of 4 with no saving throw penalties. This protection is visible in combat as flares of light or temporary shells of force disperse incoming attacks, but is otherwise imperceptible even under close physical contact.



# DIVINE SUPREMACY

Some Godbound or other supernatural entities are not satisfied with the mighty powers their Words and innate gifts can grant them. Some desire more than the adulation of their devotees and the fragrant scent of their burnt offerings. Other noble-minded divinities are determined to protect their realm from some alien peril, and can only do so with the power of unquestioned divinity. Whether for good or ill, these entities embark on a quest for divine supremacy, seeking to become the arch-god of their realm.

This quest is dangerous. Every major supernatural entity in the realm will become intuitively aware of this threat to their freedom, and the aspiring arch-divinity can expect to be opposed by every significant power in the land. Only through overwhelming force, ferocious determination, and ruthless destruction of their foes can any entity hope to become an arch-god.

## Who Can Become an Arch-God?

The process of arch-apotheosis is limited to Godbound and other entities with some innate bond to a Word of Creation. Lich-kings, primal dragons, prodigiously-skilled theurgists, and other such great powers can make the attempt, as well as more conventional parasite gods, Made Gods, and angelic powers.

Arch-divinity can be shared out among multiple people. If an entire pantheon of Godbound agrees, they can work together to share the godhead amongst themselves. While it's much easier for an entire pantheon to overcome the challenges inherent in becoming arch-god of a realm, it also means that none of them will have unquestioned dominion over what follows. Disputes among the participants can result in cataclysmic damage to their domains as none of them have the power to easily stymie the others.

## The Arch-Apotheosis Process

In theory, becoming arch-god of a realm is relatively simple. The aspiring divinity must first seek out the shard of Heaven that houses the engine that sustains the realm's heart. This massive celestial engine maintains the realm's innermost substance, sustaining its reality against the chaos of Uncreated Night. While it is not the only engine that supports the realm's functioning, it is the most crucial, and if it were to be broken the entire realm would start to break apart in tremendous supernatural disasters until the engine was repaired or the realm was reduced to unlivable horror.

Finding this prime engine is not easy. Night Roads to its shard can usually only be found in the deepest, most dangerous regions of the realm, often sealed off for uncounted ages. Even the angelic powers cannot always say which engine is most crucial to a given realm if the angel responsible for its upkeep did not ally itself with their new cause. Ancient theurgic texts can sometimes lead seekers to these portals, or cryptic instructions left in the ruins of the Former Empires, but finding the shard that contains a specific realm's prime engine is always a great quest for a seeker.

Once the shard is found, the seeker must pass the Night Road to it, overcome the ancient defenses or more recent inhabitants of the shard, and reach the engine itself. Once there, they may invoke their connection to the Words of Creation to realign the prime engine into sympathy with their own will or the will of their shared pantheon. This process takes at least seven days and nights, and requires a

tremendous amount of Dominion to be poured into the process in order to reconfigure the celestial engines of the realm.

To realign a prime engine, the seekers must spend an amount of Dominion equal to thirteen times the realm's base size as given on page 129. Thus, taking over a tiny, village-sized realm would cost 13 Dominion points, the village's base size cost of one multiplied by thirteen. Seizing a realm as big as Arcem or larger would cost 208 Dominion points, as the realm's size cost of 16 is multiplied by thirteen.

As soon as an entity begins to realign the prime engine, however, every entity in the realm with a connection to the Words of Creation becomes intuitively aware of what's happening. Visions of the seeker fill their dreams and they gain an intuitive sense of the location of the Night Road that connects their realm to the prime engine's shard. All of them are instinctively aware that if the seeker is not stopped, they will gain unimaginable power over the realm and all within it.

Supernatural NPCs may hinder this attempt at seizing the realm by exerting their own occult power to stop it. Multiply the total Dominion cost by the largest applicable multiplier on page 130. Thus, if a major parasite god, an Eldritch, and a phalanx of holy priests were fighting the assimilation, the total cost would be multiplied by 8, because that's the multiplier for a major parasite god's interference. If the parasite god were cowed or destroyed, the multiplier would become 4, because that's the value for the next mightiest opponent of the process. These resisters need to remain stationary in a single location, usually the seat of their power, and focus their entire efforts on resisting the assumption of divine might.

Because of this, it's virtually impossible to take over a large realm without utterly cowing or destroying all significant supernatural rivals within it. If these rivals are still willing and able to resist the seeker, they usually ensure that it is prohibitively expensive to seize the realm. Even so, particularly determined seekers or cooperative pantheons might have enough Dominion to brute-force their way to victory if the number of potent resisters are few enough, particularly in a very small realm.

Resistance does come at a price, however. Entities who oppose the assumption of arch-godhood become known to the candidate, along with their approximate location. It is impossible to hide this information while also opposing the entity's ascension. While the seeker cannot leave the prime engine while the process is underway, lieutenants and dread minions may be dispatched to "persuade" the refuser.

If the seeker is driven away from the prime engine during this process, the Dominion expended is wasted and the attempt fails. They can still attempt it again, or if exceptionally spiteful, they might even try to damage the prime engine badly enough that the offending realm is destroyed.

If an entity becomes arch-god of more than one realm, they can bind these shattered fragments of the world together as part of the realignment process, merging them into a single realm if they so wish. The violence of this merging depends on how much resistance there is to the new god's ascent; the more committed Influence and Dominion that's being overridden by the deity, the more cataclysmic the unification. If no one is opposing the deity, the merge can be painlessly smooth. If the existing resistance multiplier is x4 or greater, the process will be attended with earthquakes, storms, floods, and upheavals on a Biblical scale.

## BENEFITS OF ARCH-GODHOOD

Arch-divinity of a realm may be vested in a single entity or shared in a cooperative group of divine collaborators. Once the prime engine is realigned, however, new members may not be added to the group without repeating the realignment process at its original cost. More significantly, perhaps, no member may be *removed* from the group. The only way to lose arch-divinity is for someone else to come along and realign the realm's prime engine for their own benefit. Thus, if a pantheon includes a misfit god, the only way for the group to get rid of them is to let an outside entity become arch-god in their place and then willingly step aside for the pantheon to reconstitute itself without the offending member. Very few pantheons are inclined to take this step, even discounting the tremendous price in Dominion involved.

An arch-god has certain benefits from their status. In particular, they gain the following abilities and perks.

- When they make changes to their realm with Dominion, no entity's interference or objection can increase the difficulty. The arch-god may have to overcome natural obstacles in the process, but enemies cannot increase the cost. At most, they can spend their own Dominion to reverse the change, but the arch-god is aware of any such manipulation of their realm and may take stern measures against the impudent shaper.
- Arch-gods can focus and coalesce the power of divinity into tangible celestial shards. One celestial shard forms monthly in their realm, and they know immediately where it is when it forms. Only one shard forms no matter how many realms they might control.
- They can perceive any location in their realm with an action's worth of focus, seeing and hearing everything going on there and penetrating any ward or disguise not fueled by a divine gift. They can instantly find individuals within their realm if they so wish.
- By Committing Effort for the scene, they can instantly appear at any location within their realm or within the shard of Heaven that contains its prime engine, provided they were somewhere within the realm or shard to begin with. Thus, if they visit another realm, they cannot instantly return to their own domain with this ability. By Committing Effort for the day, they can take up to a dozen willing companions with them. This power can be blocked by appropriate offensive dispelling or theurgic wards of binding.
- When within their realm or its prime engine's shard, they fail any saving throws only on a natural 1 and their maximum Effort is doubled.

These abilities are shared equally among all participants in the arch-godhead, even when they're used to oppose each other. Thus, two members of a pantheon who disagreed over the proper shaping of a culture would both be able to spend Dominion to change it, and neither of them would be able to interfere with each others' exertions, only to change it back at the usual Dominion cost after each time it's "improved" by the other.

As it's usually prohibitively difficult or dangerous to exclude a member from a arch-pantheon once they've attained the prize of supreme divinity, most pantheons are forced to simply endure their disagreements, albeit violence may be considered in desperate situations.

## ARCH-GODHOOD IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

While the mighty gifts of arch-divinity are certainly enough to appeal to a player, there are a few other uses for the idea of arch-divinity that can prove interesting in a campaign.

The most obvious angle is to have the PCs oppose some mighty NPC who seeks the divine throne of their home realm. God-emperors have a known tendency to seek apotheosis in this way, though evil wizards, megalomaniacal tyrants, and long-dead Lovecraftian entities also share this common ambition.

In order to achieve this power, however, the antagonist needs to find the prime engine of the shard, clear whatever guardians or perils might block the way to it, and subdue any major supernatural opponents of their ultimate rule, usually in this order.

The PCs might find themselves racing to obtain or conceal the information the NPC seeks, trying to cut them off before they can reach the broken heavens. The entity might be personally involved in these investigative expeditions or they may just send trusted lieutenants to bring them the information. If the PCs successfully steal the only available source of the knowledge, the antagonist might be forced to cut deals or seek to pressure the heroes in other ways to force them to divulge the secrets.

Once the antagonist has the location of the prime engine, they need to fight through the guardians. It may be that the Night Road that leads to the shard is somewhere in a hostile city, or physically located within the realm in some hidden sacred locale. The PCs might be called upon to reinforce these defenses, or the antagonist's allies might be powerful enough to push right through them and put the focus on the next stage of the process.

The crucial final stage of attaining apotheosis is the overcoming of any supernatural resistance to ascension. The antagonist's minions will be crossing the world, killing, intimidating, or suborning supernatural entities into the new divine order. Because resisters have to remain in one area and focused on resisting the change, PCs are unlikely to be able to join this resistance unless they're willing to sit tight and destroy whatever waves of enemies the antagonist sends to dislodge them. More likely, the heroes need to breach the prime engine and take out the antagonist before they finally accrue enough Dominion to overwhelm whatever minor resisters are left alive in the realm outside.

## DEFEATING AN ARCH-GOD

Once an entity has become an arch-god, further resistance within their realm is mostly hopeless. The arch-god can mold the realm as they wish without interference, they have huge pools of Effort, and there are no major supernatural entities left that aren't either allies or cowed subjects. Even if the heroes somehow manage to threaten them, they can instantly flee the scene unless their enemies bring just the right tools to pin them in place.

The only real way to overcome an arch-god within their realm is to bring overwhelming force. A pantheon of veteran Godbound have a chance against a lone arch-god if they're prepared with exactly the right Words and artifacts to defeat the arch-god's powers and keep them from escaping when the battle turns against them.

If the heroes don't have that kind of might at their disposal, it might be necessary to lure the arch-god out of their realm, to a land where they no longer have their tremendous advantages. One chance might be when the arch-god seeks to assimilate another realm; they'll be vulnerable as they seek to bind the new land at its prime engine.



# GODWALKERS

Godwalkers are a relic of ancient theotechnical research, an offshoot of the deep arts that resulted in the Made Gods. These titans of polished steel and glowing sigils once towered over the battlefields of the Former Empires, sacred engines of ruin in the service of their gods. The privilege of piloting these great war machines was reserved to the most zealous of the paladins of their people, most often picked nobility or combat-trained temple hierarchs.

Godwalkers operate by drawing divine sympathies between their shape, their function, and their pilots. A godwalker forged in the shape of a mighty warrior thus draws down a great blessing of war and can be empowered with assorted components that channel divine miracles of martial prowess. A godwalker in the shape of a vehicle is a peerless conveyance, swift to transport its riders and unleash wrath on those who would impede its way. A few experimental godwalkers were even crafted in more exotic shapes, such as thrones or libraries, in order to draw more pacifistic divine sympathies. The great majority, however, were forged as weapons of war.

Every godwalker has a name, which varies with their creating civilization. The modern walkers of the Thousand Gods are named for the glorious qualities of their god-patrons, while the engines of the Thousand Hero Army of the True King were named with poetic similes of resolution and regret. Some bore the name of dead heroes, their armaments or very bones worked into the substance of the godwalker's chassis. Indeed, it was not unknown for pilots to take the name of their godwalker as part of their rites of dedication to the mighty chariot of divinity.

These godwalker pilots were trained carefully for their work. While it's not impossible for a completely ignorant human to operate a godwalker by instinct and blind impulse, true mastery of its divine components and unique abilities requires extensive training and practice. Only the most trustworthy warriors of the Former Empires were entrusted with this grave duty, and in the modern day these esoteric arts are unknown in Arcem outside of the Thousand Gods.

In many realms godwalkers are entirely unknown. The Former Empires who ruled there found no use for them, or they were all dispatched to distant realms, or they were all destroyed in the cataclysmic fighting of the Last War. In Arcem, however, the fate of these great machines was not so simple.

## GODWALKERS IN YOUR GAME

Some GMs and groups will be very enthusiastic about the existence of godwalkers in their campaign. Even if none of the PCs have an interest in piloting one or training minions to do so, they like the idea and might find it interesting to fight one.

Other groups will not be so keen on them. It's entirely up to the GM whether godwalkers exist in their campaign world. Even those in Arcem can be trimmed out entirely with no damage to the setting if the GM or group prefers a less magitechnical sort of campaign.

If you do keep godwalkers, they're likely to have the greatest use as boosters for low-level Godbound and equalizers for mortal opponents. Veteran Godbound can usually do more with their native powers than a godwalker can, though even then, vehicular walkers still have their pragmatic uses.

## GODWALKERS IN ARCEM

In the wake of the Shattering the sophisticated theurgic infrastructure necessary for building and maintaining godwalkers crumbled away. Attrition, scavenging, and simple mechanical failure withered their numbers until the godwalkers were no more than legends in most realms. Today, the nations of the Sundered world make war with simple tools, for that is all that they can support.

Among the Thousand Gods, matters are different. The tribes there are heirs to the finest theotechnical researchers of the realm, and they have preserved enough of their science and sorcery to build godwalkers and keep them functioning. The work is exhausting and requires the active aid of the tribe's divine god-ruler, but the tribes can field a few of these massive machines in the service of their patron.

Modern godwalkers lack the polished aesthetic of the ancient engines, owing more to rune-carved tropical hardwoods, enchanted feathers, laboriously polished stones, sacred war paints, and the animated bones of tribal heroes. Even so, the skill of the crafters and the aid of their patron god can make these modern wonders perform just as well as the marvels of former days. Lesser tribes may not have a single godwalker, and only the mightiest have more than a handful of these machines. Each is piloted by a hero of the tribe, and the privilege of this role is the greatest honor a tribal god may confer upon one of its warriors.

Because of the intimate tie between the godwalker's pilot and their tribe, it is almost unheard-of for one of these engines to leave the Thousand Gods. Only a scant few have ever abandoned their people to work for the nations of the north, and the sheer destructiveness of their power has ensured that their careers were both dramatic and very short as every rival power in the north tried to destroy them before they could wreak havoc. The vast majority of a godwalker's time is spent fighting over tribal champions in the Thousand Gods, though occasional raids into the Toban plains keep their dread fresh in the minds of the Toban nomads.

Other nations sometimes have a godwalker or two kept within some ancient armory, but these hulks are often useless to their owners. The maintenance requirements are so steep for keeping them in order that only major nations can manage the difficult theotechnical procedures required, or afford the tremendous cost of their upkeep. Without paying such a cost, pilots can't be trained or kept proficient, and so there is no one who can be trusted to pilot the godwalker when it should be needed.

Modern rulers are more likely to build a temple around a godwalker and use it as a particularly imposing idol than they are to pay the price of keeping it and its pilot in fighting trim. Still, major nations in a realm usually have the resources to field a few godwalkers when some terrible need comes upon them, assuming that any godwalkers still exist in their realm. Many domains haven't heard anything more than rumors of these titans.

Even so, sometimes an ancient godwalker can be found still in its maintenance rack, somewhere in some lost Former Empire temple or a cyst of Uncreated Night. These gleaming engines are perfectly preserved, just waiting for a new pilot to ascend to its control cockpit. For the limited time that such godwalkers will function before a lack of maintenance fells them, their pilots can be numbered among the mightiest warriors of the realm.

## OPERATING A GODWALKER

Godwalkers are more primitive, basic implementations of the arts that led to the creation of the Made Gods. Rather than being intelligent, artificially-crafted divinities, they are more like gigantic suits of armor that channel the echoes of divine power through their carefully-devised components. A godwalker requires a pilot to function, and without such a trained operator it is little more than an intimidating statue.

This pilot must have a Fact related to being a trained godwalker pilot, or else they will be unable to activate any of its attached components or attack in any way more complicated than a physical blow. Mortal NPCs without training can acquire proficiency by spending six months practicing regularly with a godwalker. Godbound and PCs must commit a Fact to such training, usually one earned by leveling up after a suitable training period. Godbound with appropriate technical or martial Words such as Knowledge, Sword, Bow or Artifice intuitively understand how to pilot a godwalker.

Godwalker theotechnology was not designed to deal with a Godbound pilot's abilities. While it's possible for a Godbound to pilot one, they cannot Commit Effort to activate their own gifts or miracles while integrated with the godwalker, though free or Constant abilities may be used and will affect the entire godwalker as if it were the PC's own body. Patching into or detaching from a godwalker's cockpit harness takes one round's action for a pilot in the cockpit.

A piloted godwalker is treated as a single creature for combat purposes. This single creature has the hit dice of the godwalker, its armor class, its actions per round, its saving throw, and so forth. It uses the basic attack bonus of the pilot, but not their attribute modifiers; instead, the godwalker itself gives them a bonus based on its intrinsic targeting systems. By the same token, the damage the godwalker's weapons do or its armor class aren't modified by the pilot's own attributes. If an attribute check is somehow required of the godwalker, the pilot's attributes are used. Godwalkers are always treated as worthy foes for purposes of resisting abilities or Fray dice and can always Commit Effort for the day to succeed on otherwise-failed saving throws.

Godwalkers have an intrinsic supply of Effort which they can commit to fuel their gifts and effects or automatically succeed at saving throws. Effort committed for the day can only be recovered with a maintenance cycle, which is unavailable in Arcem outside of the tribal technicians and theotechnical infrastructure of the Thousand Gods. PCs who want to recharge a badly-depleted godwalker will need to make their own arrangements or develop their own infrastructure.

The first time a godwalker is activated each day, it Commits Effort for the day to fuel its operation. It may be shut down and reactivated any number of times for the next 24 hours before an additional point of Effort must be Committed to keep it running.

Damage inflicted on a godwalker creates sympathetic injuries on its pilot. Whenever the godwalker loses a quarter of its maximum hit dice, the pilot loses a quarter of their maximum hit dice or hit points in turn, rounded down. This damage is inflicted as soon as the pilot patches in, so assuming control of a badly-damaged godwalker will instantly result in similar damage appearing on the pilot. A pilot cannot be reduced below 1 hit point or 1 hit die by this sympathetic injury.

A godwalker reduced to zero hit dice becomes inoperative, and its pilot is left with only 1 hit point or hit die. They can detach themselves from the harness with a round's effort and climb out of the godwalker's cockpit, but sufficiently impressive moving devices or superhuman strength will be needed to get the godwalker back to a place where it can be repaired.

## GODWALKERS IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

At their simplest, godwalkers make for useful opponents for the PCs when they're dealing with the tribes of the Thousand Gods. A single godwalker is unlikely to be able to overcome an experienced pantheon, but one in coordination with tribal warriors and priest-sorcerers can be a serious threat, particularly if the tribe's patron god gets involved as well. A tribe strong enough to field a half-dozen of these beasts can make even a full pantheon find wisdom in being elsewhere, particularly if they're being piloted by heroes with excellent base attack bonuses and unflinching morale.

You can also insert godwalkers in other nations, either as wonders salvaged from a recently-discovered ruin, a national treasure kept for some hour of dire need, or as the product of another Godbound's magical forges. The PCs might end up fighting this eidolon, or they could seek to steal it for their own purposes. Given that godwalkers are much more useful to ordinary mortals than to Godbound, the pantheon might find themselves wanting an engine to boost the power of a well-favored mortal or a champion of their own cult. After all, if it works for the Thousand Gods, shouldn't it work for them?

Godwalkers can also serve as major treasures for the PCs to discover, perhaps unearthing them from a forgotten ruin or finding one still operational in a shard of Heaven. A fully-operational godwalker is a priceless thing, and the PCs would be well-advised to think about how they mean to keep the agents of half the nations in the realm from trying to "persuade" them to turn over the engine.

## GODWALKERS IN PLAY

As explained before, godwalkers are treated as creatures in combat. They have their own hit dice, armor class, maximum Effort, movement rates, and other statistics. All godwalkers require a trained pilot to operate them; once secured in the godwalker's cockpit, the pilot cannot be targeted or affected by external effects. Only the godwalker can be damaged or targeted until it is destroyed or the pilot leaves the cockpit.

Godwalkers are equipped with special abilities and focused enchantments that mimic the effect of Godbound gifts or other mighty sorceries. These abilities are on a par with gifts, and can't be dispelled or overcome as conventional low magic or theurgy. Only miracles of dispelling from an appropriate Word can block or stifle them. Godwalkers use their intrinsic Effort to fuel their abilities. Any Effort their pilot may have can't be used to trigger godwalker powers. Godwalkers can reclaim Effort committed temporarily or for the scene normally, but Effort committed for the day requires a full maintenance cycle to restore. Godwalkers usually need to Commit Effort for the day the first time they're activated in a day, so a godwalker without access to functioning maintenance support will rapidly run out of power.

The theotechnical channels of the godwalkers were never intended to be directed by a Godbound pilot. Once interfaced with the godwalker, a Godbound can't Commit Effort until they leave the machine. They can still use constant powers or other abilities that don't require them to Commit Effort, and these abilities will affect the godwalker they're piloting. Thus, a Godbound could get use from a gift that automatically alerted them to an impending ambush, and a Constant gift that let them easily traverse vertical surfaces would also affect the godwalker's mighty limbs.

Godwalkers are always considered worthy foes for the purpose of resisting hostile effects and Fray dice. They can Commit their own Effort just as a Godbound does to automatically succeed at a failed saving throw.



## DESIGNING A GODWALKER

Godwalkers are fashioned of individual components, some mandatory, others optional. Every godwalker needs certain components to function at all, while others add powers, improve its base statistics, or grant bonuses to its operation.

Every godwalker needs a **chakra engine**, the locus of its divine fire and the interface between its artifices and the celestial forces that power it. The type of chakra engine chosen determines the number of slots the godwalker will have for optional equipment, with different types of slots useful for different types of divine components.

A **sacred armature** is the basic chassis of the godwalker, whether humanoid, beast-like, or mechanical in shape. Different types of armatures offer different advantages, whether they might include functioning hands, vast transport space, integral flight ability, or remarkably sturdy construction. The sacred armature of a godwalker is considered its fundamental "self", the part of the machine that has earned a name and which persists in its identity.

Once the designer has chosen a chakra engine and an armature to put it in, they have a functioning godwalker. It may lack many of the abilities and special powers of a better-equipped creation, but it can fight in combat and move as its pilot directs. Most theotechnical armorers take the time to install additional systems, however, to better equip the machine for its duties.

