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To Penny Williams and Brendon Goodyear, for saving the day.

To Budapest, for always being a good boy. We'll miss you.

To Frank Frazetta, without whose art we may never have found fantasy in the first place.

FANTASY CRAFT CREATED BY ALEX FLAGG, SCOTT GEARIN, AND PATRICK KAPERA

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CHAPTER 1: CLOAK & DAGGER

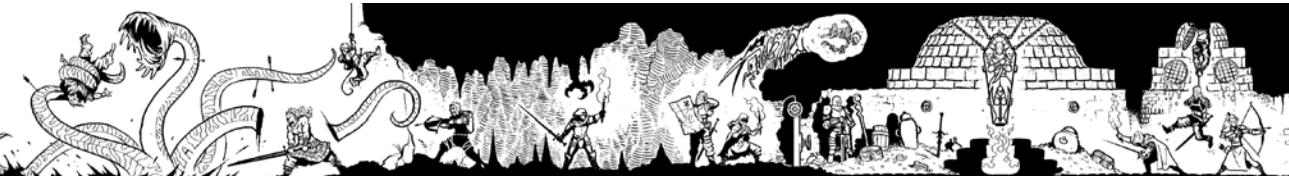
SILENT KNIVES AT THE END OF AN EMPIRE

You there, pup — get up off your knee and come over here. Servants have no need to kneel before old soldiers like me; we're also of common stock and have little need for such formality. Besides, I'm not here to see your master. I'm here to see you.

Don't act so surprised! We've had our eyes on you for many a year. We were watching during your days as a student in the Schola Ministorum, where your talents went unrecognized and unnourished by your headmasters. We were watching when you went on to the Collegium, where you toiled as a lowly scribe, cowering at the sandaled feet of pompous and overfed administrators. And we've been watching you in this gods-forsaken backwater, where every day you labor at the whim and fancy of a half-wit patrician, hoping that by getting close to him, you can *finally* gain recognition of your talents and be delivered from this hollow existence. Well, let me be the first to tell you, friend — you've cast your lot and lost. This is what you are, and this is what you'll stay, and your life will remain a pale shade of what it could be. Why? Because you lack *purpose*.

You look upset — am I too close to the mark? You think I'm cruel, but rest assured, I've not come to insult servants. I'm on an important mission, and I'm here to ask you one question: When you leave this world, and Eppilia inscribes your life in the Book of the Departed, what tale should she tell — one of a servant, or one of a man? A tale of a plebian, or a patriot? One who merely lived, or one who truly *mattered*?

But forgive me — I'm as refined as I am handsome, and I forget myself. I am Adrakus — once centurion of the Imperial Legion, now instructor for the Schola Specerum of House Revus. I knew your father — served with him during the Third Hykosian War. We drew and spilt blood together in that infernal expanse of sand southeast of Phaetes. He was a good man, your father, and he loved the Empire — so much that he fought for it in that desiccated hell and died for it with a Southerner's sword buried in his belly. But sure as I knew him, I know he loved our nation of Revus more. He loved its sea-kissed breezes and sun-bleached cities, its bronzed and brassy women, and the Spire of Adomius that towers proudly above the cliffs of Lamnum Labrum. Aye, he was a loyal citizen of the Golden Empire, but he was a patriot too.





And indeed, we live in a time for patriots. Surely an educated man such as yourself has seen it coming — the tension increasing between the Great Houses, the line of succession at the Collegium growing more and more unfair, and the Empire careening toward despotism and tyranny. Barbarians bash at our northern gates, the Hykosian kingdoms again press their advantage in the south, savage cultists spread heathen religions among our poor, and the rich wallow in their gluttony and hedonism. This empire is rotting from the head, and the time has come for men of valor to do something about it. Each one of us must ask where his heart lies — with the throne or with our people, with empire or with countrymen. You are a loyal citizen, and you've served your empire well, but I ask you now — are *you* a patriot?

THE GOLDEN AGE

The story of our land was written in the blood of patriots. The tale began on the eastern shores of the now faded Middle Sea, in ancient Aesonia, the first jewel of civilization in the Known World. Those days were the stuff of legend and myth — strange and terrible beasts haunted the dark places of the world, witches worked their evil hexes on the unwary, and gods roamed the land, meddling in the affairs of men.

The Known World was smaller then, consisting of dozens of squabbling city-states divided by boundless stretches of untamed wilderness. The Aesonian kings governed their affairs by passion rather than reason, squandering their resources in pointless conflicts over scraps of land, hoards of riches, and the favors of women. Their shameful pride and lust for power knew no limits beyond their imaginations, until they faced an enemy beyond all reckoning — the Hykosians.

Out of the south they marched, a million fighting men from a thousand kingdoms — slaves, mystics, charioteers, and more, backed by lumbering beasts and horrible creatures found not even in the darkest dreamings of Adomius — sweeping across the wild lands of the East like a billowing storm over calm seas. None could stand against the sheer force of their arms, the earth-shaking tread of their armies, and the twisted countenances of their gods. Kings who opposed the Hykosians soon found themselves in chains, and cities that fought their armies were burned to the ground. In just ten years, the invaders raised ziggurats to their vile gods throughout the South and East. Then their pagan kings began to gaze covetously at tiny Aesonia.

With the enemy on their doorstep and the armies of the old kings in tatters, the kings of Aesonia knew not where to turn until Good King Polyanthropos proposed a revolutionary idea — the development of a professional army, led by the greatest champions of the land. Desperate and downcast, the other regents of the land agreed to put aside old rivalries for the sake of

civilization itself. The leaders of the Grand Alliance, as the nascent union was called, wasted no time in dispatching messengers to the far corners of their lands in search of their heroes.

Seven champions answered the call: stoic Atrodos, the vicious Thestarian sorcerer and swordsman; ancient Hepothyses, the sagacious and powerful high priest of the Western Reach; wise Corlantia, the dazzlingly beautiful mistress of spear and shield; savage Verkona, a barely civilized warrior seeking to avenge the death of her beloved; mighty Terkos, a master of beasts who had the strength of a dozen men; proud Olegus, the noble son of an oracle with a voice that could charm man and beast; and our founder, Ilkan Revus, a notorious scoundrel and seafarer. The kings made this assemblage of heroes an unlikely offer: Save Aesonia from the easterling hordes, and they could name their own rewards. With the greatest treasures of the land at their disposal and the blessings of all civilization laid upon them, the Seven, as they came to be known, began the Great War of Liberation.

For twelve years, the army of the Alliance battled Hykosia throughout the Known World, from the shores of the Gulf of Pelegia to the cliffs of Lamnum Labrum and the trackless deserts of Phaetes. Though they began as strangers and shared no ties of culture or kinship, the Seven worked together brilliantly, slaying kings and hydras, and surviving both cut of blade and burn of spell to raze temples and liberate cities. With little more than a handful of brave and desperate soldiers at their backs, they broke the back of the unbeatable enemy in little more than a decade, scattering the disorganized barbarians to the four winds.

BIRTH OF AN EMPIRE

When the Seven returned to Thestares, the city of kings, the citizens hailed them as saviors of the world. But the greedy and treacherous kings viewed them as a threat to their sovereignty that could not be tolerated. Thus, neither triumphant reception nor public sacrifice to the gods awaited them — only thinly veiled threats coupled with suggestions that they return to their old lives allow the old order to rise again. To the Seven, who knew well the language of the old ways, the meaning of this reception was clear. They would be turned against each other in pointless conflicts, or quietly removed by poisoned wine or a silent knife at midnight. The audacity! The hubris! Gravely insulted but not ruled by their base passions, the heroes took council together. Realizing that the Hykosian scourge was but a taste of what awaited Aesonia should it return to the chaos of the old ways, they returned to the kings with but one request — that the Aesonian kings abandon their thrones for the good of the Known World.

Outraged, the kings cursed the heroes and recanted their promise of reward. Each monarch began to raise an army of his own, pitting countryman against countryman as their fragile union fractured. But the armies of the Grand Alliance were seasoned, determined, and loyal to the Seven. They moved



CHAPTER 1



relentlessly against the gathering forces of the kings, and those who resisted were crushed. Their conquest complete, the Seven returned to Aesonia with a promise to its citizens — to bring liberty and law to every land of the Known World in the same way that the Grand Alliance had defeated the southern horde — as one people beneath the flag of one Golden Empire.

Thus was born the Collegium, the cornerstone of the Golden Empire. The Seven divided the Known World into seven states, each with a hero and his house at its head and an equal portion of the new Imperial army. But the mantle of emperor would never rest with just one house; rather, the throne would pass to the next Great House every decade, granting each the opportunity to lead the seven nations to prosperity and glory. While not on the throne, the patriarchs of the other six Great Houses would oversee the many aspects of Imperial affairs, from military campaigns and the formation of academies to the construction of roads and state festivals. Together, these seven new nations built Imperia — the greatest city the world has ever known — to serve as the seat of their empire. Each nation claimed an equal share of the city, which was treated as a separate nation beyond the borders of the others.

In the ensuing centuries, the Golden Empire's reach spread still farther, bringing the light of education, art, and peace to all corners of the Known World. The seven nations grew as their influence spread, and their legions slowly pushed back the barbaric tribes that had claimed the lands of the West for eons. The Imperial legions then joined forces for a mission known as the Great Cleansing, to exterminate the profane magical beasts befouling the land to make way for new cities, roads, and commerce. The Magna Imperia movement educated the people of new territories, spreading Imperial language and culture from one end of the Known World to the other. The Golden Empire even established peace with the Hykosians, who were still licking their wounds from their defeats during the War of Liberation. This treaty at last settled the empire's restive southern border.

But as Master Revus once said, "Beware the ally who smiles and asks for nothing, for he is sharpening his blade while you're not watching." And so it was with the Golden Empire. Though peace and cooperation were the spirit of the day, old rivalries and secret resentments still festered in the shadows of the throne. The nations that formed the cradle of the empire — Corlantae, Olegea, and Atrodia — remained resentful of rule by more "provincial" nations, so their officials threw up bureaucratic roadblocks and started whisper campaigns designed to undermine the efficacy of their rivals' time on the throne. The dream of peace with the tribes of the north and Hykosia in the south proved fleeting, and Tertio and Verkonos ended up in a state of constant warfare for the borders of the empire. The wealth generated by expansion during the golden age deepened the divisions between the patrician and plebian classes, causing widespread civic unrest and periodic revolts. In the midst of this

social chaos, the generals of the Imperial Army became more assured of their power, and their attention drifted from military matters to political aspirations.

As time wore on, the Collegium began to buckle beneath the strain. The "empire of equals" became riddled with corruption, and infighting broke out within the Great Houses. Disagreements over succession turned into bitter political struggles, rife with politicking, double-dealing, and scandal as each house struggled to get its patriarch installed on the Golden Throne earlier. Eventually, the Olegean and Corlantic emperors, each fearful of the growing power of the other, began to resist abdicating the throne altogether and used the mercenary Imperial Army as a weapon to ward off their erstwhile colleagues. The dream of the Seven — a better world of equality, peace, and enlightenment — was dead, crushed beneath the jackboot of military might and debased by human indulgence, frailty, and lust for power.

IMPERIA BURNING



The once-proud Golden Empire now lies in shambles. Houses Corlantae and Olegea have alternated periods of rulership for more than a century, wearing down the occasional roughness of rule by Collegium into the smooth stone of despotism and tyranny. Dynasties of lesser sons sired by lesser sons have all but extinguished the light of reason, fraternity, and strength that the throne once embodied. Economy and trade falter as roads go unrepaired and shipping routes unguarded. Plebian cultists and firebrands rally the uneducated and superstitious masses against the throne, confusing poor rule with divine retribution. Our enemies to the north and south, sensing our growing weakness, become ever bolder about raiding across our borders. The Imperial Army charged with keeping the peace and security of the nations has been slowly rent asunder, as some factions quietly prepare for what is to come. This empire of ours is standing on a pyre of our own making, and a single spark could set the whole thing alight. But men like us — *we* can be the match!

Not three months ago, Emperor Abraxius Buxares Olegea, of the long-ruling Buxares dynasty of House Olegea, passed on to the next world, leaving no heir and few allies — even within his own house. As a man of letters, you no doubt know this part, but what you don't know is far more distressing. The Collegium, long since crippled by dictatorship and complacency, has proven ill-equipped to choose a new emperor. The resulting power vacuum has stoked a fire within the hearts of each House's patriarchs — some burn with lust for power, others desire a return to the old ways, and still others champion agendas not yet revealed.

This crisis has generated a cataclysmic breakdown of the structures that prop up the Golden Empire. Legionnaires desert the northern and southern fronts to defend home and House, opening our borders to the enemy. Unpaid, the navy has struck,





isolating the provincial nations from the support of Imperia. Even your colleagues in the Ministorum are peddling the secrets of the Empire to the highest bidder to secure their places in the new order. No one is to be trusted; everyone is suspect. What is needed, now more than ever, are patriots — those with the will to do what's right, for their country and ultimately for the empire.

The great play of history is about to unfold, and we sit in some of the finest seats in the house. The stage is set, the chorus sings, and the players are taking their positions. Now is the day that we of the smaller houses, passed over dozens of times in the rotation of the throne, could claim it for ourselves or rebuild the Collegium to its former glory. And likewise, now is the time when tyranny could snuff out the dimming candle of democracy forever. Whether this drama unfolds as a tragedy, a comedy, or an epic will be decided by men like us.

IN OUR PATRIARCH'S SECRET SERVICE

And now we get to the heart of the matter. This time in which we live is one of war, silent though it may be. Our enemies are everywhere, clad in the guises of friends and countrymen. Each nation looks to the empty throne with covetous eyes and prepares to draw swords on any who oppose its aspirations. Though armies may not yet march and cities may not yet burn, the weapons are readied, and the pernicious fires are already lit.

As we stand at this precipice, a time that will forever define the Golden Empire's future, it takes men of great discretion, skill, and conviction to shape the destiny of nations. These men are the eyes that guide the fell hand of our legions, the ears that catch secrets whispered in hallowed halls and breezy bedchambers, and the knives that cut away the plague of disloyalty with a chirurgeon's precision. Their weapon is guile, their armor anonymity, their coin secrets. They are the *specerum*, and they are poised to fight a war quite unlike any other ever fought.

The men and women who become specerum have little in common — they are mercenaries and philosophers, laborers and actors, soldiers and politicians, criminals and priests, slaves and patricians. They are united by little more than a love of country and a talent for subterfuge — in other words, they are people just like you and me. And on this motley and unpredictable lot rests the future of the Golden Empire, for the specerum form the front line in the unpredictable Silent War — theirs may be the hands that heal this nascent civil war, or the hands that light the pyre.

Most specerum fighting the Silent War are in the employ of one of the Great Houses of the Golden Empire — Atrodia, Corlantae, Hepothysus, Olegea, Revus, Tertio or Verkonos — which directs and funds their actions through a close-kept series of information networks, bribed informants, and coded instructions. Others are freelance operatives, selling their

services to the highest bidder — and sometimes more than one. Unlike legionnaires, specerum work alone or in small teams without the support of employers, often in enemy territory. Their objectives change from mission to mission — today they might be monitoring a suspected informant to a rival House, tomorrow they might be charged with poisoning a trafficker of weapons or delivering monies to an insurgent cell. The *specerum* is his own man, a soldier who must fight without comrades to his right and left, surrounded by enemies and in the dark. To be revealed is to be disarmed, and those caught are usually tortured and killed.

Make no mistake: the life of a specerum is not easy. If you agree to take on this mantle, you will be separated from your family and sent to foreign lands where you can call no one friend. You will be expected to lie and steal and manipulate and murder. You may become a person you do not like, doing things you hate. But your actions are not for you — they are for the thousands of people oppressed by the powerful, exploited by the greedy, and terrorized by the tyrant. Not many are brave or strong enough to fight for such stakes in such circumstances, but without the fruits of their labors, the future for us all looks dire indeed.

You're still here — I'm impressed. Not many have the stomach to even hear about the company we keep, much less join it. Good. Then your lessons begin now. Open your ears and set down your quill — it's time to learn the true ways of the world.

THE KNOWN WORLD

The Golden Empire occupies some three-quarters of the world as we know it, ranging from the towering mountains in the north to the baking deserts in the south and stretching some 2,000 leagues from one end to the other. It is centered on the **Middle Sea** — a vast ocean fraught with perils such as savage storms, vicious pirates, and great sea serpents that can swallow a trireme whole. As the empire has expanded, the Middle Sea has become the central thoroughfare for trade, travel, and culture. Fortunately, the skill of our navies — particularly those of Revus — is more than a match for the dangers of the sea, allowing the empire to reinforce embattled legions, move vital goods, and provide aid to plague-struck nations in a matter of weeks rather than months.

The northern regions of the Empire are home to the nations of **Tertio**, **Olegea** and our beautiful **Revus**. All three of these lands are temperate and verdant, dotted with rolling hills, towering mountains, and untamed forests still prowled by monsters of yore. The mighty **Montis Ora Mundi** runs along the northern border of both Revus and Olegea, forming a natural barricade against the intrusions of foreign powers. Tertio, bounded only by vast expanses of forests and great rivers, is not so lucky, and remains in perpetual struggle with the Balataic hordes pressing their way south into the Empire.



CHAPTER 1



East of the Middle Sea lie **Corlantae** and **Atrodia**, which occupy the territories of ancient Aesonian, the birthplace of our civilization. This dry, hard, and humble country would seem an unlikely land for kings, but the rich deposits of copper, iron, and jewels yielded by both earth and sea has ensured that these small nations remain the wealthiest in all the empire. Beyond their borders lie the mysterious steppes and wastelands of the eastern reaches, which remain largely uncharted by our surveyors and a great mystery. Some believe the east holds naught but a massive desert, while others swear to have met travelers speaking of untold riches and paths to an undiscovered sea that would allow us to circumnavigate the world. I say leave the rumors to gossiping wives and drunken vagabonds — wise men know that all the world has to offer is here before us.

To the south squat **Hepothysus** and **Verkonos**, whose lush, jungled shores are dotted with small rocky islands that provide refuge for mariners, pirates, and man-eating monsters. Farther south, these rich, tropical lands give way to the trackless **Inculata Exarescos**, a desert that runs the length of the empire's

southern border. Across that damnable field of sand and ash lie the Hykosian kingdoms, home to our ancient enemies, who ruled the Known World a thousand years before the birth of the Golden Empire. Massive ziggurats — the houses of their pagan god-heroes built during the occupation — still dot the lands of Hepothysus, Verkonos, and Atrodia, providing a constant reminder of the price our ancestors paid for our freedom.

TONGUES OF THE KNOWN WORLD

Because the Golden Empire is a melting pot of cultures and races, its citizens speak a number of different languages. Every specerius worth his salt learns as many tongues as he can, for in words lie power — and often, survival.

Imperial is the bureaucratic and trade language of the Golden Empire, spoken by 90% of its citizens and used to the exclusion of all others in political matters. Its roots are Old Aesonian, but the language has evolved over time, incorporating



SAYINGS OF THE KNOWN WORLD

Barbarian: A non-Imperial person; most often a Balataic tribesman.

Brushed by Philia's lips: Fell in love; also a *specerum* code phrase referring to a seduced asset.

The Collegium: The governing council of the Golden Empire, headed by the patriarchs of all seven Great Houses.

Cur: A mangy dog; also a mortal insult, especially in Hykosia.

Eppilia's game: A hunt; also a cat-and-mouse chase between two parties or a manhunt.

Esteemed by Stryx: Died valiantly in battle.

Fulminarius (pl. fulminarii): The emperor's secret police, who monitor House and societal affairs.

Games: Gladiatorial competitions.

Great City: Imperia, capital of the Golden Empire.

Hestaria's gaze: Intense sunlight, such as that found in the Inculata Exarescos; also *specerum* slang for coming under scrutiny or exposure during a mission.

House, Great: The government of a nation. Each Great House was descended from one of the Seven who founded the Golden Empire.

Imperia locuta est: literally "Imperia has spoken;" emblazoned on the seal for official orders from the emperor or his handpicked agents.

Labrum ex umbra: literally "a knife from the shadows;" to be caught unaware or unprepared.

Legions: Slang for the Imperial Army.

Lex: Short for the Lex Aequitas, the codex of Imperial law.

Lions: Coin. Though much of the precious metal has been removed from the coins themselves, they are still named for their primary sheen — copper, silver, or gold.

Ministorum: The Imperial administrative bureaucracy.

Patriarch: The head of a Great House.

Pricked by Adomius' needle: Fell into a spot of bad luck or experienced a sudden change of fortune.

Sephaltes' Riddle: The mystery of life; used by *specerum* for questions that cannot be answered without more information.

words, euphemisms, and phrases of conquered peoples as the empire spread its reach to the north, west, and south. Imperial script is the official written language of the Golden Empire, and it uses the same alphabet as Old Aesonian and Thesterian.

Most of the barbarian raiders speak the **Balataic** tongue, as do Imperial fighting men on campaign in the Balatian wilderness to the northwest. The tongue of the animistic horsemen of the north is oddly musical, with a rhythmic cadence and a rhyming sentence structure. Balataic has not been encountered in a written form, though many scholars speculate that such a script would be considered sacred and confined exclusively to the priesthood.

Like Imperial, **Hykosian** is spoken throughout the southern kingdoms to support trade and establish political common ground. Though guttural-sounding to untrained ears and nearly painful to hear when spoken by amateurs, the language depends heavily on nuance and places great emphasis on both intonation and body language. Hykosian script combines pictographs with a looping cursive that is beautiful to look at, though baffling to non-scholars.

The **Imperial Code** is not a language *per se*, but rather a complex flag-and-light signaling system used for discreet communication of covert information during wartime. The code is intricate and changes on a weekly basis — a particularly important tactic in these difficult times where the legions face upstart houses leading veteran legionnaires in open conflict across the land.

Old Aesonian — the first common tongue of the Known World — is the predecessor of Imperial. Today, the latter has replaced the former everywhere except the halls of academia, the Aesonian priesthood, and the most remote outposts. Interestingly enough, Old Aesonian has remained the language of most sapient monsters, which were driven into hiding by the Great Cleansing and have not been exposed to the cultures of man since.

Phaetian is a creole language of Imperial and Hykosian spoken primarily by the working classes of Verkonos. The language originated in Phaetes, port city and capital of Verkonos, where sea-trade and the influx of goods from Hykosia during intermittent periods of peace necessitated a pidgin tongue. Phaetian is also common in the northern cities of Hykosia and in southern Revus, where sailors have brought it back from their travels across the Middle Sea.

Thesterian is the language of the kings of yore. Predating even Old Aesonian, it's the oldest spoken language in the Golden Empire. Though harsh-sounding, archaic, and limited in vocabulary by modern standards, it befits the proud and stoic people of Atrodia, whose nationalism and adherence to their noble but faded history guide their culture to this day. Thesterian remains universally favored by Atrodians while within national borders, though most are bilingual in the larger towns and cities.



SAYINGS OF THE KNOWN WORLD (CONT.)

Seven: Aesonian heroes of the Great War of Liberation against Hykosia, whose success led to the creation of the Golden Empire. Today, each nation and Great House keeps its Founder as its namesake.

Silent War: The war of succession between the Great Houses that threatens to tear the Golden Empire apart.

Sleep with jackals: Fight on the southern front.

Specerus (pl. specerum): A spy or covert agent of a Great House.

Struck by Juris' hammer: Received one's just desserts.

Throne: Slang for both the emperor and the Golden Throne, seat of Imperial power.

Worth one's salt: Earning one's keep; many who serve governments are paid in spice rather than coin.



SEVEN NATIONS

The strength of the Golden Empire stems from the diversity of its nations. We've mustered armies of the hardiest Terkic troops guided by the finest Corlantic generals, cured plagues with the council of both the mystics of Atrodia and the philosophers of Hepothysus, and created a vast trade empire funded by Olegean wealth, manned by fine Revan sailors, and overseen by enterprising Verkonan merchants. This beautiful dance of interest meeting interest and strength buttressing strength has given the Golden Empire a depth and breadth unparalleled in the Known World.

Ironically, the differences that have made the empire truly great are also what now threaten to tear it apart. Ancient rivalries, political grudges, and old struggles over wealth, natural resources, and borders have all bubbled up in the wake of the emperor's death, as the Great Houses jockey for position in the new order. Now we must dance to a new tune, taking care to be light on our feet and ready to switch partners at a moment's notice. To keep our balance in these fragile times, we must know our partners as ourselves — their favorite steps, their old injuries, and of course the songs that each hopes to play next. Let us study the dances of our fellow nations so that we may find the best partners, and in doing so, learn how to set the tempo of the dance.

ATRODIA

Patriarch: Tyrant Leokadus the Greater

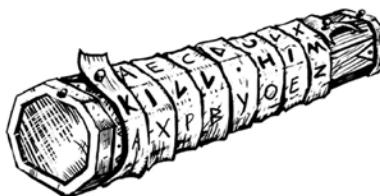
Capital: Thesteres

Patron God: Stryx, "The Warrior"

House Atrodia, once home to the Thesterian sorcerer-kings and rulers of the Known Word, was greatly diminished by the dawn of the Golden Empire. Five hundred years before the War of Liberation, the Aesonians bent other lands to their will by the force of magic or the tip of a spear. But with the formation of the empire, all that changed. Where once Thesteres had ruled, it now had to build consensus; where once it had dominated, it now had to compromise. Each successful military campaign, each expansion of another nation's territory, each time a non-Atrodiian emperor took the throne — all were considered quiet but pointed insults that mocked Atrodia's lost glory. The other nations — particularly Corlantae and Olegea — reveled in the suppression of this arrogant realm, but this loss of status was an indignity that Atrodos, the house's founder, and all his descendants could never forget.

These small "shames" spurred the Atrodians to strive for excellence and domination in all things. House Atrodia's Schola Thaumatergium, founded by Atrodos himself, has produced the finest battle-wizards and mystics in the empire. The nation's soldiers are renowned across the Known World for their stubbornness and jingoism, and campaigns by the Atrodiian Legion are invariably bloody affairs that leave few survivors and even fewer intact lands. The Atrodians have rebuilt Thesteres and other cities over and over again, making them ever larger and more impenetrable to threats both foreign and domestic.

With the beginning of the Silent War, arrogant House Atrodia has seen its opportunity to rise again. Leokadus and his minions have become agitators in the southern reaches, advocating for division of the empire into northern and southern halves so that the south's fighting men and resources would not be "squandered" in pointless wars to defend far-off Tertio or Revus. These ideas have gained traction in Verkonos and Hepothysus, and House Atrodia has wielded this support in the Collegium to thwart the moves of its old Aesonian rivals Corlantae and Olegea. Our operatives have reported Atrodiian legionnaires and thaumatergists deserting their posts wholesale — presumably in anticipation of the conflict to come. House Corlantae's attempts to negotiate or make peace have been met with aggression and vicious warnings against meddling in its affairs. Whether such maneuvering is simply spear-rattling or genuine aggression remains to be seen.



CORLANTAE

Patriarch: Penelophia Corlantia

Capital: Corlanteum

Patron God: Philia, "The Lover"

Corlanteum has been the home of culture, art, learning, and enlightenment in the Known World since the time of the Aesonian city-states. As such, it is truly the cradle of our civilization. When this tiny nation was not under the yoke of foreign oppression, it traded hands between the powermongers of Olegea and the warmongers of Atrodia, both of whom adopted many of its ideas as their own. During the War of Liberation, it was in Corlanteum's spacious plazas and dim baths that the fires of revolution were sparked, and it was in the monumental Temple of Philia that the Scrolls of Alliance were ratified to form the Golden Empire. With victory against Hykosia, Corlantae finally gained true independence, and its influence quickly reached far beyond cultural circles. Corlantic empresses have been some of the most important and popular leaders the Golden Empire has ever seen — a fact that House Corlantae has relentlessly exploited to dominate contests for the throne in the last century.

The people of Corlantae love all things beautiful and excellent, and they enjoy showing up their ancient rivals Atrodia and Olegea. As befits its history, the nation forgoes military might in favor of the arts and refinements to civic life. Corlantic political treatises, religious declarations, poems, and tragedies are familiar to people in every backwater burg and major city of the Golden Empire. House Corlantae has directly sponsored public education for children, so literacy is nearly universal within the nation's borders. This educated population provides House Corlantae with unparalleled access to the finest academics, actors and diplomats in the empire, and makes it a fertile training ground for specerum — a fact that the House exploits to the fullest. Some even say that Corlantic operatives are as talented as those of House Revus — no doubt a deliberate fabrication meant to cast our reputation into question! One should never underestimate a Corlantean, for his silver tongue can speak honeyed words while pouring poison in your ear. Never forget, young man — despite their sweet songs and great contributions to our society, the patriarchs of House Corlantae have betrayed the Collegium and played the tyrant as often as those of Olegea.

The beginning of the Silent War has placed House Corlantae on guard — the naked ambitions of Atrodia to its south and Olegea's vicious power grabbing to the north have backed the Corlanteans into a corner with little hope of escape. Fully cognizant of its transgressions, House Corlantae now hopes to reach accords with the remaining Great Houses and draw them into an alliance to overthrow the Olegean tyranny once and for all. While part of me quietly delights in watching the lofty-minded and perfumed dandies squirm at the prospect of

crushing defeat at the hands of their savage Aesonian brethren, the loss of such an asset would only encourage more of the same actions from its brutish cousins. Besides, without Corlantae, what would we ever do for entertainment?

HEPOTHYSUS

Patriarch: Akkrandas II

Capital: Consilium

Patron God: Sephaltes, "The Sage"

The powermongers of Corlantae and Olegea would have us believe that the future of the Golden Empire rests in their withered hands, but men of true wisdom know to look west. It is there at the edge of the world where the great priest Hepothysus, fatigued by years of fighting the War of Liberation, chose to shelter between the arid expanse of the Inculta Exarescos and the unfathomable loneliness of the Outer Sea. The nation he built was dedicated to peace and learning — a haven for thinkers of all sorts to share their wisdom with one another. Far from the chaos of border wars and the internecine strife plaguing the heart of the Empire, Hepothysus has fostered both knowledge and innovation — indeed, the greatest discoveries of the Golden Empire have sprung up from this nation's greatest colleges and men of learning. Because of Hepothesian ingenuity, we have flowing water in our homes, great roads that span the entire length of the empire, and weapons of war that are stronger and deadlier than any others in the Known World. Furthermore, some of the greatest emperors — including Fillupus, Drachmatus II, Alexia, and Dromedean — have come from House Hepothysus. This nation's wise council and the inventions of its philosophers and mathematicians have helped propel the Golden Empire toward excellence in all things — and may yet again, even in this dark time.

The new patriarch of House Hepothysus — Akkrandas, son of Fillipus IV — is just a boy by any measure of years or size. However, he possesses the wisdom of a man twice his age — a fact that provides an intriguing glimpse into the future of the House, and quite possibly the empire itself. Akkrandas pairs great Hepothesian curiosity with great political savvy and immense charisma, and he enjoys support of plebian and patrician alike. Of late, the young patriarch has taken it upon himself to lay out a radical new vision for the Collegium. His plan would restructure those aspects of the empire that have fallen into corruption and address the continual abuses of Olegea and Corlantae. Talk of democracy and revision of the class system have sent waves through all levels of our society. Such ideas are make Akkrandas a wild card in the battle for the Golden Throne — and a dire threat to the powers that be. Ensuring that such a man survives for as long as possible is in our own best interests, if only to keep our enemies preoccupied while we pursue our own agendas.