Every additional piece of equipment has a chakra slot type. Any equipment can be mounted to any godwalker, provided its chakra engine provides enough free slots of the right type and the chassis is large enough to support the component. Once all an engine's chakra slots are filled, the godwalker can't add anything more without uninstalling some hardware.

## CHAKRA ENGINES AND ENGINE SLOTS

Chakra engines provide a certain number of slots representing their divine sympathies and occult capacities. The slots an engine provides are divided up among five types.

**Fire** slots are dedicated to weapons and offensive systems. The support divine components that do damage to opponents or empower the godwalker's attacks.

**Metal** slots are filled by defensive systems and components meant to increase the hardness of the basic godwalker armature.

**Void** slots normally support components that deal with communications, senses, and command. Void slots are exceptional, however, in that they can support *any* type of component if necessary. A chakra engine like the Thirsting Altar with its six Void slots can thus support an extremely flexible component loadout, albeit often less efficiently than a more focused engine.

**Water** slots are for utility, transformation, and creation components, including such additions as might provide battlefield engineering benefits or logistical support.

**Wind** slots relate to movement, whether augmenting existing moves of locomotion or offering entirely new movement modes.

Chakra engines also have a listed size, which indicates the smallest sacred armature that can contain them. It's possible to power a larger armature with a smaller engine, albeit the fewer available slots of the smaller engines tend to make that an inadvisable choice when other options exist.

If GMs choose to design new chakra engines, a good guideline is to give small engines five slots, medium engines six, and large engines seven. Adjust this total if the engine has any additional benefits.

## BUILDING A GODWALKER

The first thing any artificer needs to build a godwalker is a construction facility worthy of the task. Many tribes of the Thousand Gods have functioning construction forges, but only thanks to the cooperation of their patron gods and the focused effort of the tribe. If a godbound artificer can't win their help, they'll need to construct their own forges, as no other nation of Arcem has been able to preserve such sophisticated facilities.

Assuming the facility, staff, and components are available, the artificer can forge the elements of the godwalker. Each component, whether chakra engine, sacred armature, or additional equipment, has a Dominion cost for its creation. The artificer may pay this Dominion cost, or it may be paid by a Godbound ally with a relevant Word. The component is then created over a period of months, with the facility staff building one Dominion point of hardware each month for every thousand laborers. Thus, a facility with six thousand trained laborers building a component that costs six Dominion points would take a month to finish it. Building one that costs only three Dominion points could be done in only two weeks.

With all the pieces complete, the godwalker can be assembled in one week by a thousand laborers, with more help finishing the job more quickly in a proportional way. If different equipment or components are to be swapped into an existing godwalker, the same amount of time is required to enact the change.

## CREATING A CONSTRUCTION FACILITY

It may well be that no construction facility is available when the players want to build a godwalker. If the GM decides to allow the prospect, the heroes can build their own facility.

Creating a godwalker construction facility counts as a 16-point Dominion change requiring the acquisition of at least four celestial shards and the overcoming of one substantial challenge related to establishing the facility. The artificer in charge of the project must either be bound to the Word of Artifice or have a Fact or Word related to knowing how to build a godwalker. The latter might be the product of the correct study or Word of Knowledge, but finding the ancient lore necessary to create such an engine would be a worthy challenge for a hero. Other godbound in the pantheon may contribute to the Dominion needed for the change, provided they can explain how their powers are helpful.

Once the artificer has a facility, they need a staff to run it. While it's theoretically possible for a lone crafter to build a godwalker from scratch without assistance, the time frame is usually prohibitively long. Each thousand laborers under the crafter's direction can build one Dominion point of the eventual godwalker in one month's time. Godbound with the Word of Artifice and the right gifts might provide much of this labor, but more might need to be recruited and trained from allied nations or loyal cultists, most likely with marvels of Dominion to speed up their education.

Lastly, the artificer needs raw materials. While the facility is capable of conjuring or synthesizing most of what it needs to build the godwalker, one celestial shard is needed for each component in the godwalker. While this requirement is unavoidable for the chakra engine and the sacred armature, other components can substitute the aid of Godbound who has bound a Word relevant to the equipment for the celestial shard requirement. Their divine power can bless and sanctify the components and ready them to receive the celestial power that will flow through them.



## REPAIRING AND MAINTAINING GODWALKERS

A normal maintenance cycle requires one hundred trained theotechnicians, six hours, and a set of vanishingly rare godwalker maintenance tools. If these tools can't be found in some ancient ruin, a Godbound with relevant Words or Facts can recreate them at a cost of 2 Dominion points and one week of work. A maintenance cycle restores 1d6 lost hit dice and restores any Effort the godwalker may have committed for the day. A maintenance cycle can't be performed any more quickly than this by mortal theotechnicians, and only one maintenance cycle can be performed between full overhauls.

A full overhaul of the godwalker requires the same number of theotechnicians, and the same sort of tools, but requires 72 hours and repairs all damage the godwalker has suffered. Doubling the number of properly-equipped theotechnicians halves the time for a full overhaul, so a small army of 800 theotechnicians with eight sets of godwalker maintenance tools could repair a godwalker completely in only 9 hours. A full overhaul takes at least an hour, no matter how many workers are employed.

A godwalker that has been reduced to zero hit dice has been critically damaged. A randomly-selected half of its components have been completely destroyed, excepting the chakra engine and sacred armature. Before it can be repaired, two Dominion points and a month of work by a team of a thousand theotechnicians must be expended before it and its remaining components can be made functional again.

Godbound who use gifts of the Word of Artifice to heal damaged godwalkers can do so much more quickly, and with the right gifts they can fix almost any amount of damage in mere moments. This kind of rapid restoration of the godwalker weakens and disperses its available energy, however, and each 4 points of damage healed this

way require the godwalker to Commit a point of Effort for the day. If the godwalker has no more Effort to commit, it just can't sustain this "healing" and can't be repaired this way. Godbound of Artifice can also conduct a full overhaul in a matter of minutes with the right gifts or miracles, but a godwalker can be restored this way only once per day and it cannot be so quickly fixed in mid-combat. Godwalkers reduced to zero hit dice are beyond this magical repair, however, and must be restored as given above.

In Arcem, most major nations have access to godwalker maintenance tools. They may not have many sufficiently-trained technicians and sages, but they can usually scrape together a few hundred given time and forewarning. Those nations that still have functional godwalkers usually keep these artificers in reserve, leaving them to conduct their studies and oversee their ateliers unless summoned by the ruler. Such summons are most often made when a godwalker has been depleted by training or warfare, and a fresh overhaul is needed to recharge its Effort reserves. More fortunate states have godwalkers equipped with endurance fittings or long-running engines that they can use for the training of their elite pilot-knights.

Only the strongest and most sophisticated nations can summon the full thousand artificers needed to actually *repair* a damaged godwalker. Because of the difficulty of repairing such damage, even those nations that possess functional godwalkers are loathe to use them for anything short of a national crisis. Just keeping a few pilots trained and ready for deployment is as much as they can manage, with the position often decaying into mere ceremony. It's not uncommon for the official role to be filled by a noble who's hardly seen the inside of a godwalker cockpit, while the real training is done by some grim champion willing to eat, drink, and live their service to the state.

# SACRED ARMATURES

The sacred armature is the heart of a godwalker's identity, the grand construct of prayer and steel that channels the glorious power of the divine. Without a chakra engine to power it however, it's no more than an inanimate statue. An armature without divine components is also of limited use, though even an entirely stripped armature can at least move, transport, and manipulate objects as its physical design permits.

Each armature has a size class: small, medium, or large. The size class of an armature affects what chakra engines and divine components it can mount. Larger armatures can mount smaller engines and components, but smaller armatures are limited in their choices.

Armatures have room for a single pilot and their personal equipment. Unless specified otherwise, additional cargo or passengers requires the mounting of the *Cargo Space Water* component.

**Che:** A combat transport by design, the Che is roughly wagon-shaped, large enough to transport as many as twenty heroes along with its pilot, or 250 pounds of cargo for each hero omitted. The Che cannot fly without special components, but it can hover as much as twenty feet above the ground and can ignore water and rough terrain barriers. Overland, it travels about 30 miles an hour.

**Epitaph:** The standard front-line godwalker of the Former Empires, the Epitaph is humanoid in shape, standing roughly thirty feet tall. It moves on foot, barring special movement components.

**Eyas:** The Eyas came in several sub-variant forms, ranging from triangular fighters to stylized bird-golem shapes. The armature flies with remarkable agility, and can hover and fly backward with perfect ease. If the pilot is not engaged in combat and is focusing entirely on flight, the Eyas can reach speeds of up to 200 miles an hour over long distances.

**Grigori:** The heaviest shock godwalker developed by most Former Empires, the Grigori is a hulking humanoid shape at least fifty feet tall. Integral terrain stabilizers prevent the Grigori from sinking into soft earth or losing its footing on rough terrain, but it still must navigate its way around water barriers too deep to wade.

**Iron Eclipse:** These gigantic flying warships were the pride of more than one Former Empire, the fruit of tremendous theotechnical research and the manufacturing effort of an entire civilization. The exact outlines of an Iron Eclipse varied with its creators, but most of

these godwalkers were at least seven hundred feet long and one hundred feet wide, with up to a thousand crew and passengers. While the Iron Eclipse can be operated by a single pilot, the additional crew provided their own weaponry and sorcery to the armature's complement of components, and could fight from the deck. An Iron Eclipse can reach non-combat speeds of up to 60 miles an hour, barring the influence of special movement components.

**Kraken:** The Kraken has a decidedly squidlike outline, the body portion roughly twenty feet long with four major manipulatory tentacles extending forty feet from the body. These tentacles can maneuver the Kraken on land at a 30' movement rate, but its chief function was always as a submarine armature, meant for operating deep beneath the ocean surface. The Kraken is equipped with integral sensory blessings that give its pilot full normal vision and hearing while underwater. While at sea, it travels 20 miles an hour.

**Peltast:** While no armature could ever be considered inexpensive, the eighteen-foot-tall Peltast was envisioned as a cheap scouting and garrison godwalker, fast enough to keep ahead of an advancing army while small enough to avoid immediate notice. While no match for a godwalker of the conventional line of battle, a properly-equipped Peltast was more than enough to break rebel militia.

**Seraph:** A mighty winged eidolon standing forty feet high, the Seraph was one of the rare flying humanoid armatures. Working flight into the armature's basic functionality came at a price, and the Seraph has no high-speed overland flight mode as the Eyas or Iron Eclipse does. Even so, conventional fortifications mean nothing to a titan that can fall on a citadel from above.

**Skate:** Some realms were more water than land, and the Skate was a popular choice for guarding the coast and transporting important dignitaries in speed and safety. The skate itself is the size of a small sailing ship, roughly forty feet from prow to stern, and usually shaped in a vaguely manta-ray outline. Even without additional components, the Skate can carry up to twenty passengers and can sail at 30 miles an hour when not embroiled in combat.

**Vorax:** Slow, inaccurate, and almost indestructible, the Vorax was a favored humanoid armature for carrying vital command equipment or crucial personnel. Unlike other armatures, a Vorax's internal repair units restore 1 lost hit die every hour automatically.

| ARMATURE     | DOMINION<br>COST | SIZE | HIT<br>DICE | ARMOR<br>CLASS | HIT<br>BONUS | MOVE      | SAVE |                                        |
|--------------|------------------|------|-------------|----------------|--------------|-----------|------|----------------------------------------|
| Peltast      | 3                | S    | 14          | 4              | +3           | 60' run   | 8+   | <i>Small humanoid armature</i>         |
| Skate        | 4                | S    | 20          | 6              | +2           | 40' sail  | 7+   | <i>Seafaring armature</i>              |
| Eyas         | 5                | S    | 14          | 5              | +3           | 120' fly  | 8+   | <i>Aerial armature</i>                 |
| Che          | 3                | S    | 20          | 5              | +1           | 50' hover | 7+   | <i>Hovering wagon-like vehicle.</i>    |
| Epitaph      | 6                | M    | 25          | 6              | +2           | 40' run   | 6+   | <i>Humanoid armature</i>               |
| Kraken       | 7                | M    | 30          | 7              | +2           | 50' sail  | 6+   | <i>Submarine craft</i>                 |
| Vorax        | 7                | M    | 35          | 3              | +0           | 20' run   | 5+   | <i>Extra-durable humanoid armature</i> |
| Iron Eclipse | 16               | L    | 40          | 4              | +2           | 90' fly   | 6+   | <i>Aerial battleship</i>               |
| Seraph       | 10               | L    | 30          | 5              | +2           | 60' fly   | 6+   | <i>Flying humanoid titan</i>           |
| Grigori      | 10               | L    | 35          | 4              | +3           | 40' run   | 5+   | <i>Walking humanoid</i>                |

# CHAKRA ENGINES

Most godwalker armatures received a specific chakra engine during their initial creation and kept it for their service life. Due to the modular nature of the devices, however, it was sometimes deemed appropriate to change an armature's engine for specific duties or missions. This process required a trained crew of theotechnicians, appropriate sacrifices, and carefully-calculated propitiatory prayer to avoid unfortunate divine backlash, but the benefits of an engine specially-designed to support a certain role were sometimes worth the effort.

Chakra engines have a minimum armature size they'll fit. It's possible to power a large armature with a small engine, but most designers find it preferable to mount as large an engine as the armature can support. Sadly, the expense of this sometimes proves impractical.

**Breaker of Cities:** This chakra engine was designed to be mounted on siege godwalkers and shock armatures, those walkers forming the sharp edge of an assault that would require numerous defensive systems and terrain-deforming components.

**Celestial Lance:** A workhorse engine of medium-sized godwalker armatures, the Celestial Lance was esteemed as a reliable and effective engine for a Former Empire's main battle line.

**Chariot of War:** While the Former Empire theotechnicians who designed this chakra engine envisioned it as a cheap skirmisher engine for light picket godwalkers, its relative simplicity and flexible slot arrangement make it the most popular chakra engine still created in the Thousand Gods.

**Cinnabar Field Reactor:** An offense-oriented engine meant chiefly for the godwalkers of the most effective heroes of an army, the Cinnabar Field Reactor trades logistical utility for superior mobility. In addition, the unique qualities of the reactor allow its pilot to expend their own Effort to auto-save in place of the walker's.

**Golden Halberd:** The product of a combat doctrine that emphasized tremendous first strikes, the Golden Halberd was equipped with a special speed augmentation that allowed its godwalker to Commit Effort for the day as an On Turn action once per round to gain an extra action for that round. While the engine's Effort reserves were disappointingly small, the designers thought that a loadout with a low Effort cost for deployment would compensate for this.

**Hecatomb:** An elaboration of the same design philosophy that brought about the Golden Halberd, the Hecatomb was an overwhelmingly offense-oriented engine. Its multiple Fire chakra slots would allow it a wide variety of devastating offensive options, and its tremendous speed on the battlefield would sweep away all opposition in moments. Of course, if that strike failed to clear the way, its regrettable defensive weakness would leave the armature open to an enemy counterattack.

**Shining Titan:** This was the standard chakra engine for the largest godwalkers conventionally fielded by the Former Empires. Strong defenses, multiple Fire chakra slots for offensive options, and three actions per round ensure that the godwalker powered by the Shining Titan will justify its tremendous expense.

**Thirsting Altar:** Very few Thirsting Altars were created, both due to their enormous cost in resources and the difficulty of piloting the godwalkers they powered. Their chakra slots were perfectly flexible, with six Void slots to be filled with whatever loadout the pilot required. The engine lent itself to loadouts that were extremely unbalanced, creating single-purpose godwalkers that were far more effective in their one role than their peers, yet largely useless outside that function. Very few pilots matched the engine's natural flexibility, and were much better at one or two types of operations, thus preferring specialized chakra engines that excelled at only those roles in a cheaper, more efficient way. Still, for a few pilot polymaths, the Thirsting Altar gave them the field options they craved.

**Thousand League Horse:** While the Thousand League Horse's chakra engine was significantly restricted in its combat effectiveness due to the lack of Fire or Metal chakra slots, the extreme efficiency of the design allowed it to operate almost indefinitely. Unlike most other engines, the Thousand League Horse doesn't need to Commit Effort when first started or at 24 hour intervals thereafter. Once activated, it can continue operating until damaged beyond use, and thus was a popular choice as a transport and utility godwalker.

**Tireless Flowing Water:** Like the Thousand League Horse, the Tireless Flowing Water could be operated without the daily Effort Commitment most engines require. Light, cheap, and efficient, it was a favorite for scout godwalkers and extended-duty pickets.

| CHAKRA ENGINE          | COST | MIN<br>SIZE | Component Slots |       |      |       |      | MAX<br>EFFORT | ACTIONS |
|------------------------|------|-------------|-----------------|-------|------|-------|------|---------------|---------|
|                        |      |             | FIRE            | METAL | VOID | WATER | WIND |               |         |
| Tireless Flowing Water | 4    | S           | 1               | 0     | 1    | 0     | 1    | 4*            | 1       |
| Chariot of War         | 4    | S           | 1               | 1     | 1    | 1     | 1    | 6             | 1       |
| Golden Halberd         | 5    | S           | 1               | 1     | 1    | 1     | 1    | 5             | 1*      |
| Thousand League Horse  | 6    | M           | 0               | 0     | 2    | 0     | 1    | 5*            | 1       |
| Celestial Lance        | 8    | M           | 2               | 1     | 1    | 1     | 1    | 6             | 2       |
| Cinnabar Field Reactor | 12   | M           | 2               | 1     | 1    | 0     | 2    | 5*            | 2       |
| Breaker of Cities      | 8    | M           | 1               | 2     | 1    | 2     | 1    | 8             | 1       |
| Hecatomb               | 16   | L           | 4               | 0     | 1    | 1     | 1    | 10            | 3       |
| Shining Titan          | 16   | L           | 2               | 2     | 1    | 1     | 1    | 10            | 3       |
| Thirsting Altar        | 20   | L           | 0               | 0     | 6    | 0     | 0    | 9             | 3       |

\* These chakra engines give special abilities to the godwalker

## Divine Components

The components listed here are some of the more common designs utilized by the Former Empires in equipping their godwalkers. Other designs might be fabricated by sufficiently clever Artificers, probably as an Improbable feat assuming that the designer has access to a godwalker construction facility.

Components can be theoretically created to mimic any lesser gift, but at substantial price in Dominion. Those components that perform a more restricted function or a narrower benefit should be cheaper than the Divine Actuators described in this list. It's also necessary to assign the component to the correct slot type. When the proper type is ambiguous, the GM should make the call.

**Ablative Blessing Seals:** The godwalker gains an extra 20% of its maximum hit dice as a buffer against damage. These bonus hit dice don't affect the godwalker's other statistics, but are lost first when the walker is damaged. They are repaired fully after a full overhaul, but can't be fixed by less thorough maintenance or instant repair gifts.

**Advance of the Iron Tide:** Commit Effort for the day before moving. So long as the godwalker moves in a straight line, they have an invincible defense against damage or hostile effects and can phase harmlessly through solid barriers. They can maintain this immunity from round to round so long as they do nothing but move in a straight line.

**Anchor of the Holy Gate:** The godwalker acts as the destination node of a teleportation gateway, Committing Effort for the day to open a gate in its immediate presence. Targets in a specially-consecrated location elsewhere in the same realm may then come through the gate, with up to one large godwalker, two medium, or four small ones passing through each round, or one hundred infantry, or ten wagons or tank-sized vehicles during the same time. Holding the gate open requires the godwalker to Commit Effort for the day for each round it's maintained. Preparing a specific location to serve as the sending end of the gate requires 24 hours of ritual purification, and any blasphemous behavior within the sending zone will spoil the site until the area is reconsecrated.

**Banner of Zeal:** Commit Effort to ignite it. While active, allies within 500 feet have Morale 12 and you have an invincible defense against any mental effect that would make you stop attacking your enemies.

**Cargo Space:** The godwalker can carry extra passengers based on its size, or an additional 250 pounds of cargo for each passenger omitted. Small godwalkers can carry an additional eight passengers, medium armatures can carry twenty-four, and large armatures can carry an extra hundred. Most godwalkers normally have room only for the pilot, though some armatures may have designed space for additional passengers. Particularly large godwalkers might pull wagons or carry transport racks, but such transit is much more precarious than traveling in the safety of a cargo space.

**Clarion Call:** The godwalker can transmit a telepathic order to all members of a known friendly group within ten miles. The pilot gets a brief impression of that group's current condition, position, and activities before issuing the order. The subjects are not required to obey the order, though they do know who it's coming from.

**Clavis of Night:** Commit Effort for the day to punch a temporary hole into Uncreated Night. This hole takes ten minutes to form and remains open only long enough for the godwalker to enter it. Once within, the godwalker pilot must have the theurgic coordinates of a

desired destination realm to reach it or they face eternal wandering within Uncreated Night. These coordinates can only be obtained by visiting the desired target location and surveying it carefully for a week with a competent theurge. Certain lost tomes of arcane lore might also contain the coordinates for locations long since lost to the known Night Roads. This component takes up two Wind chakra slots rather than just one, and the travel takes one week.

**Crown of Companions:** The godwalker pilot can keep in telepathic contact with up to a dozen willing allies, knowing their positions and condition and freely trading thoughts and sensory perception between them.

**Devourer of Armies:** Commit Effort for the scene. Torrents of lethal sacred energy boil forth from the godwalker, scorching a cone up to three hundred feet long and as wide at the far end. Any Mobs largely caught within that area suffer 4d20 damage straight, and lesser foes suffer the damage rolled normally. Worthy foes are unharmed.

**Divine Aspect Actuator:** The element grants the godwalker access to a single lesser gift related to transformation, creation, or alteration, allowing it to use the gift at its normal Effort cost, assuming it has any. With these and other divine actuators, a gift's effects or conjurations can't persist longer than a scene unless the gift is a Constant self-augment.

**Divine Awareness Actuator:** The element grants the godwalker access to a single lesser gift related to perception or communication, allowing it to use the gift at its normal Effort cost, assuming it has any.

**Divine Motion Actuator:** The element grants the godwalker access to a single lesser gift related to movement, allowing it to use the gift at its normal Effort cost, assuming it has any.

**Divine Shielding Actuator:** The element grants the godwalker access to a single lesser gift related to defense or protection, allowing it to use the gift at its normal Effort cost, assuming it has any.

**Divine Smiting Actuator:** The element grants the godwalker access to a single lesser gift related to attacking or damaging a target, allowing it to use the gift at its normal Effort cost, assuming it has any.

**Elemental Harmonizer:** The godwalker gains an invincible defense against an energy type such as fire, cold, electricity, or the like. The harmonizer can be tuned to a different element during a daily maintenance cycle.

**Eyes of Argus:** The godwalker can penetrate fog, smoke, and darkness with their sensors. On the godwalker's turn, it can tag a single visible target and track their location unerringly within one mile.

**Force Projection Jewel:** This ranged energy weapon has a maximum range of up to a mile, if the target is visible, and does 1d8+4 damage. Against Mobs, this damage is rolled straight.

**Godwalker Repair Bay:** The godwalker has integral tools sufficient to provide maintenance to itself or other godwalkers. It can provide a daily maintenance cycle to itself or another godwalker with six hours of effort. In extremis, it can provide a full field overhaul of itself or another godwalker, but it takes a full week to do so, albeit it requires no additional supplies or personnel.

**Halo of Wrath:** The godwalker sears enemies within 60 feet with a penumbra of divine wrath, inflicting a 1d10 damage die on them at the start of its round's actions. Mobs suffer this damage straight.

**Harvester Hand:** This attached melee weapon does 1d10+2 damage straight to lesser foes and mobs, but rolls its damage normally against worthy foes.

| Component                 | Dominion Cost | Slot  | Armature Min. Size | Action Type | Effects                                 |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Divine Smiting Actuator   | 5             | Fire  | Small              | Special     | Enable a combat-related lesser gift     |
| Force Projection Jewel    | 3             | Fire  | Small              | Constant    | Long-range attack and Mob-clearer       |
| Harvester Hand            | 3             | Fire  | Small              | Constant    | Does grave harm to lesser foes          |
| The Lance of Appointing   | 3             | Fire  | Small              | Constant    | Single-target offensive melee weapon    |
| Mundane Weaponry          | 0             | Fire  | Small              | Constant    | Huge mundane weaponry                   |
| Jump Torpedoes            | 3             | Fire  | Medium             | Constant    | Sea-to-surface torpedoes                |
| Halo of Wrath             | 3             | Fire  | Medium             | Constant    | Constantly damage nearby foes           |
| Stiletto Sutra Projector  | 3             | Fire  | Medium             | Constant    | Single-target armor-piercing bolt       |
| Wingcutter Malediction    | 3             | Fire  | Medium             | Constant    | Surface-to-air beam attack              |
| Devourer of Armies        | 4             | Fire  | Large              | Constant    | Fire a cone of consuming flame          |
| Trump of Judgment         | 4             | Fire  | Large              | Constant    | Blast a target with a sonic barrage     |
| Ablative Blessing Seals   | 3             | Metal | Small              | Constant    | Gain 20% of hit dice as a buffer        |
| Divine Shielding Actuator | 5             | Metal | Small              | Special     | Enable a defense-related lesser gift    |
| Improved Plating          | 3             | Metal | Small              | Constant    | Improve AC by 2 points                  |
| Sanctified to the Word    | 3             | Metal | Small              | Instant     | Commit Effort to resist Smiting gifts   |
| Elemental Harmonizer      | 3             | Metal | Medium             | Constant    | Invincible defense vs. an energy type   |
| Reactive Adaptation Unit  | 3             | Metal | Medium             | Instant     | Commit Effort for one immunity          |
| Volley Negation Shield    | 4             | Metal | Large              | Constant    | Multi-attack foes can only hit once     |
| Banner of Zeal            | 2             | Void  | Small              | On Turn     | Commit Effort to raise allied Morale    |
| Crown of Companions       | 2             | Void  | Small              | Constant    | Keep in mind contact with allies        |
| Divine Awareness Actuator | 4             | Void  | Small              | Special     | Enable a sense-related lesser gift      |
| Eyes of Argus             | 2             | Void  | Small              | Constant    | See in all conditions; tag an enemy     |
| Clarion Call              | 2             | Void  | Medium             | Action      | Long-range telepathic contact           |
| Oracular Combinator       | 3             | Void  | Medium             | Constant    | No surprise. Commit Effort to predict   |
| Keening Dread             | 3             | Void  | Large              | Action      | Commit Effort to force Morale check     |
| Cargo Space               | 0             | Water | Small              | Special     | Allow extra passengers or cargo         |
| Divine Aspect Actuator    | 4             | Water | Small              | Special     | Enable a utility-oriented lesser gift   |
| Pious Construction Array  | 2             | Water | Small              | Special     | Build or fix mundane structures         |
| Polymorphic Shaping Core  | 2             | Water | Small              | On Turn     | Alter the godwalker's general shape     |
| Sustaining Recirculator   | 2             | Water | Small              | Constant    | Improve Effort efficiency for operation |
| Rainbow Bridge Emitter    | 2             | Water | Medium             | Action      | Create a bridge between visible points  |
| Transmutation Field       | 2             | Water | Medium             | Special     | Transmute a ton of matter slowly        |
| Anchor of the Holy Gate   | 3             | Water | Large              | Special     | Be the destination of a teleport gate   |
| Godwalker Repair Bay      | 3             | Water | Large              | Special     | Provide maintenance and overhauls       |
| Divine Motion Actuator    | 4             | Wind  | Small              | Special     | Enable a movement-related lesser gift   |
| Noble Path Generator      | 2             | Wind  | Small              | Constant    | Cross any surface without hindrance     |
| The Awl of Shifting Space | 2             | Wind  | Small              | Action      | Teleport short distances                |
| Wingjet Propulsion Unit   | 3             | Wind  | Small              | Constant    | Fly, but it takes up two chakra slots   |
| Incandescent Spur         | 2             | Wind  | Medium             | On Turn     | Commit Effort to double move speed      |
| Kinetic Sump Vortex       | 2             | Wind  | Medium             | Action      | Commit Effort to slow enemy move        |
| Advance of the Iron Tide  | 3             | Wind  | Large              | On Turn     | Commit Effort to implacably charge      |
| Clavis of Night           | 8             | Wind  | Large              | Action      | Commit Effort to open a Night Road      |

**Improved Plating:** The godwalker's armor class is improved by 2 points, to a minimum of AC 0.

**Incandescent Spur:** Commit Effort. All combat movement speeds of the godwalker are doubled while this component is operating. This benefit does not extend to overland flight speeds.

**Jump Torpedoes:** Commit Effort for the scene to launch a salvo of torpedoes at a visible target. These torpedoes must be launched from the water, but can briefly fly to impact targets within 1,000 feet of the water. Each salvo of torpedoes affects everything within 100 feet of the target point, doing 5d6 damage to all creatures and structures within that area, rolling damage straight against Mobs largely in the area affected. If the target was unaware of the godwalker's presence, the damage is automatically maximized.

**Keening Dread:** Commit Effort for the scene. All enemies currently being engaged by the godwalker must make a Morale check.

**Kinetic Sump Vortex:** Commit Effort. All enemies within 500 feet have their movement rate cut in half and lose initiative each round in combat. The effect lasts for one round after the godwalker has left or reclaimed their Effort. Worthy foes can roll a Hardiness saving throw to resist the slowing for the scene.

**Mundane Weaponry:** These are purely mundane swords, hammers, axes, or hurled projectiles that are extremely cheap to mount on a godwalker, if perhaps inferior to more elaborate weaponry. Many of them can be improvised simply by picking up something heavy. Despite their mundane nature, the godwalker causes them to be treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming a target's defenses. Small godwalkers do 1d8 damage with the weaponry, medium do 1d10, and large do 1d12. Thrown weapons do damage one die size smaller than a melee weapon, and have a range of 200 feet.

**Noble Path Generator:** Commit Effort. The godbound has solid footing regardless of the substance beneath them, whether stone, water, or loose scree. They can cross pits and depressions horizontally without falling.

**Oracular Combinator:** The godwalker can't be surprised. On its turn, it can Commit Effort for the scene to predict the most likely next action for a visible enemy or Mob. Worthy foes can make a Spirit saving throw to conceal their purpose.

**Pious Construction Array:** The godwalker can fix or build damaged mundane structures and goods. A day of its labor is equivalent to 100 skilled craftsmen for small armatures, 300 for medium, and 900 for large. This benefit applies only to mundane repair skills, and requires that raw materials be available on the site.

**Polymorphic Shaping Core:** The godwalker can alter its shape within its general dimensions, gaining a 40' land or sea movement rate by walking, propellers, or wheels if desired, or growing manipulatory appendages. If desired, the entire godwalker can compress its size down to something no larger than a horse. The core is not sophisticated enough to grant flying modes of movement.

**Rainbow Bridge Emitter:** The godwalker can Commit Effort to summon a bridge between any two points in sight that are within 1,000 feet of each other. This bridge is approximately thirty feet wide and allows travel along its surface no matter how steep the grade. The bridge has as many hit dice as the godwalker's maximum hit dice. Users cannot be knocked off the bridge while they are alive or while vehicles are functional. The godwalker can summon as many bridges as they're willing to keep Effort Committed for.

**Reactive Adaptation Unit:** The godwalker can Commit Effort for the scene to render itself immune to a gift or power for the rest of

the scene. This affects only specific gifts or powers, and not attacks or all effects of a particular type.

**Sanctified to the Word:** Commit Effort for the scene and pick a Word; the godwalker is treated as if it had bound to that Word for purposes of resisting the *Corona of Fury* or *Divine Wrath* gifts. The godwalker may also Commit Effort for the day to defensively dispel powers of that Word used against it. Multiple Effort points can be committed at once to bind multiple Words.

**Stiletto Sutra Projector:** This esoteric weapon uses the resonances of a ruinous sacred text to pierce gaping holes of nonbeing into a single chosen target within 2,000 feet. The wielder may choose to automatically hit the target for 1d8+2 straight damage or instead make an attack roll, where a success will inflict an automatic 10 points of damage. The weapon's damage never overflows to additional targets and it is effectively useless against Mobs. The sutra is ineffective against automatons, undead, and other unliving targets, and can't be fired more than once per round.

**Sustaining Recirculator:** The godwalker is exceptionally efficient with its power supply. Where other godwalkers must Commit Effort for the day for each day of operation, this armature need only do so once per week.

**The Awl of Shifting Space:** The godwalker can teleport to a distance up to twice its normal movement rate as an action, reaching any location within range that it can see or has formerly occupied. This teleportation leaves behind any physical bindings or restraints, but not magical ones.

**The Lance of Appointing:** This attached melee weapon does 1d10 damage straight to single targets, but the excess damage done does not overflow to other targets on a successful killing blow. Against Mobs it rolls its damage normally.

**Transmutation Field:** With time and the appropriate mudras, the godwalker can transform large amounts of matter from one generally-consistent substance to another. Any non-magical substance up to one ton in weight can be transmuted into another non-magical, non-precious substance of equal mass with 12 hours of labor. This ability cannot mold or shape the transmuted matter, but it's useful for creating foodstuffs and other material necessities in the field.

**Trump of Judgment:** Commit Effort for the scene. The godwalker launches a building-flattening sonic barrage at everything within 200 feet of a chosen target point in sight. The resonant vibrations will powder any non-magical solid construction within that zone and inflict a 1d12 damage die on creatures within it.

**Volley Negation Shield:** When attacked by a foe with multiple attacks per action, only one of those attacks have any chance to hit, but will do so for maximum damage if it connects. After the first attack of the sequence hits, all others automatically miss. If the enemy does not dedicate its entire attack sequence for an action against the godwalker, none of the attacks have any chance to hit.

**Wingcutter Malediction:** This anti-air beam of congealed curses strikes for 1d10 damage against airborne enemies and rolls its damage straight against flying Mobs and flying lesser foes. It automatically hits any aerial target, but is useless against ground-bound foes.

**Wingjet Propulsion Unit:** The godwalker can fly at its normal movement rate, including the ability to hover in place. This component takes up two Wind chakra slots and isn't powerful enough to lift anything bigger than a medium-sized sacred armature. Engines that don't provide enough Wind slots might have to dedicate a Void slot to cover part of the price.

## EXAMPLE GODWALKERS

This page provides a selection of example godwalkers, either for discovery as treasure, theft from a suitable foe, or as opponents for the pantheon. The weaker godwalkers may not be enough of a fight individually, but as minions of a powerful foe or in the company of Mobs of allies they can still make a good brawl. A godwalker reduced to zero hit dice is so much scrap without a dedicated construction facility, so a GM is generally safe in allowing a pantheon to fight these foes without worrying about them excessively pillaging the remains.

### UNBLINKING JADE EYE

|                                                                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Armature:</b> Peltast                                                              | <b>Engine:</b> Tireless Flowing Water |
| <b>AC:</b> 4                                                                          | <b>Move:</b> 60' run or Awl teleport  |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 14                                                                   | <b>Save:</b> 8+                       |
| <b>Attack:</b> +13 total                                                              | <b>Damage:</b> Harvester Hand         |
| <b>Effort:</b> 4                                                                      | <b>Actions:</b> 1 per combat round    |
| <b>Slotted:</b> <i>Harvester Hand, Crown of Companions, The Awl of Shifting Space</i> |                                       |

*Unblinking Jade Eye* is a godwalker of the Thousand Gods in service to the divinity known as Mirrored Panther. Its most common pilot is a tribal hero with a base attack bonus of +10, allowing it a total hit bonus of +13. Mirrored Panther is not a particularly great god by the measure of his neighbors, and *Unblinking Jade Eye* is the only godwalker at its disposal. The divinity is always planning to make more, but it is easily distracted by events. Including its fittings, armature, and engine, *Unblinking Jade Eye* cost 14 Dominion to build.

The godwalker is used to keep tributary villages in line. The Peltast armature moves quickly, and the Tireless Flowing Water engine doesn't require Effort to activate it each day, allowing *Unblinking Jade Eye* to spend weeks in the field overawing the locals. *Crown of Companions* helps it keep in contact with its patron's lieutenants, while *Harvester Hand* makes short and bloody work of any native Mobs that might contest Mirrored Panther's rule. If confronted by an opponent too strong to overcome, *Unblinking Jade Eye* retreats, relying on the *Awl of Shifting Space* to get away quickly.

### WITHOUT REPINING

|                                                                                                                                                          |                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Armature:</b> Epitaph                                                                                                                                 | <b>Engine:</b> Celestial Lance        |
| <b>AC:</b> 6                                                                                                                                             | <b>Move:</b> 40' run, x2 with Spur    |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 25                                                                                                                                      | <b>Save:</b> 6+                       |
| <b>Attack:</b> pilot +2                                                                                                                                  | <b>Damage:</b> As Lance of Appointing |
| <b>Effort:</b> 6                                                                                                                                         | <b>Actions:</b> 2 per combat round    |
| <b>Slotted:</b> <i>The Lance of Appointing, Halo of Wrath, Reactive Adaptation Unit, Oracular Combinator, Sustaining Recirculator, Incandescent Spur</i> |                                       |

Forgotten in an ancient Ren invasion depot, *Without Repining* was once a proud field combatant built to overwhelm Khamite armies with a *Halo of Wrath* and smite down their heroes with the *Lance of Appointing*, while operating for long periods of limited maintenance with its *Sustaining Recirculator*. Now, the godwalker that cost the True King 30 Dominion points to build lies silent and still in its rack.

### GENTLEMAN WHO HOLDS THE WHIP

|                                                                                                                                 |                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>Armature:</b> Che                                                                                                            | <b>Engine:</b> Chariot of War          |
| <b>AC:</b> 3                                                                                                                    | <b>Move:</b> 50' hover or Awl teleport |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 20                                                                                                             | <b>Save:</b> 7+                        |
| <b>Attack:</b> pilot +1                                                                                                         | <b>Damage:</b> As Focused Proj. Jewel  |
| <b>Effort:</b> 6                                                                                                                | <b>Actions:</b> 1 per combat round     |
| <b>Slotted:</b> <i>Force Projection Jewel, Improved Plating, Eyes of Argus, Pious Construction Array, Awl of Shifting Space</i> |                                        |

A combat transport for the ancient Ren invasion force that became Dulimbai, the *Gentleman Who Holds the Whip* was characteristic of their philosophy. While an effective tank against Khamite Mobs with its *Force Projection Jewel*, its main function was to get Ren heroes and VIPs deeper into a battle. Its *Improved Plating* allowed it to shrug off otherwise-ruinous impacts, and its *Eyes of Argus* permitted easy night operation. Perhaps not least, its *Pious Construction Array* was of substantial use in fortifying camps and repairing transport infrastructure.

While of great use in the field, the most significant limitation to the godwalker's utility is its limited endurance. Without swapping out its sensors or construction array for a *Sustaining Recirculator* it won't be able to function for more than six days without receiving a maintenance cycle, due to its engine's daily Effort cost.

A modern recreation of the *Gentleman Who Holds the Whip* would cost an artificer-divinity 20 Dominion.

### THE GATEKEEPER

|                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Armature:</b> Grigori                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Engine:</b> Shining Titan          |
| <b>AC:</b> 4                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Move:</b> 40' run, x2 with Spur    |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 35                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Save:</b> 5+                       |
| <b>Attack:</b> +15 total                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Damage:</b> As Lance of Appointing |
| <b>Effort:</b> 10                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Actions:</b> 3 per combat round    |
| <b>Slotted:</b> <i>The Lance of Appointing, Devourer of Armies, Wingcutter Malediction, Volley Negation Shield, Sanctified to the Word, Godwalker Repair Bay, Incandescent Spur</i> |                                       |

Somewhere amid the fallen halls of Heaven, a great storehouse of celestial shards and other treasures is said to have been erected by a Made God now long disappeared. To protect his trove, he appointed an undying guardian and fashioned for this being a godwalker of sublime power. In conjunction with a small army of lesser automatons, this guardian was to protect the treasure until the Made God returned to reclaim it. That never came to pass.

Now, the Gatekeeper waits patiently, as they have for a thousand years. They maintain their host of mechanical guardians and repel the occasional army from a realm that dreams of seizing the fragments of celestial power. The Gatekeeper's designer envisioned it as being used chiefly against armies led by a few mortal heroes or theurges, and the godwalker's fittings are exceedingly effective at eliminating such armies. Against a small group of Godbound, it must rely more on its escort automatons to deliver enough focused damage.

Should a modern artificer seek to replicate the Gatekeeper and its components, it would come to the fabulous price of 48 Dominion.

# THE MARTIAL STRIFES

Conflict is woven into the fabric of the world. Even in the absence of conscious will, there is a struggle between flowing water and crumbling stone, between ravenous fire and wet green wood, between even the bird's feathered wing and the gravity that drags it down. These superficial contentions are echoes of deeper truths, shadows in the waking world of the True Strifes that strain the gears of the engines of Heaven.

The True Strifes have existed as modes of physical struggle since before the Shattering. Ancient sages and secret adepts took instruction from the nature of the world and the revelations of their own contemplations, and so learned how to make these abstract principles into tangible forms of fist and will. These adepts were never many, and the True Strifes were never widely known, but some few among the myriad nations of the Former Empires always were there to teach the worthy—or those skilled in seeming so.

Usually only a supernatural entity is capable of learning the techniques of a True Strife. Without the native ability to connect with the deep principles of creation, the aspiring adept is unable to channel the True Strife's power. Parasite gods, mighty Eldritch, sorcerous Misbegotten, or stranger constructs all might qualify to learn a True Strife's power if they have sufficient will and a suitable mentor. Even otherwise mortal humans can sometimes attain to the mastery of a True Strife, but this requires a near-superhuman degree of discipline and spiritual cultivation in order to forge that first essential connection with the deeper truths of the world. Those who lack this discipline sometimes buy their way into supernatural power by means of pacts with greater entities.

Instead, for every mortal master of the True Strifes, there are a thousand adepts who study the lesser Strifes. These are pale echoes of the deeper truths, simplified and abridged techniques that utilize those principles that even mortal practitioners can hope to master. Their techniques are far weaker than those of their True counterparts, but a determined disciple can hope to master one without terrible dangers to their spiritual integrity or bargains made with dangerous powers. The lesser Strifes are more common by far in human cultures, and most lands have at least a few known places of instruction for them, if not more common teachers. Any adept of a True Strife can always teach the principles of the lesser version, even if they have not personally bothered to master its petty arts.

The techniques revealed in this chapter are not the only arts of conflict. Aside from the host of mysterious True Strifes cultivated by hidden masters, there are also those techniques and styles that tap into forbidden arts and dangerous celestial energies. Some of these forbidden methods can grant even a mortal tremendous power, but it always comes at a ruinous cost: madness, cancerous malformation, inevitable damnation, or hideously immoral sacrifices.

Most of the forbidden techniques are long since lost, but there are always those restless and power-hungry students who balk at nothing and are willing to seek out these dark secrets to augment their own might. Some entire schools of forbidden study are known in certain realms, where heartless adepts vie with each other in their depravities in order to become master of these black monasteries. There are even persistent tales of entire Strifes composed of these diabolical methods, "Black Strifes" that grant tremendous power to hopelessly damned masters.

## LEARNING THE STRIFES

Learning a True Strife is generally restricted to a supernatural entity. A Godbound hero, an angel, a parasite god, an undead lich-lord... any creature that qualifies as "more than human" has the requisite connection to learn a True Strife. Ordinary mortals who have mastered a lesser Strife and have remarkable reserves of talent and dedication can sometimes master the True Strife as well through sheer force of will and determination. This process transforms them into a supernatural hero in their own right if they aren't already, often with enhanced abilities related to the Strife.

Learning any Strife, True or lesser, requires a source of instruction. For Godbound and other creatures that bind to Words, possession of an appropriate Word gives an intuitive grasp of the principles of a Strife, one sufficient to teach a diligent student. The Sea Word would teach the Strife of the Drowning Tide, for example, or the Beast Word would give hints to the Strife of the Hunting Beast. It's the GM's decision as to whether or not a given Word is sufficient justification. Without this, the pupil must find a teacher who has mastered the techniques they desire to learn or a secret manual that explains the Strife's arts.

True Strifes are learned in a particular order. First, the pupil learns the entrance technique for the art, the first technique listed in the Strife's description. Learning this technique costs one point, the same as learning a lesser gift. Next, the student learns any or all of the four following gifts that form the body of the art, paying one half of a point for each. Once all five earlier techniques are mastered, the adept may perfect the finishing technique of the Strife for one gift point. Thus, completely mastering a Strife costs four gift points.

Lesser Strifes are much easier to learn, though they too require a suitable source of instruction. Any sufficiently dedicated pupil can learn them, though it's usually a work of decades for a normal mortal. Godbound can learn all three levels of a Strife's lesser art for the cost of one gift point, or by dedicating one Fact to it. For example, "I learned the lesser Strife of the Drowning Tide from the sea-priests of the Kasirutan islands." might be a Fact taken at character creation or picked up later as the hero gains an experience level.

## TEACHING MORTALS THE STRIFES

It is possible for Godbound and other divine leaders to imbue their loyal servants with the secrets of the Strifes. Teaching full mastery of a lesser Strife to one's mortal servitors is usually an Improbable task, becoming Impossible if more than one lesser Strife is to be mastered by the same minions. Opening the secrets of a True Strife to a servitor who has already mastered the lesser version is an Improbable task, but it can only be performed for one minion at a time, and it only teaches them the entrance technique. Thus, the first technique taught to one mortal minion will usually cost 2 Dominion. Each additional technique to be taught is a separate Probable task which must also be performed one minion at a time, costing 1 Dominion in most cases. To teach a mortal the full mastery of a True Strife thus costs 7 Dominion points. Minions so graced become heroic mortals of a level equal to the PC teacher's level, and can take talents accordingly.