CHAPTER 1



OLEGEA

Patriarch: None (currently)

Capital: Septum Fiume

Patron God: Juris, "The Judge"

Ah, House Olegea. What good can any Revan — or for that matter, any other citizen of the empire — speak of the House whose patriarchs envision themselves as the self-appointed rulers of the Known World. During the War of Liberation, the cautious citizens of Septum Fiume were quite content to sit back in their high mountain towns and let the southern nations bear the brunt of the Hykosian scourge, coming to the aid of their fellow Aesonians only when victory seemed close at hand. As the war wound down, it was Olegus of Septum Fiume who convinced the Seven to band together against the Aesonian kings. Later, he drafted the Lex Aequitas, the founding doctrine that forms the basis for all Imperial law and politics. This vital contribution to the Golden Empire's success is something that House Olegea has never let the rest of us live down.

But the days of this House's altruism and fellowship have long since been drowned in the heady wine of absolute power, and today Olegea is much more likely to offer one hand in friendship while concealing a keen dagger in the other. House Olegea's offer of gold and silver from its mines in exchange for making the Olegean lion the currency of the empire gave it nearly total control of the monetary system and almost bankrupted its old enemy Corlantae. Today, those coins jingling in your purse are cast of Olegean silver, minted in Olegean foundries, and distributed by Olegean bankers — all of whom reap generous profits at the expense of us all. With this tremendous wealth, Septum Fiume became second only to Imperia in terms of wealth and glory. (No doubt this secondary status was merely a careful ploy designed to conceal its greater political ambitions.) The Legio Olegea was transformed into the most resplendent and best-equipped legion in the Imperial Army, betrothed only to its political masters. As time has worn on, we've seen just how despicably tight a yoke Olegean coin had placed on the Legion. Who can forget the betrayal at Krytas, when the Legio Olegea — faced with the invading hordes of the Balataic warmonger Hruthgar — quit the field at the behest of its House, abandoning its comrades to total slaughter?

It's a poorly kept secret that House Olegea has been striving to disband the Collegium for some time, as we of "the lesser Houses" can attest. It was in 252 that House Olegea first let slip its true ambitions. Emperor Tretrecles Asperos Olegea refused to abdicate the Golden Throne at the Collegium, citing the then-current Second Balataic War as a reason to retain the same leadership. Ten years later, House Olegea found another excuse with the Third Balataic War. Outrage swept through the disparate Houses, but the disorganization and petty infighting kept Olegea on the throne. Eventually, Corlantae and a few

other Houses rose to contest Olegea's claim, but trading one tyrant for another proved only that the damage was done, and Olegea still emerged victorious.

The leaders of House Olegea know that the Silent War could spell the end of their imperial dynasty, and so they are clutching their power all the tighter. Already, the House has dispatched Legio Imperia and half of Legio Olegea to defend Imperia from possible attack. The brutal regime of Abraxius Buxares Olegea earned the House many enemies throughout the Empire, causing even long-time friends such as House Verkonos to turn their backs on Olegea. Though it now has little support and fewer allies, nothing short of all-out war will undo Olegea's deathgrip on the rod of power — and war is something that no House wants.

REVUS

Patriarch: Laris Maximus

Capital: Lamnum Labrum

Patron God: Adomius, "The Fated One"

With the fervors and jingoism sweeping through the Empire during this troubled and turbulent time, it would be easy for me to talk in only the most glorious tones of dear Revus, our home. But a specerous cannot afford blind affection for anyone or anything — not even the nation of his birth. Unlike most of the empire's citizenry, the people of Revus are not descended from the ancient Aesonians, but from tribes that inhabited many of the world's hidden places, from the rocky coves of the Middle Sea to the secluded glades of the Montis Ora Mundi. Our predecessors built high-walled towns dotted with tall towers and battled back invaders of all sorts — Aesonian, Balatian, and Hykosian alike. At the behest of the old tribal chieftains, Ilkan Revus joined the other champions in the Great War of Liberation, and through his contributions, he came to be one of the Seven who founded the empire. As a proud and independent people, we took little stock in the ostentatious politicking of the Collegium, or the pompous posturing of the Aesonian nations. Content simply to keep plying the oceans in our fast ships, we stayed largely out of their affairs, taking only our levy of Imperial taxes and our garrison of troops from the empire.

Our skill with trade and seafaring brought us great success as merchants, and our ships became the model upon which the Imperial Navy was built. We are the most-traveled nation in the Golden Empire, and consequently the best-informed. For centuries, we have profited from trading not only goods from foreign lands, but secrets as well. All Houses have patronized Revus at one time or another for its knowledge and its willingness to bring the darkest secrets to light. Naturally, such a trade has given us a nasty reputation as rogues, scoundrels, and double-dealers — and all those accusations are true, to a degree. However, such tales have never been nasty enough to discourage others from seeking our services.



The Silent War has put House Revus in a unique position among the seven nations. We have never held a strong stance on the business of Imperia, nor of our neighbors, and to date we have shown little ambition for rule or domination of the Known World. The other Great Houses pour fortunes into our information network, hoping to discover some great secret of their rivals they might exploit — and we gladly sell them. What none of them know, however, is that over the centuries, we have learned *everyone's* vulnerabilities, recorded every transgression, and established eyes in every Great House. Shall we use these secrets to turn the other nations against one another like wild dogs and claim the throne for ourselves, or shall we wield them as weapons to guide us toward a greater destiny? Only our leaders know. But I do know this much: The rotten soul of the Empire lies exposed to us alone, and with it are the keys for either its redemption or its damnation.

TERTIO

Patriarch: Secrestos, Dux Militum of Solastria

Capital: Solastria

Patron God: Eppilia, "The Huntress"

Like Hepothysus, Tertio is a frontier nation at the edge of the world, far to the north and west near the Outer Sea. The house's founder, stout Terkus of the Seven, was descended from northern stock. After the Great War of Liberation, he chose a place close to his people in the hopes of convincing all the northern realms to join the empire. Shortly after he established his new capital of Solastria, he headed into the dim forests and gloomy mountains of present-day Balatia, never to return. As a consequence of its founder's disappearance, Tertio was quickly excluded from many of the key decisions at the dawn of the empire — denied its chance to speak against them, but nonetheless forced to abide by them. Such an early and foolish slight sowed the seed of jealousy so deep in the hearts of Tertio's people that over the past five hundred years, this nation has grown into a sturdy oak of mistrust and skepticism.

Less than fifty years after its founding, Tertio met in battle the enemy that has come to define it — the barbarians of Balatia. Conflict with the Northmen has been more or less constant ever since, ranging from low-intensity skirmishes and cattle raids to all-out pillaging and marauding across Tertio's entire northern border. Such a drawn-out conflict has toughened the people of Tertio like boiling hardens leather, breeding in each the heart of a fighter and the will of a survivor. Every citizen of Tertio is taught the way of the spear and the bow shortly after he learns to walk, and he'll fight to the death to defend his home and kinsmen. Though often dismissed as bumpkins or peasants by the city-folk of the East, the unity and self-sacrificing nature of Tertio's people has been the sole salvation of our empire for far too long — a fact not lost on their House in the slightest.

Isolated Tertio has thus far drawn the poorest lot in the Silent War. The tensions of the building civil war have diminished the number of legionary reinforcements that this nation receives to defend its porous northwestern border, and this reduction in defenses has emboldened the Balataic horde. Feeling cut off from the rest of the Golden Empire and weary of war, Tertio's citizens have become more and more supportive of calls for peace or reconciliation with the barbarians. But when their patriarch refused to engage the raiders, citing lack of military support, the people rose up and burned him at the stake, then installed the popular Praetor Secrestos of Legio Tertio as their leader. The success of this rebellion has sent a wave of distress through the other Great Houses — after all, if a scattered band of peasants can undo House Tertio, what of their own far more dense populations?

House Tertio's objectives in the Silent War are not clear — even to us. Rumors allege that its patriarch has begun to hire out the nation's most skilled hunters as assassins in an attempt to raise funds for even more secretive goals. Others believe House Tertio may already have struck a deal with the Balataic tribes, and might even be allowing them with unrestricted movement through Tertio or providing them with information about the other nations. If either of those rumors proves true, the Golden Empire and the powers that be face a crisis of massive proportions, for we have a traitor in the Collegium. To date, House Tertio has neither denied nor affirmed these allegations — a wise move that has bought its patriarch a seat at the table with any House that has plans for the throne.

VERKONOS

Patriarch: Agothicar, son of Hamilthocles

Capital: Phaetes

Patron God: Hestaria, "The Sun-Bearer"

Because it is the largest and southernmost nation, Verkonos has long been known as the Shield of the Empire — a broad and sturdy wall against which the feeble waves of Hykosia crash. It was in the blasted sands of Verkonos where the Seven broke the back of the Hykosian League during the Great War of Liberation, and it was there that they drew the Atipotes Line, which they forbade the Southerners ever to cross again. House Verkonos has made the defense of that line its sacred duty ever since, staving off no less than seven attempts at invasion. From those many wars and the high loss of life they entailed, however, came a greater respect for their enemy.

Hundreds of battles against the Hykosian armies and intermittent peacetime trade with merchants of the Hykosian League have granted House Verkonos exclusive insights into the magicks and technology of our southern neighbors. Today, this House has access to some of the most powerful sorcerers outside of Thesteres, as well as weapons of a composition and craftsmanship unrivaled in the Known World. Intermarriage



between Verkonans and Hykosians is common, and most people in the south favor the Phaetian dialect rather than Imperial (see page 9). Some of the more fearful nations — particularly Corlantae and Olegea — look to Verkonos with a watchful eye, wondering if such a close relationship with traditional enemies might one day prove a liability to all the empire — but there's been little to grant weight to such fears.

Like a loyal soldier, House Verkonos has been a staunch defender of the status quo, allying with the throne no matter which House that holds it, and its stance in the Silent War is no different. House Olegea clings tightly to its unwritten alliance with the southern nation, which grants it great military leverage against a possible coup by Atrodia. But Atrodia has also been spending a great deal of time wooing Verkonos, hoping to split the empire into southern and northern halves — an offer which may tickle the fancies of even the staunchest Verkonan diplomats. Revus' strong trade ties complicate matters further, and House Verkonos is slowly coming to realize the full political weight it holds in this conflict. With whom it chooses to throw in its lot, however, remains anyone's guess.

THREATS FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC

The fell hand of Stryx, the god of war, has sculpted, guided, and perfected the entire history of the Golden Empire. Without war, the Seven would never have come together, never have overthrown the corrupt Aesonian order, and never have carved out this empire that stretches from one end of the world to the other. Without war, the poets of Corlantae would have no dramas to perform, the sages of Hepothysus no secrets to unravel, and the bankers of Olegea no spoils to hoard. Aye, all the Golden Empire is, and all that it will be, arises from conflict. It is for that reason, more than any other, that we fight this Silent War today — for without war, we cannot know our measure or value in this world.

The Golden Empire has been locked in a state of war with some power or another for most of its history. The Hykosian League, our most ancient enemy, has long sought to reclaim what it believes is a rebel territory, and its forces constantly probe our southern borders on the Inculata Exarescos for weakness. A younger and more vital enemy has risen from the gloomy forests of Balatia — savage barbarian horsemen who hate our civilization enough to wage a war of genocide against our northern territories. And even when the Collegium was at the peak of its power, low-grade skirmishes and border disputes were not uncommon among the Great Houses.

In such times as these, it would be easy to forget that we are at war with foes both within and without. The Golden Empire's

moment of weakness attracts the enemies of our freedom as the blood of the wounded hare attracts the wolf. As specerum, we must be ever vigilant for those who seek to seize power or draw blood for past slights. Should the empire fall, all the sacrifices made by the Seven, our fathers, and our brothers will have been for naught.

THE IMPERIAL ARMY

At the core of the Imperial war machine are the eight Legions; one for each nation, plus one legion assigned to protect the Throne and the city-state of Imperia. Each legion ranges from 10,000 to 30,000 men, depending on the wealth and manpower of the nation it calls home, and is organized into cohorts of 1,000 men each. The legions are completely self-reliant, with their own cooks, engineers, chirurgeons, scribes, shipwrights, priests, sorcerers, and a smattering of other professionals. Each fighting man is equipped and ready to fight at a moment's notice. All Legion soldiers are skilled with spear and shield, girt in glistening mail and greaves, and committed to lay down their lives for their comrades, their countries, and their empire — a commitment far more profound than the slave levies of the southerners or the noisy rabble of the North can boast. To see the massive organism that is a legion in battle — the careful coordinated movements of the maniples, the men standing shoulder to shoulder, fighting and dying as one, the great war machines raining munitions down like the fiery arrows of Eppilia — is the most terrible and beautiful thing I've ever set my eyes upon, or ever shall.

But in times of instability, such an immense power becomes an equally dangerous threat — not just to the Houses, but to the empire itself. Some ambitious generals have seen the crumbling of our nation as a chance to lay claim to their former protectorates' wealth, to declare themselves new provincial governors, or to chisel their names into the tablets of history in some other way. Other officers have turned their forces into mercenary companies that now sell their services to any of the Houses or lesser lords. A rare few — Legio Imperia being foremost among them — remain hopelessly loyal to the throne and continue to fight desperately against the rising chaos, but it's only a matter of time before their leaders too succumb to more enlightened self-interest. Dread that day, young pup, for it is the day that the great spear and shield of our freedom will be reforged into a hammer that will crush us against the anvil of tyranny.

THE FULMINARI

The Legions may rule the battlefields and wild areas of the Known World, but there is a far more dangerous army in our midst, waging war on all we hold dear — the *fulminari*. Originally, these thrice-damned curs were the Emperor's messenger corps, carrying his decrees to all nations of our land at a speed that rivaled the bolts of Juris. As you might expect, their privileged status made them both well-heeled and well-informed



— a powerful combination indeed. They lost no time in using that power to secure their own future in the court by quietly becoming the Golden Throne's political officers and secret police force. They are accountable only to the emperor — and sometimes, not even to him. While the Great Houses and Legions were using specerum to spy on enemy camps and keep tabs on external foes, the fulminarii kept watch on the empire's people — collecting damning evidence, arresting dissidents and "foreign agents," and murdering those opposed to the Throne's goals without the Collegium's knowledge or consent.

In the wake of the Emperor's death, the fulminarii have been busy ensuring their own security and protecting the Throne's interests as they see them, in that order. Though hated by every level of Imperial society, their power is inviolable. Extortion and racketeering are their stock in trade, backed with vague threats should their victims "defy the Throne" and refuse to "pay their taxes." Anyone who resists simply vanishes in the night, only to reappear face down in an aqueduct or bleeding in the gladiatorial pit. The fulminarii are fully aware of the Silent War, but they do nothing to stop it so long as it endangers neither the Throne's interests nor their own survival. Beware making an enemy of a *fulminarius*, for he and his traitorous kin will descend upon you like the crashing of a great wave, sweeping you from the land of the living as quickly as a sailor lost at sea.

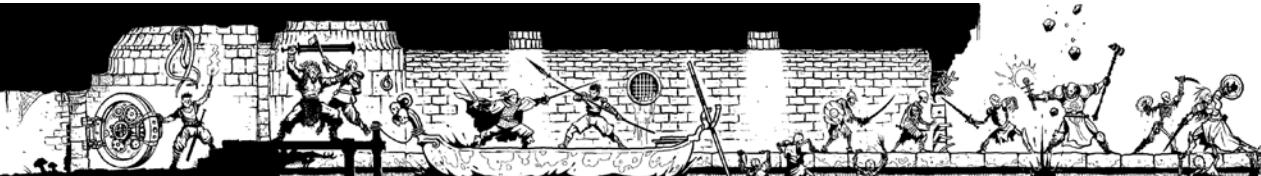
THE HYKOSIAN LEAGUE

The most imminent foreign threat to our Empire lurks in the south, in the wastes far beyond the borders of the Known World. Out of the Inculata Exarescos come cruel sorcerer-kings leading slave-armies of all colors and breeds. The powerful magicks they wield and the terrifying beasts they control have long threatened to snuff out the light of civilization forever. The Hykosian League consists of perhaps a thousand pagan kingdoms that have been conspiring to destroy the Golden Empire since the time before its birth. It was their ancestors who led the invasion against Aesonia, and were driven back by the Seven and the armies of the Alliance. But even though these former conquerors were defeated, they were never truly vanquished, so they retreated back across the sands to regain their strength.

In time, we came to trade with them, to marry their extraordinary princesses, and even to take up their language — especially in the South. But even five hundred years of relative peace has not erased the shame of their fathers' fathers' defeat, and these perfumed jackals have been patiently probing us, testing our borders and waiting for the moment when we might expose our throat to the killing blow.



Now they have caught the telltale scent of rottenness and frailty in the Golden Empire, so they are once again gathering to march on Hepothysus and Verkonos. You look at me as if such were impossible, but I assure you — I've seen it with my own eyes. With the northern and eastern Legions scattered, and Imperia preoccupied with staving off domestic rivals, there is no better time for the League to strike and break the back of the empire's sea trade. The loss of our southern ports plus the wealth generated by the spice, fabric, and minerals trades would surely destroy our economy and throw all the empire into chaos. No matter what nation any specerum hails from, if he has a drop of patriotic blood left he will set aside the politics of the day to stand against Hykosia, else there may be no empire left to win.





THE BALATAIC TRIBES

No less threatening than the organized forces massing to our south are the hundreds of rampaging tribes of horse barbarians who pick at the northern border. Though we refer to this collection of savages as Balatia, they are no nation, kingdom, or empire — they are simply a rabble of hungry dogs that would just as soon turn on each other as us. Our leaders have mistaken such infighting as a sign of simple-mindedness and allowed the hordes to rut and swell their ranks until now they press through the Montis Ora Mundi and raid the lands of Olegea, Tertio, and Revus in search of loot.

In recent years, their raids have grown bolder, more frequent, and more voracious as massive hordes of riders move south ahead of the coming winter. Confrontations have grown from simple skirmishes to extended sieges in which our men are cursed with plagues of insects and disease. Towns are fired, fields are salted, and women kidnapped to be sullied by the raiders' lust. While infiltrating the tribes has proven nearly impossible, Revan agents in Tertio speculate that a secret accord has been struck among some of the horse-lords' greatest chieftains in the interest of occupying lands south of the mountains. What's worse is that Tertio may no longer be interested in stopping them. Should our Terkic neighbors choose to lie down with the dogs of the north, Revus, Olegea, and eventually Imperia itself would be in mortal danger and nigh-unto powerless to protect themselves.

CREATURES OF MYTH AND LEGEND

In the days of old Aesonia, we had many more things to fear than unkempt barbarians, greedy generals, dandied nomads, and the machinations of the Great Houses. No, in those days before order was brought to the world with fire and sword, terrible creatures preyed upon humankind — for food, for love, and for sport. These monsters were as old as the Known World itself — indeed, many were the first children of the Aesonian gods. Rejected and cast down for transgressions against their fathers, they preyed upon men out of spite and bitterness at the favor we enjoyed. The Great Cleansing rid the world of these horrible beings — or so the throne would have us believe.

As always, the truth is far worse than the lie. The fact is, the campaign against the monsters *did* succeed — mostly. Hundred of thousands of creatures — dryads, satyrs, centaurs, hydras, gorgons, and so forth — were put to the sword or driven to the sea, clearing the path for progress. But a few — the most ancient, savage, and powerful — managed to evade our armies and seclude themselves far from civilization. While we still know little about the beings that escaped the Legions' grasp, two things are clear — they are survivors, and they have been waiting five centuries for vengeance.

Now, as armies march against one another and the specerum quietly walk roads less traveled, these beasts are once again stirring in their dens to menace the Golden Empire. Their horrors are subtle: herds of cattle vanish from the field in the space of a night, a mother gives birth to a child with horns and feet of a goat, or a village elder is found slain — rent limb from limb by claws larger than those of any known creature. Should you be unlucky enough to encounter one of these beasts in your travel, boy, tread carefully. Listen not to their riddles and do not play fool to their charms. Remember: monsters *are* real, and they are not just us.

LIFE IN THE GOLDEN EMPIRE

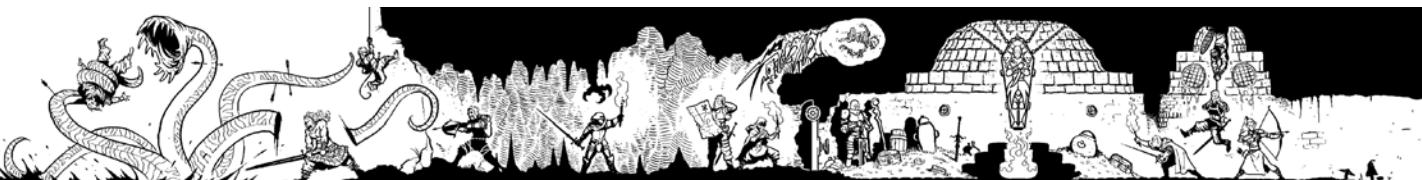
To be a specerum is to live in a land between the shadows — to your House, you are a hero; to the citizens, a peasant; to your rivals, a thief; to the empire, an enemy of the state. You must know the truth and never tell it, uphold the virtues of civilization while living without morality, and break the laws in order to preserve them. To be a specerum is to live with no past and no future in order to gain the clarity of the present. Are you ready, young pup, to step from your skin — to see our world as it truly is so that you may correct it?

Good. Then let us turn our eyes from the movements of nations to the theatres in which our Silent War will be fought — the streets of our cities, the minds of our leaders, and the hearts of our people.

THE MARBLE JUNGLE

Our cities constitute the heart of the Golden Empire — they are the font from which all commerce, culture, politics, and knowledge springs. According to the Imperial census, two in three of our citizens live in one of the eight capital cities of the empire — one in five in Imperia alone. The lifestyle of even low-born Imperial citizens ranks among the best in the Known World. Cities provide ample opportunity to find work or markets for one's goods, as well as plentiful housing, public education, culture, and a modicum of protection from the predations of bandits, monsters, and foreign invaders.

Each nation's capital is packed to the gills with people from all over of the Known World — travelers from far away lands, foreign envoys, street corner philosophers, squawking fishwives, colorful troubadours, shifty beggars, and every kind of person in between. In the streets of these great cities, one can find exotic goods, hear epic poetry, see the latest dramas, eat fine foods, drink delicious wines, and indulge his particular appetites at bacchanals, orgies, and brothels. It's easy to view them as our single greatest treasure, our forever-lasting legacy.





But urban living has its downsides — crime, decadence, class struggles, and degeneracy of the spirit plague many of our cities. Most Great Houses are indifferent or absorbed enough in their own affairs to leave the streets in the hands of rough vigilantes or crime lords who prey upon the populace and engage in bloody battles for supremacy or revenge. Exhorters both religious and rebellious extol the virtues of their bizarre beliefs and advocate the destruction of the very society from which they draw sustenance. Most detestably, the nobles treat the cities and everyone in them as their personal assets and playthings. Though our cities offer testament to all that is best about the Golden Empire, they also bring out the worst in its people. It is for reasons such as this that men like myself pine for the peace and simplicity of pastoral life, and yearn to get away from the poisonous greed and avarice that has rotted the heart of our empire for so long.

THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY

A rigid class system forms the foundation of Imperial society. This tradition reaches back to the earliest days of our Aesonian ancestors, and to the Hykosian invaders before them. But unlike the old class system, which the Seven abolished at the founding of the Golden Empire, class in Imperial society is based on economics rather than birth.

At the bottom are the slaves, a class primarily composed of prisoners of war and traitor stock, most of whom remain in slavery to pay off a debt to an individual or House they have wronged. Above the slaves are the commoners — mostly craftsmen and enlisted soldiers — who pay tithes in return for nominal freedoms such as the right to own a business, travel freely, and receive tutelage in the public forums. The next rank is the citizenry, most of whom are Legion veterans or members of monied families whose investment in the empire grants them the right to own slaves, to vote, and to raise formal complaints and proposals with House leadership, in addition to other freedoms. At the top of the structure are the nobles — people of great wealth and distinction who serve as both elected and selected leaders of their Houses.

Although a person's class is a function of his economic circumstances, his birth still often plays a role. A child born to a slave is also likely to be a slave because he inherits his parents' debts and responsibilities, just as a son of a nobleman will probably go on to enjoy the pampered life of a House representative. Such is the way of things.

Class mobility does exist, however. For the lower classes, the easiest ways to overcome the misfortune of birth are buying your way out (likely only for the lucky and unscrupulous), joining the Imperial Legion, or gaining the patronage of a Great House. Arrangements such as the latter two have become the cornerstone of social mobility; indeed, most of the empire's current citizens are descended from slaves and commoners who elevated their status through service to the military or a noble House.

When one enters the service of a House, his patron takes over responsibility for his debts, his residence, and to an extent, his actions. In return, the servant must provide his patron with his exclusive (and often unquestioning) services and a portion of his income, not to mention his absolute fidelity. Specerum such as myself are but one example of the men and women in the employ of a House —most others are scribes, entertainers, couriers, bodyguards, manservants, and administrators like you. However, a special role may be made for anyone with the ambition or desire to become more than what he was born to be.

Though the interplay of class and patronage has propped up Imperial society for more than half a millennium, the ground is shifting beneath this foundation. The emperor's death was like removing the lid from a boiling pot, it scalded the Houses tending the stew and allowed deep-seated frustrations to boil over into the populace. Some fragments of the populace, particularly those struck by economic hardships, have engaged in open rebellion, clashing with the forces of the diminished Legions in pointless conflicts; others have waged more subtle campaigns to undermine faith in our government with lies and distortions. We suspect many of these insurrections to be the work of House Olegea, which stands to gain the most by keeping its enemies' attention on their own borders rather than on the Throne. This clever ploy is delightfully underhanded, but toying with the patriotism of commoners is a dangerous game, for they hold the power of sheer numbers, and they do not appreciate being trifled with.

THE IMPERIAL ECONOMY

The demands of war and a massive population serve to fuel a booming Imperial economy. Craftsman and artisans are the most common working people, and it is they who feed, clothe, and house the tens of thousands of people who fill the teeming cities. Most traders are seamen who brave the dangerous waters of the Middle Sea to supply the legions amassed at the borders and provide the wealthier classes with the opulent and exotic items they so prize. Outside the cities, opportunities are limited to farming, husbandry, and simple labor — the fruits of which go to meet the voracious demands of the cities.

Each of the Imperial nations provides certain core capacities to the economy. Phaetes, capital of Verkonos, is the nexus of trade with caravans that are brave or hardy enough to cross the Inculata Exarescos from Hykosia, and this city is also our main point of access for spices, silks, and other exotic fineries from the lands south of the empire. Consilium, the largest city in Hepothysus, provides many of the newest technological breakthroughs and is an important manufacturer of siege engines and other war machines used on the southern front. Corlantae's primary export is entertainment — typically popular plays and social and philosophical treatises. Olegea provides raw ores used in the manufacture of the steel and bronze that are so critical



CHAPTER 1



to the wartime economy. Embattled Solastria in Tertio provides a massive levy of wool, leather, and hide from its many farms. Thesteres' main exports are wheat and magickal trinkets such as curative tonics, scrying bones, and ensorcelled medallions. While such items have long since gone out of style, they do have many useful applications for people in our line of work. And of course, the greatest services that Revus provides are transport and information — both highly valuable in this day and age.

The opening of the Silent War has placed great strain on the economy because channels to many staple goods have been either choked off or abandoned. Some Houses have been using their monopolies on one type of product or another to punish their rivals. Atrodia has already begun to hoard grain, raising the price of bread and causing a panic within the poor segments of Imperia and other major cities, and Olegea's blockade of ore could stifle the manufacture of weapons outside its borders. Such underhanded maneuvering, however, has only served to steel the wills of those made to suffer and raise even more opposition to Atroidian or Olegean rule. 'Tis a dangerous game to play with the lives of the many for the profit of the few — a lesson we should always remember.

THE IMPERIAL CALENDAR

The Imperial Calendar is based on that of the ancient Aesonians. Year 1 begins with the final defeat of the Hykosians (Post Victorum). The events and details put forth in this narrative are set in 532 PV.

Each year is broken into ten 5-week months: Pehrva, Dvo, Tria, Tettera, Pevte, Exi, Epta, Octu, Evvia, and Dekka. Each week is 7 days long, and each day is named for and aligned with one of the gods of the Aesonian pantheon:

Jurideis ("Judge's Day"): The first day of the week. Courts are open to the public, and all executions handed down the previous week are carried out on this day.

Hestaradeis ("Priest's Day"): The second day of the week. Religious observances, sacrifices, and the weekly prophesies of the oracles are made on this day.

Sephaltedeis ("Philosopher's Day"): The third day of the week. Public debates are held, schools are open to the uneducated, and the previous week's news is recounted in public squares.

Stryxedeis ("Warrior's Day"): The fourth day of the week. Legionnaires are released on liberty, and all major military celebrations and parades are held on this day.

Philadeis ("Artisan's Day"): The fifth day of the week. Craftsmen and laborers are allowed this day, and entertainments such as plays and poetry recitations are held for the public.

Eppiladeis ("Departed's Day"): The sixth day of the week. Funerals and cremations are held for those who died in the previous week. This is also the day of national mourning and remembrance for heroes and leaders of the Golden Empire.

Adomideis ("Fate's Day"): The seventh day of the week. Citizens celebrate with bacchanals, orgies, gladiatorial battles, and other visceral celebrations of life. Politicians, administrators, and the upper classes have this day off.

NAMES OF THE EMPIRE

The names of the Golden Empire's people are as diverse as its populace. The nations that trace their heritage back to Old Aesonia — Corlantae, Olegea, and Atrodia — still favor the archaic names of their ancestors, while the nations of the South and West tend to prefer more modern appellations that blend older names with new elements from Imperial and the languages of assimilated cultures. Appropriate names can be generated randomly using Table 1.1: Names of the Empire (*see right*).

JURIS' SHADOW

In spite of all its shortcomings, vices, and villainy, the Golden Empire is a land of law. When Juris, emperor of the gods, created all that is, he gave men but three things — the glory of life, the peace of death, and the rule of law — and he made none greater than the others. It is by law that we distinguish ourselves from the chaotic hordes of the North and the despotic zealots of the South, and it is by law that we shape reason and come to understand the world and all that lies within. Without law, we are but beasts, worth no more than the hides we'd provide and meat we feed those more worthy of Juris' cold admiration.

The Lex Aequitas is the root of all Imperial law, defining the basic rights of commoner, citizen, and noble. As with all else in the Golden Empire, a person's social status defines his rights. Those at the root of society naturally receive the fewest protections, while the nobles at the top often redefine the laws for themselves via votes or bribes. Only the wealthiest and most celebrated individuals have the benefit of trial for accusations of wrongdoing — the rest of us are carried off to stand before the local House patron or military leader. Prison is rarer still — 'tis much easier to send people off to slavery or to the gladiator's pit than to house and feed them until they rot.

Crimes against the state are the most serious offenses in the Lex, and the punishments visited upon those who engage in such activities are carefully considered and relevant to the circumstances. A nobleman and his family may be stripped of land and title and reduced to slavery in an instant, while the bravest soldier might be drawn and quartered for the pleasure of a Hykosian emissary. The following is a list of typical offenses and punishments.