Teaching an entire group the secrets of a True Strife would be an Impossible working at the least, and likely require a good deal of celestial salvage in the form of instructional texts and exemplary devices.

## Using the Strifes

Strifes require particular techniques and spiritual states, ones that aren't necessarily compatible with all forms of armor and weaponry. Each Strife notes the allowed armor and weapons to the style. Adepts who are wearing excessively heavy armor or wielding unsuitable weapons cannot use any of the lesser or True Strife's techniques and get no benefit from Constant techniques they've learned. Exotic forms of armor are treated as their mundane equivalents; heavy regalia armor counts as heavy armor for purposes of the Strife even if it's nothing more than an enchanted loincloth. The style's allowed weapons count as unarmed attacks for purposes of techniques that boost such blows.

Strifes naturally conflict in their techniques. Heroes who know more than one Strife must choose one to use at the start of a combat scene and cannot use the techniques of any other, including Constant techniques. Masters who spend an extra gift point may integrate all of their current and future completely-mastered styles, allowing them to use all such freely at the same time, with the least restrictive armor and weapon choices applicable to all. This integration applies only to Strifes that have been completely mastered; partially-learned True Strifes aren't familiar enough to integrate with other techniques.

True Strife techniques count as divine gifts for purposes of overcoming mortal magics and resisting attempts at dispelling them. Lesser Strifes are less potent, and are treated as low magic techniques when that concern is relevant.

## Creating New Strifes

It's to be expected that the GM or players might want to add additional Strifes to their campaign, or introduce new techniques into existing ones. These extra techniques wouldn't count for purposes of mastering the Strife, which would still only require learning the entrance technique, the four following arts, and the finishing technique.

Techniques should always be directly applicable to combat. Strifes are about fighting; they should not contain techniques that do are mostly about doing something irrelevant to combat or conflict. Techniques should never simply add a flat bonus to the adept's rolls. Each one should either give them a new maneuver option in combat, a new combat ability, or a very large boost to their dice in a specific kind of circumstance. In general, techniques should be weaker than lesser gifts, largely by being much narrower in application.

Lesser Strifes might have alternate talents taught by heterodox instructors or developed by inspired teachers. If you're running a campaign where such minor talents matter, such as a game focusing on mortal PCs, you might award such talents free to any PC who finds a teacher, or let them commit one of their level-up Facts to devising new ones. The techniques themselves should echo the True Strife's abilities; the general idea should be lesser Strife techniques are all weaker, more limited versions of what the True Strife can do.

## The Strifes That Follow

In the following pages you'll find eight True Strifes for the delectation of your martial heroes. Each one describes how the Strife works, lists the True Strife techniques, and covers the three degrees of lesser Strife mastery. Each also includes a pre-made antagonist practitioner of the True Strife to serve as an opponent, a dubious ally, or a greater foe's lieutenant. As written, the NPCs should be a serious threat to a group of Godbound heroes, but if you plan to use them in an exclusively mortal campaign, you should consider having them roll their damage dice regularly rather than counting them straight.



# THE STRIFE OF THE BITTER RIVAL

The greatest accomplishments are the fruit of well-matched struggle. A rival can be the kind of goad that no lesser prod can be, inspiring the warrior to new heights of ferocity if only to prove themselves the greater. The Strife of the Bitter Rival embodies this violence and strengthens its adepts when they face their chosen rivals.

This Strife is a superb dueling style, and it excels when the adept has only a single enemy to face. Against several fearsome opponents or a swirling mob of bodies, its techniques have less utility.

## THE LESSER STRIFE

The lesser Strife is potent when dueling a single opponent, but useless when multiple foes are involved in a fray, even if they're not attacking the adept. It is a fashionable art in Vissio, where its lust for competitive excellence appeals to the local character. Many Vissian lordlings boast of their talent with the Strife, and only some of these boasts are lies.

**Initiate:** When fighting a solitary opponent in single combat, the initiate can roll hit rolls twice and take the better result.

**Disciple:** When fighting a single opponent, the disciple may automatically succeed at a saving throw against a power their enemy uses once per scene, if a save is allowed.

**Master:** When fighting a single opponent, the master gains one bonus attack each round as long as no other allies have yet engaged the opponent or aided the master.

## SIGNORE DOTTORE GAVAZZI

AC: 3, in regalia armor

Move: 30' run

Hit Dice: 20

Save: 5+

Attack: +12 x 3

Damage: 1d8+2 rapier straight

Morale: 10

Effort: 6

Signore Dottore Gavazzi once graced the Order of Redactors with his illustrious talents as an assassin. Countless enemies of the Order fell to his clockwork blades and extravagant talents of violence, but unfortunately, the esteemed Dottore became too wrapped up in the Strife which won him such fame. His Vissian obsession with personal excellence and his need for greater rivals eventually led him to break from the Order, and now he roams in constant search of worthy foes.

Gavazzi has attained mastery of the True Strife of the Bitter Rival and has extensively augmented himself with Vissian clockwork prostheses. Combined with his supernatural talents of subtlety, his skills grant him the Words of Alacrity and Deception and the ability to automatically succeed at saving throws by Committing Effort as a Godbound does. Gavazzi gets two actions per round.

The Vissian understands the limits of his capabilities but is constantly seeking out enemies that can test them. Gavazzi is positively friendly toward his chosen rivals, always letting them know beforehand of their signal honor and expressing his deep appreciation of their many fine qualities. He will kill them, of course, but their friends and associates are entirely safe from the blademaker provided they do not interfere with the rivalry. Sadly, his target's friends have a regrettable tendency to obtrude into the affair all the same, so he takes pains to line up allies and minions beforehand to better occupy those other hands.

Gavazzi has hired out as a henchman for powerful supernatural creatures on occasion, usually serving only long enough to earn the resources he needs to pursue his eternal hunt.

## TECHNIQUES OF THE BITTER RIVAL

|                                                            |                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Name Their Doom</i>                                     | Choose a rival in a fight        |
| <i>Excel Their Stroke</i>                                  | Hit a rival after they miss      |
| <i>While They Live</i>                                     | Fight on while a rival stands    |
| <i>Shed Their Snares</i>                                   | More easily save versus rivals   |
| <i>When They Hide</i>                                      | Know a rival's position always   |
| <i>Fill Their Grave</i>                                    | Flurry constant blows at a rival |
| This Strife allows any armor or weapon to be used with it. |                                  |

### NAME THEIR DOOM

On Turn

Commit Effort. Choose a single individual within sight as a rival. Until the rival is defeated, flees, or the scene ends, a new rival cannot be chosen, nor can the technique be ended. All hit rolls the adept makes against the rival may be rolled twice, and the better taken. All hit rolls the adept makes against anyone else are rolled twice, and the worst taken. Mobs cannot be selected as rivals.

### EXCEL THEIR STROKES

On Turn

Commit Effort. While committed, if the rival misses an attack roll in a turn against any target, the adept's next hit roll against them is automatically successful. Attack rolls that are blocked or negated by a gift don't count as misses, nor do resisted supernatural powers.

### WHILE THEY LIVE

Instant

If the adept is reduced to zero hit points while the rival is still active, the adept may Commit Effort for the day and instantly regain two hit points per level, or a quarter of their hit dice for creatures without levels. This technique can be used only once per scene.

### SHED THEIR SNARES

Constant

When the adept Commits Effort to auto-save against a rival's power to defensively dispel one of their supernatural attacks, it may be reclaimed at the end of the scene, rather than the end of the day.

### WHEN THEY HIDE

Constant

The adept is always aware of their rival's exact location and general activities while the scene is still underway, and may fight them without penalty even while unable to see or detect the rival otherwise.

### FILL THEIR GRAVE

On Turn

Commit Effort for the day. The adept's weapon or unarmed attack attempts against the rival gain one bonus attack per round until a round when none of their attacks or hostile powers hit the rival. Attacks blocked by magic, gifts, or successful saving throws still count as a hit for purposes of this technique. If the technique is ended, the adept may trigger the technique again on the next round by committing more Effort for the day. While this art is in effect, they are unable to target attacks, hostile effects, or Fray dice against anyone but their rival, albeit other foes might be caught in area effects.



# The Strife of the Broken Earth

The solid surety of earth can vanish in a moment when a quake breaks the soil or a landslide strips away the ground beneath a man's feet. The Strife of the Broken Earth mimics that catastrophic upheaval, shaking what is solid and defying what is secure.

The Strife of the Broken Earth is particularly effective for smashing inanimate objects and destroying fortifications. It has few attacks meant to instantly overwhelm a foe, but instead focuses on grinding, remorseless assaults that eventually wear down the strongest enemy. Fleeing is useless when even the ground beneath you seeks your death.

## The Lesser Strife

The lesser strife of the Broken Earth emphasizes crushing blows and shattering strikes. Adepts are capable of smashing thick walls of stone, though their arts are not equally applicable to wooden barriers.

**Initiate:** The initiate never slips or falls on an earthen or stone surface, and their unarmed attacks do 1d6 damage.

**Disciple:** By focusing, the adept can break stones with their blows, smashing a foot-thick barrier with a minute's effort.

**Master:** Commit Effort for the scene to ignore any metal armor on a foe. The master's unarmed blows do 1d8 damage per hit.

## The Shaken Lady

|                         |                                     |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 3, intrinsic | <b>Move:</b> 30' run                |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 25     | <b>Save:</b> 5+                     |
| <b>Attack:</b> +12 x 2  | <b>Damage:</b> 1d10 strike straight |
| <b>Morale:</b> 10       | <b>Effort:</b> 7                    |

The Shaken Lady is an unfortunate product of the eugenic cults of the Oasis States. The culmination of several centuries of careful cross- and inbreeding among several allied noble houses, she was to be a perfected vessel for the terrestrial powers of stone and sand. Something went wrong in the breeding process, however, and the Shaken Lady was born a frail, trembling girl wholly unserviceable for that end.

Enduring years of disappointment and scorn from her family, she nursed a growing hatred for her kinsmen and society. Unbeknownst to her progenitors, the seeds of terrestrial power were still in the girl, and required only a sufficient time to manifest. When it did, much of the pyramid level she occupied collapsed in the ensuing chaos. She escaped to the desert, where she was found by a sand prince who recognized her value to his cause.

Since then, the "Shaken Lady" as she's known has become a relentless scourge to the pyramids of the Oasis States. She nurses an unquenchable hatred of the pyramid-dwellers, and would delight in seeing them all dead, down to the infants in their mothers' arms. She justifies this to herself as a noble hatred of the eugenic cults, but in truth, she simply wants the universal slaughter of those who despised her.

The Shaken Lady has mastered the True Strife of the Broken Earth, and has an innate bond to the Words of Might and Earth. She is unprepossessing in appearance, looking like a small and very pretty Oasian teenager with a noticeable tremor to her limbs and an occasional stuttering catch to her voice. To comment on these tics is to invite immediate and spectacular death, but she holds jealously to her current alias as a reminder of her suffering.

The Shaken Lady can Commit Effort to automatically save versus effects, and gains two actions per round in combat.

## Techniques of the Broken Earth

|                                                                |                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Avalanche Stride</b>                                        | Churn the earth in your wake   |
| <b>Load Bearing</b>                                            | Uphold any weight              |
| <b>Rocks Fall</b>                                              | Your blows crush stone         |
| <b>No Walls Stand</b>                                          | Ignore metal armor and shields |
| <b>Gray Jaws Champing</b>                                      | Topple buildings and objects   |
| <b>Under This Red Rock</b>                                     | Hit a target from any range    |
| This Strife may be used with any armor and with melee weapons. |                                |

## Avalanche Stride

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene. The adept never slips or falls on earth or stone, and can traverse such surfaces even vertically or upside-down. If they end the round standing on earth or stone, they create shockwaves in the material that do 1d8 damage to all foes within 10 feet of them. These waves don't harm the surface, and as they cause area-effect damage the die is rolled straight against Mobs in melee with the adept.

## Load Bearing

Instant

Commit Effort. The adept becomes impossible to crush by simple weight. Attacks affect them normally, but collapsing ceilings, encroaching wall traps, and falling weights can't harm them. If they spend their action, they can move up to half their normal movement rate, either carrying the object atop them or pushing through debris and rubble.

## Rocks Fall

Constant

Your unarmed attacks are treated as a magical weapon doing 1d10 damage. Your blows can make a man-sized hole in earth or stone up to six feet deep per round.

## No Walls Stand

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene to ignore all stone or metal armor or shields used by opponents. For ordinary human NPCs wearing metal armor, it can be assumed that they are AC 9 without it.

## Gray Jaws Champing

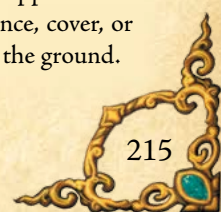
Action

Strike a structure or immobile object no larger than a small house and cause the earth to crack and grind beneath it. Wagon-sized things are smashed in one round, lightly-built houses in two, and sturdy fortifications in four. The collapse will inflict 1d20 damage on anyone who remains inside the structure when it falls, but anyone who can move can dive or dodge clear of the crevice before suffering damage. Mobile vehicles also move too quickly to be affected by this technique.

## Under This Red Rock

Action

Commit Effort for the day and choose a target you've hit during the scene. For the next ten minutes you may attack that opponent as if they were adjacent to you, regardless of their distance, cover, or whether you know their location, so long as they're on the ground.



# THE STRIFE OF THE CONSUMING FLAME

The light that burns, the heat that sears and blackens, the purity that comes from combustion... all these things are the purview of the Consuming Flame. Adepts of the True Flame can burn their own life force to ensure that their attacks strike home. The instinctive terror of flame scourges their foes, and the indiscriminate hunger of their fire devours the foes that surround them. Practitioners of this art are often marked by their ferocity and self-sacrificial violence.

## THE LESSER STRIFE

The lesser Strife of the Consuming Flame focuses on sacrificial strikes and counterattacks, opening the practitioner to enemies in order to ensure their blows strike home.

**Initiate:** The initiate gains an immunity to mundane flame, and their unarmed attacks inflict 1d6 damage.

**Disciple:** Once per round, the disciple may automatically counter-attack a melee opponent who strikes at the martial artist, rolling a single hit roll and damage normally.

**Master:** The master's unarmed attacks inflict 1d8 flame damage. Once per round, the master may reroll a missed attack roll by accepting a 1d8+2 damage die worth of injury. This damage may not be avoided and this reroll may only be attempted once per round.

## LAWFUL PYRE-BORN

AC: 3, in regalia armor

Move: 40' run

Hit Dice: 25

Save: 5+

Attack: +12 x 2

Damage: 1d10 fiery straight

Morale: 12

Effort: 8

The antipriests of Lom are lords of that cold and unhappy land, but some among them desire a higher rank among their peers than their own talents would otherwise justify. The most ambitious of these petitioners seek leave to enter the Pyre, a holy artifact that imbues its subjects with the power to silence divine miracles. Unfortunately, nine-tenths of those who enter the Pyre are rendered simpletons by the holy flames, childlike Stiflers treated little better than animals by their god-hunting handlers. Those that survive with their intellects intact, however, can expect glorious advancement in the hierarchy.

Lawful Architect was one such petitioner, but the Pyre did more than the antipriests anticipated. When he emerged from the flames of reason, Lawful Pyre-Born was gifted with an intrinsic bond with the Word of Fire. Such was Lawful's zeal that he refrained from seeking higher rank in the Holy Colloquy, and now leads a band of Lomite antipriests in campaigns against parasite gods and newly-awakened Godbound who might threaten the atheocracy's grip on Lom.

Aside from mastery of the True Strife of the Consuming Flame and the Word of Fire, Lawful also has the intrinsic abilities of a Lomite Stifler. Much like an Uncreated, he can use *The Cold Breath* to force any Godbound in his presence to Commit two points of Effort before they can Commit Effort to activate any gift. Lawful has the power to Commit Effort to automatically succeed at saving throws and takes two actions per round in combat.

Lawful is always accompanied by a crew of elite Lomite heroes, and carefully studies his foes before he moves to attack. He is utterly committed to True Reason, and fears the Godbound are merely the harbingers of an age of divine tyranny over humanity.

## TECHNIQUES OF THE CONSUMING FLAME

|                                                                |                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Ignite the Pyre</i>                                         | Mantle yourself in flames        |
| <i>Blaze of Conviction</i>                                     | Reroll a miss, at a cost in pain |
| <i>A Hand of Ashes</i>                                         | Strike with terrifying flames    |
| <i>Burn Clean</i>                                              | Purge your poisons or sickness   |
| <i>An Unfettered Flame</i>                                     | Become insubstantial briefly     |
| <i>A Consuming Fury</i>                                        | Burst explosively, at a cost     |
| This Strife may be used with any armor and with melee weapons. |                                  |

### IGNITE THE PYRE

Action

Gain an invincible defense against flame or smoke. Commit Effort to shroud the adept in a mantle of flame that burns only what they wish. When shrouded, melee foes automatically suffer a 1d8 damage die before resolving an attack against the adept. A victim can suffer this damage only once per round, even if they make multiple attacks.

### BLAZE OF CONVICTION

Instant

If the adept misses with an unarmed attack, they can suffer an unavoidable 1d8+2 damage die and roll the attack again. They may use this power repeatedly on the same attack, but the harm increases by another 1d8+2 die after each consecutive use on the same missed blow.

### A HAND OF ASHES

Constant

The adept's unarmed attacks count as a 1d8 weapon that inflicts fire damage if desired. Once per scene, they can force a target or Mob struck by their attacks to make an immediate Morale check at -2 against the terror of their flames unless the target is immune to fire.

### BURN CLEAN

On Turn

If afflicted by a hostile magical effect, poison, or disease, the adept may suffer a quarter of the inflictor's maximum hit dice in hit point damage to purge the effect with flames. If the effect was not caused by a creature, the adept takes a 1d20 damage die to purge it.

### AN UNFETTERED FLAME

Action

The adept's body partially transforms to flame for a moment, allowing them to escape any bonds or grapples or pass through tiny cracks. The adept can move up to 30 feet as part of this power, and automatically inflicts one point of damage per level to any creature or substance trying to restrain them. Using this power more than once in a scene requires them to Commit Effort for the scene each further time.

### A CONSUMING FURY

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the day. The adept expends their life force to erupt in a pillar of flame with a thirty-foot radius. The adept may inflict up to 1d10 damage dice per level to all selected targets within the area, up to a 10d10 maximum, but they also take the same number of dice of damage and cannot mitigate the injury with any of their powers.



# The Strife of the Drowning Tide

Waves beat tirelessly on the shore, grinding mountains to silt and swallowing nations whole. The Strife of the Drowning Tide mimics that all-consuming ruin, flowing in and crushing the multitudes that would dare oppose its adepts. While less efficient against a single potent foe, the Strife has ways of swiftly washing away packs of lesser enemies.

## The Lesser Strife

The sea-priests of the Kasirutan isles are known to practice this lesser Strife, and through them more than one pirate or merchant's guardsman has learned something of its secrets.

**Initiate:** The initiate can breathe underwater and gains a 1d4 Fray die.

**Disciple:** The disciple's unarmed attacks are treated as weapons that do 1d8 damage. As an action, they can move their full movement rate through the most tightly-packed crowd of foes without drawing melee attacks.

**Master:** Commit Effort for the scene. The master whirls through the space around them, inflicting one action's worth of melee attacks on all chosen targets within thirty feet of their position. They must end their action at the location they began.

## SALT LADY LASTRI

**AC:** 3, intrinsic

**Move:** 30' run or swim

**Hit Dice:** 30

**Save:** 5+

**Attack:** +12 x 2

**Damage:** 1d10+2 blow straight

**Morale:** 10

**Effort:** 8

People of the eastern isles say that Lastri's father was a sea-god with teeth of coral and skin of white salt. His daughter was born with pearl-white eyes and a terrifying relentlessness, a determination that drove her to the captaincy of her own ship before she was eighteen. In the ten years since, her name has become a byword for bloodstained plundering and the reaping of fat merchantmen. Even other Kasirutan ships are fair game to the Salt Lady when her ship is on the prowl.

Between her natural gifts and unnatural potencies, mastery of the True Strife of the Drowning Tide came instinctively to Lastri. Whether by her bloodline or by rumored bargains with powers of the deep waves, she has gained arts akin to the Words of Sea and Endurance, and is always first over the rail when boarding her prey. She can Commit Effort for the day to automatically save as a Godbound can, and she acts twice a round in combat.

Lastri terrifies her crew almost as much as she does her prey. As is the Kasirutan custom, she'll sail only with a crew of other women, one she keeps in line with brutal punishments and iron-fisted discipline. Her hellions have burnt villages and raided towns all along the Nezdohvan and Raktine coasts, ranging as far north as the Dry Ports of the Oasis States and around the Thousand Gods to chew at Dulimbai's belly. She's taught her veteran crew the secrets of the lesser Strife of the Drowning Tide, and they rejoice in the opportunity to use it.

Lastri's great ambition is to be named Pirate Queen, but her history of casual fratricide toward other Kasirutan ships has left the islands' datus and great captains bitterly resentful toward her. While she's idly entertained thoughts of mass murder to bring them around, she thinks that some legendary raid on a great city might be more effective. To do that, of course, she needs allies and funds for a fleet, and she is quite ready to aid those who can get these things for her.

## Techniques of the Drowning Tide

|                                                               |                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Water Red and White</b>                                    | Your wounds attack your foes   |
| <b>Undertow Hand</b>                                          | Crush Mobs with your blows     |
| <b>The Tide Comes In</b>                                      | Charge through barriers        |
| <b>Stone Cast on the Strand</b>                               | Hurl a foe back with a blow    |
| <b>The Tide Goes Out</b>                                      | Leap back from attack flurries |
| <b>The Mountains Wash Away</b>                                | Crush and drown nearby foes    |
| This Strife allows any armor and any two-handed melee weapon. |                                |

## WATER RED AND WHITE

Constant

The adept can breathe water, see clearly underwater in the absence of light, and ignores the cold and pressure of the depths. Their wounds lash out with tendrils of gore. Each time they're hit and take damage, they can apply their Fray die to the attacker, even if a worthy foe.

## UNDERTOW HAND

Constant

The adept's unarmed attack is treated as a magical weapon that does 1d10 damage. Against Mobs, this damage is rolled straight if the Godbound delays their attack until after the Mob's actions for the round.

## THE TIDE COMES IN

Action

The adept can move their full movement rate in a straight line. They have an invincible defense against harm during this movement and can charge through a line of foes or any non-magical barrier or wall less than two feet thick without slowing.

## STONE CAST ON THE STRAND

Instant

On a successful hit, the adept may halve the damage inflicted, rounded up, and hurl the target straight back up to thirty feet. No extra damage is done by the throw even if the target is stopped by a barrier, but they must spend their movement action rising next turn. Worthy foes may make a Hardiness save to resist the throw.

## THE TIDE GOES OUT

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene. On a hit, the adept may choose to be thrown back thirty feet, landing on their feet. If the assailant is a creature with multiple attacks and meant to launch several at the adept, the remainder are wasted. If the adept is pinned against a wall or other obstruction, they cannot benefit from this technique.

## THE MOUNTAINS WASH AWAY

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the scene. All Mobs and lesser foes within fifty feet are inundated with salt water and blood, quenching flames, smashing light construction, and inflicting 1d8 damage per level or hit die of the adept, rounded up, up to a 10d8 maximum. If used more often than once per scene, the adept takes the same damage inflicted with no possible mitigation of it. The drowning fluids vanish after they do their damage and have no effect on worthy foes.



# THE STRIFE OF THE DYING HOUR

With time comes death and dissolution as the inevitable march of the hours grinds away the substance of humans and inanimate matter alike. The Strife of the Dying Hour draws on that eternal conflict, imbuing its practitioners with the arts of temporal erosion and lethal time-manipulation. As the art's scorn for material objects is so fundamental, its practitioners cannot use it while wearing armor or wielding weapons, as such reliance on base matter is contrary to its ways.

## THE LESSER STRIFE

The lesser Strife of the Dying Hour is surprisingly popular among scholars and intellectuals, who find sympathy in its focus on time. Its most common practitioners in Arcem are among the officials of the Dulimbaian Regency and their neo-Taoist internal masters who practice it as an outgrowth of their immortality studies. While the art does not offer agelessness, it is thought that study of its principles better-equips a master to overcome the relentless decay of age.

**Initiate:** The initiate cannot be surprised without the aid of magic and their unarmed attacks inflict 1d6 damage.

**Disciple:** Once per scene, the disciple may double their allowed attacks for a round, albeit they lose the following two rounds of actions. Disciples with multiple actions in a round double attacks made with any of them.

**Master:** The master's unarmed attacks inflict 1d8 damage and they become immune to magical aging or slowing effects.

## SCHOLAR LI PO

AC: 5, intrinsic

Move: 60' teleport

Hit Dice: 20

Save: 5+

Attack: +12 x 3

Damage: 1d10 strike straight

Morale: 10

Effort: 8

One of the esteemed *junzi* gentry of the Dulimbaian Regency, Scholar Li Po is a genius—and fully aware of that fact. Tremendously proud of his erudition and culture, he considers the common *xiaoren* to be little more than annoying rabble to be ordered correctly for their own good, and the less said of barbarian foreigners, the better.

While an incredible intellect, Li Po is such a tremendous asshole that his colleagues in the bureaucracy have conspired almost as one to ensure that he is not honored by the Regent nor given an office of importance. Outraged by this disregard for his talents, Scholar Li Po has elected to rusticate in places of Former Empire culture and sophistication, seeking out ruins for study and plunder. He often sets his heart on various artifacts or relics that might be held by PCs.

Li Po considers himself a paragon of Dulimbaian values of "ritual" and "humanity". In practice, he's a relentlessly selfish bastard who effortlessly explains to himself why his passing whims and self-centered desires are the veriest embodiment of the True King's virtue. He's mastered enough of the ancient Li-magic to compel the wills of minions and lieutenants, many of whom hate him even as they serve him. He has tremendous wealth at his command as well, and often hires specialists for certain work, many soon coming to despise him.

Scholar Li Po has mastered the True Strife of the Dying Hour, and has gifts equivalent to the Words of Knowledge and Command. He can Commit Effort to automatically succeed at saving throws, and can take two actions per combat round.

## TECHNIQUES OF THE DYING HOUR

|                                                    |                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Sand Falling Free</b>                           | A free action instead of surprise |
| <b>Thief of Hours</b>                              | Do 1d10 temporal damage           |
| <b>Day-Devouring Blow</b>                          | Age a target with your blows      |
| <b>Avalanche of Moments</b>                        | Double attacks for one round      |
| <b>Stand Outside the Hour</b>                      | Temporal immunity                 |
| <b>The Seconds Flee</b>                            | Strip an enemy's action on a hit  |
| This strife disallows armor or weapon use with it. |                                   |

### SAND FALLING FREE

Constant

The adept cannot be surprised. If caught in a situation where they *would* normally be surprised, they gain a free round's action before the conflict begins. This doesn't apply to situations of willful carelessness.

### THIEF OF HOURS

Constant

The adept's unarmed attacks are treated as a magic weapon that inflicts 1d10 damage with a 30 foot range. Each blow's damage is done as future or past hurts are drawn back to wound the target.

### DAY-DEVOURING BLOW

Action

The adept makes a normal unarmed attack, but instead of damage, each hit physically ages or makes younger a living target or inanimate object by up to 10 years, at their discretion. Immortal creatures are not affected, and worthy foes get a Hardiness save to resist. Godbound are treated as immortals for the purpose of this gift.

### AVALANCHE OF MOMENTS

On Turn

The weight of the adept's future collapses on a foe, allowing the adept to attack twice in one round, doubling all attacks for practitioners with multiple attacks per action. They sacrifice their next round's turn, however, being unable to act, move, or activate anything but Instant abilities or defensive dispelling that round.

### STAND OUTSIDE THE HOUR

Instant

Commit Effort. The adept gains an invincible defense against temporal manipulations that would slow them, age them, or deprive them of actions. This immunity does not apply to physical bindings or mental influences, but only to temporal effects. This grants immunity to attacks from *Thief of Hours*. Optionally, the adept can cause any damage they inflict to stand in abeyance until they release the Effort, when it will either occur to the victim or dissipate at the adept's choice.

### THE SECONDS FLEE

Action

Make a normal physical attack. On a successful hit, inflict normal damage and deny the target their next round's actions, whether movement or attack, even if they normally get multiple actions per round. This action loss can be inflicted only once per scene on a given target, though the adept can use this ability repeatedly until they hit.

# The Strife of the Falling Sky

All things that rise up must descend, and the Strife of the Falling Sky embodies that dichotomy. It is a strife of hurled bodies and thunderous blows, with an adept's own fall a weapon against all below them. The downward blows of a master of the True Strife can crush stone barriers and human bones just as readily, and their terrible leaping strikes can pierce overhead cover with ease. An adept of the strife will usually move more by leaping than running when in a fight, relying on their thunderous landing to weaken strong enemies and cull weak ones. The True Strife is most often taught by supernatural beings of Sun, Night, or Sky, though only the most gifted can master its secrets.

## The Lesser Strife

The lesser strife of the Falling Sky is most often found in wild places, where open spaces are plentiful. Mountain monasteries and other refuges in high places are known to teach this strife, often pairing it with lofty meditations on the soul.

**Initiate:** The initiate's unarmed attacks do 1d6 damage. When striking an opponent below them, the initiate may roll their hit roll twice and take the better roll. They ignore the first thirty feet of falling damage.

**Disciple:** The disciple may use their movement action to leap fifteen feet vertically and thirty feet horizontally.

**Master:** The master's unarmed attacks do 1d8 electrical damage and have a 50 foot range, and they are immune to falling damage. They may automatically strike a target below them when they fall for a 1d10 damage die, provided they fall at least 30 feet beforehand.

## Inga Hammerfall

**AC:** 5, intrinsic

**Move:** 40' run, 60' jump

**Hit Dice:** 25

**Save:** 5+

**Attack:** +12 x 2

**Damage:** 1d8+2 strike straight

**Morale:** 11

**Effort:** 8

The Witch-Queen Sif of the Ulstang isles has many loyal priestesses, but few so useful to her as the towering Inga Hammerfall. A half-living jotun daughter of a now-dead jarl, Inga's supernatural gifts manifested as an uncanny talent for the secrets of the Falling Sky. She mastered the True Strife before her twenty-third birthday, and with her jotun blood's affinity for the Word of the Sky she has been Sif's most reliable lieutenant and executioner for the past ten years.

Inga relies upon surprise, using her Sky affinity to fly into danger and the *Tear Down the Sky* technique to batter her opponents in a first strike. Once she lands, she leaps with *The Rising of Rain* to gain repeated benefit from the *Javelin of God*, shocking her opponents before flurrying a terrible onslaught of blows. She avoids engaging foes indoors, where it is difficult for her to leap or maneuver.

Inga's sole interest is in serving Sif loyally. The witch-queen offers her satisfactions that only her dark powers can provide, and tantalizes the jotun with the promise of secret rites of immortality. Inga is beginning to suspect that Sif may view her as much as a potential rival as a future peer, however, and so she has secretly begun to search for alternative means of prolonging her youth.

Inga's supernatural heritage lends her an inhuman degree of might. She can Commit Effort for the day to automatically succeed on saving throws, just as Godbound can, and she gets two actions per round.

## Techniques of the Falling Sky

|                                                                    |                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Javelin of God</i>                                              | Pierce barriers on landing     |
| <i>The Rising of Rain</i>                                          | Leap great distances           |
| <i>Cast Down the Proud</i>                                         | Knock over a foe in combat     |
| <i>Thunderbolt Fist</i>                                            | Hurl lightning as a weapon     |
| <i>Topple the Pillar</i>                                           | Magnify a foe's falling damage |
| <i>Tear Down the Sky</i>                                           | Throw pieces of sky at enemies |
| This strife disallows armor and non-projectile weapon use with it. |                                |

## Javelin of God

Constant

The adept never suffers falling damage and can land with perfect precision on a desired inanimate target beneath them when such accuracy is important. When falling or diving, the adept may penetrate non-magical barriers as far as they've fallen freely, up to thirty feet of ceilings, barriers, or solid earth. If they have fallen thirty feet or more, as an action they may create a thunderclap that inflicts a 1d10 damage die on all enemies in a thirty-foot radius of their landing point.

## The Rising of Rain

On Turn

The adept may trade their movement action to leap up to thirty feet vertically and sixty feet horizontally. They can only do this once per round, but leaping out of melee doesn't draw a free attack from a foe.

## Cast Down the Proud

Action

The adept may make a standard ranged or melee attack against any target within sight, their blow transmitted through the air. On a hit, the damage done is halved, rounded up, but the target is thrown to the ground and must use their movement action to rise.

## Thunderbolt Fist

Constant

The adept's unarmed or projectile attacks count as magical weapons with a 1d8 damage die of electrical damage and a 200 foot range. If the adept is on solid ground above the target when they make an attack, they may roll their hit roll twice and take the better result.

## Topple the Pillar

Instant

The adept may instantly target a falling enemy or object; any damage inflicted by the fall is doubled, usually to 2d6 damage per 10' fallen.

## Tear Down the Sky

(Smite) Action

Commit Effort for the scene. If outdoors, the adept rips out a piece of the heavens and hurls or shoots it at a single target within sight. The victim suffers 1d10 damage per level or hit die of the adept, up to a 10d10 maximum, and is pinned to the earth for the remainder of the scene. They can move along the ground, but cannot swim, fly, teleport or jump. Worthy foes may make an Evasion saving throw to resist the pinning effect of this technique. Each use of this technique after the first in the same vicinity does half as much damage, as the sky tatters. It takes a week for the sky to heal enough to eliminate this penalty.

# THE STRIFE OF THE HUNTING BEAST

The Strife of the Hunting Beast mirrors the eternal conflict and predator and prey, and the countless wiles the feral hunter must embrace to catch a swift meal. The adept of this Strife becomes almost impossible to detect until the moment they finally spring, and the packs of domestic hounds or guard animals that their prey might muster fall inevitably beneath red talons. Adepts of this Strife are known for sometimes taking on bestial physical aspects, occasionally extending to claws, fur, or animalistic facial features.

## THE LESSER STRIFE

Many hunting tribes are known for preserving versions of this lesser Strife, teaching their most capable warriors the secrets of the prowling predator's arts. Outsiders are rarely invited to learn these things without winning the respect of the tribe's elders, and that process can often involve numerous painful feats, including some assaults on rival tribes that might not sit well with a student's conscience.

**Initiate:** The initiate treats their training as a helpful Fact for all stealth or ambush ability checks. They gain a +4 bonus to hit and damage rolls against an unwary target.

**Disciple:** The adept's unarmed attacks count as weapons that do 1d6 damage. By spending an action, the disciple can vanish into natural outdoor surroundings for a round, becoming imperceptible to onlookers. This ability can be used only once per scene, and worthy foes can roll a Spirit save to resist it.

**Master:** The adept's unarmed attacks count as magical weapons that do 1d8 damage. They may Commit Effort for the day to attack a target twice. For mortals with multiple attacks in an action, all attacks are doubled. This ability can be used once per target per scene.

## GARAK RED CHORUS

AC: 3, intrinsic

Move: 60' run

Hit Dice: 30

Save: 5+

Attack: +12 x 2

Damage: 1d10 claw straight

Morale: 10

Effort: 6

A brutal chieftain of the Running Dog Howler tribe, Garak Red Chorus is famed as one of the greatest hunters of his generation. His supernatural stealth, his prowess in war, and his terrible swiftness have made him a scourge to the villages of Lom's Tongue region and a plague to the Oasian pyramid-cities too close to the Howler border.

Garak is utterly indifferent to the lives of non-Running Dogs, and considers others mere playthings and tribute-producers for his tribe. The peace chief of his tribe is utterly cowed by him, and his word is law among his people. A coalition of neighboring tribes is keeping the Running Dogs in check, but the peace is only likely to last as long as Lom and the Oasis States provide more interesting fights. He's especially interested in champions who might be able to give him an engagement worthy of enhancing his glory.

When Garak's not laying a personal ambush, he's always found in the company of his bestial Running Dog kinsmen and their packs of savage, mutated canine allies, many of which are large enough to ride.

Garak has mastered the True Strife of the Hunting Beast and has innate talents equivalent to the Word of Beasts and Alacrity. He can Commit Effort to automatically save, and can take two actions per combat round.

## TECHNIQUES OF THE HUNTING BEAST

|                                                              |                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>The God that Prowls</i>                                   | Vanish to one enemy target      |
| <i>Mask of Grasses</i>                                       | Disappear briefly in nature     |
| <i>Talons of the Stalking Beast</i>                          | Your unarmed blows are silent   |
| <i>The Taste of Blood</i>                                    | Track a bloodied foe unerringly |
| <i>Cull the Huntsman's Pack</i>                              | Slaughter guard beasts          |
| <i>Red Jaws of Frenzy</i>                                    | Berserk against a chosen foe    |
| This Strife disallows armor or non-melee weapon use with it. |                                 |

## THE GOD THAT PROWL

On Turn

The adept chooses one visible creature as prey, becoming imperceptible to that target. If the adept launches a weapon or unarmed attack against the victim, the blow hits automatically and does maximum damage. Once the adept has attacked a target, they are immune to this technique for the rest of the scene. Only one creature can be targeted at a time, and worthy foes get a Spirit saving throw to resist this power.

## MASK OF GRASSES

Action

The adept vanishes into natural outdoor surroundings, becoming imperceptible to all onlookers for one round. The effect is broken if they attack or otherwise draw attention. Each use of this ability after the first in a scene requires the user to Commit Effort for the scene. Worthy foes can make a Spirit saving throw to pierce the concealment.

## TALONS OF THE STALKING BEAST

Constant

The adept's unarmed attacks count as a magic weapon that does 1d10 damage. Unarmed attacks made by the adept stifle all alarm cries or warning sounds made by the victim for one round after the attack.

## THE TASTE OF BLOOD

On Turn

Once the adept hits a victim or has tasted a victim's freshly-shed blood, they can unerringly sense their direction and distance until dawn.

## CULL THE HUNTSMAN'S PACK

Constant

The adept's attacks against natural or magical guard beasts and other animal servitors of intelligent beings automatically hit, and their Fray die always does maximum damage if applied exclusively to the beast.

## RED JAWS OF FRENZY

Instant

Commit Effort for the day and pick a target. The adept may use their action to make three attacks against the target. They may repeat this action each round, but the first time they use their main action for the round to do anything except physically attack this target or are prevented from attacking the target for a round, this gift ends and cannot be triggered against the same target during this scene. Movement, Instant, and On Turn powers may be used without disrupting the gift. If used by a creature with multiple attacks per action, they gain two additional attacks, but all must be targeted at the same foe. If used with *The God that Prowls*, only the first attack is an automatic hit.

# THE STRIFE OF THE SCORPED LOVER

Love and hate are sisters in the heart, and the Strife of the Scorned Lover embodies the bitter vengeance of a love rejected. It is a subtle art, its strikes made invisibly by its adepts and the damage it does concealed until combat finally erupts. It functions most effectively as a tool of treachery, turning old friendships and former romances into weapons against the adept's enemies. Most adepts of the Scorned Lover are beguiling and liberal in their charms, knowing that every kiss and every promise is just another weapon in their arsenal.

## THE LESSER STRIFE

The lesser strife of the Scorned Lover is largely the property of courtesans and con men, adepts who use the art as the final stroke in a far more elaborate plan. Some formal courtesan guilds make a point of teaching this lesser strife to their members for self-defense purposes.

**Initiate:** The initiate treats their skill as a helpful Fact for seduction and charm. The adept's unarmed attacks are treated as weapons that do 1d6 damage. If striking at a completely unwary opponent, the first round's attacks always hit and do maximum damage.

**Disciple:** The first time a foe hits them in a scene, the disciple gets an automatic counterattack action with their weapon or unarmed attack. Practitioners with multiple attacks for each action get their full attack sequence. A Mob versed in this strife may trigger this power once per round, as they are made of multiple individuals.

**Master:** The master's unarmed attacks are treated as magical weapons that do 1d8 damage. They do not appear to be attacks to anyone except the target, who realizes what is really happening.

## LADY MIHRET KASSA

AC: 6, intrinsic

Move: 30' run

Hit Dice: 22

Save: 12+

Attack: +12 x 2

Damage: 1d8+2 strike straight

Morale: 12

Effort: 8

A despised renegade of the Invidian Order of Ancalian knighthood, Mihret Kassa was once a champion among knights, famed as much as any of those secretive justiciars for her astonishing powers of infiltration and disguise. She gained particular renown for masquerading as an undead draugr concubine in a successful attempt to assassinate the dreaded jarl Ivar Gore-Drinker on the eve of a major Ulstang raid.

No one is certain what enticed her to turn against her former sisters, but the systematic extermination of an entire noble kantiba's family was proven to be her work by Vindicant investigators. She vanished several months before the eruption of the Night Roads in Ancalia, and has supposedly since entertained offers of employment from half a dozen wealthy nobles throughout Arcem.

Mihret has fully mastered the True Strife of the Scorned Lover, and uses it with great elan. She prefers to entice her eventual prey through her remarkable natural charms before delivering the killing blow. If discovered prematurely, she's been known to play the unfairly-maligned damsel, persuading her victim that her disgrace was the work of scheming rivals. She has a veteran spy's paranoia, and if confronted by an unknown enemy she'll tend to flee first and investigate later.

Mihret's innate talent has gifted her with superhuman prowess. She can spend Effort to auto-succeed on saves, has arts equivalent to the Word of Deception, and gets two actions per round.

## TECHNIQUES OF THE SCORPED LOVER

|                                                               |                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>A Kiss Like Poison</i>                                     | Do subtle unarmed damage        |
| <i>A Clinging Like Fragrance</i>                              | Follow an evasive foe           |
| <i>A Confession Like Sin</i>                                  | Counterattack on melee hits     |
| <i>A Passion Like Chains</i>                                  | Force a foe to target you alone |
| <i>A Name Like Razors</i>                                     | Intimate ties cause more harm   |
| <i>A Love Like Murder</i>                                     | Echo damage to attackers        |
| This Strife disallows armor and non-light weapon use with it. |                                 |

### A KISS LIKE POISON

Constant

The adept's unarmed attacks are treated as magical weapons that do 1d8 damage and have a 50 foot range, using Charisma as the attribute modifier for the attack. These unarmed attacks appear to be completely harmless kisses, pats, warm smiles or intimate glances, though they still require a normal hit roll, as the martial panoply or heavy armor of a foe somewhat lessens the charm of a honeyed smile. Lesser foes not already in combat are unaware of hit point loss from these "attacks" until they are killed or rendered unconscious by them. Worthy foes may make a Spirit saving throw to realize that damage was done after each successful attack.

### A CLINGING LIKE FRAGRANCE

On Turn

Commit Effort and choose a target in melee range. For the remainder of the scene, whenever the target moves, the adept may automatically move with them, even if the target teleports or flies. Worthy foes get an Evasion saving throw to resist the lock, which also ends if the adept chooses not to move with them. Willing allies need not save.

### A CONFESSION LIKE SIN

Instant

Commit Effort for the scene when struck and damaged by an attack from a foe in melee range. You automatically counterattack and hit with a weapon or unarmed attack, doing maximum damage. Practitioners with multiple attacks for each action get only one hit.

### A PASSION LIKE CHAINS

Action

Call out an intelligent target or a Mob of intelligent beings. All of their offensive actions must be focused on you until you drop this technique's effects. Worthy foes get a Spirit saving throw to resist the effect, and only one individual or Mob can be so fixed at a time.

### A NAME LIKE RAZORS

Constant

If the adept knows a name the target answers to, their unarmed attack damage die increases to 1d10. If they've shared an uncoerced bed or a deep friendship, the adept's unarmed damage die becomes 1d20.

### A LOVE LIKE MURDER

(Smite) On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene. Until the start of the adept's next turn, any damage inflicted on them is also inflicted on the attacker, but is doubled before being applied to the assailant.



# PARADISES

A Paradise is a realm of perfect obedience to a divinity's will. While the arch-god of a realm might have great control over its form and substance, rule of a Paradise allows an even more profound degree of control. The land and physical laws of such a place bow to its master's desires, and it is a haven both for its ruler and the souls of those pledged to its ruler's service.

Only extremely powerful divine entities are capable of forging a Paradise. Some divinities are unable to do so due to their basic nature; parasite gods are shackled to particular regions of their realm, and cannot escape their metaphysical prisons. Other holy powers are too weak to ever expend the necessary strength. A few, however, have both the power and the determination to forge a realm of their own, one to serve as a citadel and a sanctuary alike. A pantheon of veteran God-bound might well have the might necessary to work such a wonder.

## FORMING A PARADISE

A divinity has two practical methods of fabricating a Paradise: they can work to become the supreme deity of a dead realm, or they can seek out a rare artifact known as a "genesis seed" in the wreckage of Heaven. The former method is relatively reliable, but prone to awakening alien perils, while the latter is less capricious but requires the scavenging of exceedingly dangerous Heavenly shards.

## A PARADISE BY CLAIMING

In the first method, an entity must become the arch-god of a realm through methods described on page 200. The divinity may then begin the process of transforming the realm into a Paradise, a citadel-realm uniquely tied to them as a vessel for their power and a refuge for the souls of their devotees. Due to the difficulty of becoming the arch-god of a populated realm, most entities that take this course are forced to seek out small, empty tomb-realms which have lost their natural population for some reason. This usually means dealing with whatever perils killed off the original inhabitants.

While the transformation is impossible if the god already has a Paradise, the process itself is otherwise swift and inexorable. Within mere days, the dead soil of a tomb-realm can be made to bloom with new life at the will of its new presiding divinity. By this time, the aspiring ruler has already driven off or destroyed any meaningful opposition to the process, and so it is simply a matter of deciding how they wish their new Paradise to behave and paying the Dominion accordingly.