- **Theft (Minor Offense):** 5 lashes by whip; removal of fingers or hand; slave labor
- **Brawling (Minor Offense):** 10 lashes by whip; slave labor
- **Extortion/Racketeering (Major Offense):** Removal of the tongue; blinding in one eye; death by gladiatorial combat

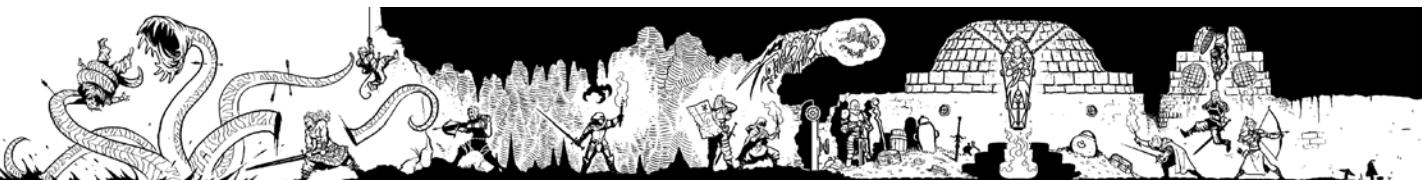


Table 1.1: Names of the Empire

Result	A. Aesonian M (Pre/Suff)	B. Aesonian F (Pre/Suff)	C. Imperial M (Pre/Suff)	D. Imperial F (Pre/Suff)
1	Achi/-genes	Ala/-be	Adel/-an	Aeme/-ca
2	Aga/-kon	Arte/-cia	Agust/-anus	Ale/-cia
3	Ae/-krates	Cir/-ctra	Cass/-ello	Bea/-dicia
4	Ara/-illes	Dia/-delpha	Comm/-ephus	Bella/-dora
5	Dei/-lus	Ely/-dne	Cos/-ex	Cassi/-gea
6	Dra/-mus	Eva/-do	Dac/-ian	Eva/-la
7	Ede/-naes	Eury/-donia	Dar/-idus	Hal/-lia
8	Eo/-nidus	Hala/-gea	Dom/-idius	Isi/-na
9	Hero/-phos	Hele/-lla	Drak/-imus	Juli/-ndra
10	Hyppa/-ris	Io/-lia	Gord/-inus	Lae/-nisus
11	Krata/-sander	Kaly/-mene	Jul/-io	Leno/-no
12	Kry/-seus	Koro/-mnia	Jur/-is	Meda/-nthia
13	Leo/-stes	Medi/-nia	Luc/-ius	Mela/-pia
14	Ly/-stotle	Mela/-na	Max/-os	Mine/-pha
15	Neo/-sus	Nera/-phia	Omn/-no	Nere/-rina
16	Ody/-thon	Nio/-sis	Ot/-nus	Petre/-rva
17	Ory/-thysus	Ophal/-ste	Phid/-to	Phe/-tacia
18	Sala/-tos	Phe/-tacia	Rem/-tos	Rosa/-tacia
19	Stry/-tyx	Rai/-tha	Terk/-ulus	Theo/-tha
20	Xyste/-xistes	Tha/-ura	Vict/-us	Vio/-trix

- Rape (Minor Offense):** Gelding
- Murder (Major Offense):** Death by gladiatorial combat or drowning
- Espionage (Major Offense):** Torture; death by drawing and quartering
- Sedition/Rebellion (Major Offense):** loss of title and lands; death by combat, hanging, crucifixion, or burning

Such circumstances present particular challenges to the specerius, who must break the laws of the empire to save it. My advice is to stay to the shadows, for the consequences of capture would be most dire. Naturally, if you were to be caught abroad, your House would brand you a rogue and traitor and throw you to the wolves, lest its intricate web of plots and covert scheming be rent asunder. While none of us wish this upon our brothers in arms, such is the lot of the patriot — to each day willingly place his beliefs before his own survival.

FAITH IN OUR HEARTS, SWORDS IN OUR HANDS

To one degree or another, religion is a vital part of all cultures in the Known World. Priests are leaders both in faith and in politics, advising the ignorant, superstitious, and powerful alike. But the gods have long since ceased to heed the affairs of men — the anarchy of war and politics, the suffering of the poor and the indulgence of the rich, the scourge of monsters, and the disintegration of our society all bear testament to that fact. Some

say that we are cursed — that our lack of faith and reliance on reason has caused the gods to turn their backs on us. Others say the world is ending, and divine power will scrub men from the face of the earth forever. I say that to dishonor the gods may be foolish, but to fear them is more foolish still.

Still, the sacred is intimately woven into the secular happenings of our world — a fact we cannot afford to ignore. Gods of all faiths are patrons to cities and nations, and they have even lent their names to the days of our week. Cities build grand temples to them, the wealthy offer them sacrifices of gold, and citizens of both high and low status pray to them before important events. Their virtues are the foundation upon which the pillars of our civilization are built. The wars we've fought, the people we've killed, and the destruction we've wrought — all this is the legacy of faith in the Known World.

Today, religion has become a serious threat to the Empire's stability. Plague, poverty, and crumbling leadership have spawned fear, which in turn has spawned groups seeking divine origin. Doomsday cults, penitent groups, and bizarre religions imported from the far West have cropped up at all levels of society. The Cult of the One has harnessed this wave of fear and directed it toward its own ends, transforming both slaves and freedmen into suicidal guerillas that tear at the base of the empire. Terror and confusion now reign in the lower classes, and the Legions' brutal reprisals and the public executions or perpetrators do naught but encourage further sedition. The House that can harness the power of fanaticism in the people may find it a powerful weapon in the struggle for control of the Golden Throne.



THE AESONIAN PANTHEON

Practiced by priests and vestals from the frigid reaches of Solastria to the sands of Phaetes, the religion of the ancient Aesonians is the official faith of the Golden Empire. Once a central focus for the civic and political life of the empire, worship of the Pantheon is now predominant mainly in the lower classes, where stringent social taboos and deep-seated superstitions keep the faith alive.

The Aesonian pantheon centers around seven important deities: Juris, emperor of the gods and creator of life, death, and law; Philia, wife of Juris and sponsor of art and culture; Stryx, god of martial prowess and conquest; Sephaltes, god of knowledge and medicine; Adomius, patron of conflict, fortune, and politics; Eppilia, goddess of mysteries and scribe of life; and Hestaria, goddess of the sun and prophecy.

Priests of the Aesonian Pantheon fill roles at all levels of Imperial life, including both military and House service as healers, advisors, or occasionally spies. Though a priest of the pantheon may revere one god or goddess above the others based on temperament or nationality, each respects the roles of all the gods in the lives of the faithful.

THE CULT OF THE ONE

This upstart monotheist cult from the East is spreading through the lowest social strata of the Golden Empire like wildfire. This faith transforms its closest adherents — often the poor, downtrodden, and outcasts of Imperial society — into savage fanatics who live without fear of death or punishment for the worship of their strange and vengeful god.

Priests of the One are fiery exhorters who encourage sedition and outright rebellion among their shadowy congregations, employing them in desperate missions against “idolaters and false gods.” The power of their god is truly fearsome, and his priests use their magic both to summon his wrath or blessings and to defy the law of life and death.

THE HYKOSIAN PANTHEON

The southern kingdoms of Hykosia are the most ancient in the Known World, and their potent gods have been a force in their society from its very beginning. Their faith is delicately woven throughout the League’s history, mingling legend with fact and rendering their historians as much mythweavers as scholars. Their religion enshrines dozens of god-heroes called *yazat* — great men and women who were integral players in Hykosia’s long history of glory and conquest. Like the kingdoms of the South, the pantheon is a maze of complicated divine hierarchies that remains impenetrable to those outside the priesthood.

As exemplars of the *yazat* of old, priests of the Hykosian religion are expected to embody the heroism, wisdom, and skill found only in the gods themselves. Unlike priests of the empire, each holy man of the southern kingdoms swears allegiance

to only one of his land’s multitudinous gods — generally one from whom he can claim lineage through circuitous and often tenuous historical evidence. Hykosian priests are also civic leaders, functioning as advisors to military and political figures, and occasionally, as heads of state in their own right. Members of the Hykosian priesthood fight side by side with the troops on the battlefield, using their wondrous powers to cut swaths through enemy lines, sharpen their soldiers’ steel, and rally their countrymen in the face of certain defeat.

PAGAN GODS OF BALATIA

The barbarian horsemen of the northwest reaches worship a legion of animistic nature spirits appropriate to their wild and uncivilized roots. The Balatians believe that a spirit oversees every aspect of life and demands reverence and recognition whenever the outcome is in question. Thus, the people of Balatia tend to be a deeply spiritual and superstitious lot, praying over everything from their pots before cooking an important meal to their axes and bows before entering battle.

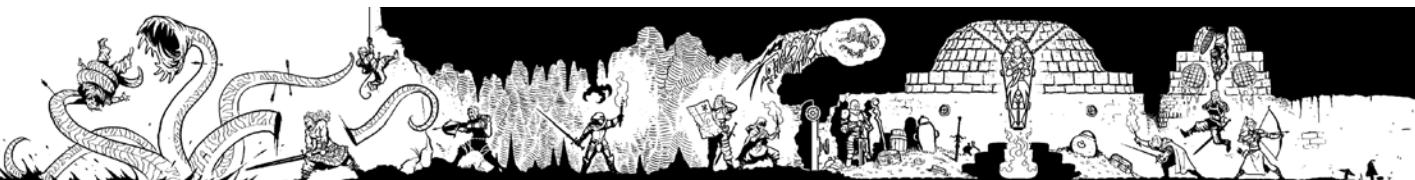
Priests in Balataic society are keepers of laws both sacred and secular. It is they who render judgments, bless marriages and newborn children, and sentence criminals to horse-draggings or impossible quests of redemption. Their word is law, even among the lawless, and their authority is undisputed by even the most powerful chieftains and sorcerers.

But do not mistake religious rigor for order, pup. for the faith of the North is as savage and cruel as its people. The barbarians believe sacrifice the best remedy to all ills, and children and the infirm are commonly tossed into bogs or offered up as blood sacrifice to stave off everything from plague to bad luck.

THE FADING OF MAGIC

Magic was once the greatest technology in the Known World. Through it, tyrants dominated populations, wizards tugged at the strands of Fate, and heroes carved their names into the tablet of history. It was through magic that our nation was born — during the War of Liberation, spells routed armies while the Seven wielded powerful artifacts against fearsome opponents. Once magic changed the destiny of our world — but that great power has since become a terrible threat to the stability of the empire.

It was in 69 PV that Emperor Graco Atrodia created the Collegia Thaumaturgum, a collective of colleges designated to train — and contain — those with the magickal gift for service in the Legions. Very few make it through the tests for entrance, but those who do are the some of the finest battle-mages ever to walk the land. These schools still operate to this day, churning out young recruits who will spend the rest of their miserable lives battling over some gods-forsaken patch of ground against barbarians and rebels, conveniently isolated from the gleaming marble palaces and political forums that their gift could so endanger.





Magic outside the rigid confines of the Collegia Thaumatergium is rare and highly valued. Priests are the most accepted mystical artisans within the empire, and many noblemen pay top coin to keep them as healers and advisors in hopes that their close association with the divine will somehow rub off. Soothsayers and oracles also follow the magickal path, probing the web of fickle Fate with the delicate fingers of their minds. Most citizens find the practice of the augur somewhat off-putting, but for men like us whose profession is secrets, such practitioners are positively terrifying. Be wary of these sell-spell mercenary witches, for their art can undo you faster than the sharpest ear for lies.

Beyond the edges of the Golden Empire, magic is something else altogether — a truly terrible weapon used to instill fear, ensure loyalty, and wreak havoc upon one's enemies. In Hykosia, magicians are revered as channelers of cosmic power, and sorcerer-warriors often occupy positions at the heads of Hykosian phalanxes. In savage Balatia, hex-weaving hags form a natural counterpart to the male-dominated priesthood, working unnatural magicks that bring all things — stone, plants, and even the dead — to life.

The secrets of artifice — the greatest skill given to us by the gods — have long since been lost to the legends from which they sprang. Gone are the days of mirrored shields, golden arrows, and common wards. The artifacts that survive from antiquity

— the shield of Corlantia, Juris' ring, Hepothyses' laurels, and others — are great and wondrous treasures, closely guarded by their respective Houses for their historical significance and great mystical power. Today, such precious trinkets are entrusted only to the most highly trained specerum in the most exceptional of circumstances. While their power can quickly save a mission from the jaws of defeat, the embarrassment of losing one to a rival House poses an even greater danger.

THE BLOOD OF PATRIOTS

I won't lie to you, boy — we walk a path through a wilderness of mirrors that has claimed the lives of far better men than you and me. Our Empire faces ruin, our leaders have betrayed our Founders' promise, our enemies revel in our imminent destruction, our armies crumble, and our people are losing hope in the future. We have become a nation of cowards, liars, thieves, and pigs. We can be better than this. *We are* better than this. But being better will not change the destinies that Fate has written for us. Only through sacrifice may we draw the favor of Adomius, and only when he can dip his quill in the blood we shed will he rewrite the course of our destiny.



CHAPTER 1

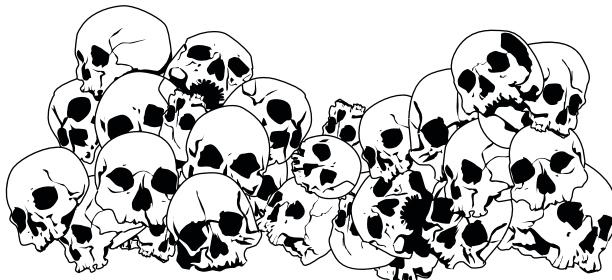


True, we may die. Dying is the lot of men, but the *duty* of men is to live well and for something beautiful and true. And our Golden Empire, for all its ugliness and debauchery, is still beautiful; for all its avarice and greed, it is still true. As the jeweler can spot an unpolished gem hidden in stone, so too can the patriot see the empire we love beneath the filth that sullies its countenance. It is up to us — rough men, men who are willing to murder and lie and steal and cheat — to wipe the slate clean by any means necessary. And should we meet our end in this pursuit — should we fall beneath the silent knife or the scorching fire — we shall know that we died in pursuit of the greatest goal men can have — the ideals of our nation.

You've proven your mettle, pup. You would have made an excellent specerūs, just like your father. He did love this country of ours. How sad he would be to know his son has spent years selling its secrets to his Olegean masters. Don't look so surprised! *Surely* you didn't think we wouldn't find out, did you? Dozens of specerūm — your countrymen — have died for the Lions filling your purse and the fine toga you wear. Did you *really* believe we wouldn't come for you? Foolish cur! You were dead the moment you doomed one of my men to the gladiatorial pits of Septum Fiume. Fortunately for you, I respected your father — loved him even. So for him, I will make this quick. Do him the honor of dying well — perhaps when your name is written in the Book of the Departed, it will not be stained with the shame you bring him now.

THE CLOAK & DAGGER CAMPAIGN

The Cloak & Dagger setting blends the most distinctive elements of the cultures of antiquity — Rome, Hellenistic Greece, Egypt, Persia, the Celtic tribes, and the Huns — with the tension and labyrinthine plots of a modern espionage thriller. The Silent War is a dark time for the Golden Empire, marked by rampant greed, shifting political alliances, blind nationalism, and constant betrayal. Life for characters operating in this wilderness of mirrors is dangerous indeed, for there is little they can trust save the support of their closest allies and the edges of their blades.



INSPIRATIONS

300 (comic book, movie), *The Aeneid* (book), *Alexander* (movie), *Clash of the Titans* (movie), the Didius Falco series (books), *Gladiator* (movie), *Gladius* (video game), *The Iliad* (book), *Imperium: A Novel of Ancient Rome* (book), *Rome* (television series), *Spartacus* (movie, television), *Titan Quest* series (computer game), *Troy* (movie), *Vettius and His Friends* (book)

ERA

Ancient. Inspired by the golden ages of Greece, Rome, Persia, and Egypt, the Known World's technologies are roughly equivalent to those found in Hellenistic Greece through the late Imperial period of Rome. Character options and gear from the Ancient and Primitive eras are available in this setting (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 305).

CAMPAIN QUALITIES

The following campaign qualities are suggested for the Cloak & Dagger campaign setting (see page 322 of *Fantasy Craft* and page 142 of this book for more on campaign qualities).

Dead Means Dead: Specerūs often meet cruel — and sometimes pointless — deaths to advance their Houses' goals, but resurrection remains the province of the very wealthy.

Fear and Loathing (see page 142): Early in the empire's history, the Great Cleansing swept away the magical creatures of the Known World, and they are only now starting to return as civilization falters. But fear, ignorance, and loathing remain the dominant emotions between humans and non-human species, and that situation is unlikely to change soon.

Fragile Heroes: The Known World is a dangerous place, and many heroes' have died at the point of a simple dagger or arrow.

Legendary Monsters (see page 142): Those mythical creatures that have survived the empire's pogrom live in the world's dark places, waiting to end the world of men.

Miracles (Fickle Universe, Indifferent Universe): Though the priestly caste is a vital part of cultures throughout the Known World, the gods have long since abandoned mortals to their own devices, meddling only in the affairs of their own priesthoods. Whether this indifference is the result of disgust or spite is anyone's guess.

Rampant Corruption: Greed and corruption rule the Golden Empire during the time of the Silent War, and a good specerūs knows that everyone has a price — even himself.

Rare Magic Items: The secrets of magic are slowly fading from the world, and agents of the Great Houses can rarely rely on magical tricks to survive a mission.

Sorcery (Difficult Magic): While magic is still an important part of life in the Golden Empire, it requires great skill to wield effectively, and training in its use is restricted to scholars and students of faith.



CLOAK & DAGGER CHARACTERS

The specerum who occupy the front lines of the Silent War are a motley lot, but each plays a particular role on the grand stage of civil war. Some offer unique insights and others bring specialized talents for intrigue and combat to the fore. All have the potential to turn the tide, forever shifting the balance of power across the Golden Empire.

HUMAN TALENTS

Though new modes of travel, duty in the Legions, and metropolitan life have ensured that most Imperial citizens share in all the cultures of the Known World, a rare few ethnicities remain insular or aloof enough to retain distinct racial and hereditary identities. The following talents highlight these ancient bloodlines.

AESONIAN

The blue-blooded inheritors of ancient Aesonia have kept their ancestors' ideals of excellence and beauty alive to the present day.

- *Attributes*: +2 to Charisma, -2 to Constitution
- *Base Speed*: 30 ft.
- *Celebrated*: Your Legend increases by 2.
- *Encouragement*: Once per scene, you may speak to one of your teammates for 1 minute to grant him a +1 morale bonus with saving throws until the end of the current scene.
- *Enlightened Impress*: Your maximum Impress rank increases to your Career Level + 5. Only the highest bonus from any single enlightened ability may apply to each skill.
- *Sharp Mind*: You gain 1 additional skill point per level.

BALATAIC

Those born of the savage northern tribes are rugged survivors and mighty warriors.

- *Attributes*: +2 Constitution
- *Base Speed*: 40 ft.
- *Bloodthirsty*: You may not attack more than one character in each round.
- *Crunch!*: Your Strength-based damage rolls inflict 1 additional damage.
- *Enlightened Survival*: Your maximum Survival rank increases to your Career Level + 5. Only the highest bonus from any single enlightened ability may apply to each skill.
- *Hearty Appetite*: You benefit from the first 2 food and 2 drink you consume in each day.
- *Iron Gut*: You gain a +2 insight bonus with saves against disease and poisons.

COMMON CHARACTER OPTIONS

ORIGINS

Species: Human

Human Talents: Adaptable, Aesonian, Balataic, Gifted, Hykosian, Methodical, Ruthless, Savvy, Striking, Thesterian, Vigilant

Specialties: Aristocrat, Artisan, Citizen, Cultist, Fulminarius, Gladiator, Guardian, House Agent, Lord, Physician, Mercenary, Merchant, Scholar, Slave, Shield Bearer, Swindler

CLASSES

Base Classes: Assassin, Courtier, Emissary, Explorer, Keeper, Sage, Soldier

Expert Classes: Alchemist, Bloodsworn, Gallant, Rune Knight

Master Classes: Regent

FEATS

Basic Combat: Aggro Basics, Armor Basics, Combat Instincts, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Quick Draw, Veteran Adventurer

Melee Combat: Darting Weapon, Edged Master, Knife Basics, Shield Basics, Spear Basic, Sword Basics

Ranged Combat: Angry Hornet, Haled Basics, Siege Basics

Unarmed Combat: Blocking Basics, Wrestling Basics

Chance: Black Cat, Close Call, Fortune Favors the Bold, Living on the Edge, Lucky Break

Covert: Anonymity Basics, Garrote Basics, Ghost Basics, Flawless Identity, Misdirection Basics, Safe House, Traceless

Gear: Alchemy Basics, Bandage, Crafting Basics, Favored Gear, Followers, Scroll Casting

Skill: Basic Skill Mastery (actor, investigator, officer, pickpocket, spy), Codemaster, Depth of Study, Perfect Memory, Polyglot, Well-Rounded

Species: Hidden Promise, Quick Healer, Special Construction (Brass), Steel Brave

Spellcasting: Casting Basics, Hidden Spells

Style: Extra Contact, Hero of the Army, Hero of the Court, Mark, Patronage, Repartee Basics

Terrain: Battlefield Trickery, Bushwhack Basics, Night Fighting, Pathfinder Basics (indoors/settled)

CHAPTER 1



HYKOSIAN

The men of the South are as handsome, harsh, and unpredictable as their desert home.

- *Attributes*: +2 to any 1 attribute, -2 to any 1 attribute
- *Base Speed*: 30 ft.
- *Cold-Blooded*: You require only one common meal per day but suffer 1 additional damage per die from cold and are *sickened* for a number of rounds equal to 1/2 any cold damage taken (rounded down). If you suffer continuous cold damage — such as from the environment — you are *sickened* until you escape the source of the damage.
- *Menacing Threat*: You may Threaten up to three opponents at once. You roll only once for the action, while each opponent rolls to resist separately.
- *Natural Elegance*: Your Appearance bonus increases by +1.
- *Split Decision*: As a full action, you may simultaneously take two Ready actions, each with separate triggers and reactions. After the first trigger occurs, the other Ready action is lost.

THESTERIAN

The insular and unconquerable people of Atrodia make magic and war with equal ease.

- *Attributes*: +2 to the lower of Strength or Intelligence
- *Base Speed*: 30 ft.
- *Aloof*: Your error range increases by 2 when making Impress and Sense Motive checks targeting non-Thesterian characters.
- *Fearless I*: You gain a +4 bonus with Morale checks.
- *Linguist*: You gain Thesterian and one other Language (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 61).
- *Relentless Attack*: You gain the Relentless Attack trick (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 222).
- *The Gift*: You gain The Gift feat.

RACES OF MYTH AND LEGEND

As historically-inspired fantasy, the world of Cloak & Dagger focuses primarily on the lives, machinations, and struggles of humans. Early in the dawn of the Golden Empire, non-human intelligent species were systematically exterminated as part of a campaign to protect Imperial citizens from the predations of the mythological creatures that once inhabited the Known World. The current scarcity of such beings and the well-deserved bitterness that they feel toward humans make heroic non-human characters rare in this setting. However, the following non-human Species may fit into Cloak & Dagger campaigns, at the GM's discretion.

Ogres: The hundreds of deserted islands dotting the shores of Hepothysus and Verkonos are rumored to be home to rare brutish giants who feast on the flesh of men. Though widely feared and misunderstood, ogres may find their way into the mercenary armies of Hykosia, or appear as exotic fighters in the gladiatorial pits of Imperia or Phaetes.

Unborn: Legend holds that before the birth of man, Sephaltes sculpted beautiful statues of bronze and tricked Philia, who believed them to be creatures slain for sport, into breathing life into them. Some of these immortal beings may still rove the crypts and ruined temples of old Aesonia, waiting for their creators to return and teach them the ways of the world.

SPECIALTIES

The following Specialties represent some of the backgrounds and occupations unique to the Known World.

CITIZEN

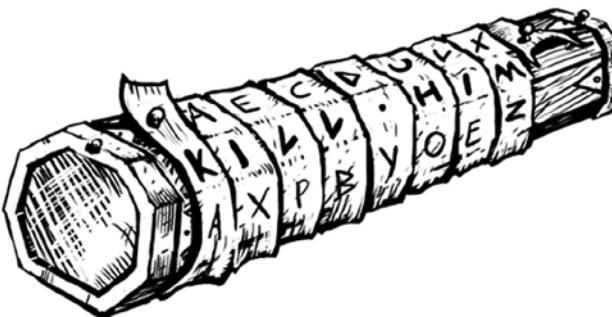
Through hard work or military service, you have gained property and raised yourself above the class of your birth.

- *Bonus Feat*: Extra Holding
- *Attribute Training*: The lower of your Constitution or Wisdom scores increases by 1 (your choice if a tie). Apply this bonus after any modifiers from your Species or Talent.
- *Flashy*: Your Panache rises by 2.
- *Inquisitive Mind*: You gain 2 additional Interests.
- *Noble Blood*: You may purchase Noble Renown for 20 reputation per rank (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 187).

FULMINARIUS

As a member of the Golden Empire's secret police, you've learned many skills for rooting out enemies.

- *Bonus Feat*: Mark
- *Commissioned*: You may purchase Military Renown for 20 Reputation per rank (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 187).
- *Free Hint*: Once per session, you may request a free hint from the GM. If he refuses, you gain 1 bonus action die.
- *Origin Skill*: You gain Search as an additional Origin skill.
- *Practiced Sense Motive*: If you spend an action die to boost a Sense Motive check and it still fails, you gain the die back after the action is resolved. Against multiple targets, you regain the die only if the check fails against all of them.



HOUSE AGENT

One of the Great Houses of the Golden Empire has trained you in the arts of stealth and deception.

- *Bonus Feat*: Basic Skill Mastery (Spy)
- *Attribute Training*: The lower of your Wisdom or Charisma scores increases by 1 (your choice if a tie). Apply this bonus after any modifiers from your Species or Talent.
- *Covert Expert*: You are considered to have 2 additional Covert feats for any ability based on the number of Covert feats you have.
- *Linguist*: You gain 2 additional Languages (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 61).
- *Practiced Investigate*: If you spend an action die to boost an Investigate check and it still fails, you gain the die back after the action is resolved. Against multiple targets, you regain the die only if the check fails against all of them.
- *Trackless Step*: The DCs of Tracking checks to follow your trail increase by 10.

INTERESTS OF CLOAK & DAGGER

The following Interests are common to the Cloak & Dagger setting.

LANGUAGES

For more detail on the languages of the Known World, see page 8.

- **Balataic**: The musical barbarian language of the North, spoken in Balatia and remote parts of Tertio, as well as by soldiers of the northern Legions.
- **Hykosian**: Guttural language of the Hykosian League, spoken in Hykosia and by some Verkonan spice traders.
- **Imperial**: The official trade and bureaucratic language of the Golden Empire, spoken throughout all of the seven nations and at all levels of society.
- **Imperial Code**: Signals language of the Imperial Army, known primarily by Legion praetors, officers, and specerum of the Houses.
- **Old Aesonian**: Ancient predecessor of Imperial, spoken in Corlantae and Olegea, as well as by many of the last remaining intelligent monsters of the world.

Table 1.2: Alignments of Cloak & Dagger

Alignment	Alignment Skills	Paths	Ritual Weapon	Avatar *
Aesonian Pantheon	Athletics, Crafting, Haggle, Investigate	Beauty, Fortune, Knowledge, Order	Throwing Spear	Aesonian Lion
Cult of the One	Blend, Bluff, Prestidigitation, Sneak	Curses, Death, Life, Spirits	Quarterstaff	Ghostly Devotee
Hykosian Pantheon	Bluff, Crafting, Ride, Tactics	Fire, Heroism, Magic, Metal, Secrets	Sickle Sword	Lamia
Pagan Gods of Balatia	Haggle, Investigate, Ride, Survival	Beasts, Nature, Strength, Wilderness	Short Bow	Rootwa ker Warlord

* These avatars can be found in the Bestiary (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 253) and starting on page 40.

- **Phaetian**: Creole trade language that borrows liberally from Imperial and Hykosian, spoken in northern Hykosia and urban Verkonos, as well as by sea traders all over the Known World.
- **Thesterian**: Oldest surviving language of the Known World, spoken by Atrodians and a few scholars.

STUDIES

Knowledge is power, as they say, and no one makes use of knowledge quite like the specerum and those on whom they prey. The following are just a few of the most common Studies acquired by Cloak & Dagger characters: Aesonian heroes; ancient artifacts; Balataic culture; banking; the Cult of the One; drama; any one Great House; the Great War of Liberation; foods of the Empire; Imperia; Imperial history; Imperial politics; Hykosian culture; monsters of Old Aesonia; music; poetry; philosophy; sculpture; specerum tactics; spice trading; wars on the Northern Front

ALIGNMENTS

Most Alignments of Cloak & Dagger center upon pantheons, each of which is tied to one of the Known World's great cultures. The upstart Cult of the One is a new and recent threat whose devotion is spreading like wildfire throughout the Empire's slave and commoner populations (see *Faith in Our Hearts, Swords in Our Hands*, page 19). Suitable Alignments built with the rules in Chapter 7 of *Fantasy Craft* can be found on Table 1.2: Alignments of Cloak and Dagger (see below).

STYLE FEATS

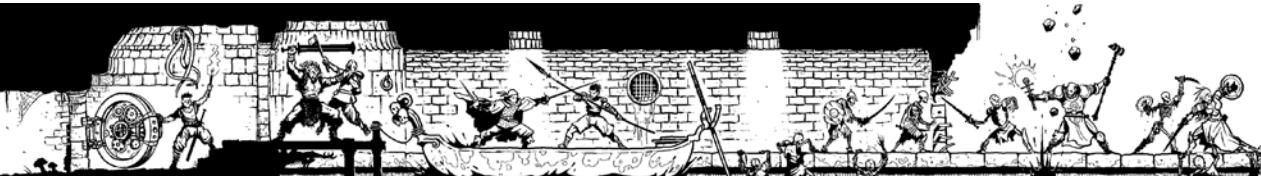
For more about Style feats, see *Fantasy Craft*, page 107.

PATRONAGE

You have pledged fealty to one of the empire's Great Houses and can draw assistance from it in turn.

Prerequisites: Total Renown 1+

Benefit: Choose one Great House to be your patron. Once per adventure, you may call in a free Favor from your patron with a cost equal to your Career Level + your total Renown. The type of Favor you may call in depends upon your patron House...





- *House Atrodia*: Combat Training or Spellcasting Favor
- *House Corlantae*: Decree or Event Favor
- *House Hepothysus*: Skill Training or Support Favor
- *House Olegea*: Invitation or Loan Favor
- *House Revus*: Harassment or Safe Haven Favor
- *House Tertio*: Detention or Reconnaissance Favor
- *House Verkonos*: Blessing or Safe Passage Favor

You must spend the minimum Downtime to call in this Favor, as normal. Once called in, a Favor is lost unless used by the end of the scene. Favors gained in this way may not be kept as Prizes.

TRADE AND GEAR

Though the specerum of the Known World rely mainly on intuition, guile, and stealth in pursuit of their Houses' goals, nearly all of them make use of special tools unavailable to the common man. Cover identities, concealed weapons, secret messengers, and advanced communications networks are all key weapons of the Secret War, and they are often more powerful than swords and more deadly than catapults.

LIFESTYLE

The denizens of the Known World live in a mostly urban culture, with distinct economic classes ranging from slaves to filthy rich nobles (see *Life in the Golden Empire*, page 16). Thanks to more than five hundred years of military and cultural dominance, Imperial culture has become increasingly metropolitan, incorporating the best elements of the societies it absorbs. It is not usual to see citizens clad in Hykosian silks, veterans with tattoos in the Balataic style adorning their bodies, and exotic "harmless" monsters kept as pets by the wealthiest nobles. Sample nourishment and apparel available to a character based on his Panache can be found on Table 1.3: Panache in Cloak & Dagger (see below).

Table 1.3: Panache in Cloak & Dagger

Rating	Example Dress	Example Sustenance
0	Coarse woolen tunic	Porridge or broth
1	Simple cotton tunic	Breads, dried meats
2	Colored/embroidered tunic, cloak	Fish, crude wine
3	Colored toga, copper jewelry	Figs, fruits, nuts
4	White toga, silver jewelry	Preserved meats, common wine
5	Embroidered toga, colored cloak, gold jewelry	Fresh meats, cakes
6	Foreign fabrics, semiprecious stones	Fatted pigs, common spices
7	Exotic fabrics, some gems	Regular feasts, fine wine
8	Printed fabrics, gold, gems	Nightly feasts, foreign spices
9	Custom fabrics, many set gems	Hykosian spices, exotic wines
10	Hykosian silks, gem-studded jewelry	Imported fruits, lavish feasts
11 or higher	Woven golden garments, crown	Nightly orgies

LIONS AND SALT

The standard currency of the Known World is the Leonis, a silver or gold coin emblazed on one side with a lion — the symbol of the Golden Empire — often in a propagandic pose relating to the time it was minted. (Thus, coins minted after a great victory at sea might feature the Imperial lion batting Hykosian ships with its paw.) The opposite side identifies the nation where it was minted with the name of the capitol and the image of its patron god.

Unlike the monies of Hykosia and Balatia, Leonis are not bullion, but representative tender — that is, the value of the coin rests in what it symbolizes rather than what it is made of. Throughout the empire, 1 silver Lion is the value of a single day's labor, but in poorer realms or in times of economic hardship, one might find a "silver" Leonis cast of tin, bronze, or even iron.

More valuable even than gold are spices such as salt, pepper, and herbs, which are vital to the preparation and preservation of food for harsh winters and in moist tropical climes. Spice is so important that its price is used as a benchmark for the economy, and many people use bags of spice as raw currency. Spice traders therefore have a tremendous influence on the Imperial economy. Spice caravans travel from one end of the Known World to the other, often at great risk, to deliver their products, and many specerum disguise themselves as spice merchants to disguise their activities within foreign lands.

The currency equivalents are given below.

- 20 Copper Leonis = 1 Silver Leonis
- 1 Silver Leonis = 1 Silver Leonis
- 1 Gold Leonis = 20 Silver Leonis
- 1 pound Spice = 50 Silver Leonis

GOODS

Aesonian Spikes: Aesonian rebels designed these bronze spikes during the Hykosian occupation to pass secret messages and very small items without arousing suspicion. Each spike may hold up to 1 Fine or smaller item, or a single scroll or sheet of



Table 1.4: Cloak & Dagger Goods

Name	Effect	SZ/Hand	Const	Comp	Weight	Era	Cost
Aesonian Spikes (3)	Hide F or smaller Size item; DC 25 to locate	T/—	Hard 1	10D	1 lb.	Ancient	25s
Code Wheel	+2 gear bonus to Decipher Imperial Code	T/2h	Hard 1	10W	1 lb.	Ancient	50s
Courier Pouch	+2 gear bonus to Stash paper/1 lb. item on self	T/—	Soft 1	7D	1/4 lb.	Ancient	15s

paper. A DC 25 Awareness or Perception check is required to locate a spike driven into soft ground, assuming that the searcher is not already aware of the spike's location.

Code Wheel: This simple cipher consisting of five wheels is set by the year, month, week, day, and hour on the Imperial Calendar. The key to the Imperial Signals Corps, this tool is invaluable for intercepting communications. A code wheel provides a +2 gear bonus with Investigate/Decipher checks to decode signals sent in Imperial Code.

Courier Pouch: This flat cotton pouch lies flat when strapped to the inner thigh, the small of the back, or some other covered area of the body, granting the user a +2 gear bonus when Stashing up to ten sheets of paper, or one item weighing up to 1/2 lb. on his person.

SUPPLIES

In addition to the new gear below, invisible ink is also available in the Cloak & Dagger setting (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 162). Note: characters most commonly Craft ciphers, code books, or fake documents using the Crafting skill's Inscription focus.

CONSUMABLES

Caltrops: These tiny pyramidal spikes are sprinkled across the ground to penetrate sandals, boots, and hooves, thereby impairing pursuit. Each use of caltrops fills one 5 x 5 ft. square of ground. Any character moving through that square must make a Reflex save (DC 15) or have his Speed reduced by 5 ft. for 1d6 rounds.

Table 1.5: Cloak & Dagger Consumables

Name	Effect	Uses	SZ/H	Const	Comp	Weight	Era	Cost
<i>General Consumables</i>								
Caltrops	Fills 1 square; Ref DC 15 or –5 ft. Speed for 1d6 rounds	5	T/2h	Hard 1	7D	1 lb.	Ancient	10s
Cipher, simple	Trivial Decipher check to break	3	T/1h	Brittle 1	12D	1/4 lb.	Ancient	15s
Cipher, average	Challenging Decipher check to break	3	T/1h	Brittle 1	15D	1/4 lb.	Ancient	30s
Cipher, sophisticated	Grueling Decipher check to break	5	T/1h	Brittle 1	18W	1/4 lb.	Ancient	100s
Cipher, masterful	Maddening Decipher check to break	5	T/1h	Brittle 1	20M	1/4 lb.	Ancient	200s
Code books, pair	Encrypt message; Maddening Decipher check to break code without matching book	10	T/2h	Soft 1	25W	1/2 lb.	Ancient	100s
Fake documents, poor	DC 15 to spot as fakes	1	T/1h	Brittle 1	10D	1/4 lb.	Ancient	25s
Fake documents, average	DC 20 to spot as fakes	3	T/1h	Brittle 1	12D	1/4 lb.	Ancient	75s
Fake documents, excellent	DC 25 to spot as fakes	5	T/1h	Brittle 1	15W	1/4 lb.	Ancient	150s
Fake documents, flawless	DC 30 to spot as fakes	10	T/1h	Brittle 1	18W	1/4 lb.	Ancient	300s
Rubbing paper	Copy non-paper surface in 2 full actions	10	T/1h	Brittle 1	18D	1/2 lb.	Ancient	30s

Cipher: Specerum make extensive use of ciphers, using everything from secret languages to word puzzles to “code batons” that require leather wraps to decode the message. Each of these ciphers is used only a limited number of times for fear that it will be intercepted and decoded by enemy Houses or states. Each “use” represents a single communication using that cipher. The complexity of the cipher determines the Investigate/Decipher DC required to decode it (see Table 2.14: Puzzles, page 77 of *Fantasy Craft*).

Code Books: Designed by Hepothesian cryptographers, this set of paper pads is made in matching unique pairs — one owned by the sender, and the other by the recipient. The character with the matching book can translate the coded written message with a Trivial Decipher check; however, without one book of the pair, the encoded message is virtually impossible to decode, requiring a Maddening Decipher check instead (see Table 2.14: Puzzles, page 77 of *Fantasy Craft*). After each use, one page in each book is discarded. The pair is good for a total of ten messages (sent or received).

Fake Documents: Writs of dispatch, travel passes, and forged orders are favorite tools that specerum use to lure targets into traps or gain access to secured areas, particularly in enemy territory. When the item is purchased or Crafted, the owner should define one task that the documents allow (e.g. a border crossing, an assignment to a Legion detachment, etc.). The “uses” listed with this item indicate the number of times the documents can stand up to inspection before they must be discarded. The quality of the fake documents determines the difficulty for the

CHAPTER 1



viewer's Investigate or Crafting (Inscription) check to spot them as fakes. If this check is successful, the documents are instantly rendered useless.

Rubbing Paper: This specially painted paper allows the user to make a two-dimensional copy of another, non-paper surface (such as a tablet, art in relief, or a person's face) as 2 full actions. Specerum often use this material to quickly copy stone documents, confirm the assassination of a target, etc.

POISONS

Hykosian Perfume: This thick, mind-affecting incense made from the Hykosian poppy addles the senses of those who imbibe it. While the nobles of the South often use it as a recreational drug in their pleasure palaces, well-heeled specerum have also put Hykosian perfume to good use in reducing a target's awareness. A victim of this poison suffers a cumulative -2 gear penalty with Notice and Search checks.

Incense: This poison is burned so that the smoke slowly fills the air in an enclosed space. It burns for 10 minutes per use, exposing a 10-ft. radius centered on the poison for every 10 minutes or fraction thereof that has passed. (Thus, three doses of incense expose a 30-ft. radius around the point of burning, and burn out within 30 minutes.) Incense can't penetrate liquids and does not affect characters who do not breathe. An open door disperses the poison in 4 rounds, and a strong or magical wind disperses it immediately.

Juris' Tongue: Named for the Aesonian god of justice, this precious drug is distilled from the venom of the Revan Viper and used to cloud the minds and loosen the tongues of interrogated prisoners. A victim of this poison suffers a cumulative -2 gear penalty with Bluff and Resolve checks.

Table 1.6: Cloak & Dagger Poisons

Name	Effect	Incubation	Uses	Comp	Weight	Era	Cost
Hykosian perfume	-2 gear penalty with Notice and Search checks	1 minute	3	15D	1/10th lb.	Ancient	30s
Juris' Tongue	-2 gear penalty with Bluff and Resolve checks	1 minute	3	15D	1/10th lb.	Ancient	75s
Poison Upgrades							
Incense	Can be burned, fills 10×10 ft. area per use	—	—	+2	—	Ancient	+100%
Nuanced	-5 penalty to checks to detect poison	—	—	+2	—	Ancient	+50%

Table 1.7: Cloak & Dagger Services

Name	Effect	Availability	Era	Cost
Community Services				
Decryption	Decodes 1 message or cipher	15	Ancient	2 × cipher
Orgy, 1 night	Heals all stress and 1/2 subdual damage; Stress Resistance 4 (current scene)	10	Ancient	50s
Signaled message, low priority	Within Golden Empire (1 day per 100 miles of travel)	10	Ancient	25s
Signaled message, standard	Within Golden Empire (1 day per 250 miles of travel)	12	Ancient	75s
Signaled message, urgent	Within Golden Empire (1 day per 500 miles of travel)	15	Ancient	150s



Nuanced: This poison is particularly difficult to detect by smell, touch, or taste. A character suffers a -5 penalty with all checks to detect this poison.

SERVICES

Nearly all agents of the Golden Empire make extensive use of specialized services during their missions. Baths, deliveries, fortune-tellers, hired passage, library access, lodging, scribes, and particularly commissioned items (often forgers and cryptographers contracted to draft fake documents or codes — see *Table 1.5: Consumables*, page 28) are all particular favorites of specerum in the field.

SERVICES DESCRIPTIONS

Decryption: Unemployed Ministorum scribes often accept contracts to crack ciphers and other encrypted messages. Decoding the cipher or encryption costs twice the item's listed cost and takes a number of (D)ays, (W)eeks, or (M)onths equal to the encrypted item's Complexity divided by 10 (rounded up). No skill checks are made — the encryption is simply cracked.

Orgy: This festival of wealth and excess has become a symbol for the corruption and decadence that rots the heart of the Golden Empire. However, such an event can provide substantial benefit for agents under pressure.

Signaled Message: The Imperial Army maintains a sophisticated corps of signal officers to communicate messages from Imperia across long distances to the Legions and Great Houses. Many Great Houses still use the corps to communicate with specerum in the field, in spite of the obvious risks of using it within the empire's bounds. The cost of this service depends on the urgency of the message being sent.

ARMOR

Because openly bearing arms and armor in urban areas is an invitation to trouble, most Cloak & Dagger heroes abstain from armor in favor of speed, stealth, and obscurity. However, some who fight in the gladiatorial arena or the Legions have adapted those tools to deadly effect in their work.

ARMOR DESCRIPTIONS

Gladiatorial Harness: This “suit” of straps, belts, a canvas or leather sleeve, and a loincloth is most commonly worn by contestants of the arena and is designed to draw out the combat. The harness is almost always combined with fittings to improve its effectiveness.

Musculata: This simple one-piece breastplate, common to officers and nobles, is formed of metal or hardened leather and crafted in the shape of a warrior’s chest and abdomen.

WEAPONS

Specerum and their enemies have spent centuries honing the bloody craft of murder to a razor edge. Knives, swords, spears, shields, and hurled weapons remain the most common implements of destruction employed across the empire, thanks to their availability through Legion armories. However, more exotic weapons from the gladiatorial arenas or invading armies of the North also find their way into agents’ hands from time to time.

EDGED WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

Falcata: The smallest of the falx family is a brutal chopping weapon used more like a hatchet than a short sword. Its enclosed handle and armor-piercing power make it a favorite weapon of Balataic horsemen.

Falx: This Balataic “sword” has a deeply curved blade with an interior cutting edge that can deliver powerful blows to split armor or sweep legionnaires from their feet.

Syca: An imitation of the falcata, this long knife has a blade that breaks at a 45-degree angle, making it ideal for hooking a foe’s shield and opening him up to the killing blow.

Rhomphaia: This massive, curved Balataic pole-sword has a 3-foot-long blade and equally long handle that allow its wielder to cleave through both armor and its wearer with a single stroke.

Table 1.8: Cloak & Dagger Armor

Type	DR	Resistances	DP	ACP	Speed	Disguise	Const	Comp	Weight *	Era	Cost
<i>Partial Armor (torso only)</i>											
Gladiatorial harness	0	Edged 1	-0	-0	—	-2	Soft 2	7D	5 lbs.	Ancient	20s
Musculata	3	—	-1	-1	—	obvious	Hard 2	12W	10 lbs.	Ancient	80s

* These values assume armor for a Medium character. For smaller characters, these values decrease by 1/2 per Size (rounded down), and for larger characters they triple per Size.

DESCRIPTIVE GLADIATOR FITTINGS

The armor worn by the gladiators of the Known World resembles that of actual gladiators of old. If you wish to use the descriptive armor guidelines to determine what sort of fittings your gladiator might wear, use these guidelines (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 173).

- **Feet:** Leg defense/straps, padded leggings, greaves
- **Forearms:** Bracers, *caestus* (battle gloves), *manica* (arm guard — mail or scale)
- **Head:** Helmet
- **Shoulders:** *Galerus* (shoulder plate)
- **Vitals:** *Balteus* (wide belt), *pteruges* (leather skirt)



Revan Needle: More of a sharpened spike than a knife, this fine, thin blade is favored by Revan rogues. It slides easily through nearly any armor available in the Known World.

Sandal Dagger: This unusual weapon is actually a curved blade lining the toe of a sandal. Since it is worn on the foot, it requires no hands to wield and allows the wearer to strike by kicking out with his foot.



CHAPTER 1



WEAPON UPGRADES

Aesonian: These rare weapons of the Known World's golden age command the respect of any who view them, as well as a hefty price on the open market.

Bronze: Weapons made of bronze are immune to rust and destructive corrosion (such as that caused by Rusting Extraordinary attacks or the Rusting Grasp spell), but they are softer than their steel counterparts and lose their edge more quickly.

Discreet: These weapons have been made thinner or shorter to reduce their profile and increase their concealability. The wielder gains a +2 gear bonus to Stash this weapon.

Hollow: Hollow weapons are sometimes used to conceal poisons, messages, and other tools of the trade for a specerum. A hollow weapon may contain another item at least two Size categories smaller than itself. Finding this hidden compartment requires a successful Notice or Search check (DC 20).

Hykosian Steel: The craftsmen of the Inculata Exarescos forge weapons of steel rods entwined like rope, which gives their arms incredible sharpness and durability at the cost of time.

Table 1.9: Cloak & Dagger Edged Weapons

Name	Dmg	Threat	Qualities **	SZ/Hnd	Const	Comp	Weight	Era	Cost
<i>Knives</i>									
Revan Needle	1d4 lethal	19-20	AP 4, finesse	D/1h	Hard 1	10D	1/2 lbs.	Ancient	15s
Sandal Dagger *	1d4 lethal	20	Inaccurate, grip	D/—	Hard 1	12D	1 lbs.	Ancient	25s
Syca	1d6 lethal	20	Hook, keen 4	T/1h	Hard 2	10 W	2 lbs.	Ancient	20s
<i>Swords</i>									
Falcata	1d8 lethal	19-20	AP 2, grip	T/1h	Hard 2	12W	2 lbs.	Ancient	35s
Falx *	1d10 lethal	20	AP 2, trip	S/1h	Hard 2	12W	4 lbs.	Ancient	50s
<i>Polearms</i>									
Rhomphaia	1d10 lethal	19-20	AP 4	M/2h	Hard 2	10W	6 lbs.	Ancient	40s

* You must have the Edged forte to be proficient with this exotic weapon.

** All edged weapons also have the *injector* quality.

Table 1.10: Cloak & Dagger Weapon Upgrades

Name	Effect	Const	Comp	Weight	Era	Cost
<i>Craftsmanship *</i>						
Aesonian	+1 to Appearance	—	+5	—	Ancient	+100%
<i>Customization</i>						
Discreet	+2 gear bonus to Stash checks	—	+2	—	Ancient	+50%
Hollow	May contain item two or more Sizes smaller	—	+5	—	Ancient	+25%
<i>Materials *</i>						
Bronze	Hard only; cannot be rusted	-1 save	-2	—	Ancient	-10%
Hykosian Steel	Hard only; gains <i>keen 4</i> ; increase Downtime 1 step	+1 save	+5 **	—	Ancient	+100%

* A weapon may only receive 1 upgrade from this category.

** Increase the required Downtime to craft this weapon by 1 step (e.g. from D to W, W to M, or M to Y), to a maximum of Y.



PRIZES

Because Cloak & Dagger is a fairly "low fantasy" setting focused heavily on politics and intrigue, its Prizes often take different forms than the typical magical weapons and towering castles found in more standard fantasy fare. The following is a list of changes and guidelines for using Prizes in your game.

RENNOW

The shadow world of the specerum is one that crosses over to all parts of society. Just as the specerum must excel professionally, so too does he have intimate ties to the nobles and military officers who make the wheels of the empire turn. The Renown tracks on Table 1.11 (see right) reflect the three cornerstones of a specerum's reputation. The heroic branch specifies his standing within the espionage community, the military branch his influence over the Legion and its officers, and the noble branch his advancement and participation within the politics of the Golden Empire.

Table 1.11: Cloak & Dagger Renown

Rank	Heroic	Military	Noble
1	Neophyte	Militia	Libertius
2	Procurator	Auxilia	Plebian
3	Custos	Legionnaire	Proletarian
4	Explorator	Cataphract	Patrician
5	Stipatores	Praetorian	Equistes
6	Specerus	Centurion	Dux
7	Speculator	Tr bune	Archon
8	Archspecerus	Praetor	Regent
9	Specerus Rex	Dux Militum	Patriarch
10	Rector Officium	Praetor Legionarium	Emperor-Elect

Table 1.12: Cloak & Dagger Holdings

Scale	Example Residence
1	Common house, dormitory
2	Small insulae (apartment), hut
3	Large insulae, provincial farm
4	Private insulae, small urban farm
5	Small taberna, large urban farm
6	Large taberna, multiple farms
7	Domus
8	Walled estate
9	Private estate and grounds
10	Palace, small village
11	Manor in Imperia, large village
12	Private quarters in the Imperial Palace

HOLDINGS

Most heroes of the Golden Empire live and work in its bustling cities, though some veterans choose to escape to the pastoral life, away from the vicious politics and backstabbing of the Houses.

ROOMS

The following Rooms may also be added to Holdings in Cloak & Dagger (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 193).

Aviary: The holding features a facility for training and housing messenger birds — a useful asset for discreet, private communication. Once per adventure, you gain access to 1 Delivery (Neighboring or Regional) Favor between your Holding and one other Holding, chosen when you gain this Room. This Room may be chosen multiple times, and each time it connects to a different Holding of your choice.

Bathhouse: Aqueducts and plentiful hot springs across the Empire have made bathhouses common and popular meeting places. Once per adventure, you and each guest gain 1 Bath service at no cost (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 167).

Harem: Though expensive, keeping a concubine or two is a popular pastime of the Imperial wealthy. Once per adventure, you and each guest gain 1 Consort service at no cost (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 167).

Obfuscarium: Paranoid nobles often keep a windowless, wicker-lined chamber in the center of his residence, as far as possible from prying eyes and ears. Characters *outside* the Room suffers a -10 gear penalty to hear anything happening within it.

Oraculeum: This small shrine to the Aesonian pantheon (or one of its deities) gives residents a chance to commune with the divine through dreams. Once per adventure, one character residing at the Holding gains 1 Fortune service at no cost (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 168).

Signaling Station: The Holding includes a small station used by the Signal Corps for passing messages to distant corners of the empire. Once per adventure, you gain 1 standard Signaled Message service at no cost (see page 28).

ARTIFACTS OF THE GOLDEN EMPIRE

Though the magickal relics of the Known World's golden age are largely lost to the ravages of time, a few items have survived to this day. Foremost amongst these are the artifacts of the Great Houses — items used by the Seven to defeat men and beasts in the Great War of Liberation.

BANDS OF TERKUS

Legend holds that these hardened red leather bands were soaked in the blood of mighty Terkus, founder of House Tertio, and that they bestow upon their wearer a sliver of his great strength, as well as his renowned command over beasts of the wild. Though these precious artifacts are the possessions that Terkus left behind for his people, they are regularly employed in warfare, worn by the House champion as a badge of honor and status in Legio Tertio.

Item: Leather bracers (light fittings)

Essences:

- Lesser Damage Resistance (Ranged Weapons 4)
- Greater Edge Surge (Trigger item to gain 4 Edge, once per combat)



CHAPTER 1



Charms:

- Greater Attribute Bonus (+2 Str at Level 1–2, +3 Str at Level 3–6, +4 Str at Level 7–10, +5 Str at Level 11–14, +6 Str at Level 15–18, +7 Str at 19–20)
- Lesser Spell Effect (Hold Animal — 1 use per scene at Level 1–4, 2 uses per scene at Level 5–7, 3 uses per scene at Level 8–11, 4 uses per scene at Level 12–14, 5 uses per scene at Level 15–18, 6 uses per scene at Level 19–20)

Reputation Value: Priceless

BRAND OF ATRODOS

The prized weapon of the legendary Thessian sorcerer-general may look unremarkable — a simple bronze blade, scarred from five hundred years of battles and stained with the lifeblood of thousands — but it's one of the Golden Empire's most potent artifacts. Anyone who raises it in anger is said to be filled with the deadly fury of Atrodos, which ignites the blade in blue flame and fills the wielder's soul with incredible arcane power.

Item: Short Sword (1-handed item)

Essences:

- Class Enhancement (Next level's Rune Knight abilities)
- Greater Casting Level Bonus (+2 Caster Level when casting spells from Channeler school)
- Exotic Damage (inflicts fire damage)

Charms:

- Lesser Damage Bonus (+1 at Level 1–6, +2 at Level 7–12, +3 at Level 13–18, +4 at Level 19–20)

Reputation Value: Priceless

CORLANTEUM'S SIGIL

As beautiful as the city for which it is named, this broad shield was wrought by Aesonian smiths in the midst of the Hykosian occupation. Its laminated face tells the story of the Siege of Corlanteum, in which Southrons besieged the city for 3 years in an effort to break the residents' will. Legend says it was only through the guidance of Philia, the city-state's patron goddess, that Corlanteum was able to throw back the besiegers and keep the light of Aesonian culture burning.

Item: Metal Shield (1-handed item)

Essences:

- Lesser Damage Aura (adjacent attackers suffer 1d6 divine damage when they hit the wielder)
- Greater Save Bonus (+3 with Fort saves)
- Trick (grants Shield Block trick)

Charms:

- Lesser Defense Bonus (+1 at Level 1–6, +2 at Level 7–12, +3 at Level 13–18, +4 at Level 19–20)
- Greater Skill Bonus (Resolve — +2 ranks at Level 1–2, +3 ranks at Level 3–6, +4 ranks at Level 7–10, +5 ranks at Level 11–14, +6 ranks at Level 15–18, +7 ranks at Level 19–20)

Reputation Value: Priceless

HESTARIA'S LANCE

The favored hunting lance of the warrior maiden Verkona was one of the decisive weapons employed during the Great Cleansing of the Known World. Its keen edge pieced the heart of the terrible Hydra of Fiume Barkathos, put out the eye of savage King Okulos of the arges, and mortally wounded the dread Hepothesian Dragon when all other weapons had failed. But what is most extraordinary about Hestaria's Lance is that House Verkonos still lends it to great champions throughout the empire in times of need, regardless of their Houses or the politics of the day. While House Verkonos places great value on the spear, it takes its sacred duty as defender of the Throne even more seriously — even in days such as these.

Item: Throwing Spear (1-handed item)

Essences:

- Feat (Spear Basics)
- NPC Quality (*Chameleon I* — forest/jungle)

Charms:

- Greater Bane (+2 vs. beasts at Level 1–2, +3 vs. beasts at Level 3–6, +4 vs. beasts at Level 7–10, +5 vs. beasts at Level 11–14, +6 vs. beasts at Level 15–18, +7 vs. beasts at Level 19–20)
- Greater Damage Bonus (+2 at Level 1–2, +3 at Level 3–6, +4 at Level 7–10, +5 hit at Level 11–14, +6 at Level 15–18, +7 at Level 19–20)

Reputation Value: Priceless

ORBIS REX REGENTUM

This ancient ring dates back to the earliest days of Aesonia, when it was created for the merchant-lord of Septum Fiume. Olegean legend says Juris himself forged the ring from the golden scales of Ophidia, queen of the monsters, as proof of its wearer's right to rule all the Known World.

Item: Signet Ring

Essences:

- Class ability (grants the Courtier's *with a word* ability)
- NPC quality (grants *beguiling* quality)

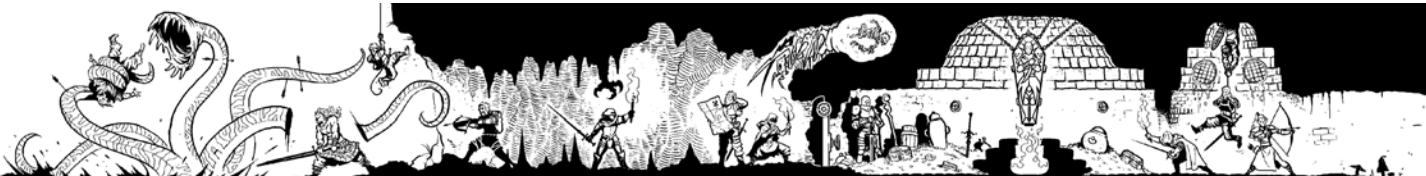
Charms:

- Lesser Spell Effect (Command II — 1 use per scene at Level 4–8, 2 uses per scene at Level 9–12, 3 uses per scene at Level 13–17, 4 uses per scene at Level 18–20)
- Lesser Spell Effect (Geas — 1 use per scene at Level 4–8, 2 uses per scene at Level 9–12, 3 uses per scene at Level 13–17, 4 uses per scene at Level 18–20)

Reputation Value: Priceless

THE PHILOSOPHER'S WREATH

This glorious laurel, wrought of delicate golden leaves entwined about gems from across the Known World, is more than just a crown of the Hepothesian patriarch — it is the incarnation of its peoples' great wisdom and quest for knowledge.



For the regents of House Hepothysus, the wreath has provided guidance in times of great uncertainty and answers when none were apparent. Young Akkrandas reportedly wears the crown throughout all his waking hours as he tirelessly seeks a solution to the empire's present ailments.

Item: Golden Laurel

Essences:

- Class ability (Explorer: *bookworm I*)
- Class Enhancement (Next level's abilities from Keeper class)
- Trained Skill (Investigate)

Charms:

- Lesser Spell Effect (Scrye II — 1 use per scene at Level 1–4, 2 uses per scene at Level 5–7, 3 uses per scene at Level 8–11, 4 uses per scene at Level 12–14, 5 uses per scene at Level 15–18, 6 uses per scene at Level 19–20)
- Greater Spell Effect (Living Library III — 1 use per adventure at Level 8–11, 2 uses per adventure at Level 12–16, 3 uses per adventure at Level 17–20)

Reputation Value: Priceless

REVUS' THORN

When the great rogue used this insignificant-looking dagger to slit the throat of the gorgon Alethea, it gained part of the hag-queen's life force. Rumor holds that the weapon hates all life and seeks out its opponents' most vulnerable areas in an effort to exact Alethea's revenge against mankind.

Item: Dagger (1-handed item)

Essences:

- Class Ability (grants the Assassin's *unspoken name* +1 ability)
- Feat (Ferocity Basics)

Charms:

- Lesser Bane (+1 vs. folk at Level 1–6, +2 vs. folk at Level 7–12, +3 vs. folk at Level 13–18, +4 vs. folk at Level 19–20)
- Greater Accuracy Bonus (+2 to hit at Level 1–2, +3 to hit at Level 3–6, +4 to hit at Level 7–10, +5 to hit at Level 11–14, +6 to hit at Level 15–18, +7 to hit at Level 19–20)

Reputation Value: Priceless

CLOAK & DAGGER ADVENTURES

The final days of the Golden Empire present many unique opportunities for fantasy roleplaying. Like modern secret agents, the heroes face the challenges of conducting covert operations in hostile territory, alone and unsupported, with the likelihood of betrayal by both friend and foe. But they also face the special dangers of the fantasy world: ferocious monsters, powerful magic, and rampaging armies intent on the ultimate destruction of all

they hold dear. Consequently, most Cloak & Dagger adventures balance intrigue and subtlety against situations requiring bold and decisive action. To prevail, the characters must stay on their toes and remain ever aware of the dangers they face in playing for the highest stakes of all.

THEMES

Unlike most fantasy worlds, Cloak & Dagger is a game about shades of gray, in which the heroes must commit lesser evils in pursuit of the greater good. Indeed, the Silent War is defined by treachery, violence, and a distinct sense of loss among all citizens. The Known World teeters at the edge of utter chaos — its borders crumple beneath the weight of barbarian hordes and its society consumes itself in a hedonistic frenzy, while its leaders gird themselves for civil war. Allegiances are abandoned and alliances voided as those aware of the crisis race to pick the Golden Empire's bones clean before it comes to an end.

In this land of confusion, the steadfast and patriotic specerum have become the fulcrums on which the fate of the Golden Empire will tip. Through duty, honor, betrayal, and murder, they fight to prevent the ultimate implosion of their beloved empire and perhaps herald its return to long-lost glories. This intensely personal and desperate struggle — to save all that they love by any means necessary — is a key element of the best Cloak & Dagger campaigns.

Uncertainty can be the spy's greatest enemy, and there's plenty of it to go around in the Known World. The winds of Imperial politics shift constantly as the Great Houses form and break alliances in their single-minded quest for dominance over the Throne. A specerum stationed with a friendly House maniple one day may find himself in the midst of the hornet's nest the next, perhaps even entreating protection from an erstwhile enemy. And no matter what the propaganda, even the closest allies in a character's House may prove to be traitors, turned by love of coin or power. Trust is a precious and fleeting commodity — but if you're going to save the world, you have to trust somebody — if only for a little while.