An arch-god may rule many realms, but only one of them can be their Paradise. Once chosen, the paradise cannot be changed, though it can be physically merged with other realms in the usual way. Realms welded together in this fashion have a certain geographic area which constitutes the paradise; the Western Isles, the Elysian Fields, or some other blessed country where those who come find relief. Of course, this also allows anyone in that realm to enter the Paradise unless its owner takes steps to create barriers or Dominion changes that keep out the unworthy.

## A PARADISE BY CREATION

In the second method, the seeker must find one of the precious divine artifacts known as genesis seeds. These fist-sized objects have in them the beginnings of an entire realm, awaiting the trigger of divine will to blossom into a virgin fragment of creation. The seed must be activated

from some point within a realm, whereupon a Night Road entrance will yawn open and a permanent link between that realm's location and the new realm will be formed.

Each genesis seed is roughly fist-sized, usually appearing as some object of deceptively simple outlines and excruciatingly complex internal structure. Genesis seeds have worn the shape of crystals, mechanisms, carved stones, humming devices, and other such artifacts. A seed cannot be mistaken for anything but an object of occult power; even a casual glance betrays the tremendous immensity contained within the seed.

To activate a seed, one or more powerful Word-bound entities must touch the object and channel Dominion into its awakening. The amount of Dominion that must be spent depends on the size of the realm that the seed will sprout; multiply the base size costs given on page 129 by seven. Thus, a village-sized realm would cost 7 Dominion to sprout, while one the size of Arcem would take 112. Most seeds can create realms in any size the creators are willing to finance.

More than one entity can contribute to this activation cost, but only major entities that are bound to at least one Word of Creation can fuel the seed. The prime celestial engine of such a seed-realm is located physically within the new domain. This makes it relatively easy to guard, but it also leaves enemies no doubt as to where to look to find the place's heart.

Every entity who contributes Dominion to the creation of the new realm participates in its arch-godhead. If an entity that already rules a Paradise finds a genesis seed and wishes to activate it, they may do so, but the seed simply becomes a new realm for them to rule as arch-divinity, and does not coalesce into a second Paradise.

## GODBOUND WITHIN A PARADISE

While inhabiting their own Paradise, a deity has enormous advantages against interlopers and hostile entities. A full pantheon of Godbound united in defense of their shared Paradise can be a match for Made Gods and their legions, or forge their sanctuary-realm into a wondrous place of impossible marvels. Within a Paradise, its singular or plural ruling entities gain the following benefits:

- The ruler of a Paradise has all the benefits of being its arch-god as described on page 201, because that's exactly what they are.
- As their action for the round, they may refresh all Committed Effort, regaining any points that they would otherwise need the end of the scene or the day to return. Note that if the Effort is fueling a persistent effect, such as a scene-long miracle powered by Effort committed for the day, reclaiming that Effort ends the effect.
- They have an invincible defense against any attacks or hostile effects launched by their devotees, living or dead, and may expel troublesome devotees from the Paradise and into Hell as an instant action. While this case is unlikely in most realms, some Paradises are less than pleasing to the shades of those within, and rebellion is not beyond imagination.
- All changes they would enact in the Paradise are treated as Plausible, and require no challenges to be completed or celestial

shards to enact unless the GM decides that the alteration is utterly unbelievable.

- An entity that has a Paradise is impervious to aging or ordinary mortality. They can adjust their physical age to any year that suits them, and cannot be killed by the ravages of mere time.
- If the ruler of a Paradise is slain, their remnant comes to rest somewhere within the Paradise, sleeping and silent. Destroying this remnant is simple for a supernatural foe and consigns the god's soul to Hell, but the Paradise's inhabitants will doubtless defend it with utmost ferocity. The dead god may still be worshiped by the faithful of the realm, and receive their souls into Paradise accordingly. Centuries of this worship or certain special sacrifices and rites might be enough to revive the fallen divinity, albeit often in a much weaker state.
- The ruler of a Paradise may enter or leave it through any properly-dedicated shrine, as given in the Apotheosis Word gift *Sanctify Shrine*. They can also reach it through the Night Roads, cumbersome as that may be. Free divinities without a cult who are still rulers of a Paradise may enter it in any realm location very strongly aligned with one or more of their Words.

Unsurprisingly, Godbound are almost impossible to defeat within their Paradise unless confronted by an overwhelmingly powerful enemy. More often, a clever opponent will seek to lure the divinities out of their sanctum, where they're vulnerable to more conventional means of deicide.

## CHANGING A PARADISE'S PROPERTIES

If the divinity forged their Paradise out of a tomb-realm, the Paradise's qualities will be set by whatever terrain and occupants the god found there. In most cases, the god will likely want something more uplifting than endless plains of barren dust and broken cities, however, so they may wish to enact changes in the Paradise.

Realms created with a genesis seed are more clement, and have a usual range of flora, fauna, and geographic features developed as its creators wish. This default package can be shaped when the realm is created, though no natural intelligent occupants or artificial dwellings or edifices are part of this initial complement of facts.

In both cases, fashioning a realm into a Paradise leaves reality slightly molten and allows the world's new arch-god or arch-pantheon to declare new facts about the place and make these words true. Even Impossible changes may be enacted this way, with new truths broad enough to change the basic laws of reality over the entire Paradise.

Seven such facts may be decreed when the Paradise is created. Every participant in awakening a genesis seed or in becoming the arch-pantheon of a tomb-realm may choose one of these facts, with the remainder granted proportionally based on which participant is donating the most Dominion to the process. Thus, if five Godbound work together to become arch-gods of a tomb-realm, each one gets to name one fact about the new Paradise, with the remaining two facts granted to the two participants who'd paid the most Dominion during the ascension process.

Genesis seeds already arrange their geography and climate to suit their awakeners, but a newly Paradisical tomb-realm might have its physical structure radically changed by these facts. From the blasted

waste, one god may declare, "Lush forests now cover the land," while another says, "A proud and wise humanity springs up throughout the land, defenders of their newly-reborn world," and a third declares, "The inhabitants of this world never know death, but only sleep for a year and a day before rising young and strong again," while the fourth decides to temper that with, "Unless they choose to sleep in the grave, enjoying sweet dreams until their sleeping selves decide it is time to rise again." When such laws contradict, the most recent one applies.

These changes, and any other changes the ruling power makes later on, tend to work out exactly the way the divinity expected them to. In the blessed population described above, there is no overpopulation crisis, nor phobic reaction to sleep, nor any one of a hundred other ways a thoughtful observer might see trouble coming. The divine authority of the arch-god simply *makes* them work, smoothing out any difficulties with unconscious and automatic adjustments. If the god is later slain or abandons their Paradise forever, however, this perfect coherence might start to break down in their absence.

Importantly, changes established to the realm cannot confer any direct special powers to the Godbound who rule it. They cannot make themselves exempt from death, grant themselves unlimited might, or otherwise augment what graces they already have.

## PARADISES AND SOULS

The most important function of a Paradise for a god's worshipers is as a refuge for their souls. Devotees of the god who perish will find their souls manifesting roughly a month later within the Paradise, arriving in whatever way or role the god has decreed for them. Particularly loyal worshipers may be granted a place of glory and delight, while less satisfactory devotees might face an eternity of servitude. Some gods make Paradises scarcely distinguishable from Hell, tormenting those of their followers who fail to adhere to the laws handed down to them. Ultimately, a devotee's fate hinges on the god's judgment of them, and not any more abstract ethical law.

These souls manifest in whatever way the gods decree. Some may reappear as flesh-and-blood humans, just as they were in life. Other gods might decide that their devotees would be happier as orbs of light, or winged humanoids, or shining stones suffused with the glow of eternal contentment. By default, the devotees manifest as they existed in the prime of their life. More exotic forms must be decreed as a change for the realm, either when it is first made a Paradise or later on.

Devotees who die within a Paradise find their souls sleeping peacefully there unless the gods have made special provision for death. Faithless visitors from other realms who die there, however, find their souls winging to whatever fate awaits them normally.

Once within a Paradise the souls there cannot safely leave. Without powerful protections, leaving the Paradise would expose them to the clutches of Hell and trap them in the inferno below. Unique life forms created in a Paradise are also shackled to its special laws, though a Godbound can make some part of a terrestrial realm friendly to their existence with an Improbable change to the area. Thus, if a holy host of winged lions was called forth in a Paradise, the Godbound could make the precincts of their great temple livable for the entities by enacting an Improbable change on the area. No particular Word is needed for this.

Paradises have no intrinsic protection against the incursion of Night Roads. Some may open with time and require defenders to repulse an invasion before the pantheon can seal it. Others may lie silent, waiting for some hour of seeming peace to vomit forth nightmares.



# Themed Godbound

The nature of Godbound and the process that creates them have been left intentionally ambiguous in this book. It may be that they are the result of decaying divinity and the chance acquisition of those synthesized blessings that once were wielded by the Made Gods. It could be that they are a consequence of the failing celestial engines, infused with divine power as an automatic failsafe against cosmic calamity. It might even be that they are blessed by the Creator, given their gifts to redeem a world which has renounced its maker. Any of these are possibilities, and it is not the intention of *Godbound* to prescribe the "real truth" about such things.

You, on the other hand, are much more in a position to decide the reality of the matter in your campaign. The nature of the Godbound and the way they express their powers in your game are very much up to you, and you may have your own ideas about how you want their abilities to work in your world.

This might be a matter of personal taste as you sculpt these demi-gods into shapes more suitable for your homebrew world, or you might want to take an existing setting and smooth off some mechanical mismatches before inserting Godbound PCs into it. Like everything else in this book, the existing rules and guidelines are intended to provide a solid basis for your own creativity and development and give you useful tools toward building your own campaign.

Still, it can be helpful to have some guidelines on making these kind of changes, and so this section will detail the creation of *themed Godbound*. Rather than having a single variety of demi-divine hero, these rules help you create different subtypes of celestially-blessed PC to better serve your campaign's needs.

## CREATING THEMED GODBOUND

The first step in building a new type of Godbound is understanding why you want to make them in the first place. Your reasons for creating this new theme will affect how much work you need to put into fleshing it out, and how much care you need to take in balancing the result.

Are you creating this theme for player characters in a specific homebrew campaign or existing fantasy setting? If you plan on letting PCs take this theme, you're going to need to ensure that it's balanced and playable. If this is a theme that all PCs are going to belong to, then you also need to make sure that there's enough scope for variation so that an entire pantheon isn't left with largely identical abilities, or with key powers that are all the same. If you envision most or all of an entire group choosing this theme, you need to make sure that there are enough different choices for the characters to provide individual distinction in their powers.

Are you creating this theme for antagonists or background NPCs? If you won't be allowing PCs to choose this theme, you don't need to worry about power overlap or balance. You can use the standard bestiary chapter rules for creating antagonists to brew up an enemy and then decorate them with powers and gifts appropriate to the theme. Don't worry about fleshing out special Words or building a full range of gifts and powers; just give the antagonist the abilities that make sense for the theme and let miracles take care of the rest.

Are you creating this theme as something that exists in your world, but it isn't something the PCs are going to either be or fight? You really don't need more than a few sentences of background information about them. If these beings aren't anybody the PCs are going

to engage with mechanically, you don't need to worry about writing game mechanics for them.

Once you know why you're writing this theme, move on to creating its mechanical distinctions. For NPC-only types and types that will only appear offscreen, this step is largely trivial. Give the NPC some particular Word or special ability that is obvious and clearly marks them out as abnormal, and your job is done. With PC types, it's somewhat more demanding.

You need to identify a clear difference to a themed Godbound's powers or nature. It needs some Word, or some power, or some set of limits that shows up regularly in play and influences the player's decision-making. There needs to be something that people can see is *very different* from the standard Godbound type, and this difference needs to support the theme you're trying to create. Generally, it's best to have no more than one or two of these major differences, as the more differences you add, the harder it is to balance them correctly.

Next, you need to choose traits for your theme. These traits are adjustments, benefits, and penalties that mold a Godbound's abilities and alter the way they play in the campaign. The following section includes a number of traits as suggestions, but you can easily make your own, either drawing them from existing source material or adding them out of your own creativity.

Traits aren't designed to be some kind of point-based system where you add one special ability and offset it with a new penalty. Creating a new theme of PC Godbound requires a little too much GM judgment to make that practical. You should also be wary of adding too many traits to a Godbound theme; it's all too easy to end up with a mess of special cases and interlocking limits that can be difficult to track in play. Focus on just a handful of characteristic, meaningful traits that will show up regularly during play.

The last step is to sit down and actually roll up a character with this new theme. Does it look fun and playable? Even if it does, be ready to make tweaks in play, as no plan survives contact with the players.

## Themed Godbound in Arcem

The example themed NPCs given here are placed in the Arcem setting described in this book, but the existence of themed Godbound in Arcem is purely up to you. Godbound of any kind are extremely rare in Arcem, and it's your decision as to whether any PCs or NPCs among them might use the rules in this section. Even if some do, they may just be cosmic one-offs and freaks rather than instances of an entire sub-variety of divine hero.

The themed varieties given in this section are all roughly equivalent in prowess to the default variety of Godbound, with the exception of elemental Scions who are somewhat weaker. The Arrayed in particular might require a more sophisticated support infrastructure than you want to insert into your campaign. For the others, there shouldn't be too much of a balance issue if you decide to let individual PCs use their rules in play. Despite this, don't feel bad about declining to include them if you decide that they'd distract too much from the rest of the pantheon. Sometimes the best management of a campaign consists of choosing what *not* to include in it.

# Themed Godbound Traits

The traits listed below are simply possibilities for a GM to consider when drawing up their own themed Godbound. Some of these traits are wholly negative, while others offer some advantage or benefit to the types of Godbound who have them.

It's important not to think of theme creation as being exclusively an exercise in game balance. Stacking on a pile of limiting traits may make a theme strictly inferior to that of a conventional Godbound in their personal power, but if everyone in the gaming group is going to be playing a Godbound of that theme, it's not much of an issue. If all of the PCs are sharing the same penalties or advantages, it's a relatively simple matter for the GM to dish up challenges that are meaningful for the group.

GMs should be careful, however, if they're building a Godbound theme for a campaign with multiple PCs of different theme types. As it's impossible to break these loose traits down into a strict calculus of balance, you'll need to be careful to adjust things to fit your group's composition, and not leave certain individuals out of the fun.

## Consuming Temptation

This Godbound type is prey to some titanic passion or dark compulsion that tends to surface at moments of strain. When the character is created, the player chooses one ambition, craving, or drive for the PC, perhaps as a tremendous hunger for beauty, a hatred of a type of foe, or a craving for being glorified by others. This ambition can change during play with the GM's permission and a suitable rationale.

If the Godbound ever has all their Effort Committed in a moment of great strain or danger where they are facing the loss of something precious to them or have been brought below one quarter of their maximum hit points, the stress and passions of the moment are subverted by the temptation. While they can control themselves long enough to deal with the immediate combat or crisis that provoked the temptation if their lives are at stake, they immediately afterwards are driven to throw themselves into indulging their craving.

After the crisis, until they somehow extravagantly satisfy the temptation or spend at least a day pursuing it with utter disregard for their own best interests or prudence, they cannot Commit Effort or Influence to anything not related to pursuing that temptation. Existing Influence Commitments will rapidly collapse unless the Godbound satisfies their passions soon enough to return to overseeing their projects. A Consuming Temptation can flare up no more than once per month, no matter how many moments of crisis the Godbound faces.

## IncanDESCENT Power

Using the Godbound's abilities results in some obvious penumbra or insignia. A certain amount of the Godbound's Effort is "subtle" and may be Committed without causing any obvious effects, beyond whatever gift or miracle is being used. At first level, this is one point, increasing by one point at levels 3, 6, and 9. All the rest of the Godbound's Effort is overt. Committing this Effort to a gift, automatic saving throw, or miracle will cause some sort of visible effect.

The first overt point Committed will cause some minor but perceptible change. The Godbound's eyes will start faintly glowing, or wisps of smoke will start wafting from them, or the low rasp of grinding stone will be heard around them. These changes are usually only perceptible to someone within melee range or someone who's already watching the PC.

The second overt point Committed will amplify the effect: the Godbound's whole body will start glowing, or their hair will transform into a mane of fire, or the rasp will become a loud rumbling. This insignia has no mechanical effect, but it's obvious to anyone in the Godbound's immediate vicinity and makes non-magical stealth largely impossible.

The third and further overt points Committed increase the insignia to its biggest, brightest, loudest level. The coruscating beacons and burning banners created at this level are not just obvious to those around the Godbound, but are bright or loud enough to attract attention several hundred feet away.

These insignia die away at the end of a scene, even if the Effort is still Committed. Committing and de-Committing the same point of Effort counts toward the total, so a PC who activates a gift with a point of overt Effort, deactivates it, and then activates it again with the same point has stacked up two points worth of insignia. The specific nature of the insignia usually depends on the type of Godbound, though it often has a personal touch unique to the specific hero's powers and nature.

Godbound with the gifts of Deception or other divine powers of concealment can stifle these insignia as part of their powers. Thus, a Godbound who uses their powers to go invisible will not be given away by a blaze of light. Once they drop their abilities, however, any current insignia are extremely perceptible.

## INFLEXIBLE Words

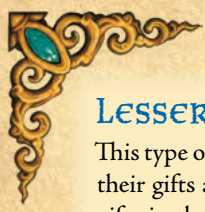
The Godbound can only use the gifts of the Words they have bound. They can't use miracles to create arbitrary effects or mimic the powers of other gifts of that Word. If the GM is particularly stern, they might not even be able to use the Word to dispel or counter appropriate hostile powers, but this is inadvisable, as it can leave them extremely vulnerable to powerful supernaturals. Godbound of types closely tied to particular Words might still be permitted to use miracles of that specific Word.

## InnATE Gift

The Godbound type has one particular power that's universal to their kind or characteristic of their abilities. This gift should be about as strong as a lesser gift, and might not require any Effort to trigger. A Godbound type defined by its shapeshifting abilities, for example, might automatically receive a gift that allows them to shapeshift. GMs might subtract this gift cost from their starting points, or they might allow it for free if all the other PCs are getting their own innate gifts.

## InnATE Weakness

The Godbound type is vulnerable to something that doesn't require elaborate effort to use against them. Pure silver, the bones of an innocent, necromantic sorcery, an uncommon alloy salvaged from the ruins of the ancients, or some other substance can cause them significant problems. This substance is sometimes able to penetrate even invincible defenses raised by the PC and rolls twice for any damage done, taking the better result. Exceptionally pure or potent samples of the substance might be able to inflict damage straight with the wounds they inflict. Alternately, it might increase the minimum Effort cost of using powers in the area, much like a portable empyrean ward, or it might give even a lesser foe the ability to resist the Godbound's powers as if they were a worthy enemy.



## LESSER GODBOUND GIFTS

This type of Godbound just isn't as powerful as the usual variety, and their gifts aren't as strong or flexible. They can purchase only lesser gifts in their bound Words, and cannot use miracles to mimic the effects of greater gifts, though they can usually still echo lesser gifts with their miracles. Some lesser Godbound types may have somewhat stronger ties to specific Words, and be permitted to buy greater gifts appropriate to their type. Purchasing these greater gifts may require that they have a minimum level of experience.

## LIMITED WORD CHOICE

There are certain types of Words that aren't appropriate for this type of Godbound. Paragons of death might not be allowed to bond the Word of Healing or Fertility, while those with a strictly elemental bent might not be allowed to bind any of the more intellectual Words such as Deception, Knowledge, or Command.

## MANDATORY WORD

The Godbound must choose one particular Word specific to their type. This may be a unique Word containing powers that all their kind should possess, or it might be one of a short list of Words for Godbound of a particular theme, such as an elemental Word for elemental Godbound.

## SKILL WORDS

These Godbound have powers that revolve around mortal skills and human achievements rather than the abstract elements of creation. They may not be able to bind conventional Words at all, and may have to choose powers that reflect superlative human prowess or superhuman expressions of conventional skill rather than gifts that perform purely magical effects. Full details on using Skill Words can be found on page 234.

## SKILLED IN STRIFE

These Godbound are all remarkable martial artists. The first and last technique in a True Strife only cost them a half-point to buy instead of a full point, and once a Strife is fully mastered it is automatically integrated with the other Strifes they've mastered without the usual one-point surcharge that must be paid to integrate all completed Strifes. The knowledge of the Strifes is innate in them; they may develop expertise in one existing Strife most suited to their nature without requiring a teacher for it.

## TABOO BEHAVIOR

The Godbound's type is forbidden from a particular sort of behavior by their nature or the nature of their powers. Fraternization with mortals, defiling natural places, smiting their own followers, or some other general class of behavior or action is forbidden to them. If this is a lesser taboo, they must immediately Commit Effort for the day if they break it. If they can't, they suffer 1d6 damage straight from the strain and are reduced to helpless distraction if they fall to zero hit points. If the taboo is absolutely crucial to the Godbound's nature or somehow inscribed in their essence, then assuming that they can break it at all, they must Commit *all* their available Effort for the day immediately after they break it, suffering 1d10 damage straight for every point they're lacking from their maximum commitment. If breaking the taboo involves a lasting condition or persistent activity, the Effort cannot refresh until the behavior or taboo condition ceases.

## THEME CREATION CHECKLIST

If you do decide to brew up a theme of your own for your campaign's Godbound, you can use the follow steps to organize your thinking.

1. Identify why you want to make the theme. Is this theme meant to be an option for players in your game? Are all PCs intended to belong to this theme? Is this theme for NPCs, meant to underline some special quality of your campaign world? Do you even have a particular NPC in mind for the theme, or is it just a type of being you want to exist in your realm?
2. Identify the work you need to put into the theme. If every player in your game is going to belong to this theme, you need to be careful to flesh it out fully, balancing it properly and ensuring that there are enough possible differences in PC abilities to avoid excessive overlap. If only one player wants to be this theme, you don't need to give so much room for differentiation, because the PC won't be sharing the stage with others of their kind. If only an NPC has this theme, you don't need to worry about balancing traits or assigning Word options, and can focus solely on how that specific NPC works. If neither an NPC or a PC is expected to be this theme, you don't need to do anything more than write a few sentences about how the themed type exists and any major influence it's had on the setting.
3. For themes that will be used for player characters, identify at least one big difference in how the Godbound will work during play. For Arrayed, that's their swappable powers. For Exemplars, it's their innate power and potential Skill Word usage. For Proteans, it's the Shapeshifting Word and their physical prowess, while the Undestined have their unmemorability and the Fate Word. Elemental Scions are distinct due to their limited powers, illustrating how you can create distinction by what you take away from a theme as well as what you might add to them.
4. Assign specific traits. The ones listed in this section are ideas, but they're ideas you can tweak and mold to fit your specific concept. The Scions have a dangerous elemental mantle, for example, rather than a simple *Incandescent Power* trait. For a PC theme, make sure that the end result is playable and appealing. Traits that make the PC useless for wide swaths of activities or traits that leave them inferior to their party-mates in a substantial range of important fields are likely to prove annoying in play. The exception to this is if all the players are going to have the same type, in which case mutually-shared weaknesses have less chance of leaving particular PCs feeling unnecessary.
5. Make up at least one character with the theme if you intend to make the theme available to players. There's no substitute for actually filling out a sheet when it comes time to check your concepts for playability and player appeal.