But the world the heroes love is also rotting, and sometimes they may question whether it is even worth saving. Unlike many fantasy worlds, the Golden Empire is a rigid and deeply stratified society on the verge of tearing at its socio-economic seams. Many in the disaffected slave and commoner classes seek answers via rebellion, new and bizarre religions, or even outright violence against the ruling classes. Tension regularly flares in the form of police actions, food riots, and cult assaults on Imperial institutions. This caldron of social tension brings a new dimension to the heroes' mission — if they preserve the order as it stands, will they be propping up the unjust and making the rest of their countrymen pay the price? Such nagging questions — about duty vs. honor, enemies within vs. those without, the powerful vs. the plentiful — are integral parts of the Cloak & Dagger setting.



CHAPTER 1



LIFE DURING WARTIME

The Silent War is rife with plots both honorable and foul — from dangerous military missions into the Balataic wilderness to twisted tales of murder, intrigue, and betrayal. The rapid disintegration of Imperial society leaves opportunities for the ambitious and callous to claim its riches, its land, or perhaps the Golden Throne itself. While there are simply too many plot hooks to cover in this supplement, the following few pieces of kindling may serve to light the fires of adventure in the Known World.

The Boy Who Would Be Emperor: The radical ideas and growing popularity of Akkrandas II, the new patriarch of House Hepothysus, have whipped the nations of Old Aesonia into a furor. His proposals for making peace with Balatia and Hykosia, strengthening the Magna Imperia to improve education for the masses, and especially rewriting the Carta Collegium to ensure a fair and balanced order of ascension to the Golden Throne have won him many admirers among the smaller nations and the commoners while making him a true threat to the status quo. It is only a matter of time before those who wield the empire's power try to silence him. Whether he lives or dies could change the fortunes of those on the right side of history forever.

Adomius' Blade: The greatest specerūs of the Golden Empire is the Revan actor Janos Besmos, who has recently abandoned the service of his House to sell his talents to the highest bidder. All the Great Houses — and even the Throne itself — are engaged in a bidding war to secure his loyalty — or at least deny it to their enemies. The heroes might be agents sent either to secure the services of the Known World's greatest spy, or to slay him — and neither mission is an easy prospect.

Bronze Spears and Iron Wills: Always a nation within an Empire, Atrodiā has taken the opportunities afforded by the Silent War to quietly prepare for the inevitable military conflict ahead. In true Atrodiān fashion, its agents are stirring up trouble within the Collegium — sabotaging treaties, undermining friendships, and sowing disinformation as they jockey to reclaim some of their “lost Thestarian glory.” Any rival House hoping to gain leverage over the entrenched Atrodiāns will have to peel apart these layers of deception, evade magical surveillance, and find a way to draw the schemers out of their shell. The reward for success is priceless — access to the Empire’s greatest magical colleges and/or most resolute fighters.

True Believers: A wildfire of faith has ignited the commoners in support of the radical Cult of the One. Its priests preach treason against the Throne, encourage the workers to withhold the fruits of their labors, and turn the most devout into fanatics who do not care if they live or die. Now that faith is spreading into the Legions and the rank-and-file of the Great Houses as well, and the



initial crackdown against believers has only galvanized the rest of the cult. To undo the damage, specerūm may have to infiltrate cult-cells and upend the faith itself by any means in their power — perhaps by proving its leaders to be charlatans or by highlighting the One’s cruel detachment from his faithful.

The Consorts of Ophidia: With the once-watchful eye of the empire now turned inward, the ancient beasts that once stalked the Known World have returned from their seclusion to prey upon men. Now, however, their attacks bespeak the presence of a sinister intelligence behind the scenes. Wide-eyed paranoids allege that an unholy alliance of men and beasts is conspiring to hasten the end of the Golden Empire and reclaim the Known World for themselves. While no one has definitive proof, determining whether these allegations are the ravings of madmen or evidence of a new cult or army amassing in the East is of interest to all of the Houses.

Splitting the Hare: For decades, a Hykosian general nicknamed “The Hare” has dogged the Legio Verkonos with cunning feints, daring raids, and wild goose chases into the Inculata



Exarescos. Now, with the Verkonan government distracted and the military's morale shaken, the Hare grows bolder, striking progressively closer to Phaetes and its vital southern ports. Some say the Southron general has allies in the city who are feeding him information. Tracking those connections and then catching and slaying the Hare could be crucial steps in saving the South.

A Velvet Glove, Cast in Iron: Still stinging from the sudden death of its emperor and patriarch Abraxius Buxares, House Olegea finds itself leaderless and vulnerable at the start of the Silent War. The members of the Council Regentum in Septum Fiume have turned on one another like a pack of starved dogs fighting over a scrap of meat in their zeal to become the next patriarch, while Olegea's spymasters try desperately to preserve the nation's slippery grip on power in Imperia. Resolving this issue quickly is of vital importance — the longer a power vacuum exists, the worse off House Olegea is — so the knives are out in the City of Seven Rivers. For Olegean agents, it is a time of great peril as brother turns on brother. For enemies of Olegea, this situation offers a chance to depose the tyrant House once and for all.

The Rite of Secession: Long besieged by the barbarians of Balatia and excluded from the line of succession to the Golden Throne, isolated Tertio has been nursing serious grievances for a very long time. Now it is whispered among the Legions that Solastria sues for peace with the Balataic hordes and plans to seek independence from the empire. Olegea and Atrodia label such ideas treasonous and assert that such efforts would represent a declaration of war upon the empire — a crime for which payment could be rendered only in blood. If the rumors are true, the Golden Empire could soon be facing the twin crises of a civil war and an open border in the North through which the barbarian horsemen could ride on Revus and Olegea. Specerum who can confirm or deny such rumors could avert disaster — or help the loyal Houses gain the advantage they need in the war to come.

ENCOUNTERS

Cloak & Dagger is, primarily, a setting based on social interaction and investigation in which meticulous fieldwork and intriguing plots are punctuated by brief bursts of decisive, tense action. Scenes should require far more than a find-the-monster-kill-it-and-take-its-stuff style of play — rather, the players should face moral dilemmas, murky puzzles, and a distinct sense of unease most of the time.

Thanks to the *fragile heroes* and *legendary monsters* campaign qualities, combat in this setting is commonly the last resort of the desperate or suicidal. When blades are drawn or a monster appears, chances are good that someone is going to die — and the heroes rarely have numbers on their side. Adding that sense of “grit” and gravity to every combat, where a dagger can quickly end a man’s life, is sure to help enforce the deadliness of this world.

OPPOSITION

The primary enemies of faced by Cloak & Dagger’s heroes are humans. The cities are filled with enemy agents, gang lords, Legionary peacekeepers, and *fulminarii* who keep a vigilant watch for threats to the Throne — threats such as the player characters. Often, these foes are just a shade below the skill or talent of most specerum, and they often exceed the heroes’ skill when working in their own specialties. Rather than treating such enemies like the faceless hordes of unnamed orcs or sword-fodder kobolds one often finds in most fantasy adventure games, try rounding them out with names, personalities, and nationalities of their own (*maybe by using the new Rogue Templates on page 38*). Doing so can give the world a more “realistic” feel — even if it does have spell casting, magic swords, and anachronistic technologies. Monsters, when they do appear, are generally individual creatures kept as pets or foes for the gladiatorial arena (see *Monsters of the Known World*, page 38).

REWARDS

Because the lower-magic and classic espionage themes are so central to the Cloak & Dagger setting, GMs are encouraged to grant Prizes that reflect a more modern sensibility.

RENOwN

The reputation of a specerum with his colleagues, his society, and the ever-present military can make the critical difference between success and failure in the field. Renown is the perfect reward to represent the player characters’ growing influence and rank within their Houses — especially when they complete critical missions. You might grant a bonus rank of Noble renown if the party rescues an influential diplomat from an ambush, a rank of Heroic renown when the team foils a major rival House operation, or a rank of Military renown if the heroes contribute vital intelligence against an invasion or insurgent cell.

FAVORS

Likewise, aid from the right person at the right time can save an entire team from certain death. From the halls of the Imperial court to the dark alleys of the slums, promises of future help are what grease the wheels of the empire. Even small Favors such as a Delivery, Safe Haven, or Safe Passage can provide vital security and secrecy in a world where both are in all too short supply.

CONTACTS

In a world without telephones and international flights, knowing the right people — and as many of them as possible — is even more important than it is to the modern spy. Of all the Prizes a Cloak & Dagger character can get, a good Contact is perhaps the most valuable and prized. Most specerum try to develop as many Contacts as they can to shore up their own weaknesses or provide valuable advice and assistance in the field.



CHAPTER 1



HOLDINGS

Most Cloak & Dagger missions focus on urban areas because that's where the people are. Thus, Holdings are a lot more useful to the heroes here than they are in most fantasy campaigns. You might award a flop house in the slums, a secured insulae in Imperia, an alchemist's lab in a philosopher's circle, or even a cult bolt-hole hidden in the sewers below the streets.

CLOAK & DAGGER ROGUES GALLERY

The rogues described below are specific to the Cloak & Dagger campaign setting. Additionally, the following rogues from the Fantasy Craft rogues gallery are common in the Known World: apothecary, apprentice, artist, attendant, banker, barkeep, brigand, con man, craftsman, cutpurse, damsels, entertainer, farmer, fortune teller, goon, guild boss, laborer, merchant, nobleman, scholar, servant, strumpet, town crier, warlord, watchman, worshipper (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 244 for statistics).

Balataic Horseman (Medium Folk Walker — 47 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 40 ft. ground; Init VII; Atk IV; Def V; Res V; Health IV; Comp I; Skills: Ride V, Survival III; Qualities: *Class ability (Scout: rough riding), expertise (Ride), feat (Combat Rider, Mobility Basics), ferocity, interests (Alignment: Pagan Gods of Balatia, language: Balataic)*

Attacks/Weapons: Short bow + 40 standard arrows (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 19–20; range 20 ft. × 6; qualities: AP 2, cavalry), falcata (dmg 1d8 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: AP 2, grip)

Mount or Vehicle: Riding horse (Spd 50 ft. ground (Run 250 ft.; Travel 7; SZ/Def L/IV) or none

Gear: Body paint

Treasure: 1G, 1L

Balataic Druid (Medium Folk Walker — 71 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 12; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 40 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk II; Def VI; Res IV; Health V; Comp IV; Skills: Intimidate V, Resolve VII, Sense Motive V, Tactics V; Qualities: *Class ability (Captain: battle planning I (crush them!, press on!); Priest: saved! I (Will)), devoted (Nature III), interests (Alignment: Pagan Gods of Balatia, language: Balataic), treacherous*

Attacks/Weapons: Romphaia (dmg 1d10 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: AP 4), short bow + 20 standard arrows (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 19–20; range 20 ft. × 6; qualities: AP 2, cavalry)

Mount or Vehicle: Riding horse (Spd 50 ft. ground (Run 250 ft.; Travel 7; SZ/Def L/IV) or none

Gear: Holy symbol, oil of blessing

Treasure: 2L, 1M

Cult Exhorter (Medium Folk Walker — 62 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 16; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init I; Atk II; Def VIII; Res V; Health III; Comp I; Skills: Impress IX, Intimidate IX, Resolve IV; Qualities: *Class ability (Courtier: slanderous), fearless II, feat (Black Cat, Iron Will, Repartee Basics), honorable, interests (any Alignment), menacing threat*

Attacks/Weapons: Quarterstaff (dmg 1d8 subdual; threat 20; qualities: double, trip)

Gear: Holy book

Treasure: 1C

Fulminarius (Medium Folk Walker — 59 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init VII; Atk III; Def V; Res II; Health IV; Comp V; Skills: Blend VI, Investigate VI, Sense Motive VI; Qualities: *Bright I, class ability (Emissary: human nature), feat (Anonymity Basics, Anonymity Mastery, Garrote Basics)*

Attacks/Weapons: Short sword (dmg 1d8 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: keen 4)

Mount or Vehicle: Riding horse (Spd 50 ft. ground (Run 250 ft.; Travel 7; SZ/Def L/IV) or none

Gear: Partial leather with light fittings (DR 2; Resist Fire 3; DP –1; ACP –1; Spd —; Disguise –4), garrote, 3 doses Juris' Tongue

Treasure: 2C, 1G

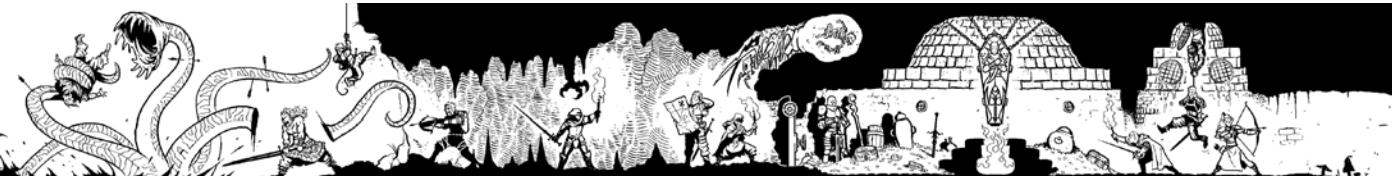
Gladiatorial Champion (Medium Folk Walker — 67 XP): Str 12, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init VI; Atk VI; Def VI; Res VI; Health VI; Comp I; Skills: Acrobatics IV, Athletics VI, Prestidigitation IV, Tactics IV; Qualities: *Class ability (Burglar: I'll cut you! I), feat (Combo Basics, Expert Disarm), grappler, grueling combatant, tricky (Mix-Up (Feint, Trip))*

Attacks/Weapons: Short sword (dmg 1d8+1 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: keen 4) + trident (dmg 1d8+1 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: hook, hurl) OR hide shield (dmg 1d3+1 subdual; threat 20; qualities: guard +2) OR falx (dmg 1d10+1 lethal; threat 20; qualities: AP 2, trip)

Gear: Gladiatorial harness + light fittings (DR 1; Resist Edged 1; DP –0; ACP –1; Spd —; Disguise –6) or gladiatorial harness + heavy fittings (DR 2; Resist Edged 1; DP –1; ACP –1; Spd –5 ft.; Disguise –8)

Treasure: None

House Handler (Medium Folk Walker — 65 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init II; Atk II; Def III; Res III; Health II; Comp VII; Skills: Investigate VIII, Tactics VIII; Qualities: *Class ability (Assassin: offer they can't refuse; Courtier: master plan I; Emissary: cover-up I; Sage: best of the best II), condition immunity (shaken), honorable, story-critical, veteran II*



Attacks/Weapons: Dagger (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *bleed, hurl*)

Gear: Invisible ink + 10 sheets of paper, code wheel, sophisticated cipher, 3 Aesonian spikes

Treasure: 3C, 2A

Hykosian Conscript (Medium Folk Walker — 31 XP):

Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk III; Def IV; Res III; Health III; Comp I; Skills: Athletics III, Ride II, Survival III; Qualities: *Attractive I, cold-blooded, feat (Horde Basics, Pathfinder Basics (Desert)), interests (Alignment: Hykosian Pantheon, language: Hykosian, study: Hykosia), swarm*

Attacks/Weapons: Sickle sword (dmg 1d8 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *hook*), hide shield (dmg 1d3 subdual; threat 20; qualities: *guard +2*) OR reflex bow + 40 standard arrows (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20; range 30 ft. x 6; qualities: *AP 2*),

Mount or Vehicle: Camel (Spd 30 ft. ground; Travel 3; SZ/Def L/II) or none

Gear: Moderate padded armor (DR 1; Resist Cold 5; DP –0; ACP –0; Spd —; Disguise +0), waterskin

Treasure: 1C, 1G

Hykosian Enchanter (Medium Folk Walker — 58 XP):

Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 16; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init I; Atk II; Def I; Res V; Health II; Comp IV; Skills: Intimidate V, Resolve V, Sense Motive V, Spellcasting VII; Spells: Mass Brawn I, Control Weather II, Flare, Hold Person, Magic Weapon I, Prayer, Wall of Fire; Qualities: *Attractive II, beguiling, cold-blooded, damage defiance (fire), feat (Casting Basics, Hidden Spells), interests (Alignment: Hykosian Pantheon, language: Hykosian, study: Hykosia), menacing threat*

Attacks/Weapons: Dagger (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *bleed, hurl*)

Mount or Vehicle: Camel (Spd 30 ft.; Travel 3; SZ/Def L/II)

Gear: Mage's pouch, 2 mana potions

Treasure: 1C, 1L, 1M

Imperial Legionnaire (Medium Folk Walker — 49 XP):

Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init V; Atk VI; Def III; Res IV; Health V; Comp I; Skills: Athletics V, Resolve III, Tactics III; Qualities: *Fearless I, feat (Shield Basics, Spear Basics), tricky (Armored Assurance, Shield Block)*

Attacks/Weapons: Throwing spear (dmg 1d8 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *hurl, reach +2* (from Spear Basics feat)), short sword (dmg 1d8 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *keen 4*), tower shield (dmg 1d4 subdual; threat 20; qualities: *guard +3*)

Gear: Partial studded leather armor with heavy fittings (DR 4; Resist —; DP –2; ACP –1; Spd –5 ft.; Disguise –6)

Treasure: 1C, 1G

Informant (Medium Folk Walker — 25 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init I; Atk I; Def III; Res II; Health II; Comp II; Skills: Blend IV, Investigate VI, Search IV; Qualities: *Class ability (Emissary: intercept message), meek*

Attacks/Weapons: Unarmed (1d3 subdual; threat 20)

Gear: 1 free hint

Treasure: 1G

Oracle (Medium Folk Walker — 70 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init I; Atk I; Def V; Res I; Health III; Comp III; Skills: Bluff V, Investigate V, Sense Motive VII, Spellcasting V; Spells: Detect Alignment, Insight, Living Library I, Scrye II, Status; Qualities: *Always ready, feat (Lady Luck's Smile, Spell Conversion: Distance), blindsight, cagey III, honorable, interests (Alignment: Aesonian Pantheon, study: riddles)*

Attacks/Weapons: Unarmed (1d3 subdual; threat 20)

Gear: Mage's pouch, holy symbol

Treasure: 3C

Specerus (Medium Folk Walker — 79 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init VII; Atk III; Def V; Res III; Health III; Comp IV; Skills: Bluff VI, Disguise VI, Investigate VI, Prestidigitation VI, Sneak VI; Qualities: *Bright II, class ability (Assassin: quick on your feet 1/session; Burglar: stash it; Emissary: leverage, man of mystery), cagey II, feat (Ghost Basics, Traceless), interests (any 2 languages)*

Attacks/Weapons: Dagger (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *bleed, hurl*)

Gear: Partial leather armor (DR 1; Resist Fire 3; DP –1; ACP –0; Spd —; Disguise +0), courier pouch + average fake documents and rubbing paper (10 uses), disguise kit, thieves' tools

Treasure: 2C, 2G





ROGUE TEMPLATES

The people of the Known World are a diverse lot, with distinct and deeply ingrained cultures and biases. These quick and easy rogue templates can be used to add a bit of national flavor to Cloak & Dagger NPCs.

ATRODIAN (+4 XP)

Benefit: The NPC's Strength increases by 2 and he gains the *fearless* I and *interests* (*Language: Thestarian, Study: Atrodia*) NPC qualities (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 233–234).

BALATAIC (+5 XP)

Benefit: The NPC's Constitution increases by 2, his ground Speed increases by 10 ft., and he gains the *Ride* II signature skill and the *interests* (*Alignment: Pagan Gods of Balatia, Language: Balataic*) NPC qualities (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 234).

CORLANTLEAN (+4 XP)

Benefit: The NPC gains the *Impress* III signature skill and *attractive* I and *interests* (*Language: Old Aesonian, Study: Cortlantae*) NPC qualities (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 230–234).

HEPOTHESIAN (+4 XP)

Benefit: The NPC's Intelligence increases by 2, his Competence grade increases by 2, and he gains the *interests* (*Study: Hepothysus*) NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 234).

HYKOSIAN (+2 XP)

Benefit: The NPC gains the *attractive* I, *cold-blooded*, *interests* (*Alignment: Hykosian Pantheon, Language: Hykosian, Study: Hykosia*), and *menacing threat* NPC qualities (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 230–234).

OLEGEAN (+4 XP)

Benefit: The NPC gains the *Sense Motive* II signature skill and the *class ability* (*Assassin: offer they can't refuse*) and *interests* (*Language: Old Aesonian, Study: Olegea*) NPC qualities (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 231 and 234).

REVAN (+4 XP)

Benefit: The NPC gains the *Bluff* III signature skill and the *cagey* I and *interests* (*Study: Revus*) NPC qualities (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 231 and 234).

TERKIC (+4 XP)

Benefit: The NPC's Resilience grade increases by 2 and he gains the *Survival* II signature skill and the *interests* (*Language: Balataic, Study: Tertio*) NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 234).

VERKONAN (+4 XP)

Benefit: The NPC gains the *Haggle* II signature skill and *class ability* (*Captain: take command* I) and *interests* (*Language: Phaetian, Study: Verkonos*) NPC qualities (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 231 and 234).

MONSTERS OF THE KNOWN WORLD

The Known World was once filled with ferocious beasts, monstrous humanoids and other horrors that dominated the wilds, but the Imperial Legions hunted these monsters of legend nearly to extinction during the Great Cleansing. Those that remain are sturdy survivors, hardened by experience and instinct into the deadliest of opponents (see page 40 and the *legendary monsters campaign quality*, page 142).

Basilisk (*Fantasy Craft, page 254*): Basilisks have been used as tools of war since the Hykosian invasion, and some “domesticated” versions have been bred to serve as guardians for wealthy estates and secret compounds. Fortunately, these vicious lizards are exceptionally rare. They remain only in the hot, stony wastes of the south and in the eastern realms of the Golden Empire.

Centaur (*page 40*): Warbands of savage centaurs have recently started ambushing travelers and traders on the Imperial Road in the northern nations. They take great care to slay horses in these raids, slashing purses, and shattering jars of spice. Why they attack commerce is still a mystery, but the Western nations and Legionary outposts are starting to feel the impact, and voices are rising that something must be done.

Chimera (*Fantasy Craft, page 257*): These hideous beasts stalk the jungles of the Middle Sea's southern coast. Long a bane to the people of Hepothysus and Verkonos, they are particularly reviled by seafarers for their regular attacks on ships leaving port. Chimeras have also been known to chase ships into reefs to defend the territory near their seaside homes. Elimination of these brutes is among the top priorities of the Imperial Army in the South, and the soldiers' efforts to date have fortunately helped reduce their current numbers to just a scant few.

Gnoll (*Fantasy Craft, page 266*): The jackal-headed *miyasephali* of the Eastern Wastes terrify people throughout the Known World with their bloody sacrifices and tireless raids. The Great Cleansing took a heavy toll on these hideous creatures, but some still attack farms and Legion outposts in far eastern Verkonos, Atrodia, and Corlantae, looking for slaves and loot.

Gorgon (*Fantasy Craft, page 267*): The gorgons are the most intelligent and malevolent enemies of man to survive the Great Cleansing. They trace their lineage all the way back



to Ophidia herself, and as such believe themselves the rightful leaders of the world's monsters. Unlike most of their "subjects," gorgons stay relatively close to urban areas (particularly those with large necropoli or built on Aesonian ruins). They monitor the business of men carefully and drag off the lost and lonely for food and amusement.

Harpy (Fantasy Craft, page 269): Harpies are common nuisances for sailors and residents of sea towns, which they regularly attack for sport or shiny baubles. Though easily driven off, their siren's songs have misguided more than one weary sailor or amorous youth to his doom against the rocky shore.

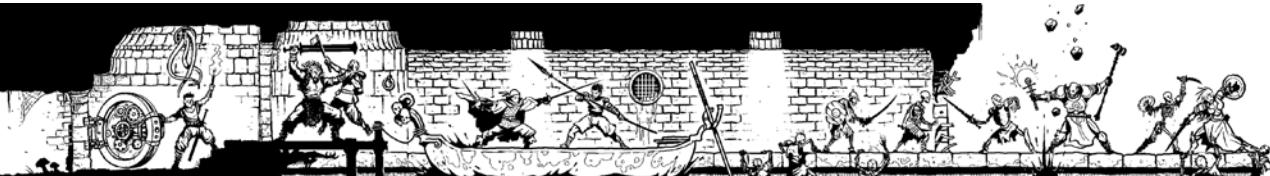
Hydra (Fantasy Craft, page 271): These unkillable monsters of old still haunt the swampy river deltas and hilly lowlands that dot northwestern Revus. Stupid but vicious, they are sometimes driven ahead of the Balataic horde to shatter the shield-wall and fighting spirit of Legion maniples during major battles with Imperial forces.

Kraken (Fantasy Craft, page 272): This legendary beast once destroyed the Aesonian port of Arktos. It is destruction incarnate, a creature that haunts the nightmares of every sailor and costal minister. Some say it is the gods' guardian of the Middle Sea, lurking in the West and waiting to destroy any and all ships passing to or from the Outer Sea.

Ogres (Fantasy Craft, page 249): Tribes of low-cunning ogres are found throughout the Known World, particularly south of the Inculata Exarescos. The most infamous of these tribes is the monocular *arges*, whose members launch raids for food and cattle from the barren islands throughout the Middle Sea. The kingdoms of Hykosia are fond of using ogres as shock troops, charging them headlong into enemy lines in hopes of breaking the will of fighting men. Ogres are also popular foes in the gladiatorial arena, where their savagery is welcomed and heartily encouraged by the masses.

Minotaur (Fantasy Craft, page 274): Small bands of minotaurs still wander the high valleys of the Montis Ora Mundi in Olegea, following the seasons and generally avoiding contact with man. Their uncanny sense of direction and low cunning make them formidable foes in the mazelike mountain paths, and more than one Olegean hunter has been gored or thrown to his doom among the forbidding peaks.

Rootwalker (Fantasy Craft, page 249): Legends of tree-spirits date back to the earliest Aesonian myths, where dryads guided men lost in the wilderness to safety. In more recent times, powerful Balataic priests have called upon savage nature spirits to defend their lands from the forces of the empire. Rumor holds that they can turn earth and even tree against the Legions.





THE BELOVED OF OPHIDIA

The ancient peoples of Aesonia and Thesteres believed that all the Known World's monsters sprung from a single source — Ophidia, queen of the beasts. Legends say this terrible beast was once a goddess whose beauty rivaled that of Philia herself, but was cast down by Juris for laying with her brother Stryx in lust. Enraged, Juris cursed her with a form more horrible than any creature to walk the earth, and threw her down from the heavens. Filled with jealousy and rage at her lot, she stole a single child from each of the animals that swam in the sea or walked the earth and swallowed them whole before fleeing to her cave at the end of the world. There, she gave birth to creatures twisted in body and soul, and filled their hearts with venom before releasing them to wreak terrible revenge against the gods' favored children.

Though Ophidia was finally slain by Hestaria, her beloved children walk the earth to this day. Though many are familiar to fantasy enthusiasts from myth and legend (see *Monsters of Cloak & Dagger*, page 38), there are many more unique to the Known World. The following are but a few the heroes may encounter in their exploits.

AESONIAN LION

Since the dawn of Golden Empire, the mighty Aesonian Lion has been its symbol, decorating everything from its currency (see page 26) to the shield bosses of its armies to the Golden Throne itself. Indeed, the first task put to the Seven Founders of the empire by the kings of Old Aesonia was to hunt down Krysamalla, the most ferocious lion of the Golden Age, as a proof of their worth.

Like the land they represent, these massive lions are proud, regal, and deadly — rulers of all they survey and terror to all who stand before them. They look much like a lion of our own world but bigger in every way possible — the average male stands 8 ft. tall at the shoulder, and sports brilliant golden coat and mane, savage 3 in. long teeth, and claws as hard as diamond. The lions' appearance is so striking that trade in furs and teeth supports an empire-wide black market, in spite of numerous imperial decrees and crackdowns against the practice.

Aesonian lions are most common to the Imperial north and east, particularly the highlands and forests of Corlantae, Olegea, and Atrodia, where they prey upon elk, deer, elephants, and other large game. Though the top of the food chain wherever they reside, they are intensely territorial creatures, with mated pairs commanding areas as large as 20 square miles across. Only those foolish enough to hunt them for sport or glory, or who intrude into their lands, are likely to ever face one in anger — but woe to those that do.

Tactics: Like most (really) big cats, Aesonian lions hunt from ambush, stalking their quarry for hours or even days before ending them in a sudden flash of claws, teeth, and gore. They fight to the death to defend their mates or cubs, only breaking off when faced with overwhelming odds or badly wounded.

Aesonian Lion (Huge Animal Walker — 104 XP): Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 4, Wis 12, Cha 10; SZ H (2x4, Reach 2); Spd 40 ft. ground (Run 240 ft.); Init V; Atk IV; Def III; Res VIII; Health: V; Comp —; Skills: Athletics IV, Notice III, Sneak IV, Tactics III; Qualities: *Attractive II, chameleon I (forest, plains), charge attack, fearless II, fearsome, rend, superior runner II, tough III*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite II (dmg 1d12+4 lethal; threat 17–20; qualities: *grab*), Claw I x 2 (dmg 1d10+4 lethal; threat 20)

Treasure: 3T

CENTAUR

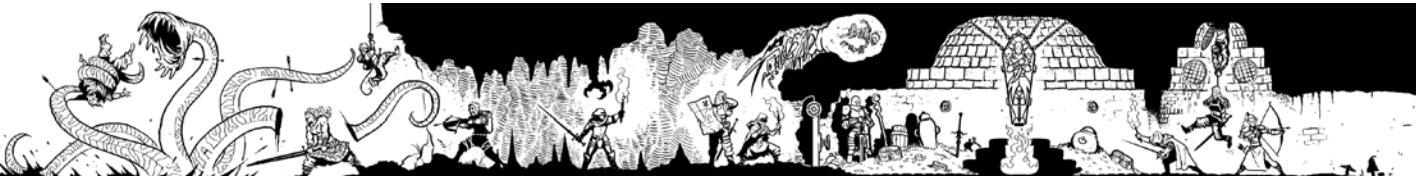
These warlike beastmen hail from the northeast of the Known World, beyond the borders of old Aesonia in the high grasslands bordering the Eastern Wastes. Appearing as the torso of an athletic, golden skinned man set astride the shoulders of a fine horse, every centaur is a lusty and skillful warrior whose greatest pleasures are rich plunder, a good fight and strong drink. Despite their barbaric tendencies, centaurs are quite vain and place considerably value on fineries as copper jewelry, colorful warpaints, and delicate combs.

Most centaurs live in nomadic war-parties, wandering the fringes of the empire's borders in search of wine cellars to raid, young women to ransom, and the chance to prove their skill at arms against local militias. Ironically, and fortunately for the Imperial Legions, there is a great deal of enmity between centaur tribes and the horsemen of Balataia... namely because centaur bands take particular delight in raiding Balataic camps at night to make away with their fine mares for a night of passion.

Tactics: Centaurs are skillful hunters and warriors, using hit-and-run attacks and devastating charges to divide and conquer their enemies. They make judicious use of their Charging Basics feat to harass at a distance with their bows and spears or to run down fleeing or isolated foes. Their bloodlust and pride is such that they're reluctant to break off once a fight's engaged, and most conflicts with a centaur warband end only with the complete destruction of one side or the other.

Centaur (Large Folk Walker — 56 XP): Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ L (1x2, Reach 1); Spd 50 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk VII; Def II; Res VI; Health VI; Comp II; Skills: Athletics III, Survival II; Qualities: *Fearless I, feat (Charging Basics), improved stability, superior traveler II*

Attacks/Weapons: Throwing spear (dmg 1d8+2 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *hurl, reach +1*), short bow + 20 standard arrows (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 19–20; range 30 ft. x 6; qualities: *AP 2,*



cavalry, poisonous), Kick II (dmg 1d8+2 lethal; threat 19–20), Trample I (dmg 1d10+2 lethal; threat 20; Medium or smaller only, Fort (DC equal to damage) or become sprawled)

Gear: Booze (3 uses)

Treasure: 1G, 1L

DAUGHTER OF OPHIDIA

In the darkening days of the Golden Empire, a sinister pattern has begun to emerge behind the encroachments of monsters into the lands of men. Cycles have developed in the raids of monsters long thought dead, in the blighting of crops, and in attacks on merchant caravans. While most military commanders and skeptical ministers dismiss it as mere happenstance, those who look closer come to see the hand of something far greater than a mindless beast in these actions. They see an intelligence, guiding its lessers to some foul end.

The horrors known as the Daughters of Ophidia do not wear one face — their forms and faces are legion. Like their “mother,” each is a unique and hideous amalgam of man and beast, tentacles and flippers, faces and snouts, talons and teeth and fiery breath. Some sing in voices sweet as sirens, and others roar to shake the mountains. Some live on the sea, others the desert, and still others the highest mountains. Some believe the Daughters truly are the descendants of the Queen of Beasts, spawned from her blood that spilled when she finally fell to Hestaria’s lance. Others think the Daughters are products of Balataic witchcraft or even harbingers of the gods, come to purge men consumed with hubris. Whatever their appearance, whatever their origins, all Daughters harbor a malevolent wit and a deep-seated hatred for mankind.

Tactics: A Daughter of Ophidia is a rare and terrifying foe, strong in mind, body, and magical power, and cloaked in an aura of horror. They use all their cunning and tricks to persuade, confuse, and break their foes before revealing their true forms, until then staying out of sight using *Illusionary Image* and *Invisibility* spells.

When a Daughter is finally revealed and engaged, she first attempts to scatter the enemy using *Command* and *Insanity* spells, or her *fearsome* and *turning* qualities. Should a larger force be mustered to face her, she uses *Control Weather* to flood battlefields and churn the seas to her advantage before attacking.

Once committed in battle, a Daughter is a truly terrible menace — immune to ambushes and superior numbers, and able to quickly turn the tables using *frenzy* and a torrent of powerful attacks. Her universal weakness is the power of the gods, for each daughter is a manifestation of spiritual anathema and wanton destruction.

Daughter of Ophidia (Huge Beast Horror Walker — 137 XP): Str 16, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 14; SZ H (3x3, Reach 2); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init III; Atk V; Def VI; Res IX; Health VII; Comp VII; Skills: Spellcasting V; Spells: Command I,

Control Weather II, Illusionary Image III, Insanity II, Invisibility; Qualities: *Achilles heel (divine), always ready, cagey II, contagion immunity, dramatic entrance, fearsome, feral, frenzy II, never outnumbered, repulsive V, telepathic, tough IV, treacherous, turning (folk)*

Attacks/Weapons: Every Daughter of Ophidia is physically different, her mode of attack depending on her makeup. Roll 1d6 three times and apply the result to the following list to determine her attacks (or you can substitute your own attacks — each of these is worth a total of 8 XP).

1. Barbed Tail (tail slap III: dmg 2d12+3 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *bleed, reach +1*)
2. Breath weapon (lethal damage attack II: 20 ft. cone; dmg 1d6 lethal per 2 TL, Ref Save DC 15 for 1/2 damage)
3. Draining gaze (Str or Con draining attack I: 70 ft. gaze; Fort DC 10 or suffer 1 temporary Str or Con impairment)
4. Grasping Tentacles (tentacle slap I × 2: dmg 1d12+3 lethal; threat 20; qualities: *grab, reach +1*)
5. Savage Maw (bite IV: dmg 2d12+3 lethal; threat 16–20),
6. Steely Talons (claw II × 2: dmg 1d10+3 lethal; threat 19–20)

Treasure: 3A, 1M, 1T

HYKOSIAN TITAN

The Hykosian League is a nation spanning an area nearly as vast as the Golden Empire, comprised of a thousand kingdoms allied through trade and the mutual desire for conquest. Unlike the legions of the Golden Empire, the armies of the League make extensive use of beasts such the ferocious Inculata Tiger and vipers in war (see pages 43 and 44). None, however, are as iconic as the Hykosian titans, massive elephantine beasts employed as frenzied battering rams, transporters, and deadly war machines.

An adult titan is a hulking, six-armed brute approximately 8 ft. broad and 12–15 ft. long, weighing nearly 2 tons, with tremendous ivory tusks and a rich brown hide baked to boiled leather by the ruthless desert sun.

Titans favor sextapedal movement in most cases, rearing up on their hind legs like a bear when threatened or excited. They use primitive grasping hands to grab and pummel threats with their horns or fists.

There exists a rare albino subspecies of titan, whose cured and carefully cooked parts are highly coveted by Hykosian nobility as gifts and prizes, especially to those who have proven themselves in battle against supernatural enemies. Unlike the albinos of other species, “silver” titans are larger and much more powerful than their common brethren, naturally rising to leadership of herds found in the wild. Other titans follow their lead naturally, and many an army has been flattened by a stampede headed by a tamer astride one of these mighty creatures.



CHAPTER 1



Tactics: Titans are most often seen on the front lines of war, as mounts to archers, sorcerers, and generals, or as line-breakers against Imperial phalanxes. Titans are not significantly bright and follow orders to the letter, even when seemingly suicidal. They often employ a *charge attack* followed by a Trample to crush enemies underfoot. Should they meet a particularly mighty or dangerous foe, they rear up and attempt to grapple him before crushing him with a Squeeze or Goring him to death.

Silver titans are cagier than their brothers, often stampeding, and making frequent use of *battle plans* with Tramples and *overruns* to utterly annihilate the enemy.

Hykosian Titan (Large Beast Walker —91 XP): Str 18, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 10, Cha 6; SZ L (2x2, Reach 2); Spd 40 ft. ground; Init II; Atk VI; Def II; Res VII; Health IV; Comp I; Skills: Athletics VIII, Notice III, Survival III; Qualities: *Charge attack, damage reduction 3, feat (Pathfinder Basics (desert)), grappler, improved carrying capacity, improved sense (hearing), tough I*

Attacks/Weapons: Gore IV (dmg 2d8+4 lethal; threat 17-20; qualities: *bleed*), Slam I x 2 (dmg 1d8+4 lethal; threat 20), Squeeze I (dmg 1d12+4 lethal; threat —; notes: Grapple benefit only), Trample I (dmg 1d10+2 lethal; threat 20; Small or smaller only, Fort (DC equal to damage) or become *sprawled*)

Treasure: 1G, 2T

Silver Titan (Huge Beast Walker —110 XP): Str 20, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6; SZ H (3x3, Reach 2); Spd 40 ft. ground; Init I; Atk VII; Def II; Res VII; Health V; Comp II; Skills: Athletics VIII, Impress III, Notice III, Survival III; Qualities: *Charge attack, class ability (Captain: battle planning I (crush them!, press on!); Scout: overrun), damage reduction 4, feat (Pathfinder Basics (desert)), grappler, improved carrying capacity, improved sense (hearing), tough I*

Attacks/Weapons: Gore IV (dmg 2d10+5 lethal; threat 17-20; qualities: *bleed*), Slam I x 2 (dmg 1d10+5 lethal; threat 20), Squeeze I (dmg 2d8+4 lethal; threat —; notes: Grapple benefit only), Trample I (dmg 1d12+2 lethal; threat 20; Medium or smaller only, Fort (DC equal to damage) or become *sprawled*)

Treasure: 1G, 3T

INCULATA TIGER

The wasted sands of the Inculata Exarescos are unimaginably harsh: thousands of leagues of arid, scorching sands punctuated only by sand-blasted rocky outcroppings and the rare muddy watering hole. This incredibly hostile environment has created a vicious hierarchy of ferocious creatures who've learned to survive by the slimmest of threads. Some, like the bloodfly, live entirely off the body fluids of others, while others like the duststrider can live on a diet of sand and rock. This hierarchy is dominated, however, by one of the most bloodthirsty beasts in the area: the Inculata Tiger.

The "tiger" is not in fact a feline, but rather a 10-ft. long lizard with a short, powerful head and a back covered in a "mane" of fine hair which collects ambient water from the air, cooling the creature even in the hottest seasons.

The tiger's short snout is filled with vicious fangs it sinks deep into the flesh of its prey, and uses to drag it under the sands to drown in a flood of dust and ash. Broad, long toed feet let the beast scamper across the top of silt beds where a man or camel would quickly sink, and this gives it an incredible advantage when running prey down across the dunes.

Such is the reputation of these ferocious beasts that it was believed that just one tiger's survival might spell doom for an entire city. Indeed, during the Great War of Liberation, when Hykosian and Imperial soldiers would discover a nest of the monsters, both sides would abandon their hostilities to wipe them out to the last scale.

Tactics: Inculata tigers are voracious and clever pack-hunters with a particular taste for the flesh of horses, camels... and men. They are supremely adapted for life in the desert and use all manner of dirty tricks to take down their prey, hiding under the surface of silt-beds like a crocodile so they can drown their prey, and funneling quarry into narrow rocky canyons or sink-holes then attacking so movement is slowed or restricted.

When a tiger and its packmates go for the kill, they use aggressive gang tactics, fighting until they lose half their number or they slay at least half their number in foes (after which they quickly make off with the spoils).

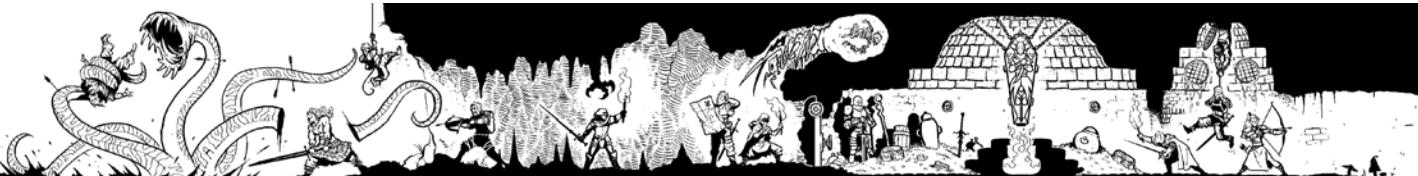
Inculata Tiger (Large Animal Walker Burrower —80 XP): Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 4; SZ L (1x2, Reach 1); Spd 50 ft. ground (Run 250 ft.), 20 ft. burrow; Init VIII; Atk V; Def IV; Res III; Health IV; Comp —; Skills: Acrobatics III, Athletics IV, Intimidate III, Survival III; Qualities: *Cold-blooded, devour, diurnal, feat (Pathfinder Basics (desert), Wolf Pack Basics, Wolf Pack Mastery), ferocity, menacing threat, superior runner I, swift attack*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite III (dmg 2d10+3 lethal; threat 18-20; qualities: *grab*)

Treasure: 1T

ORTHOS

This particularly ill-tempered species of two-headed dog haunts the northern reaches of present-day Tertio and Revus in nomadic packs. Though attempts were made to domesticate the breed, its two brains makes it far too unpredictable to live around humans, so thousands were put to the sword for public safety. Until recently, a rare few lived on in captivity, owned by wealthy collectors, zoologists, and particularly paranoid nobles and spymasters. Now that the beasts have made a comeback, they can be found running in packs alongside Balataic raiders as they pillage and burn Imperial settlements in the north.



Tactics: Orthos make excellent guard-dogs and hunters, for they have keen senses and are almost always awake (on one side or the other, at least). They are even more savage than common war-dogs, and will shred a foe limb from limb unless kept on a very tight leash.

Orthos (Small Animal Walker — 61 XP): Str 12, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 4, Wis 14, Cha 7; SZ S (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 35 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk V; Def III; Res III; Health III; Comp —; Skills: Athletics III, Intimidate III, Notice IV, Survival III; Qualities: *Feat (Wolf Pack Basics), improved sense (scent), light sleeper, swift attack*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite IV × 2 (dmg 2d6+1 lethal; threat 16–20; upgrades: *grab*)

Treasure: None

PHAETEN SCORPION

The lush shores of Verkonos have long been home to a multitude of wild and dangerous creatures, from the savage cyclopean arges to all manner of beast soaring through the air and surging through the sea. Another threat that has recently resurfaced is a race of giant scorpions that once sheltered in the caves and cliffs upon which present-day Phaetes is built.

Exterminating these mindlessly aggressive creatures was one of the first orders of business for the Imperial Legions in the south, but it seems those who thought the job was finished were sorely mistaken. Packs of these horrors now regularly harass trade envoys entering and leaving the city, setting upon camel and elephant, and dragging them away to feed the next generation of hatchlings. With the fabric of the legions stretched thin by the demands of the Secret War, there are few warriors left to combat the growing infestation, making them a constant thorn to anyone moving through the south.

Tactics: Phaeten scorpions are mindless eating-and-killing machines whose only interest is in their next meal and expanding the colony. They wade right in and attack the biggest things they spot, hoping to bring it down quickly and drag it off as food. These monsters fight fiercely in defense of the colonies, but otherwise don't bother with small or quick things like humans unless there's nothing else to devour in an area.

Phaeten Scorpion (Large Animal Walker — 65 XP): Str 15, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 2; SZ L (2x2, Reach 1); Spd 50 ft. ground; Init II; Atk IV; Def V; Res II; Health IV; Comp —; Skills: Acrobatics I, Athletics II; Qualities: *Blindsight, damage reduction 2, fearless II, superior climber I, tough I*

Attacks/Weapons: Claw I × 2 (dmg 1d8+2 lethal; threat 20; qualities: *grab*), Stinger (tail slap II: dmg 1d10+2 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *reach +1, venomous (debilitating poison)*), Squeeze I (dmg 1d12+2 lethal; threat —; notes: Grapple benefit)

Treasure: None

REVAN VIPER

Poisonous snakes have long been a popular tool of specerum; most assassins' poisons are derived from their venoms, and sometimes the creatures are slipped into a target's bedsheets or personal effects, becoming assassins themselves. In fact, it was in the high cliffs and twisted politics of Revus that the art of murder by snake was first perfected.

Revan vipers, the most intelligent and deadly of all snakes of the world, were bred as killers as early as the days of the Thesterian Kings. Such is the lethality of these creatures that Revan snake handlers remain some of the most sought-after assassins' tools in and outside the Golden Empire. To this day, a person killed by a snake bite is often said to have fallen to "Revan diplomacy."

Revan vipers are distinguished by their cluster of 10 violet eyes, much like those of a spider, along with their leathery crests, and striking blue and green patterns. They have uncanny sight and unerringly hunt down their quarry even in the deepest shadows.

There are many viper subspecies, grouped largely by their most effective form of killing. Two of the most common are slayers and strangers. The former are fanged horrors who can kill with a single bite, while the latter are taught to slip like a noose around a target's neck and squeeze, leaving no marks to alert investigators to foul play.

Tactics: Revan vipers are incredibly patient creatures, satisfied to lie in wait for hours or even days before striking with lighting quickness. They are also utterly merciless and relentlessly pursue quarry. Once its target has been eliminated, a viper makes for the nearest escape with the single-minded goal of returning to its master.

Slayer Viper (Small Animal Walker — 53 XP): Str 6, Dex 14, Con 8, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8; SZ S (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init VI; Atk V; Def VII; Res I; Health II; Comp —; Skills: Sneak II, Survival II, Tactics II; Qualities: *Class ability (Assassin: black vial; Scout: sneak attack +1d6), cold-blooded, darkvision II, favored foes (folk), feat (Combat Instincts, Lightning Reflexes), improved sense (scent), tricky (Venom Master)*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite II (dmg 1d6+2 lethal; threat 17–20; qualities: *finesse, venomous (lethal poison)*)

Treasure: 1T

Strangler Viper (Small Animal Walker — 49 XP): Str 12, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8; SZ S (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 20 ft. ground; Init VI; Atk V; Def VI; Res II; Health III; Comp —; Skills: Athletics II, Sneak II, Survival II; Qualities: *Cold-blooded, darkvision II, favored foes (folk), feat (Lightning Reflexes, Wrestling Basics), grappler, improved sense (scent)*

Attacks/Weapons: Squeeze III (dmg 2d8+1 lethal; threat —; notes: Grapple benefit)

Treasure: 1T





CHAPTER 2: EPOCH

SAVAGE ADVENTURE IN A DYING WORLD

Come sit with me, young hunters. Tonight we take up the sacred *tioye* pipe and sit in council together, for tomorrow — by blood and axe, by arrow and fire — you will be made men.

I have had a dream. I have seen the fate of our people stretching out before me like the trackless steppe in summer, doom-dark and blue like the mountains in the distance. The west wind came to me with a message of strife and pain that awaits us, but I laughed at him. The Ancestors whispered to me the secret of our land's suffering, and I wept. Tonight we will share the pipe, and I will sing you the song of my vision, so that you may know your deaths and meet them as heroes of your People.

THE DIRGE OF TIME

Before time began, all the world was water. From the waters arose the divine twins, Sun and Moon. The two brothers played together in the crystal sky, and their footprints made the stars. When at last the twins had grown into men, the wise and strong Sun said to his brother, "I am lonely. Let us make a woman to be our wife." So Sun and Moon reached down and from the waters made Earth. She was very beautiful, and the two brothers loved her instantly.

The twins took Earth as their bride and were happy for a time. Sun laid with Earth, and she begat four children: Talehtepo, the Great Hunter; Wakihana, the Vagabond; Nagetaka, the Watcher for Spirits; and Marihalak, the Bringer of Fire. Sun looked upon his children with pride and said, "Go forth and make the people." Talehtepo went to the forest, and from the trees made the giant. Wakihana went to the steppe, and from the grass made the elf. Nagetaka went to the hills, and from the glacier made the ogre. Marihalak went into the ground, and from the fire made the dwarf. Thus did the First Peoples come to be.

Then Moon laid with Earth, and she begat four more children: Kawreelanit, the Wind-Rider; Tepekotl, the Builder; Abarhisaka, the Speaker of Law, and Xelok, the Seer of All. Moon looked upon his children with joy and said, "Go forth and make the animals." Kawreelanit went to the sky, and from the wind made the great eagle. Tepekotl went to the mountain, and from the stones made the mammoth. Abarhisaka went to the valley, and from the fields made the bison. Xelok went to the darkness, and from the night made the sabretooth. Thus became the spirit-animals, fathers and mothers to all beasts.



The twins saw all that their children had made and were happy for a time. But soon, Moon grew jealous of Sun's success, for Earth loved him better, and his children and grandchildren told stories, made medicine, and were cleverer than Moon's. Ashamed, Moon fled to the West, returning to visit his beloved only when Sun slept at the end of the day. This time of long days and warmth, when the Great Ancestors walked with the First People, we call the Epoch of Light.

After many years, Moon returned to the sky with his brother Sun and said, "Let us have a wrestling match, and the winner may stay in the sky and look on Earth forever." Sun laughed and accepted Moon's challenge. For a dozen lifetimes the two brothers fought bitterly, but at last Sun prevailed. He threw his brother to the edge of the sky, saying "Ha, brother! You are beaten. Leave the sky forever!" But treacherous Moon reached beyond the horizon and drew forth a great warclub made of shards of crystal and obsidian from the night sky, and with it struck Sun across the head. Sun fell to the West, and his blood spilt at the edge of the sky, creating the sunset. During his brother's absence, Moon claimed Earth for his own, and his children and grandchildren feuded with those of Sun.

But Sun could not be defeated forever, and he rose again from the East to make war on his brother. The Great Ancestors left their mother behind to join their fathers' fight in the Other World. For a hundred lifetimes this battle raged, and Sun and Moon forgot all about their grandchildren and their great love for their wife Earth. The sound of their blows shook the heavens, shattering the crystal sky and raining stones upon the world to ravage all creation. The skies grew black with soot, and crops withered as the brothers' hatred poisoned the air. They trod upon the gate to the Other World, and immortality was lost to the First Peoples forever. This time of long nights and great sadness, when discord and death first visited the world, we call the Epoch of Darkness.

Earth wept bitterly at the violence of her husbands and the passing of her children, so she begat a child of her own in secret — Wakanachi the Peacemaker — to bring balance back to creation. Wakanachi took council with the First Peoples to find a way to remake the world. In the end, each People gave a piece of itself to him — the elves gave their great health, the ogres their keen eyes, the giants their virility, and the dwarves their long legs. Then Wakanachi went to the spirit-animals, and each gave a piece of itself to him — the eagle gave his beautiful voice, the sabretooth his nimble hands, the bison his clever mind, and the mammoth his great agility. Wakanachi took these fine gifts, wrapped them in a red tiyo leaf, and buried them in Earth. The next spring, after the passing of the snows, the first men sprang from the ground. These were the Second People — our people.

Under the tutelage of the First People and the spirit-animals, men thrived and grew, forming a great tribe and multiplying. They tamed horses, hunted the mammoth herds, built villages,

and sang songs of great joy and power. They healed Earth's wounds and were great friends to all creatures. Soon there were so many men that the four winds caught them up in their arms and carried them South, North, East, and West. Like seeds of grass, they fell upon Earth and grew, forming new tribes across Tuwa — this land beneath the crystal sky. Those of us left here on the steppe, between the Giant's Teeth and the Giant's Spine, became the Children of the Dawn, and we carried on the Old Ways and lived in peace with the First Peoples. This time of chaos and rebirth, when from the flame came hope and peace, we call the Epoch of Fire.

THE EPOCH OF ICE

Two generations ago, our world began to change. The cold seasons grew longer, and the plants came less frequently. The bison and mammoth on which we survive traveled farther and longer, forcing our people to undertake long marches to stay fed and clothed. Sun's Passing, that darkest time for the Peoples, grew longer, and a bad sign arose on the horizon.

With the dimming days came men from the West — savage men speaking a strange language. These untutored tribes knew nothing of the Old Ways — their people did not dig roots or weave baskets from steppe-grass or sing the song of Sun and Moon. Fierce and pitiless, these strange men ate their meat raw, tearing it apart with their teeth. They rode monstrous beasts and cried out twisted praises to the Great Ancestors. These men from the West — where Sun went to die and the door to the Other World was first opened — we called the Keepers of the Gate. Warfare and killing were their only joys, and they burst upon our tribes like a flood, spreading devastation wherever they went, leaving only burnt camps and crude stone idols to mark their passing. Together the First and Second Peoples repelled these raiders from Tuwa and believed them vanquished forever.

But the worst was yet to come, for we did not yet understand the designs these savage new tribes had upon our land. A dozen turnings after we sent these enemies across the horizon, in the depths of Sun's Passing, a fire burned the sky of the West. From under that weird sign came creatures like those in a tiyo-smoker's fever-dreams — shambling demons with backs lit by blue flame, lashing tentacles, or eyes staring from all parts of their gnarled bodies. Ahead of these terrors poured the savages who knew no law, wielding weapons that shone in the sky's red glow, and behind them came strange priests whose power bent nature to their will. Their numbers were like the blades of the grass on the steppe. They knew no boundary, respected no taboo, and gave no quarter. Their warbands defiled our women, enslaved our children, murdered our elders, and shattered our tribes, one at a time.





Our bravest warriors faced the spreading Taint of the *ghula* with steadfast hearts, but they fell as the trees before the axe. Others tried to turn this new power of "magic" against the enemy, but its corrupting touch proved too powerful for even their mighty wills, and they were Taken by the darkness they sought to dispel. With our champions gone and our hopes dwindling, the remaining tribes of Tuwa took council, and together decided that the only path left for us was flight. With heavy hearts and great shame, we gathered up what remained of our Peoples and together followed the herd-trails far to the East, toward Sun and a new beginning.

For a dozen turnings more, we aimlessly wandered the steppe like the coyotes and wild horses, homeless and without direction, moving ever farther East as the wolves of the enemy nipped at our heels. Sorrow darkened the future, and dissent and anger clouded our minds and spirits. Young hunters grew impatient and lusted for war, while the old argued for accepting the invaders and rejoining their families — whether in this world or the Other. Still others wanted to march ever East and find a new land beyond the edge of the sky, where Sun might protect his people. *Elha* cowards fled the last Free Tribes in pursuit of wealth or power, splintering our people further still.

It was under the leadership of Watches-the-Horizon, a great warchief of the giants, that our Peoples again found their path. He was but a boy when the enemy slew his father and sisters, but the fires of Marihalak burned deep within his breast. He spoke with great eloquence to the leaders of our tribes. He taught us to have less thunder in our mouths and more lightning in our hands, to go from a people who fight to a fighting people. He took the best of our warriors and made of them *harii* — warriors of the greatest skill and stoutest hearts, ready to live and die to return the Peoples of Tuwa to their rightful home.

But our song grows sadder still, for the Tuwa we found upon our return was not the Tuwa we had left. Vicious raiders prowled the steppe, hunting the last free men for slaves and sport. Obscene cities of stone and bone rose on the horizon, built by those we had abandoned in our flight. Gaping pits blackened the land, left by men intent on tearing the treasures from Earth's bountiful breast. And everywhere, the polluting touch of magic and the foul footstep of the *ghula* had turned river and tree — once green and full of life — to lifeless ice, chill and dead.

Today, we are strangers in our own land — the last People who sing the songs of our mothers and their mothers. Our tribes are splintered, our brothers and sisters are Taken, and wickedness, corruption, pride, and lust infect our land. Our ways, our laws, and the long dreaming of our Peoples stand at the edge of oblivion, and one false step might plunge all into darkness. This time of dissolution and despair, when men slay men and demons cut into Earth to bleed the life and warmth from our world, we call the Epoch of Ice.

THE CHILDREN OF THE DAWN

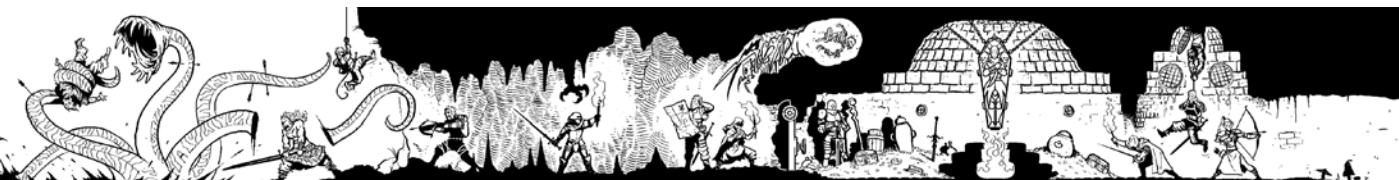
Young hunters, we are the last of the Free Tribes — the champions of the Old Ways who can free our brothers and sisters and let them again walk the plains again. We are survivors and warriors, hunters and shepherds, savages and storytellers. We are of many tribes, but one People. We are the last hope for Tuwa.

You look at me as if I were in a fever-dream! Perhaps you are right. We are but a small part of this world now, and we have few friends brave or bold enough to rise up beside us. Every day, our numbers dwindle as Keeper raids take new slaves and slaughter our children, and as sorrow and fear drive our tribesmen to become *elha* in the unholy cities of the Enemy. You fear for your lives, and for the lives of your young wives and children, your fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers.

But what is life? It is the flash of lightning that breaks the night, the breath of the mammoth in the winter, a shadow that darts across the steppe and vanishes beyond the horizon. No single life is long for this world, but the deeds of the mighty and the brave live forever. The alliances our mothers and grandmothers wrought, the songs the *vidutara* sing of our history, and the lessons the First Peoples teach — these are greater than all of us. To preserve them is to honor the lives of all wives and all children, and to die for them is the greatest glory.

Perhaps you wonder why we do not join with the Keepers and so save our people, abandoning life on the steppe for a more civilized existence. After all, the herds grow thinner while the cities grow strong, and the bone and glass of our weapons are brittle while the copper of the Keepers' axes is hard. Why not choose comfort and wait out the storm of the enemy's passing? I tell you, brothers and sisters, this is our foes' greatest hope. We must trust not in civilization, for life without nature makes one's heart hard. Without the steppe, our people would abandon the hunt. They would forget their debts of friendship and the caress of Earth, who has blessed us with plenty. Speeches of the self would replace the songs of history, and our stories would fade as we turn inward, consumed by the weaknesses that make us men. This would be a doom greater than any death.

No, our lot is here beneath the dome of the crystal sky, in the cold and the heat, in the times of leanness and the times of plenty. We must wander when others urge us to rest, be strong when others are weak, and take up arms when others beg us to make peace. No longer can we afford compassion or mercy, and we cannot cling to life or hope for survival. Now is the time for us to stand up for ourselves, lest we kneel forever.



THOSE THAT CAME BEFORE

Watches-the-Horizon taught us that those who would do great things should not attempt them alone. Before men first walked the land and became the Second People, Earth was home to the First Peoples — the children of the Great Ancestors and cousins to the spirit-animals who first presided over creation. The ancient tribes of these four Peoples are our last direct connection to the gods. The elves, dwarves, giants, and ogres are the teachers and guardians of our people — beings whose ancestry stretches back to when the hoop of Time was still new.

The First Peoples have suffered dearly in the invasion, and their treatment at the hands of the enemy has been more brutal than anything the Second People have suffered. The vile *ghula* struck them first, seeking to shatter our bonds of brotherhood with these ancient tribes and rub them from history of Tuwa as a strong wind smoothes the fresh snow.

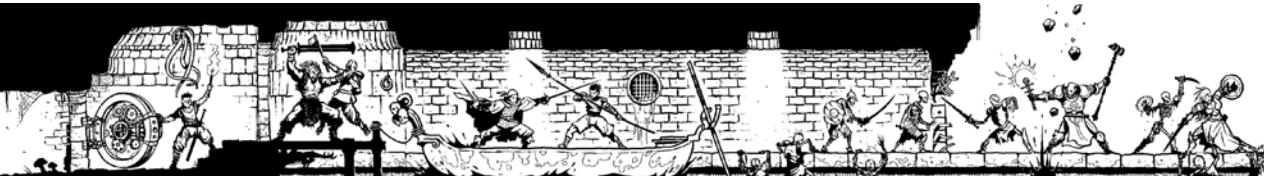
Just as many berries become a meal for all, so did the fire of conflict forge from many tribes a new and united one — the Children of the Dawn. The scattering of the tribes commingled our lives and blood, and now we hunt, trade, fight, and die together as one stronger People. In this time of sorrow and fear, the First Peoples are our greatest treasure, and our bond to them is more valuable to than any barter.

Dwarves, the Tribe of the Flame, are a passionate People whose bravery burns deep within them like fire beneath the mountains. It was they who taught us how to pass our story on through art and song, so that we might keep the Old Ways alive in the hearts of our People. The great dwarf camps that once stood far to the west were shattered like obsidian against stone in the first days of the invasion. The refugees of that slaughter



have joined with the remnants of the Second People's tribes for protection and survival, and many still make camp with us throughout Tuwa.