# The Arrayed

The Arrayed are a rare type of demi-divinity produced as an offshoot of the same theotechnical research that produced the Made Gods. While those divine titans were fabricated as single vast entities of reverence and power, the Arrayed were built to serve as lesser ministers and saints. Rather than transforming their humanity into something else entirely, they were altered and augmented so as to be able to receive the blessings of celestial might. While no match for a true Made God, their flexibility and versatility make them exceptionally effective against a target if they have the requisite support structure.

An Arrayed requires a powerful, sophisticated theotechnical organization to support it. Research theologians, cathedral-surgeries, and chambers of incandescent soul-purification are necessary to transform a human into an Arrayed, and even then, only a comparative handful of candidates will succeed in the process. Once transformed, however, they become ready vessels for the engineered might of their patron organization.

## The Arrayed and the Words

Every Arrayed is created with an intrinsic, innate bond with a single Word. They do not naturally manifest with any gifts or other Words, but this first, innate connection is one they will always have, however they may be altered by further modification. Bonding to other Words and to gifts requires the assistance of their sponsoring organization and the creation of sophisticated "echo links" that resonate to the vibrations of the Words of Creation. These links connect the Arrayed to Words and gifts, allowing them to employ the powers that their handlers have prepared for them.

Every Arrayed has a number of Word slots. At first level, they have two, in addition to the innate Word they will always have bound. These slots can be filled with Word echo links with a day's refitting at a suitably-equipped site, or existing links can be swapped out for different Words. An Arrayed gets all the intrinsic benefits of the Words they have slotted, such as Fire's immunity to flames, or Wealth's perpetual solvency. If a Word allows different choices with its intrinsic gifts, such as boosting one of two attributes, the Arrayed can choose anew each time the Word is slotted.

Arrayed also have gift slots that work just as Word slots, and which can be filled or swapped at the same time as Words and under the same circumstances. A first level Arrayed starts with four gift slots which can be filled with gift echo links, each gift taking up as many slots as its point cost to purchase. Thus, two greater gifts would take up four slots, as would two lesser and one greater. The gift echo links must match the Words that have been slotted. For example, the Arrayed can't plug in a Sword gift if their slotted Words are Bow, Endurance, and Fire. Optionally, the Arrayed can fill three gift slots with a Word echo link, allowing them to gain the benefits of bonding with that Word and use miracles accordingly, or add gift echo links related to its function.

Arrayed open up additional gift slots as they mature in their powers and become more familiar with their use. They gain one additional gift slot each time they gain a level.

Arrayed begin with the same two points of Effort that other Godbound get, but develop more of it more slowly. They gain an additional point of maximum Effort only at even-numbered levels. If they need more, they might choose to slot universal *Effort of the Word* gifts in available gift slots.

## Support Facilities

Most Arrayed are reliant on elaborate theotechnical support facilities to swap out their Words and gifts and supply them with the precious echo links they need. An Arrayed who wants to build their own facility independent of their sponsoring organization must usually count it as an Impossible change in whatever polity they're working with unless the locals are already capable of impressive theotechnical engineering. Most organizations that create Arrayed would view this as a sign of incipient treason, and Arrayed must conceal their efforts carefully. Actually building the critical infrastructure requires three celestial shards, supernatural entities with access to the Artifice, Sorcery and Health Words, and a small village worth of expert theotechnicians. If all these ingredients are brought together, the Arrayed can fashion a support facility exclusively obedient to them.

This does not create the actual Word or gift echo links, however. Each of these must either be salvaged from a dead Arrayed, found in storage somewhere, obtained from a functioning support facility, or built as artifacts. A Word echo link counts as an artifact costing eight Dominion points to build, a greater gift echo link costs four Dominion points, and a lesser gift costs two Dominion points, in addition to the usual cost in celestial shards for building an artifact.

Most sponsoring organizations have a limited number of echo links available for their Arrayed. Most of them have two copies of each Word or gift in inventory and available for PC use. Thus, if more than two PCs want to use the same Word or gift, they'll need to decide how the limited resources are to be divided, assuming their superiors in the organization don't decide for them.

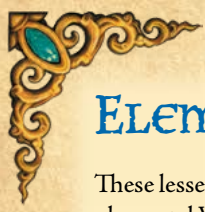
## Creating New Arrayed

Finding and creating more potential Arrayed is an extremely difficult undertaking. Only heroic mortals and others of remarkable natural gift have a chance of surviving the modification process, which requires the expenditure of five Dominion points to even initiate. These points are spent even if the candidate fails.

The aspiring Arrayed must then roll 1d100; if the total is equal or less than their hit dice or level, they are proven a worthy candidate. If the die is greater than their hit dice or level, they can either push on with the process or retreat, forever after unsuitable for transformation. If they push on with the process, they need to roll the 1d100 check again. Success on either attempt means they are suitable for ascension, while failure on both means their permanent and complete destruction, with no way to avoid their death. There is no known way to influence this trial, though theotechnicians of the sponsoring organizations still search incessantly for the key.

Once a candidate has passed the tests, they must go in for a month of invasive, painful, transformative surgery that involves the application of three celestial shards and their bonding of their initial Word. At the end of the surgical process, they are a full-fledged first level Arrayed, and their old hit dice and abilities are completely replaced by those of a first level Godbound.

The expense of initiating this process ensures that only the most capable candidates are tapped for the honor. While loyalty and dedication to the sponsoring organization are critical aspects, the very experience and veterancy that makes a candidate suitable for the process can also leave them altogether too cynical or worldly-wise to be a perfectly obedient Arrayed.



## ELEMENTAL SCIONS

These lesser Godbound are marked by their connection to one of the elemental Words, whether by some primordial bloodline or the blessing of some mighty divinity of nature. They are capable of great acts of heroism and vigorous defiance of divine foes, but their powers are not so great as that of a more conventional Godbound proto-divinity.

### THE POWERS OF SCIONS

Each one is automatically bound to the Word of their particular subtype: Fire, Sea, Sky, Earth, or Fertility. Aside from this mandatory Word, a Scion may bond to other Words of their choice with their remaining two picks during character generation, or later on as they accumulate more experience. These Words do not need to be elemental in nature, and can be chosen from any available Words.

While flexible in their choices, Scions can learn only lesser gifts from the Words they bind, and can use miracles only with their original elemental Word, and those only to mimic lesser gifts or to offensively or defensively dispel relevant effects. Once they reach sixth level, they can start purchasing greater gifts of their primary elemental Word and use miracles to replicate this Word's greater gifts.

### TRAITS AND LIMITS OF SCIONS

Scions of a realm often have the *Incandescent Power* trait, manifesting their elemental nature more dramatically the more overt Effort is put into their powers. At its strongest level, these insignia can be hazardous for those next to the scion who aren't immune to their elemental Word; each adjacent friend or foe in melee range suffers 1d4 damage from the insignia at the start of the scion's turn. Elemental scions are all immune to each others' insignia, regardless of type.

Scions find it harder to produce the large-scale, long-term effects that other Godbound can conjure. Scions cannot use Influence or Dominion to create Impossible changes in the world. These reality-defying changes are simply beyond their power to enact, so great deeds usually require them to pile up enough lesser alterations until their desired end becomes merely Improbable instead of Impossible.

In line with this limited transcendence, Scions do not develop the gifts of the Apotheosis Word, or form cults, or gain the self-generating Dominion of a free divinity, though they gain normal Dominion rewards for heroic deeds. In compensation, however, they do not need to spend Dominion in order to advance in character levels.

### SCIONS IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Scions are weaker than conventional Godbound, and this can be a potential problem if you want to run them alongside Exemplars or Proteans. Still, they're not *dramatically* weaker, and a Scion who focuses on their primary elemental Word can be a worthy contributor to the deeds of a pantheon of true demigods.

One way to avoid this complication entirely is to run an all-Scion campaign, where all the PCs are elemental Scions and other forms of Godbound are antagonists or potential allies. If their dealings come to violence, a pantheon of Scions is fully capable of taking down even a veteran Godbound thanks to their superior numbers and larger total Effort reserves. If a GM does pit such a pantheon against other Godbound, it's advised that you build the Godbound as conventional major enemies as described in the bestiary chapter. Without straight damage, multiple attacks, and lots of hit dice, an NPC Godbound may not make much of a solo opponent to a full pantheon of Scions.

## CREATING LESSER GODBOUND

The elemental Scions are just one example of a blessed bloodline, favored by some elemental power. If you want to create other themed types that are less potent than a conventional Godbound, there are a few crucial principles to keep in mind.

**First, restrict their access to greater gifts.** The greater gifts of each Word are meant to provide tremendous effects, ones that can reroute a river, chop a hole in an army, or bless an entire city with abundance. Any Godbound capable of learning greater gifts is going to be capable of performing enormous feats of divinity that may not fit with your vision for the theme. If you don't let them learn greater gifts, don't let them use miracles to mimic greater gifts either.

**Second, restrict their access to miracles.** Miracles are the general-purpose catchall for invocations of divine power. If you want to tightly focus a Godbound's theme, only let them use miracles from their thematic Word. It's possible to be even more strict and deny them miracle use at all, but that's going to make life very difficult for them when they need to defensively dispel some monstrous foe's uncanny powers, and it also tends to straitjacket them into picking their gifts with the maximum eye for utility, since they know they'll never have a very flexible choice of other responses.

**Third, take away Dominion.** Dominion is a general-purpose solution for a lot of problems. If reality is being annoying to a Godbound, they can enact a change with Dominion and simply alter the basic facts of the situation so that things work out more

to their liking. While this is entirely appropriate to a demi-divinity and can create interesting new problems in how to support or enable the change, it doesn't fit too well for lesser Godbound. For those types, eliminate Dominion and omit the Dominion spending requirements for gaining a level.

This may leave artificer concepts out in the cold, as they need Dominion to build artifacts or godwalkers. If you don't want to harshly penalize those concepts, give them Dominion rewards as usual, but halve the total rewards, and only allow them to spend the points on building things.

Influence you can leave alone. It represents the personal attention and immediate gifts of the Godbound, and so it does less to threaten sudden, totally divine solutions to a problem.

**Lastly, understand your goal in creating the theme.** Make sure you understand *why* you're building a theme of Godbound generally inferior to the usual type. Is this to run an all-lesser Godbound campaign? Then that's fine, as the players will all share the same general power level. Is it because a player really wants to play a sidekick-type with enough power to contribute, but not enough to equal their peers? Then it's a knowledgeable choice a player is making and it should work out well. Is it to create a new strain of antagonists for the PCs? Fine, but make sure you don't put more effort into it than a bunch of NPCs is worth. You don't need to balance things for PCs with the theme, you just need style.

# EXEMPLARS

Godbound Exemplars are paragons of human capability. They embody the supernatural ideals of human possibility, exhibiting incredible powers of physical and mental prowess. They all share certain basic traits, but they are also found in five sub-categories that represent certain modes of human excellence and potential. Persistent tales speak of additional types of Exemplars that model other roles.

While they exhibit the best of human capabilities, they are also prone to showing the worst. Exemplars are touched with the *Consuming Temptation* trait, and all must choose some ambition, craving, or moral flaw that is prone to overwhelming their good judgment when they find themselves greatly strained.

All Exemplars have the *Incandescent Power* trait, with their overt insignia taking the form of brilliant light. The details of shape and form vary with the individual Exemplar. Their powers are also focused on human concepts and ideals, and so they are not able to bind or learn gifts from the Fire, Sea, Sky, Earth, Time, or Fertility Words, or other custom Words that focus on some primordial elemental force unmediated by human action. They may still learn Strifes that draw on these concepts, however. Each Exemplar also has an innate gift associated with their sub-type.

## AUTOCRATS

The Autocrats are the prophets, kings, and teachers of humanity, the voice of command that leads the multitude. Where the Conqueror leads an army, the Autocrat leads a nation or a faith, and by their rule justice is assured. At least one of their starting Words must be chosen from the following list: Endurance, Command, or Passion.

Their innate gift is a tongue of ruling; once per scene, they can give a command to any single lesser foe and have it obeyed instantly, provided it is not utterly contrary to the subject's nature and can be completed within the scene. This power may instead be used to compel a Mob or crowd of lesser foes, albeit the Autocrat can only command them to do something not greatly objectionable to them.

## CONQUERORS

The Conquerors embody brilliance in war and command. They harvest armies with their flashing blades and lead legions to glorious victory. At least one of their starting Words must be chosen from the following list: Sword, Bow, or Command.

Their innate gift is that of might in war; their weapon or unarmed attacks automatically hit lesser foes.

## MEDIATORS

Mediators are those who bring the distant together and the dissonant into harmony. No distance is too far for them to travel, no custom too strange for them to understand. They bring riches and peace to those they favor, and tidings of destruction to those less blessed. At least one of their starting Words must be chosen from the following list: Deception, Journeying, and Wealth.

Their innate gift is a sense of true bargaining: they know instantly if, how, and why someone means to break a freely-made bargain they made with the Mediator, even if they are a dozen realms distant when the culprit chooses or plans to renege. If that person does indeed break the bargain, the Mediator can use one power or attack on them as if the Mediator was present, with the victim having no chance to resist or dodge the effect and any damage or effect rolls being maximized.

## REBELS

A Rebel defies. Where an Autocrat rules and instructs, the Rebel disorders and destroys. Some do so in an idealistic way and seek to break vile orders, while others act only for spite or ambition. At least one of their starting Words must be taken from Deception, Knowledge, or Passion.

Rebels have an invulnerable defense against all effects that read or influence their minds. Mobs or groups that are following their leadership also have this immunity, but not to the Rebel's own gifts.

## SAGES

Wise in all the knowledge and artifices of humankind, the Sage commands this knowledge for the betterment of the world... or the improving of their own position in it. They are masters of magic and cunning craftsmanship, and build marvels to further their plans. At least one of their starting Words must be chosen from the following list: Artifice, Sorcery, or Knowledge.

Their innate gift is a command of magic. Once per scene, they may either dispel a theurgic invocation or low magic spell as an instant action, or use their action to immediately cast a theurgic invocation known to them without the usual cost for quick casting. They can sense magic in an object or area with a round's attention.

## UNSEEN

A trickster, deceiver, and infiltrator of sealed places, the Unseen embodies the daring and adroitness of those who work by stealth, swiftness, and deception. At least one of their starting Words must be chosen from the following list: Deception, Alacrity, or Night.

Their innate gift is the power to go where they are not permitted; locks and seals open instantly for them, whether mundane or magical. Even magical barriers can be penetrated by Committing Effort for the scene. Unseen have no chance to fail humanly-possible attribute checks related to stealth or agile movement unless actively opposed by a worthy foe.

## USING EXEMPLARS WITH SKILL WORDS

Exemplars are a type of themed Godbound especially suited for using the Skill Words described on page 234. If you're importing concepts from another game that focuses on skill-based abilities or marvels, you might choose to use these Skill Words in lieu of the conventional Words of Creation. If you'd like to do so, make the changes below to the Exemplars.

Every Exemplar needs to pick at least three Skill Words from those skills natural to its sub-type. Thus, Conquerors need to pick three Skill Words from skills related to conquest, military leadership, and battle prowess. These can be major or minor Skill Words. The other two Skill Words can be picked from any skills.

Exemplars can pick intrinsic benefits from three Words appropriate to their concept. Thus, a fearsomely swift Conqueror might choose to gain Dexterity boost of Alacrity, the Charisma boost of Command, and the sword-summoning intrinsic of the Sword Word.

Exemplars can still learn the conventional Words as a form of sorcery; thus, they can take "Fire Sorcery" as a Skill Word to gain access to the gifts of the Fire Word, assuming their concept supports the idea. It's up to the PC to describe the particular form of magic they're using and how their PC relates to it.

# PROTEANS

Protean Godbound express the primordial reality of shape and substance, the coherent physical manifestation that distinguishes the ideal conception from the concrete object. Newly-awakened Proteans usually manifest this control in idealized physical transformation, instinctively molding themselves into a physical expression of their bodily self-conception. This alteration can be drastic for those Proteans whose body image poorly matches their original reality.

More experienced Proteans learn to control this shapeshifting ability, gaining the power to impersonate other humans or adopt the guise of beasts or hybridized creatures. The most determined disciples of form and substance can even mimic the shapes of wholly inanimate objects while retaining powers of animation and movement.

## THE PROWESS OF THE PERFECT FORM

Even the most intellectual Protean has tremendous physical prowess in at least one regard. One of a Protean's three initial Words must be chosen from the following list: Alacrity, Endurance, or Might, and one more pick is automatically applied to the Shapeshifting Word. Thus, a newly-arisen Protean has one free Word choice, though they may bond others with their gift points.

All Protean Godbound are physically capable and extremely hardy. If any of their Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution attributes are below 13, they are automatically raised to 13. Protean Godbound gain an extra hit point at first level and each level thereafter. Thus, even the frailest Protean will start with at least 10 hit points at first level.

In a campaign where other types of Godbound exist, they are unable to bond the Word of Shapeshifting. Otherwise, the accessibility of the Shapeshifting Word in conventional games is up to the GM.

## WEAKNESSES OF THE PROTEANS

The vibrant physical power contained in a Protean tends to react violently with certain inanimate materials, causing unusual damage to the Godbound. While casual contact with this substance is painful or distracting, it is only a serious threat if used as part of a weapon.

The Protean of a particular realm have an *Innate Weakness* to one type of metal or substance; silver is a common bane, as is obsidian, bone, specially-wrought iron, or specifically-blessed weapons. A unifying thread seems to be the substance's metaphorical embodiment of death, lifelessness, or inanimate immutability in the surrounding cultures. The Protean of a realm are usually only susceptible to one of these substances, but most well-educated observers of their kind will know about this vulnerability and will exploit it when practical.

Damage inflicted by a successful hit with this substance is rolled twice, with the most injurious result taken, and ignores even the invincible defenses of a protective gift. Specially-empowered or enchanted items of this substance might always do maximum damage against Proteans, but creating such powerful enchantments is very difficult, and only potent Eldritch, hostile Godbound, or similar artificers can hope to do so. Such empowered weaponry would have to be built as an artifact with a greater gift dedicated toward doing maximum damage to Proteans of that realm.

The Proteans of some realms are known for having the *Incandescent Power* trait, flaring with divine might when they use their abilities. This corona can make impersonation difficult, but when the Protean needs discretion after unleashing too much of their divine might, they can Commit Effort for the day to stifle its manifestation for the next hour, though it requires a round's concentration to do so.

## HEROES AS WEAPONS

### LEILA THE BLADEWIFE

|                                                                                                                                                                   |                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>AC:</b> 7, if targeted                                                                                                                                         | <b>Move:</b> 30' dance as sword |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b> 11 hit points                                                                                                                                    | <b>Save:</b> 15+                |
| <b>Attack:</b> +1, 1d8 Fray die                                                                                                                                   | <b>Damage:</b> 1d10 as sword    |
| <b>Morale:</b> 9, 12 with Hazim                                                                                                                                   | <b>Effort:</b> 2                |
| <b>Powers:</b> Bound to Endurance, Shapeshifting, and Health.<br>The gifts of <i>A Cold, Still Shape</i> , <i>Undying</i> , and <i>Lifegiver</i> are known to her |                                 |

A simple Ancalian blacksmith's daughter, Leila was the prettiest girl in the village, and the apple of her father's eye. When the manor lord's dashing son Hazim took an interest in her, her father feared for the young man's intentions, but Hazim was as good-hearted as he was strong of arm. His father was unenthusiastic about his son's choice of wife, but the boy was only a third son anyway and not needed for a marriage alliance. For a few months, it seemed that Hazim and Leila were destined to live happily ever after.

Then came the catastrophic opening of the Night Roads and the terrible Hollowing Plague. The village was destroyed, the manor overrun, and Hazim broke his sword on a swarm of husks before being dragged down and gnawed by the dead. In desperation, Leila awoke to her nature as a Godbound, infusing her beloved with tremendous vigor and becoming a bright blade in his hand.

The two now roam Ancalia's wilderness, determined to help their countrymen. Hazim is a great warrior, if but a mortal, but Leila's powers have restored him after more than one death. Her own powers are still limited, but she can make her husband nigh-immortal.

Leila usually takes the form of an unremarkable greatsword slung over her beloved's back in order to save response time and Effort, though she can adopt a less conspicuous shape if needed. She is, of course, a magic weapon and does 1d10 damage when wielded.

While she has the shape of a sword, she can physically move and manipulate her surroundings as a normal woman with two arms and two legs could do. Thus, the blade might leap up and "dance" while unseen arms grab and manipulate things around it.

Her voice is audible to her wielder and to others if she so desires, but usually she keeps quiet so as to avoid unwanted notice. Her heroic mortal beloved has a substantially better hit bonus, so while she could make her own attack against anyone within melee range each round, she usually uses her action to use Health miracles or perform physical actions that her wielder hasn't got the free hands or attention to perform. Her 1d8 Fray die applies normally, as she throws a few cuts and stabs at enemies in passing.

In truly dire situations in which her beloved has perished, she's been known to miraculously revive him with the *Lifegiver* gift's power, though not before wreaking a terrible vengeance on the foe who thought to claim the Bladewife as their own.

# SHAPESHIFTING

The Word of Shapeshifting commands physical transformations of all kinds, both of the wielder and of those targeted by their powers. Shapeshifting is a very physical, tangible Word, and does not alter minds beyond the necessary enlightenment needed to use new limbs or impersonate others. Instead, it molds flesh as its wielder desires.

Shapeshifters use the shapeshifting rules given on page 160. When shapeshifters change form, their non-magical clothing and personal effects either vanish or transmute to ones appropriate to their new shape. Vanished items return when they revert to a shape that can wear or use them, while transformed items return to their original appearance. Transformed items thrown off by the Godbound remain in their new shape. Thus, a Godbound who turns into a Dulimbaian magistrate will have their clothing become appropriate to such a figure if they so wish.

Godbound affiliated with the Shapeshifting word have an invincible defense against any unwanted effect that would alter their shape, not including simple damage, but including maiming, tattoos, branding, or mutilation. Once per day they can smooth away their own wounds, healing hit points equal to their level as an Instant action.

## LESSER GIFTS

### FAIR MORTAL MIEN

Action

You may take any humanoid form you wish, including a perfect replica of an existing person you've observed. Voice and physical mannerisms are duplicated perfectly, but you gain no special knowledge of how they behave or speak. This body can be molded to any appearance you desire, but your own statistics remain unchanged. If you Commit Effort for the scene, you can use this gift as an On Turn action.