Elves, the Tribe of the Steppe, are a furious People — unlikely braves heeding the call to war with the fury of the sabretooth. Long have their bands wandered the plains, teaching the Second People of the hunt and the horse. Though the Keepers have great difficulty catching these canny hunters, they have made sport of slaughtering the great herds of mammoth and bison and burning



CHAPTER 2



Table 2.1: Hero Names

Result	Descriptor	Noun
1	Big	Arrow
2	Blaze	Bison
3	Dance	Coyote
4	Dream	Crow
5	Fly	Deer
6	Friend	Eagle
7	Hunt	Fist
8	Laugh	Horse
9	Little	Knife
10	Look	Mammoth
11	Ride	Moon
12	Run	Mountain
13	Shine	Night
14	Shout	Spider
15	Sing	Spirit
16	Sit	Steppe
17	Speak	Storm
18	Stand	Sun
19	Walk	Tiger
20	Watch	Wolf

the grasslands to drive the elves farther east. Such brutality has made stone of the elves' warrior spirits, and their young have become harii in great numbers. Such is their lust for the enemy's blood that other tribes view their fearlessness as foolhardiness. In truth they care little for their own survival, for their hearts are stained black by a sorrow so deep that it drives them to seek death for themselves as well as their foes.

Ogres, the Tribe of the Hills, are a strong People. They are the mentors and guardians who advise us on the ways of the Other World. Their close-knit clans have weathered the invasion well by sheltering in the Giant's Teeth, far from the brutal purges of the steppe. But the spiritual rot of the enemy has reached into even these remote camps. Many young ogres, confused by the Keepers' twisted tales of the Great Ancestors, have become elha to serve as "holy warriors," while others join our cause to protect the Old Ways of the Great Ancestors.

Giants, the Tribe of the Forest, are a dying People, devastated by the war. As the protectors of the Second Peoples and most beloved of the Great Ancestors, it was the giants who taught us the laws of the Old Ways — the secrets of culture, of law, and of honor. It was they who took the brunt of the ghuls' rage, and the savagery of war nearly wiped them from the face of Tuwa forever. Unlike most of the First Peoples, the last of the giants have become silent sentinels in the deep forests of the east and south, where they dwell in solitude to protect both themselves and the Free Tribes. Still, those inspired by our great warchief do sometimes reveal themselves and become harii, ready to give their lives to honor their ancient charge from the time before time.

HEROIC NAMES IN EPOCH

The names of the Free Peoples are descriptive and symbolic, often tying the individual to a spirit-animal or particular event in his life. To generate a name, roll a d20 twice and compare the results with Table 2.1: Hero Names (*see left*). Append "-ing" or "-s" to the descriptor, and/or add transitive phrases such as "at," "with," "of," or "to" to build the name.

For example, a result of 17 and 3 on Table 2.1 gives a descriptor of "speak" and noun of "coyote." The character might be named "Speaks-to-Coyotes," "Coyotes Speaking," "Coyote Speaker," or some other combination.

This tool can provide many interesting twists or insights into your character — in fact, you might even roll up your character's name before generating his background to more closely tie the concepts together!

THE OLD WAYS

Before the invasion, all Peoples lived by the Old Ways — the lessons taught to us by the Great Ancestors and passed down through the epochs. Through the Old Ways we kept the secrets of the hunt and of battle; set the locations of camps, moots, and burial grounds; sang dirges for the dead; held celebrations for the newborn; wondered at the revelations of the Other World; and remembered the glories of our forefathers. Each Child of the Dawn knew the Old Ways, lived by them, and died by them. These lessons taught us language, respect for other tribes, the rules for holding moots, making fair trade, and guarding our mother Earth, and how to live in peace. Now, on the eve of our doom, let us recount the Old Ways and take upon ourselves the true spirit of our Peoples.

Song is the most sacred of our traditions, for through it we recall the greatness and tragedies of our Peoples throughout time. The song-speakers, vidutana such as I, are the living record of the Old Ways — the keepers of the songs so threatened in this new and perilous world. Without them, there would be no dances to herald Sun's Return, no chants to invoke Nagetaka's blessings on the sick, and no one to remember the sacrifices we prepare ourselves to make tomorrow. We must respect the vidutana and their teachings and taboos, for through them flows the river of history, and all that makes us a People.

Just as Wakihana, the creator of men, was born of Earth with no father, so too are our mothers the link to our past. Through our women do we trace our history and ensure our survival in this hard world. Protect them and treat them as equals, for they are the pathfinders of our Peoples' future.

The beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the trees of the forest are our brothers and sisters in creation — be silent and you may speak with you. When you slay a great beast, pay tribute to his spirit for providing food and hides, and use all parts of his body; through these respects will nature pay respect to you in turn.





We are a people of our land, and all that we have comes from the bounty of nature. From the herds we take meat to hold us through the winters, leather and hides for clothing and tents, and teeth for necklaces and weapons. From the ground we take stones for spearheads, jewelry, axe-blades, and grinding stones. From the trees we take wood for bows and shelters, and bark for rope and necklaces. From the fields we take roots, baskets, berries, and blankets. Take only what you need and leave the land as you found it, for no man, elf, dwarf, ogre, or giant can claim ownership of it. Share this bounty with others, for it is not yours.

Do not revel in bloodshed, for it will consume you. Instead, be in your heart a man of peace, even as you grip tightly your knife and spear. When a foe asks for quarter, grant it; but when he takes up arms against you or your tribe, strike him down with the swiftness of Taletep. Seek always harmony, but shrink not from violence — force, no matter how concealed, must always be met with resistance.

Finally, do not let the clouds of today blot out the sun of tomorrow. To abandon our laws — to lose faith that all bad things must turn to good — is to lose forever the Old Ways and become what we seek to vanquish. Even in death there is no end, so sing your death-song and die like a hero, for the coward dies many deaths, but the brave man only one.

THE HOOP OF TIME

Great Ancestors and young braves, hear this truth: All things are as a hoop, turning from one part to the next unbroken. Sorrow becomes happiness, prosperity becomes hardship, and life becomes death. The years and epochs pass one by one, each bringing with it a turning of fortune for good or ill. It is through the eternal struggle of Sun and Moon — the oldest story of them all — that we mark our steps on the trail of time.

The season of *Shared Sky* is a time of warmth and peace, when the divine brothers cease their war to gaze together on their wife Earth. The Old Ways tell us this is the time of reconciliation and unity, when the tribes gather to trade, settle the year's grievances, marry away children, and learn one another's songs. Even in these dark days, our Peoples find *Shared Sky* a time of respite. Use this fleeting moment to remember happiness while you may.

Sun wins his battle against his twin during *Sulking Moon*, sending him across the horizon to make the days grow long and warm, and the nights dark and short. During this time, all braves take up the hunt to collect meat and hides for the colder times ahead. Feed yourselves and your tribes well during this season, for the lean times to come will test the strength of the greatest champions and stoutest hearts.

It is during *Sun's Passing* that jealous Moon slays Sun, sending him beyond the edge of the sky, leaving only the fiery hoop of his spirit in his place. Without Sun's warmth, the lands cool and the plants wither, driving the herds farther afield to seek sustenance. The Keepers celebrate Sun's Passing with great orgies, human

sacrifice, and festivals of death-sport and excess in which the most corrupt of their kind rut with ghula and become heavy with their seed. Be wary in this dangerous season, for it is in Sun's Passing that the enemy's strength is at its peak, and its raiders come forth to hunt down our tribes like dogs.

Sun's Return marks the triumph of Sun over death as he returns from the eastern horizon to restore hope to Tuwa. But Sun's Return is also a time of war, for the ghula summoned during Sun's absence grow restless and angry. Knowing what is to come, they lead their Keepers to battle our Peoples before the ice and shadow of Sun's Passing is fully dispelled. Grip tight your weapons and redden the snow with the blood of the enemy, for the children of Moon are now weaker and fear the times to come.

In the season of *Earth's Rejoicing*, all the steppe flowers and turns green as Earth welcomes her favored husband back from his cold struggle against his brother Moon. This is the time for harvesting roots, and the time when the herds cease their pacing to birth calves and eat heartily after two seasons of wandering the steppe. It was during the first *Earth's Rejoicing* that the Second People were created, and it remains for all Peoples the most sacred of seasons. Give praise to the ancestors for helping our Peoples survive another cold season, and honor the valorous dead gone to the lodges of the Other World for the restoration of our lives.

THE SECRET OF MEDICINE

In times such as these, it is easy to forget one of the most important lessons of life: All things of this world are holy — from the stones beneath our feet to the animals of the forest — for all trace their lineage to the hands of Sun and Moon and Earth. You are all warriors — men and women who aspire to hunt down and slay our enemies, and perhaps die at their hands to preserve our way of life. But never forget that we are all part of this cycle — good and evil, man and beast — all following the hoop of time together. Have faith in this truth and keep it deep in your hearts always, for it is what separates the Free Peoples from those afflicted by the corruption of the ghula.

All living things revere the Great Ancestors — for they are the grandfathers of all creatures and Peoples of Tuwa. It was they who created the First Peoples and the spirit-animals and taught them the secrets of life — speech, hunting, fire, travel, medicine, and the ways of men and beasts. It is they who guard the door to the Other World and decide our worthiness to join the heroic dead by our deeds — how well we lived by their teachings, how fiercely we loved, and how bravely we died.

Medicine is the gift left us by the Great Ancestors, passed down to the First Peoples and then to us through the epochs. Through it, we pay homage to their stories and draw upon their wisdom, strength, and power from the Other World. Unlike the corrupting touch of magic, medicine leaves neither scar nor poison on the land. Like all things, however, it can be bent for deeds both good and ill.





WORDS OF THE PEOPLES

Children of the Dawn: The dwindling Free Tribes of First and Second Peoples living to the East, who remain outside the influence of the ghula, their servants, and the wickedness of civilization. Also known as the Free Peoples, they are the last hope of preserving the Old Ways in the Epoch of Ice.

First Peoples: Dwarves, elves, giants, and ogres; the children of the Great Ancestors and the grandchildren of Sun. The First Peoples are close allies of those tribes not yet corrupted by ghula and their Taken.

Elha (ELL-ha): Traitor and coward; pejorative term for First and Second Peoples who willingly live in cities or ally themselves with Keepers of the Gate.

Ghula (goo-LA): Demons. Some believe these may be the Third People — the new children of Earth and Moon, come to scour the First and Second Peoples from creation.

Harii (HAR-ee): Warrior cult of the Children of the Dawn, devoted to the elimination of magic in all its forms.

Keepers of the Gate: A great tribe of Second People who came from the West, raiding and pillaging and working strange magic. They wage war on the Children of the Dawn and use their magic to summon the ghula, whom they worship as gods.

Medicine: "Natural" magic drawn from the spirits of the Great Ancestors; typically, the divine powers of priests.

Marbaq (MARB-hock): Undead; spirits trapped in the flesh and unable to reach the Other World.

Ntowema (nn-toe-EH-ma): "Little brother;" First Peoples' slang for human allies.

Second People: Human beings.

Soul-Eaters: A particularly vicious Taken group tasked with the hunting and assassination of the Free Peoples' leadership.

Taken: First and Second Peoples who have given themselves over to magical Taint, becoming twisted in spirit and body. Many have become servants to the ghula.

Tioye (tee-OH-yay): A sacred plant smoked or ingested for sacred and medicinal purposes. The plant is extremely versatile and comes in many different colors, each of which has particular healing, psychotropic, and/or poisonous qualities.

Though we share gods with the Keepers of the Gate, do not think the Great Ancestors evil or unworthy of your respect! The Ancestors are neither good nor evil — they are simply beyond the comprehension of mortals. The Keepers may praise their favorites, such as Xelok and Tepekotl, with bloody sacrifice and gory triumph, but it is that tribute, rather than the reverence itself, that is twisted.

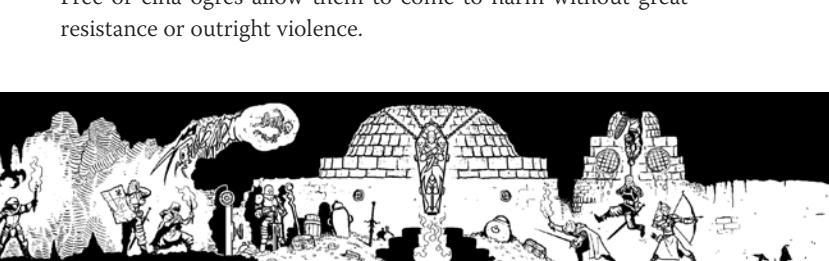
Here then is the truth of the Great Ancestors as we know it.

Abarhisaka, the Speaker of Law, Judge, and Founder of Civilization: The youngest of Moon's children is the judge of all things — an indifferent Ancestor who weighs the deeds of men in her basket before allowing them to rest in the Other World. It was her first words that stopped the battle of Sun and Moon and became the Law of All Things. Long have her laws set the taboos and relationships of all tribes and given us peace. But in the hands of the Keepers, she has become the goddess of the City, where the hearts of Free Peoples are twisted and wrapped in stone, and her law is meted out with bloody enthusiasm.

Kawreelanit, the Wind Rider, Guide to the Other World, and Friend to the Dead: The father of the Four Winds, Kawreelanit brings change swiftly across the steppe. He is the thief of life, snatching the spirits of the fallen and taking them to the Other World lest they linger in Tuwa as marbaq. Our Peoples revere him as a friend to the valorous, for he takes all brave men to live forever in the eternal hunting grounds of death. The enemy worships him with death cults and yaqyachi, who seek to trap the spirit-fire of their sacrifices with which to power their vile magic.

Marihalak, Bringer of Fire, Father of History, and Lighter of the Way: The youngest son of Sun and Earth is a passionate god who took from his father a fiery seed, which he planted the hearts of the First Peoples to give them warmth in the cold and strength in the darkness. His flame teaches all Peoples how to create and how to destroy, how to love and how to kill, how to sing songs of history and how to spit curses at our enemies. His greatest foe is his thieving half-brother Kawreelanit, who steals this flame from the living to warm the Other World. Marihalak is most sacred to his children the dwarves, but he is also revered by artists, craftsmen, storytellers, war leaders, and all whose passion drives them to either greatness or ruin.

Nagetaka, the Watcher for Spirits and Speaker of Life: Nagetaka holds a special place in the pantheon of all Peoples, for it was she who discovered the spark of life and first breathed it into all things. The Free Tribes see her as the last conduit to the Great Ancestors, protector of nature and pinnacle of purity. The Keepers of the Gate revere her as a fertility goddess and a consort to the ghula. Nagetaka is beneficent and kind, blessing her faithful with the gifts of physical and spiritual health. The Tribe of the Hills reveres her vidutana especially, and neither Free or elha ogres allow them to come to harm without great resistance or outright violence.



Talehtepo, the Great Hunter, Father of Giants, and Walker in the Forest: The most ancient of the Great Ancestors is a powerful giant who taught the First Peoples how to provide for themselves through the hunt and kinship with the wild. He made the giants stewards of all Peoples and bested Tepekotl in the rock-throwing contest that knocked out his teeth, creating the Giant's Teeth Mountains. Talehtepo is a stern and strong god, but his little brother Wakihana likes to play tricks that undermine the serious business of the Walker in the Forest. The Great Hunter holds martial skill and bravery as the greatest virtues, and the warriors of the Taken and the harii have killed each other a thousand times over in hopes of earning his respect.

Tepekotl, the Builder, Earth-Shaker and Hoarder of Treasures: Lazy and arrogant, Tepekotl is the first-born and mightiest of all Moon's children. Though more powerful than even Talehtepo, he spends most of his time slumbering beneath the soil. His snores make the mountains smoke, his thrashings push up the hills, and his yawns tear the steppe in two. The Keepers, who raise their foul temples and forge their cruel weapons from his stones, revere him especially. But still he shakes the ground in rage at their theft of his great treasures — iron and copper — and sometimes swallows whole camps in his anger.

Wakanachi, the Peacemaker, Little Brother, and Guardian and Leader of Men: The youngest of all the Great Ancestors, it was Wakanachi who forged man from the flesh of Earth, taught the First and Second Peoples to work together, and slew the demon Eyes-Of-Night who threatened to eat the first tribe of humans. He remains the most respected Ancestor of the Second People to this day, and members of all races honor him for his valor and strength. Because of his close relationship with our people, many Children of Dawn believe he will return at the End to rescue them from a great disaster — a prophecy of which the Keepers are extremely wary.

Wakihana, the Vagabond, Storyteller, Sage, and Friend: It was the Vagabond who dragged his knife across the ground and cut trails into the trackless steppe, and who taught the Peoples the art of storytelling to keep their history alive. Wakihana is a devious and curious prankster whose exploits constantly lead him into trouble, and he favors those who use cunning and trickery in their dealings. His children the elves revere him especially, as do nomadic tribesmen, merchants, thieves, and other restless spirits.

Xelok, Seer of All, Master of Night, and Father of Magic: The shadowy and scheming Xelok is the keeper of mysteries both sacred and arcane. The Keepers say it was he who first discovered magic by plunging a spike of obsidian deep into Earth's bosom and using her blood-power to defeat his bitter rival Talehtepo in an honor-duel. Xelok's followers were few before the arrival of the Keepers, but now he is widely praised in their cities. Sorcerers, wealthy *elha*, and Taken worship him, speaking in cryptic riddles and painting strange pictographs to record their words on walls.

WORDS OF THE PEOPLES (CONT.)

The Other World: The world of the dead, where the spirits of the brave and strong go to hunt in the afterlife.

Tuwa (TOO-wah): "Land beneath the Crystal Sky;" the world of Epoch.

Vidutana (vid-OO-tah-na): "Song-speaker;" a shaman of the Children of Dawn, charged with keeping the oral history of the First and Second Peoples alive (see the *Spirit Singer* master class, page 121).

Yaqyachi (yock-YAH-kee): "Blood-spiller;" a wizard or high priest of the Keepers of the Gate.

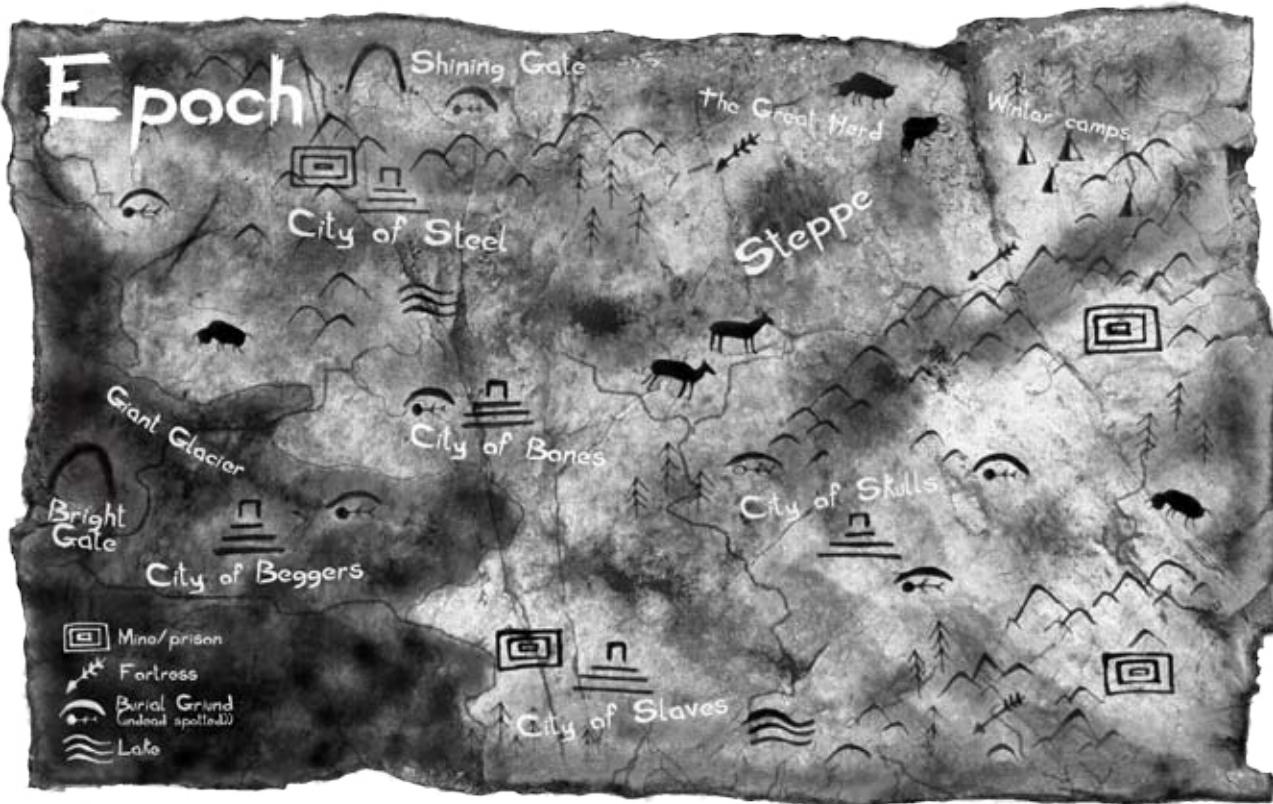
TUWA, THE LAND BENEATH THE CRYSTAL SKY

This land we call Tuwa is the steppe — dry and rolling grasslands stretching from one horizon to the other. Before the coming of the Keepers, it was Earth's fertile bosom, where the First and Second Peoples gathered meat and hides, drank from the cool, clear rivers, and raised each generation to carry on the Old Ways of our Great Ancestors. It was a land ruled by wind and beast, an unchanging, ancient witness to the lives and deaths of all our Peoples — our sacred home.

To the north and south of the steppe lie two mighty mountain ranges, thrust up from Earth by the rumblings of Tepekotl's sleepless dreaming. To the north is the **Giant's Spine**, an impassable range of stinking bogs, perilous crags, and bottomless ravines prowled by ferocious beasts. One of our last fortresses, **Shae Karnach**, still stands there, besieged by Taken and ghula who seek to decimate the Great Herd and destroy the winter camps of our Peoples.

The **Giant's Teeth** in the south are shelves of glittering black obsidian, forged from the heat of battle between Tepekotl and Marihalak. Their conflict below the skin of the world still bursts forth sometimes, sending plumes of fire into the sky and raining stone upon all creation. At the feet of the Giant's Teeth lies the **Glass Forest**, a barren wilderness of jutting crystals stalked by terrible lizards. Our hunters still travel this harsh land to gather razor-glass and greenstone for spears, axe-heads, and arrow points.

CHAPTER 2



The grasslands of the southeast are dry and lonely, and one can go days there seeing nothing except herd-beasts and the movement of Moon and Sun. With the dwarves of the Crag tribes, the hunters of **Shae Deraech** stalked the great herds of mammoth to the valley of **White Hands**, where the bones of these great beasts thrust up from the ground like fingers offered up in supplication to the heavens. There they left tribute with the vidutana who protected Tepekotl's children, and made offerings so the Shaker of the Earth's restless slumber might be peaceful for yet another turning of the years. The **Maze of Whispers** marks the south edge of our world, where spirits abandoned by Kawreelaniit wander aimlessly as they seek the path to the Other World. Even in these days, those thirsting for wisdom go to hear the ancients' soft voices on the breeze.

In the foothills lie thick forests of towering pines and massive ferns. These glens were once rich with hearty roots and small game, such as rabbits. In the green, grassy valleys, countless herds of bison, elk, antelope, and mammoth grazed and bore calves. On these lands did our braves engage in great hunts to feed their tribes, taking food and hides for the year's needs. In the winter, our peoples made camps in the forests of the East, near bubbling hot springs and the migration paths of the caribou and dire bear. And everywhere in Tuwa, towering dolmens — pinnacles of stone raised by the Great Ancestors themselves — marked the resting places of the revered dead.

But the invasion changed all of this. With the arrival of the ghula, the once-long summers of Shared Sky became short and cool, and the dark winter days of Sun's Passing ever longer and more bitter. Fires raged and scorched the steppe, drawing black scars across its pristine face and driving the herds away in terror. The forests thinned and retreated to the hills, away from the Keeper's thirsty axe. The great lake that marked the West froze into a massive glacier that now dominates the edge of the world and crawls across the steppe, choking the life from our lands like an icy fist.

Since the cities of the Keepers have dominated the land, the rivers have run brown and muddy, and great barren patches where nothing can grow have appeared on the steppe. The mighty eagles no longer ride the winds, and the herds we have followed since the Epoch of Fire grow scattered and wander year-round, pursued by our enemies for food and sport. The bodies of our dead stir beneath our feet and topple the dolmens, defiling our burial grounds and shattering the wills of our most stalwart warriors. Our children are born early and sickly, and our elders perish in their sleep, slain by a sorrow old as time itself. Earth herself has fallen ill, and we, her children, grow sick with her. This Taint carves into the flesh of Tuwa its foul symbol, bringing ill fortune upon our tribes.

The source of our pain is magic.



THE BLIGHT OF MAGIC

Many of you are too young to remember the first days of the invasion into our lands, and the arrival of the Keepers' strange "medicine." How lucky you are not to have seen the unnatural power of the yaqyachi cause friends to fall dead, bodies to sprout eyes, flesh to melt, and limbs to twist! How happy you must be never to have seen the land wither before the feet of the yaqyachi as the life bled from Earth, leaving only a frozen and desolate husk. How fortunate that you have never known the seductive caress of magic's power as its black teeth bite into your spirit! Magic is a thing from the Other World that was never meant for the living, for we are cursed by ambition, fear, greed, and weakness. Such a force can only stoke the fire of evil within a person's heart and make him a slave to its power.

Where the Keepers first discovered magic, I do not know. Some say they traveled beyond the edge of Tuwa and stole a sacred fire from the Other World, and this is why fire lights the sky when they work their powerful spells. Others say that magic is drawn from the blood of the ghula and made into a weapon to take revenge on the children of Earth. We know not why such a plague was visited upon our Peoples — we know only that it must be stopped before it consumes all creation.

The power of magic can poison the spirits of the best and most stouthearted braves, turning them away from the Old Ways toward madness and ruin. This Taint churns within the victim like a fever, fanning the darkest ambitions of his heart into an inferno until he is but a shadow of himself. Never be seduced by your pride or confidence — all those who wanted to use magic for good — to heal this land and save their People — have fallen to darkness in time.

Those who embrace magic become twisted inside and out. Their bodies twist and warp into hideous mockeries of nature — their eyes may glow with bale-flame, or their jaws fill with vicious teeth, or their hair turn white as clouds, or horrible boils infect their flesh. We call these who let the Taint consume them Taken — they are no longer of our Peoples, but are lost forever to this vile disease of the spirit.

Since the invasion, we have seen this otherworldly power become a rot that extends its black tendrils deep into the heart of Tuwa itself. Our land of long days has grown perpetually dimmer, and the season of Sun's Passing ever longer. What was green and living is now black, like a prairie burned by wildfire. The herds on which we rely starve and die as they tread upon the blighted grasses and drink the sullied waters. Nearest the foul gates through which the Keepers summon ghula to the world, the land is caught in eternal winter, choked by the great glacier creeping from the West. Should the Keepers extend their reach to the eastern horizon, night will become eternal, and Moon's children will forever claim dominion over all Tuwa. This is why we must defeat the enemy — not only for the sake of our Peoples, but for that of all creation.

FACES OF OUR ENEMY

Though I speak kindly of our Peoples' history, young hunters, remember that Tuwa has always been a dangerous place, prowled by voracious descendants of the spirit-animals, strange beings from the Other World, and tribes that abandon the Law of All Things to make war on one another. The seasons are harsh, and the threat of death is ever-present. Such is the way of life. But in these dark days, any friend can be a foe, men's hearts fill with greed and lust for power, and everywhere the Taint subtly warps the natural order. Even the wild beasts run mad, crazed by the danger and the changing world around them. We, my brothers, are alone in this world, and we must be ever watchful for the emergence of new enemies — even among our own people.

It is the great shame of the Second People that the most savage enemies Tuwa has ever seen are our kin. Like the Children of the Dawn, the Keepers of the Gate are men, who come from far beyond the western horizon to bring destruction and ruin to our land. It is the hands of men who have so brutally murdered our First People mentors, thoughtlessly slaughtered the sacred herds granted to us by the Great Ancestors, and raised blasphemous stone palaces to claim dominion over nature itself. It is men who tear at the bodies of the vanquished to make grisly trophies to wear, who dye their skins with the blood of their foes, who roast the weak on spits and pit the strong to battle in gladiatorial pits.

Some of our elders try to deny the truth, saying the Keepers are spirit animals or ghula dressed as men. But the Second People, so lucky and divine in their birth, are still possessed of want, greed, cruelty, and wickedness. Though we were charged with healing Earth's wounds, so too do we have the ability to poison them. Without the guidance of the First People, men will succumb to their senses and passions, becoming sick of spirit and twisted of soul, like the spreaders of plague and death we now face. No, our tribe no longer has a choice — only a responsibility to all Children of the Dawn to purge from these vile men from Tuwa, lest our failure stain our people's history forever.

Such a feat will not be easy, for they possess magic and treasures unlike any we have seen before — weapons made of iron and copper stolen from Tepekotl's grasp, rich jewelry of jade and gold brought from the West, and idols that give them the strength and speed of ten men, and stones that can shatter the hardest of our weapons. Their warriors ride horses and riding-cats, drive war-mammoths and basilisks into our fortresses, and summon demons and the dead from beneath our feet. Each day, they amass more power and creep across this land like the coming night. But all is not lost, for we have come to understand them, and through this wisdom, we may find the secret of their undoing.





THE KEEPERs OF THE GATE

The tribe of the Keepers is not one of equals. Instead, their society lets the strong stand on the backs of the weak. Each caste takes from those below it and pays those above to gain favor, riches, women, and slaves. But their tribe remains filled with strife, for mistrust, greed, and fighting divide them. The weakness of the enemy is our strength, for we can turn them against one another and break their tribe as the ice splits the cracked stone.

Yauqui are the lowest of the Keepers — the craftsmen and slave-owners who fill the cities and bear the children of the ghula. Most live miserable lives and survive like coyotes stealing scraps from the carcasses left by those more dangerous than they. But do not mistake these wretches for friends — while many seek only wealth or to spare themselves a glorious death in battle, most would gladly sell your life for a scrap of meat or the warm touch of a woman, given the chance.

The **otomi** are the warriors of their tribe — fierce and bloody raiders skilled with blade and horse who ride forth to capture slaves and kill us in our sleep. They decorate their bodies with jewelry of bone and jade, and inscribe their skins with fearsome pictures to protect them from the medicine of our *vidutana*. Each carries vicious weapons of iron, girds himself in leather and hide, and wears a fearsome mask to pay homage to his demonic masters. These savage madmen seek only victory, love only bloodshed, and give only death. Greet them with the same, so that our tribes may be spared their brutality.