### KNACK OF THE BORROWED SHAPE

Instant

When you adopt the shape of a creature, you may also adopt its special abilities. While you cannot mimic bound Words, divine gifts, theurgy, or other learned sorcery, you can obtain a medusa's stony gaze, a dragon's flaming breath, or some other magical gift. Old-school bestiaries offer ideas for forms, but the specifics of allowed powers are at the GM's discretion. Each gift you adopt requires you to Commit Effort; when you leave the shape, this Effort returns at the end of the scene.

### LICK YOUR WOUNDS

Action

You merge torn flesh and broken bones in your own form, becoming briefly molten with vital force. Commit Effort for the day to heal 1d6 hit points per three levels, rounded up. Until the start of your next turn, you're immune to physical weapons or harm from objects.

### PLASMIC BODY

Action

You may soften and liquefy your form, allowing you to pass through any barrier that is permeable to a liquid and permitting you to move at your normal movement rate. This liquid form may maintain a human appearance, but it is too soft to manipulate objects, attack a foe, or use offensive powers, though it is immune to non-magical weapons.

### TEN THOUSAND SKINS

Action

You may transform into any creature no smaller than a mouse nor larger than a moose. You retain your own attributes, hit points, and combat bonuses in this form, but may use whatever movement types are natural to your new shape. You may communicate with beasts of your assumed kind when wearing their shape. If you Commit Effort for the scene, you can use this gift as an On Turn action.

### THE CLAWS THAT CATCH

On Turn

You may manifest claws or other body weaponry in whatever form you take, including human guises. These inflict 1d10 damage and count as magical weapons. You may also Commit Effort for the scene to produce a venom that will kill or incapacitate a lesser foe who fails a Hardiness save, with the venom applied to every physical attack you make that scene. Against Mobs of lesser foes, this venom makes your attack do maximum damage in place of that effect.

## GREATER GIFTS

### A COLD, STELL SHAPE

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. You may transform into an inanimate object no smaller than a knife nor larger than a wagon. The object may be used normally without harm to you, though attempts to break it or disassemble it affect your hit points. You retain awareness of your surroundings while transformed and may move or otherwise animate portions of the object. Changing back requires an action.

### DECEITFUL FACES

Constant

With impersonations, you instinctively know languages and what to do to maintain the facade, even if you have no possible way of knowing the right answers or actions. Whenever you want to accomplish something, you know the "in-character" way the original would do it. Worthy foes you impersonate can make a Spirit save to block this gift.

### FORGING OF SINEW AND BONE

Action

Commit Effort for the day. You may alter a visible target's physical form into any shape you yourself are able to adopt. Subjects transformed into beasts use the rules given on page 160. Worthy foes may make a Hardiness saving throw to resist this change. This gift cannot heal a target or repair organs or limbs that have been mutilated; the injury will appear in the new form as well. This transformation is permanent unless the Godbound releases it or it is dispelled.

### THE GREATNESS WITHIN

Constant

The shapeshifter's natural transformational abilities are augmented, allowing their transformation gifts such as *Ten Thousand Skins* to adopt extremely large forms, as big as a dragon, a modest house, or a small sailing ship. A mortal transformed into a very large shape, one no smaller than an elephant, is given 3 hit dice if their native hit dice aren't already superior to that.

# Undestined

The Undestined are askew. Where other Godbound are woven deeply into the substance of the world, the Undestined have somehow gotten their divine powers tangled in the metaphysical gears of creation. They see the deeper substrate on which the manifestations of fate and causality play out, and their powers spring from strange, left-handed invocations of flaws and ambiguities in reality. A normal Godbound of Knowledge wields the truth as a natural servant of his will. An Undestined knows the flaws and frays in reality that let her instantiate Knowledge where Knowledge should not be, where Knowledge *could not* be for anyone else. The mechanical effects of these cheated miracles are the same as for other Godbound, but their appearance can often be very different.

## Undestined Powers and Limits

Undestined Godbound all have bound the Word of Fate, and are the only ones who can barring special GM permission. They have no connection to the more material elements of nature, and so cannot bind the Words of Fire, Sea, Sky, Earth or Fertility. Their existence of constant struggle against the celestial gears of reality gives them an intuitive grasp of the principles of conflict and thus all of them have the *Skilled in Strife* trait.

Their dissonance with the underlying processes of the world make it very difficult for them to directly influence events in a memorable way. They are easily forgotten, often overlooked, and even their great deeds and mighty acts spawn tales and legends of some other hero. They cannot spend Influence or Dominion on creating changes without acting through an allied or subordinated figure. The control or influence

that is created always rests with that figure rather than the Undestined, though the Undestined may have control over them in turn.

The acts and bonds of an Undestined invariably get confused or forgotten over the course of a year or two, with their feats being assigned to other figures and the tangible proof somehow becoming lost or distorted. Worthy foes involved in the events or relationships always remember the truth, however, though their testimony and insistence tends to become misunderstood or overlooked all the same.

Most Undestined who want to live normal lives have to do so by creating alternate identities, either through the *Consume the Name* gift or through their own impostures. Mundane disguises and pretense is usually sufficient to give a false identity life, allowing the acts they perform in that identity to remain clearly remembered and recorded. Determined Undestined are sometimes even able to create false identities as rulers and monarchs, sidestepping their kind's inability to rule directly by falsely assuming the ruler's fate.

If the truth is discovered about the false identity, the Undestined may be assailed as an impostor, but lesser foes will automatically assume that the original person actually existed, and the Undestined has abstracted and replaced them. Only worthy foes will be able to conceive of the idea that the Undestined was playing the role all along, and they will have extreme difficulty in persuading lesser sorts of it.

There have even been stories of persons that have been accidentally constructed whole-cloth by the Undestined's impostures. Once the Godbound's fakery is revealed, there is a small but real chance that the person they pretended to be will actually come into existence, and is unlikely to be well-disposed toward their "impostor".

## An Undestined Schemer

### BROTHER GYALTSSEN

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| AC: 3, innate                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Move: 30' run            |
| Hit Dice: 9 hit points                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Save: 15+                |
| Attack: +3, 1d8 Fray die                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Damage: 1d6 prayer beads |
| Morale: 9                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Effort: 2                |
| <b>Powers:</b> Bound to Fate, Knowledge, and Deception. Has the gifts of <i>Drawing Out the Line</i> , <i>Consume the Name</i> , <i>Liar's Flawless Grace</i> , <i>Deceiver's Unblinking Eye</i> , and <i>Veiled Step</i> . |                          |

Brother Gyaltssen was never an important monk in the windswept Toban lamasery of Jokang. His parents were nomads who perished in a raid by Thousand Gods tribesmen, and for lack of surviving kindred he was entrusted to the monks as an oblate. For the past forty years he has been a model of unobtrusive usefulness to his seniors, dutifully obeying both them and the rigid rules of the lamasery. Despite this, he has neither friends nor notice there.

Gyaltssen's frustration has boiled for years. No matter how diligently he served, how carefully he learned, he was always overlooked by his superiors and never considered for positions of greater responsibility. When his work on a holy manuscript he had spent ten years in copying was credited to a rival out of seeming sheer indifference by the chief lama, he finally lost all composure.

He murdered his rival in secret, and it was only then that he realized his true nature as an Undestined. He perceived the dead monk's past, his nature, his substance as a strand of being, and effortlessly assumed the man's life. His "rival" left the monastery forever the next day, cursing the monks and acting most disgracefully. Brother Gyaltssen's absence during the scene was never noticed.

Since then, the Undestined has been feeling out the extent of his new powers. He is convinced that the ancestors have blessed him with this power as a reward for his years of anonymity. He understands that he can achieve nothing under his own name, but his powers tempt him with the idea of subverting the monastery to his service, and from there, casting a net of influence over the whole Toban plain.

Gyaltssen is of no great prowess in a fight, and would be easily overcome by a serious supernatural foe. His gifts and Words help ensure that he never finds himself in such a situation. He will always seek to flee direct confrontations unless he's absolutely sure of his ultimate victory, and will prefer to use his gifts to frame an enemy and stir other forces into dealing with them.

Gyaltssen is a man driven by decades of aching resentment. His apparent cheerfulness in day-to-day dealings is driven by his hidden joy in his newfound powers, and he will respond with secret but vicious pettiness towards the slightest offense. Should he find other Godbound, his first thoughts will be to subtly use them for his ends.

The celestial engines grind out probabilities and likelihoods for the denizens of the world below. There is choice for the living, but some are so penned in by circumstance and their own natures that their destinies are practically certain. The Godbound who binds Fate has mastered those spaces of ambiguity between the certain and the impossible. They can make near-impossibilities a fated certainty for a person, or find the gap through which they might escape an otherwise inexorable doom.

Miracles of Fate decree future results for the Godbound and other creatures and steal the fates of others for the Godbound to inhabit. They clip causality, unlinking acts from their consequences, and they exempt the Undestined from the results of their unwise choices.

The Godbound is master of their own will. They have an invincible defense against mental influences or mind-reading, and may cause attempts at the latter to return any results they wish

## LESSER GIFTS

### CUT THE CONSEQUENCE

On Turn

Commit Effort for the scene. The Godbound's current round of action is totally ignored by all around them, with no memory of it or reaction to it save that of immediate self-defense. Even scrying or recording won't catch the Undestined's deeds while under this effect. Worthy foes can save versus Spirit to notice the Godbound's actions.

### DRAWING OUT THE LINE

Constant

The Godbound is fated to survive their perils. Their base armor class becomes 3 and they cannot be surprised.

### PERSISTENCE OF BEING

Instant

The Undestined is immune to any effect that would kill them directly, without inflicting the requisite damage. Thus death spells, lethal poisons, petrification, or other instant-death effects cannot touch them. Non-lethal side effects may apply normally. As an Instant action, they can Commit Effort for the day to negate a blow or magic that would kill them some other way, but they can do so only once a day.

### READ THE SIGNS

Action

The Godbound can look at a person and get a general idea of their past and most likely future. A brief description of their occupation, current ambitions, and a sentence on their most likely fate in the next year is obtained, along with their maximum hit dice total or character level.

### SOMEONE ELSE'S NAME

Action

Commit Effort for the scene and target a visible person to strip their destiny from them. Those who know of the victim will no longer recognize them or believe they are who they claim to be, even if the circumstantial evidence is overwhelming. The victim can try to make a new life, but they can't get their old life back until the Undestined releases them. Worthy foes can save versus Spirit to resist this power.

## STRIKE THE FETTERS

Commit Effort for the scene. All allied creatures in sight are freed of any mind-affecting effect or magical curse. If Effort is committed for the day, these subjects become immune to one mental effect or mind-affecting gift of the Godbound's choice for the rest of the scene.

## GREATER GIFTS

### CONSUME THE NAME

Action

Commit Effort for the day and choose a lesser foe or fresh human corpse in sight. The target vanishes as the Godbound assumes their identity and natural destiny. They can use either the targeted creature's attributes or their own, but retain their natural hit points and character level. They have an invincible defense against any magical attempt to detect their imposture except for the inspections of the Fate Word itself. They automatically know everything the target knew, though they may have to focus on particular topics to dredge up the knowledge. This imposture ends when the Godbound drops it or as soon as they Commit Effort for any reason. Once ended, the original target reappears where they were when this gift was first used, if they were alive, knowing nothing of what transpired since. Corpses never reappear. Once the Godbound has consumed a name they may re-adopt the persona at will by Committing Effort for the day, but they can't adopt the same name twice in a single day. When the name is re-adopted, the original subject vanishes once more, assuming they're still alive, and again returns at the power's end.

### FADE INTO FATE

Action

Commit Effort for the day. The Godbound dissolves into the present situation, becoming a faceless, overlooked member of some group of two or more people present: guards, gawking onlookers, undead legions, or even their own party of allies. They cannot be targeted or affected by any attack or power, and their original presence is forgotten, but they share the fate of the group. If the entire group is killed, they manifest next to one of the corpses with 1 hit point remaining. The Godbound may remain submerged in the group for up to one day, emerging at last in some place near a member of the group. While submerged in the group, they can take no action but get a general idea of what the group is doing and where its members are. Worthy foes can make a Spirit saving throw not to forget the Godbound was present, but actually forcing them back into their presence requires an appropriate miracle of dispelling or the extermination of the group.

### REVISE DESTINY

Action

Commit Effort for the scene. A particular creature in sight may have its destiny dictated in detail for up to one week per level of the Godbound or a single fated event or indefinite condition decreed for some point in the future. Wildly improbable events and choices cannot be dictated, but unlikely ones may be made certain, including an untimely death. If the target is a worthy foe or the destiny described requires the involvement of worthy foes in its execution, those involved get a Spirit saving throw to defy their role in the imposed fate.

## Skill Words

**Skill Words** are an optional concept the GM may choose to use with Exemplars or other themed Godbound who revolve around sublime human perfection. Instead of focusing on the primordial elements of creation, Skill Words revolve around human talents and pursuits. Rather than the Word of Sword or Command, for example, the Godbound might have the Words of Fencing or Persuasion. These Words are more limited than the conventional Words of Creation, but an individual Godbound usually has a wider selection of them.

If you're converting characters from a setting or game system that already has a skill list, then the conversion is simple; each listed skill is its own Skill Word. If you're starting from scratch, then you can let players name their own Skill Words, such as Brawling or Architecture or Cooking or any other short, descriptive term that is clear to all.

Skill Words can be used for miracles appropriate to the skill's type; thus, someone with the Linguist Word could use a miracle to write a passage that meant one thing to most observers but gave an entirely different message to a specific chosen reader. Skill Words don't tend to have such dramatic effects as the usual Words of Creation, and so the effects created by a Skill Word miracle should usually be on par with a lesser gift.

Skill Words can also be used for defensive dispelling, if the player can explain how they're using their word to dodge some impending supernatural calamity. The GM should be generous about this; it can be hard to explain how a strictly human skill can be used to evade a torrent of living flame, for example, but the game is going to be very hard for PCs who can't dispel incoming trouble at least some of the time. As a general rule of thumb, the GM should be charitable about interpretations, but don't let the player use the same dispelling justification twice in one fight. Thus, the Exemplar of Architecture might suddenly build a wall so quickly that the flame torrent spatters against it, but they couldn't then use that same trick again in the same fight. Skill Words are rarely applicable for offensive dispelling.

### Choosing Skill Words and Gifts

In place of their usual Word picks, an Exemplar or other themed Godbound of similar prowess can pick three major Skill Words and two minor Skill Words during their character creation. Major Words are critical to the PC's concept, while Minor Words might be lesser knacks that are important to the PC but not entirely mandatory to their conception. Once chosen, they can spend their usual six gift points on appropriate gifts, or buy additional major Skill Words for three gift points or minor Skill Words for two. They can likewise expand their selection of Words later on by spending points earned in advancement on doing so. If the GM is using Skill Words for a group of themed Godbound, they normally *cannot* buy conventional Words.

Players can buy gifts from any conventional Word that fit at least one of their major Words. Thus, the word of Fencing might take gifts from both Sword and Alacrity, representing the nimbleness and prowess of the paragon of fencing. One with the word of Brawling might take gifts from Might and Endurance, with a little bit of Sword on the side. It's up to the GM to decide if the justification offered makes sense. The GM also decides whether or not specific greater gifts may be purchased; some of these gifts create effects much too powerful or dramatic to fit the idiom of human skill, however superhuman its refinement. With minor Words, the player can buy gifts in a similar fashion but they are limited to lesser gifts only.

### Skill Word Sorcery

Magically-gifted PCs might choose to take a particular form of magic as a Skill Word, such as "Fire Sorcery". Mastery of this style of magic would let them pick gifts from the Fire Word, for example, or perhaps select some theurgy initiations from Sorcery. While they may represent their gifts as spells and incantations, they are used normally; the hero doesn't have to spend extra time casting to trigger their Body of Burning Light gift. Of course, if they actually do use theurgy or a low magic tradition, the casting times apply normally.

Most GMs will want to require players to take such sorcery as a major Skill Word, and avoid allowing sorcerer PCs to duplicate more human skills with their picks. Thus, you might allow Night sorcery, but not Sword sorcery, because the latter is too similar to the strictly human pursuit of swordsmanship. If a hero wants to be a tremendous swordswoman, have her pick Fencing or Dueling or Melee as a Skill Word rather than taking it as sorcery.

In the same vein, you may want to restrict such sorcery from human exercises of skill even if it would normally fall under the Word's purview. You may permit a Sea sorcerer, for example, but disallow using it for miracles of seamanship or captaincy. Magic of this kind is meant for wonders and marvels rather than simple augmentation. In all cases, taking such a Skill Word should usually be justification enough for buying the Adept of the Gate gift and other theurgic initiation gifts from the Sorcery Word. Naturally, the adept will then have to learn their invocations normally, but they can always fall back on the gifts and miracles of their chosen magic.

### Skill Word Summary

If the GM chooses to have their themed Godbound pick Skill Words instead of the usual Words of Creation, alter the usual character creation steps as below.

- Pick three major Skill Words and two minor Skill Words. Use skills from the game you're converting from, or any other short term that is clear to both you and the GM.
- Spend your six gift points to buy gifts from any of the conventional Words. You can buy any lesser gift that seems to fall under the rubric of one of your Skill Words, such as an offensive Bow gift for the Archery Skill Word or a flaming attack for a Fire Sorcery Skill Word. You may only buy greater gifts for your major Skill Words.
- You can buy additional major Skill Words for three gift points, or minor ones for two. You may do this now or as you gain more gift points with experience and level advancement.

You may perform miracles with your Skill Words as usual, but these miracles must somehow relate to superhuman excellence rather than purely magical feats.

Sorcery Skill Words do not have this limitation, but cannot be used to replicate purely human feats of skill, or cover fields that are better described by a more mundane skill's sphere. Thus, there might be Fire sorcerers, but no Archery sorcerers.

# CONVERTING POWERS FROM OTHER GAMES

One of the main reason to use themed *Godbound* is when you want to convert characters or concepts from other games. Many of these games have their own systems of powers, abilities, and special perks. Rather than reinvent the wheel, there are a few steps you can take to convert their existing powers to *Godbound*. These are most applicable if your trying to create new Skill Word gifts, but you might take them as hints for importing other powers and abilities into your game.

## Non-Combat Boost Abilities

Some powers grant the hero sublime skill at a particular non-combat activity or proficiency. If the power is narrow in its effect, applying to only one situation or type of activity, it should provide automatic success at the effort with no Effort commitment requirement. Thus, a power that gives the hero a bonus to evading obstacles and ramming attempts while captaining a ship would be converted to a lesser gift that allows the captain to dodge reefs, wreckage, or ramming attempts automatically, for no Effort Commitment. If opposed by some foe with a similar sea-mastery bent on ramming, the conflict would be diced off as an opposed attribute check.

If the power is broad-based, applying a benefit in many situations, then it should still give automatic success but require Effort to be Committed for the scene, or for the day if the effect is particularly dramatic. Thus, a generic power that made the hero a tremendous seaman would be converted to a lesser gift that let them succeed in any superhuman feat of sailing mastery at the cost of Committing Effort for the scene.

In essence, if the power is giving a bonus to a roll, convert it to automatic success. If it's an automatic success at something niche or uncommonly necessary, make it cost no Effort. If it's an automatic success at something very flexible or a specific feat the PC will be using often, like hitting someone or persuading someone, then make it Commit Effort for the scene. If it involves automatic success and tremendous results from that success, like a maximized damage roll, then it Commits Effort for the day. Skill boost abilities are almost always lesser gifts.

Some powers have a very small effect on their own, and are meant to be used in conjunction with other abilities to create a more powerful total result. These abilities don't fit in well with *Godbound*'s mechanics, and you're generally best off simply ignoring those powers and not introducing them to your game. At a pinch, you might wrap several up into a single more effective ability.

## Saving Throws and Lesser Foes

Some powers will take a foe out of the conflict if they succeed: a power of supernatural persuasion, for example, or a sudden poison that enfeebles the victim instantly. If these powers connect and automatically succeed then the victim simply loses to the PC.

Against single lesser foes, this is all right. A *Godbound* who uses a gift against one lesser foe can reasonably expect to defeat them by doing so. The inexorable persuasion, noxious poison, or crippling enchantment will just automatically work against single foes.

Against groups of lesser foes, it should allow a saving throw, and be limited in the number of targets it can take out or beguile. If you need a guideline, assume it debilitates a number of hit dice of lesser foes equal to 1d6 per two levels of the hero, rounded up. If used against a Mob of lesser foes, read those dice straight.

Against single worthy foes, the power should always allow a saving throw to resist it or mitigate its effect. It's all right for the power to eliminate a worthy foe if it fails its save, because most significant worthy foes have excellent saving throws and can Commit Effort to auto-save if they fail. Even so, these powers can be useful against such enemies as a tax on their available Effort, though the hero is probably better off relying on more direct harms.

Against groups of worthy foes, the power should only ever be able to harm or weaken them rather than render them helpless or compliant. Use the standard damage and effect guidelines given in the "What Can Miracles Do" section on page 27. Allowing a PC to automatically wipe out several major enemies with a single power or effect is unwise, even if a saving throw is allowed to the victims. The most such area-effect powers should do is inflict hit point damage, apply penalties to saving throws or hit rolls, or other effects that soften up the targets without making them trivial to defeat.

## Powers And Prerequisites

Some games have powers that involve several prerequisite abilities that must be learned before the best power can be acquired. Sometimes this final power is just qualitatively better than the earlier ones, and is a flat upgrade on its abilities. Other times the earlier powers are still useful, even if the final power is more effective in its particular result.

Cut these prerequisite chains. If the final power is exceptionally strong, make it a greater gift, but don't require prerequisite abilities. If the earlier powers in the chain do different things, wrap one or more of them up into a lesser gift, such that a player might want to pick the power even independent of the final ability in the chain. Prerequisite chains often oblige a player to map out their power choices in advance, and that's something *Godbound* tries to eliminate.

Some games gate powers behind particular scores or level limits, requiring the PC have certain abilities or a certain power level before they can choose the gift. In this case, let minor Words pick the easier gifts to learn, while major Words can pick any gift from the category. Thus, if the game measures power magnitude on a 1 to 5 scale, you might choose to let minor Words pick powers of levels 1 to 2 as lesser gifts, while major Words could pick all powers, treating those of levels 3 to 5 as greater gifts.

## Abilities Based on Overall Power

Some games have a key statistic that measures a hero's overall might, much as *Godbound* uses character levels. Sometimes this power score is measured between 1 and 5, while other games use a score between 1 and 10. These scores can be used as prerequisites for certain powers, or be relevant when determining an ability's effects.

For individual powers, it's best to use the guidelines in the section above, granting people Skill Word users with minor Words access to level 1 and 2 powers, while major Words let them pick any power. If using conventional Words of Creation, let them pick any power under their purview, as *Godbound* are stronger than the average PC heroes of these games.

When a hard score is needed for your conversion, halve the PC's level, rounded up, to get a power score between 1 and 5. If the converted game uses a ten-point range, just use the PC's level. For NPCs and monsters, just assign an appropriate score based on the setting and your own judgment of where the entity stands.

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