Table 2.2: Keeper Names

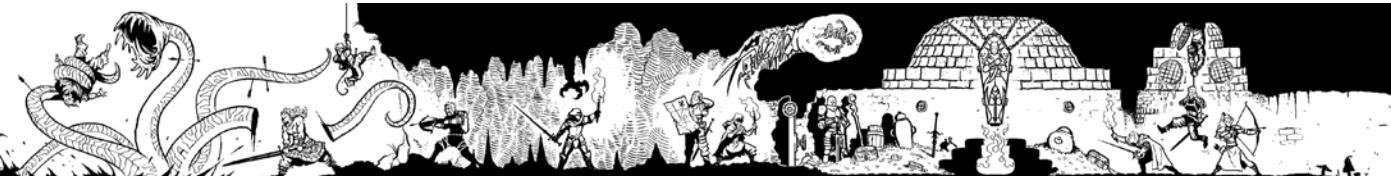
Result	Part 1	Part 2
1	Yaq ("Blood/Life")	Tli ("Beast")
2	Omitl ("Bone")	Kotl ("Builder")
3	Xi ("Brave")	Tec ("Conqueror")
4	Tlatl ("Burning")	Ghula ("Demon")
5	Toca ("Death")	Izcat ("Eye")
6	Heui ("Great")	Ich ("Face")
7	Mahu ("Fearsome")	Amin ("Hunter")
8	Tepoz ("Iron")	Atl ("Man")
9	Chac ("Jade")	Lupa ("Master")
10	Huec ("Long")	Ixch ("Moon")
11	Tolte ("Magic")	Tlax ("Offering")
12	Teotl ("Mighty")	Paq ("Pride")
13	Tze ("Night")	Miqatl ("Reaper")
14	Ech ("Rich")	Neml ("Rider")
15	Az ("Shining")	Tecuhtl ("Ruler")
16	Popoca ("Smoking")	Xoatl ("Runner")
17	Xei ("Soul")	Yuch ("Slayer")
18	Tepe ("Stone")	Lahto ("Speaker")
19	Chiqa ("Strong")	Cot ("Spear")
20	Tlac ("Swift")	Haq ("Vanquisher")

Tlahtoq are the chiefs of the Keepers' tribe — men of wealth and power who hoard shining jewelry and downtrodden slaves. It is they who uphold the bloody laws of the Keepers' cities, who force our enslaved Peoples to work themselves to death in their mines, who erect repugnant monuments to their conquest of this land. You will know them by their bloated, red-stained flesh, pierced with rings and spikes of exotic stone, by their opulent headdresses, and by their exotic clothes in brilliant colors. To strike at them is to pierce the heart of their tribe — remove them, and they collapse as the mammoth run through by the spear.

Above these are the **Taken**, whom the Keepers call *yectenl*, or "blessed." Though Taken may be found among the otomi and tlahtoq, they stand above both, for they are touched by the ghula themselves through magic. Though they may look ill or show hideous deformities, their bodies are supernaturally strong, and many wield magic with ease. Underestimate them only at the greatest peril. Taken wear masks called *ghula-taan-ich* to show their station and tell of their fall. Should you be fortunate enough to defeat a Taken in battle, do not look beneath the mask, for you will see the face of madness there.

The most savage Taken become **Soul Eaters** — the greatest warriors of their tribe and the most hated enemies of our Peoples. These hellish creatures are the guardians of the Keepers' sacred sites — the temples of their priesthood and the doors to the Other World. They are warriors of the finest stock who know nothing but the din of battle and the taste of their enemies' life-blood. They lead *otomi* warbands into battle without hesitation or doubt. Today, they hunt *harii* before all others, and they have bested many of our finest warriors as if they were no more than children fumbling with sticks. Face these half-demons only at your greatest peril, for one mistake could place you in Kawreelanit's cold, deathly grasp.

The most powerful of all Keepers of the Gate are the **yaqyachi**, the sorcerer-priests of their tribe. Their every word is law, ignored on penalty of death. A wave of a yaqyachi's hand can consume an entire tribe in magical flames or summon deadly storms from a clear blue sky. These soulless creatures trade in sacrifice and death, so that they may wrest from beyond our world the power of the Great Ancestors themselves. The yaqyachi are resplendent and terrible, clad in feathers, jade, skulls, and copper, and they are guarded by the cruelest and most devoted and warriors of their tribe. Most are Taken — either children of the ghula or men so twisted by arcane dabbling that their spirits have become hollow like a drinking-gourd and black as the moonless nights of winter. Fear these beings, before all other things in Tuwa, my brothers, for they are the needle that drives the poison of magic into Earth's body, the key that has unlocked the door of the Other World, and the clear whistle that heralds our Peoples' doom. They are civilization, and behind them walks the end of the Old Ways.





THE NAME OF THE ENEMY

The Keepers of the Gate have a language far different from that of the Children of the Dawn. To generate a name, roll a d20 twice and compare the results with Table 2.2: Keeper Names (see left). Combine the two halves in any order, adding “a,” “e,” or “i” or dropping consonants to join the parts.

For example, a result of 8 and 16 on Table 2.2 gives “tepoz” and “xoatl.” The character might be named “Tepozaxoatl,” “Xoatlatepoz,” or “Tepoxoatl,” all meaning “Iron Runner.”

THE WICKEDNESS OF CIVILIZATION

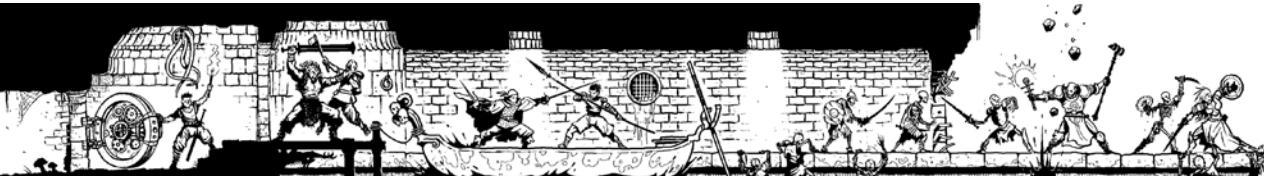
Civilization is the great whore of our world — the fork-tongued seductress who every day lures our kin from the Old Ways to kneel at the feet of the Keepers of the Gate. Cities of stone and iron have risen on the steppe, built by the hands of slaves in the name of civilization. For the sake of civilization, we have seen our brothers and sisters slain in bloody tribute to false mockeries of the Great Ancestors. Civilization has brought us war, murder, and terror unlike any that our Peoples have ever suffered before.

The invasion spread the blasphemous society of our enemies across Tuwa like a pox, infecting men’s minds and scarring the land. Drawn by the lure of wealth and empty promises, the weaker of our tribes fled to the cities, fell beneath the spell of the demons that reside there, and became *elha*. Hunters, you may have heard of the wonders that abound in these cities — of glory and women and strong drink. Take no heed, for these are traps for your spirit — yet more tricks of the ghula to turn you away from the pure path. Let me tell you the truth of the city and its horrors.

Five cities now curse the face of Tuwa, far to the west of our camps. Farthest to the north, standing deep in the Giant’s Spine Mountains, is the **City of Iron** — a filthy stone tomb choked with black smoke that echoes with the wails of the suffering. Around it looms a great wall of timber clad in metal spikes made orange by rain and snow, and patrolled by powerful warriors of the Taken. It is here that countless slaves from our tribes toil in great strip-mines,

churning from the earth strange rocks from which the Keepers coax metal with fire to make their brutal weapons. Our spies tell us of gory sacrifices there, of ghula visiting the beds of woman-slaves to swell the ranks of the Soul Eaters, and the vicious war made upon the tribes who refuge deep within the Spine and threaten the **Shining Gate** beyond.

At the center of the steppe is the **City of Bones**, built on the site where the greatest warriors of the Tribe of the Forest met the ghula in mortal combat during the invasion. What should be a monument to such heroic sacrifice is instead a defiled mockery, for the bones of these mighty giants have been torn from their flesh and used to build hideous temples and houses for the Keepers’ vicious priesthood. In this city of death, yaqyachi sacrifice scores





of our captive people to coax their demonic masters from the infected body of Earth and give their demented praise to Xelok, Kawreelanit, and Tepekot.

Farthest to the West is the **City of Beggars**, the largest and most dangerous of all the cities, set in the eternal winter of the Great Glacier. This debased fortress lies just a half-day's walk from the **Bright Gate**, from which march legions of demons to continue the conquest of Tuwa. In this city of the Taken, *ghula* freely walk among the population, mating with Keeper and slave alike to breed and feed the flames of our land's decay. Here, all Peoples are as deer before the sabretooth — to be consumed as food or entertainment — and only madmen and the most revered of the Keepers may rest in safety.

South of the City of Bones lies the **City of Slaves**, the great slave-camp where our Peoples are herded and broken before they are sent to toil in mines, to serve the whims of the *tlahloq*, or to bear knives against their own tribes in the Keepers' armies. Unlike the other cities, the City of Slaves has no great walls or vicious monsters for protection — its captives are its best defense. A great curse affects all who are brought here, breaking their will and turning them to the happy service of their new masters. *Harii* raids into the camp have always met resistance from the very people they tried to save, but without victory here, our people shall never be free.

The **City of Skulls** is the Keepers' southern outpost, located in the center of the most sacred burial grounds of all the Free Peoples. Much of the city is set into the cliffs of the Giant's Teeth, so that the weirds of the *yaqyachi* may better reach into Earth and from her pull the bodies of our brave dead to become marbaq in the service of our enemies. I have seen this city, and never have I known such horror. Amid the screeching of death-whistles and the breathless toil of the dead, I have seen men fall only to stand again with the wave of a priest's hand. Such an abomination cannot be tolerated.

Life within the cities is like dying, crushed by the press of flesh and lawlessness. Desperation and solitude rule here, draining the spirit from living things as blood drains from a wound. *Tioye*-smokers loiter in daub huts seeking spiritual release, while thieves and beggars prowl the streets looking for easy prey. Slaves lie dead in narrow alleys, murdered for sport by their Keeper masters. Captive elves and ogres are pitted in death-sport against mammoths and bears while the crowds howl for their blood. *Otomi* on horseback parade captives past the houses of nobles before leading them to the dark places where death awaits them. At the temples, gory pageants are held in which *yaqyachi* dismember once-Free slaves alive and toss pieces of their flesh down the steps to the charnel pits below. To be in one of these cities is to long for the freedom of the steppe, the grass beneath your feet, and the wind in your hair. To be there is to know the future of Tuwa should the *ghula* be victorious.

THE THIRD PEOPLE

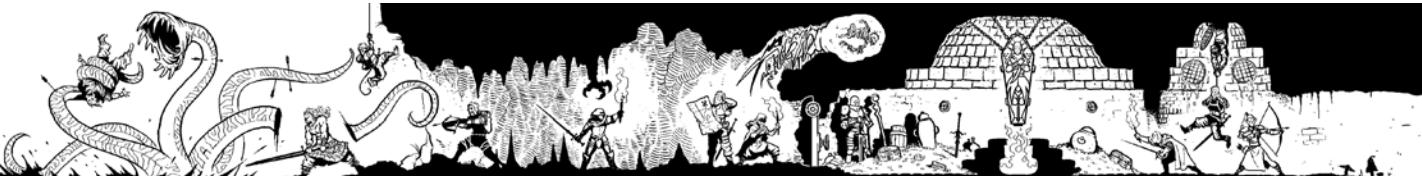
Magic, the Keepers of the Gate, civilization, the illness of our land, and the war that our enemies have brought to our people — all these diseases spring from the *ghula*, demons that have come from beyond our world to choke the life from Tuwa forever. *Ghula* are the essence of magic, summoned by the *yaqyachi* through great stone arches that the Keepers call *calacoyan*. These gates mark the doorways between this world and the Other World. The *ghula* wear many skins — some are formless and take the shape of Free People, whispering secrets to push us off the cliff of madness; others are titanic beasts that shatter mountains or breathe freezing flames. Still others are writhing masses of tentacles or sludge consuming all spirits they find.

You ask me, "Why, song-speaker, do these creatures hate us so?" I have spent many years seeking that answer, and the Great Ancestors have granted me only a single horrifying vision — that they are the Third People, come to claim Tuwa for their own.

Just as we are the stuff of Earth, created by the gifts of our Ancestors to heal her, perhaps they are the children of Moon, come to take revenge on the grandchildren of Sun, who for so long held sway over their father in the crystal sky. This is why they bleed the life from Earth with each footstep, why they consume and twist the spirit of all who encounter them, and why they seek our destruction without allowing for peace. They are the root of evil, the seed of destruction, the chaos that consumes law and nature. They seek nothing short of our extinction, and desire nothing but our defeat.

Young hunters — my brothers — the Old Ways tell us not to hate, not to seek bloodshed, and not to lust for battle. You are all men of law, champions of our People, and the pride of the *harii*. But I say there is one thing we *must* hate, for whose blood we must thirst, and from whom we will never sue for peace — and that is the demon! They are beyond our world, so they are beyond our law and our compassion! We must stand beside the First Peoples and plunge the knife of our rage into the heart of our enemies to cut away the disease that resides there. Our blood will be medicine for this land, our bravery like the crystal stars guiding our People to freedom.

Tomorrow we go to meet our doom, and by blood and axe, by arrow and fire, you will be made men. Tomorrow we may die, rent by the claw of *ghula* or cloven by the blade of the Taken. But ours is no sacrifice, for when we die, we will die as free men, on our feet, and we will take many with us. We shall meet their foul steel with obsidian knives! We shall break their bronze armor with stone axes! Our story will join the Song of Doom, but it will live in the singing of those yet to come. That is why we are here, forsaking our tribes and families against all sense or selfishness. That is why we are *harii*. That is why we will save this land beneath the crystal sky.



THE EPOCH CAMPAIGN

At its core, Epoch is a setting based heavily on the ancient worlds of North and Latin America, flavored with the mythology of Bronze Age Ireland and Scandinavia, overlaid with themes of classic barbarian fantasy. The people of this world are “barbarians” — tribesmen who live in harmony with the land and are now facing down the encroaching hand of civilization delivered by spell and sword. Like the Native Americans, the Children of the Dawn pit themselves against men of mysterious origins and powerful means in a life-or-death battle to protect their lands and ways. However, they live in an even more dangerous world of angry spirits and ravaging demons, interwoven with a lingering corruption that threatens to poison them from within. All these elements make Tuwa a dangerous but exciting place for adventure, and a grand backdrop onto which the heroes may scribe their own stories.

INSPIRATIONS

10,000 B.C. (movie), *Apocalypto* (movie), *Arak, Son of Thunder* (comic book), *Atanarjuat* (movie), Aztec mythology (legends), *The Beastmaster* (movie, television), *Fire and Ice* (movie), Frank Frazetta (artist), *Dark Sun* (RPG), Hiawatha (legend), *Last of the Mohicans* (book, movie), Northwestern and Algonquin tribal mythology (legends), *Pathfinder* (comic book, movie), Robert E. Howard (author), *Slaine* (comic book)

ERA

Primitive. The land of Tuwa exists at a time before time, in which the Free Tribes are still discovering the wonders of science, method, and artisanship. Character options and gear from the Primitive era are available in this setting (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 305).

CAMPAIN QUALITIES

The following campaign qualities are suggested for the Epoch campaign setting. (See page 322 of *Fantasy Craft* for more on campaign qualities.)

Bold Heroes: The heroes of Epoch are characters of indomitable spirit — men and women whose mighty thews and tenacious bravery carry them beyond the limits of man or beast.

Deadly Combat: The battle for survival is a bloody one, and many hunters have been sent to the Other World with a single stroke of an axe or flash of a blade.

Miracles: Though the gods are distant, they have not abandoned the tribes of Tuwa. Their blessings are a wellspring of aid against the corruption of magic.

Rampant Corruption: The influence of the ghula touches the heart of all Peoples, seducing them to darkness by playing on human greed and lust for power.

Sorcery (Corrupting Magic & Potent Magic): Magic, the power of the *ghula* brought to Tuwa by the Keepers, is a vile force whose great power corrupts all — even some of the People's bravest champions.

EPOCH CHARACTERS

The heroes of Epoch are barbarian princes, mighty hunters, skilled trackers, and ruthless killers. Their battle is desperate and their cause pure and hard. The following character options are available to characters in Epoch.

SPECIALTIES

The following Specialties represent some of the backgrounds and occupations unique to the people of Tuwa, including the warriors found on both sides of the conflict.

ELDER

You are amongst the oldest and most experienced of your tribe, wise to the ways of the world and nature.

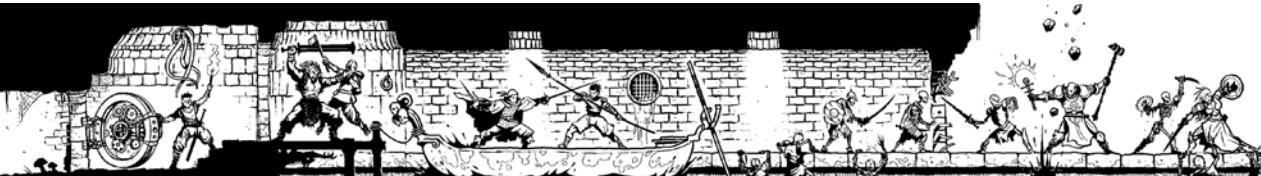
- *Bonus Feat: Prodigal Skill*
- *Encouragement:* Once per scene, you may speak to one of your teammates for 1 minute to grant him a +1 morale bonus with saving throws until the end of the current scene.
- *Inquisitive Mind:* You gain 2 additional Interests.
- *Noble Blood:* You may purchase Noble renown for 20 Reputation per rank (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 187).
- *Seasoned:* Your lowest attribute score rises by 2, and your highest attribute score decreases by 2.
- *Species Empathy:* The Disposition of non-adversary characters who share your Species increases by 5.

HARI

You are a member of the warrior cult of the Children of the Dawn, committed to eradicating the blight of the ghula from your lands.

Requirements: Children of the Dawn Interest

- *Bonus Feat: Mage Hunter* (see page 138)
- *Celebrated:* Your Legend increases by 2.
- *Demon Hunter:* You inflict 2 additional damage on standard horrors and outsiders.
- *Extra Proficiencies:* You gain two additional weapon proficiencies.





COMMON CHARACTER OPTIONS

ORIGINS

Species: Dwarf, Elf, Giant, Human, Ogre

Human Talents: Crusading, Cunning, Grizzled, Hardy, Ruthless, Savage, Stern, Strong, Vigilant

Specialties: Adventurer, Archer, Barbarian, Bard, Druid, Elder, Gladiator, Guardian, Harii, Miner, Mystic, Nomad, Ranger, Shaman, Taken, Tribesman, Warden

CLASSES

Base Classes: Assassin, Captain, Explorer, Martial Artist, Priest, Sage, Scout, Soldier

Expert Classes: Beastmaster, Bloodsworn, Edgemaster, Force of Nature, Monster Slayer

Master Classes: Regent, Spirit-Singer

FEATS

Basic Combat: Charging Basics, Combat Rider, Contempt, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Veteran Adventurer, Wolf Pack Basics

Melee Combat: All-Out Attack, Axe Basics, Cleave Basics, Club Basics, Crushing Master, Edged Master, Knife Basics, Lionheart Basics, Spear Basics

Ranged Combat: Bow Basics, Bow Master, Bullseye, Hurled Basics

Unarmed Combat: Combo Basics, Rage Basics, Wrestling Basics

Chance: Black Cat, Bloodied Bold and Resolute, Fortune Favors the Bold, Living on the Edge

Covert: Ambush Basics, Ferocity Basics, Ghost Basics, Misdirection Basics

Gear: Alchemy Basics, Bandage, Crafting Basics, Tioye Ritual

Skill: Basic Skill Mastery (athlete, healer, horseman), Prodigal Skill (Survival)

Species: Bison Nation, Crag-Born, Dwarf Blood, Elf Blood, Ghula's Blessing, Giant Blood, Ogre Blood, Quick Healer, Winter Brave

Spellcasting: Blessed, Devotion Basics, Mage Hunter

Style: Glint of Madness, Hero of the People, Mark

Terrain: Animal Partner, Coordinated Attack, Night Fighting, Pathfinder Basics

TAKEN

You have been corrupted by the ghula, body and soul. Their magic has twisted your body and brought you into the grip of evil.

- *Bonus Feat:* Ghula's Blessing (see right)
- *Practiced Intimidate:* If you spend an action die to boost an Intimidate check and the check still fails, you gain the action die back after the action is resolved.
- *Tenacious Spirit:* You gain 1 additional vitality per level.
- *Terrifying Look:* Each time an opponent must make a Will Save against stress damage you have inflicted, the Save DC increases by 4.

INTERESTS OF EPOCH

The following Interests are common to the Epoch setting.

LANGUAGES

- **Mitayune** (meet-ah-YOO-nay): The common language of the Free Tribes, spoken by nearly all First and Second Peoples.
- **Kuyutayune** (koo-YOO-tah-yoo-nay): The spirit language of the Other World; a secret language spoken by vidutana, spirits, and ancient beings.
- **Matugyune** (MAT-ugh-yoo-nay): "Forest-tongue;" the nearly-extinct language of the giants, sung for dirges and in the most ancient rites.
- **Mishkoyune** (MEESH-koh-yoo-nay): "Grass-tongue;" spoken exclusively by the elf tribes and taught only to their most trusted allies.
- **Nutauyune** (NOOT-ow-yoo-nay): "Fire-tongue;" the ancient language of the dwarf tribes, which is also still spoken by some elemental creatures.
- **Tlacatecollehi** (lah-cah-teck-oh-LEH-hee): The poisonous language of the ghula, recited only in the dark rituals or by the highest-ranking yaqyachi.
- **Tlatollehi** (lah-to-LEH-hee): The language of the Keepers of the Gate, spoken by Keepers, slaves, elha, and anyone living in the cities.
- **Wucheyune** (woo-CHAY-yoo-nay): "Hill-tongue;" the language of the ogres and the spirit-animals.
- **Literacy (one language):** Reading and writing are rare skills, known only by the wisest and wealthiest heroes. Together they count as a separate Interest.

STUDIES

The following are some of the most common Studies held by Epoch characters:

Animal husbandry; game hunting; any First Peoples tribe; fishing; the Great Ancestors; the ghula; herbalism; heroes of the Free Tribes; the invasion; the Other World; storytelling; horse racing; tioye; trial by combat





ALIGNMENTS

The Alignments of Epoch center around the Great Ancestors, demigods whom all Peoples revere (see *The Secret of Medicine*, page 49). Suitable Alignments built with the rules in Chapter 7 of Fantasy Craft can be found on Table 2.3: Alignments of Epoch (see below).

GEAR FEATS

For more about Gear feats, see *Fantasy Craft*, page 96.

TIOYE RITUAL

You keep the secrets of the sacred plant.

Benefit: You and your allies gain a 20% discount when purchasing tioye and may benefit from tioye one additional time per day.

SPECIES FEATS

For more about Species feats, see *Fantasy Craft*, page 99.

GHULA'S BLESSING

The Third People have anointed you as one of their own. You are destined to wipe the First and Second Peoples from creation.

Prerequisites: Level 1 only

Benefit: The lower of your Strength or Wisdom scores rises by 1, and you gain the slam I natural attack (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 237). If you gain a natural attack from multiple sources, the attack's grade becomes equal to the highest single grade + 1 per additional benefit granting the same attack, to a maximum of V (e.g. Slam IV, Slam III, and Slam I become Slam V). When taking the Basic Skill Mastery feat you have access to a new skill pair: Bloodspiller (Athletics & Tactics). However, you also suffer a -2 Appearance penalty.

Table 2.3: Alignments of Epoch

Alignment	Alignment Skills	Paths	Ritual Weapon	Avatar *
Abharisaka	Blend, Haggle, Investigate, Search	Evil, Good, Order	Scourge	Dire Bison
Kawreelanit	Acrobatics, Prestidigitation, Ride, Sneak	Air, Death, Water	War-club	Dire Eagle
Marihalak	Acrobatics, Bluff, Disguise, Tactics	Chaos, Fire, Light	Reflex Bow	Fire Elemental V
Nagetaka	Blend, Ride, Search, Survival	Life, Plants, Spirit	Long Staff	Dire Elk
Talehtepo	Athletics, Acrobatics, Survival, Tactics	Beasts, Nature, War	Throwing Spear	Dire Wolf
Tepekol	Athletics, Crafting, Haggle, Search	Earth, Destruction, Metal	Maul	Dire Mammoth
Wakanachi	Athletics, Crafting, Ride, Tactics	Glory, Protection, Strength	Hide Shield	Earth Elemental
Wakihana	Bluff, Disguise, Ride, Survival	Lore, Fortune, Travel, Trickery	Dagger	Dire Horse
Xelok	Bluff, Haggle, Investigate, Sneak	Darkness, Magic, Secrets	Jagged sword	Dire Sabretooth

* These elementals can be found in the Grimoire (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 125). Other avatars can be found in the Core Rulebook Bestiary (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 253)

GHULA'S CHOSEN

Your corrupt heritage warps your body and mind, filling you with unholy strength and durability of your otherworldly "parents".

Prerequisites: Ghula's Blessing

Benefit: You gain the Horror Type: Any character other than one of your teammates who can see you suffers a -3 morale penalty with Will saves. Natural animals refuse to attack you and often flee from you unless they're trained to attack horrors or they're attacked by you or your teammates. You are extremely resilient to injury, gaining a +4 bonus with Fortitude saves. Threat ranges of attacks made against you decrease by 2 and you suffers only 1/2 normal sneak attack damage (rounded down). You age and must eat, sleep, and breathe.

WINTER BRAVE

Kawreelanit long ago laid his hand on the *witika*, inuring you to the cold and creating a hunger for the flesh of your enemies to be devoured in his honor.

Prerequisites: Ogre, Level 1 only

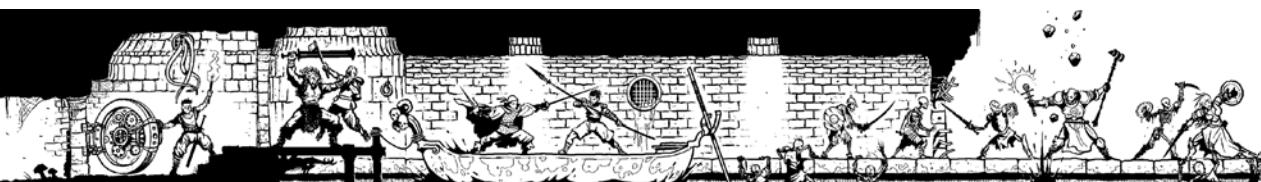
Benefit: You gain Cold Resistance 5, the bite I natural attack, and the *devour* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 237 and 233). If you gain a natural attack from multiple sources, the attack's grade becomes equal to the highest single grade + 1 per additional benefit granting the same attack, to a maximum of V (e.g. Bite IV, Bite III, and Bite I become Bite V).

WINTER ELDER

The ancients of the *witika* bear warm fur hides and the icy touch of their god.

Prerequisites: Winter Brave

Benefit: Your Cold Resistance increases to 10, and you gain the Freezing Aura (cold damage attack II: 10 ft. aura) extraordinary attack (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 238).





TRICKS

For more about tricks, see *Fantasy Craft*, page 221.

COUNT COUP

Melee or Unarmed Attack Trick: Once per combat when attacking a special adversary with 0 vitality, you may accept a -4 penalty with your attack check to “count coup” against the opponent. The attack inflicts no damage, and if you do not attack this character again during this combat, you gain 2 additional Reputation at the end of the adventure.

TRADE AND GEAR

Because they live in a primitive-era world, the gear and equipment available to Epoch characters is slim. For the most part, they must rely on their own innate abilities and care for their possessions well. However, the Free Tribes and Keepers have made many innovative advances in medicine, materials, and weaponry that help them conquer the savage wilds of Tuwa.

LIFESTYLE

The natives of Tuwa are people of the land, with simple dress and tastes. As a nomadic culture, most of the Peoples own only the clothes on their backs and what they can catch or gather from the dying Earth. For them, fresh meat and vegetables are luxuries available only to those secure enough to live in one place year-round, and jewelry made of intricate beadwork or sacred stones from deep in the Earth is the greatest symbol of status and wealth. Sample nourishment and apparel available to a character based on his Panache can be found on Table 2.4: Panache in Epoch (see below).

Table 2.4: Panache in Epoch

Rating	Example Dress	Example Sustenance
0	“Skyclad,” simple loincloth	Grubs, roots
1	Wooden jewelry, crude hides	Squirrel, sugar ants
2	Body paint, woven clothing	Bush meat jerky, wild dog
3	Bone jewelry, earrings	Bison jerky, tripe
4	Simple tattoos, buckskin clothing	Fresh venison, bison milk
5	Rich furs, body piercing	Mammoth jerky, sweetmeats
6	Greenstone jewelry, dyed clothing	Fish jerky, root tea
7	Intricate tattoos, sacred fetishes	Mammoth steaks, honey
8	Iron bangles, colorful headdress	Fresh fish, dried fruits
9	Beaded clothing, fetishes from vanquished enemies	Fresh fruits, tioye buds
10	Copper jewelry, grand headdress	Fatted lamb, fresh bread
11	Sacred tattoos	Dinosaur steaks, honey cakes
12 or higher	Heartstone jewelry	Hearts of your enemies

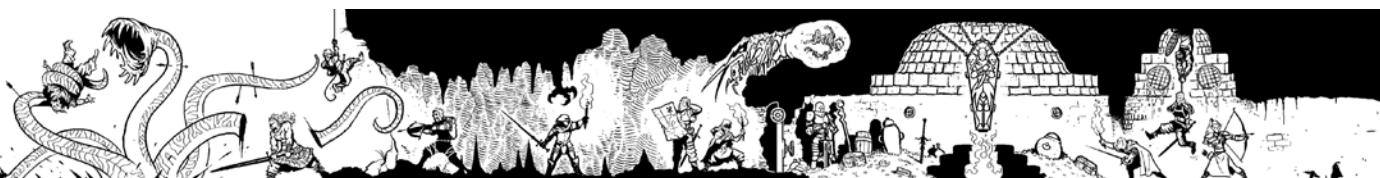
COINAGE AND TRADE GOODS

The Free Tribes have long been a bartering people, trading essential materials and goods from all over Tuwa in great moots that are traditionally held in the warm months of Shared Sky. But the invasion has disrupted both opportunities for moots and commodities for trade, as the longer winters kill plants and voracious cities devastate the steppe-herds to feed their exploding populations.

“Silver” in Epoch is a general measurement of value, rather than actual coinage. When characters receive “coins,” they are instead receiving trade materials, such as iron or copper ingots, beautiful beadwork, tioye seeds, and other nonfunctional but valuable goods for trade. Some examples of the value of such goods include...

- 1 beadstone = 1 silver
- 10 lbs. cut wood = 1 silver
- 1 lb. venison or bison meat = 2 silver
- 1 lb. cleaned bone = 3 silver
- 1 lb. tanned leather or hides = 5 silver
- 1 lb. ivory = 7 silver
- 1 lb. razor-glass = 10 silver
- 1 iron ingot = 15 silver
- 1 lb. greenstone = 25 silver
- 1 copper ingot = 35 silver
- 1 sack of tioye seeds = 50 silver
- 1 pint ghula blood = 100 silver
- Fist-sized chunk of heartstone = 250 silver

Within the cities, the slave trade is a popular (if repulsive practice), with a woman of childbearing age or an able-bodied young male worth up to 100 silver in trade.



GOODS

Coup Stick: Counting coup — the action of showing mercy to vanquished foes — wins a warrior great honor within his tribe and the respect of his fellow hunters. The coup stick is an outward expression of the carrier's success — he may add a trophy to it only by tapping a defeated opponent with it rather than landing a killing blow. You suffer no attack penalties when using the Count Coup trick (see left).

Ghula-taan-ich: “Devil’s stone face;” a greenstone, bone, and copper mask worn by Taken both to disguise their deformities and to assert their “blessed” status. Each ghula-taan-ich is unique to its owner, often resembling the wearer before his fall into darkness. You no longer suffer Appearance penalties, but you suffer a -4 gear penalty with Disguise checks.

Medicine Pouch: The practice of medicine protects the physical and spiritual bodies of the Free Peoples, and many carry these pouches filled with blessed fetishes and trinkets to guard against the evil infecting all creation. A character wearing a medicine pouch gains a +1 gear bonus with all saving throws against spells.

Spirit Drum: This leather-skinned drum is used to commune with ancestors, granting a +4 gear bonus with Impress checks targeting Spirits.

SUPPLIES

The tioye plant is a staple sacred to all Peoples of the world, for within its leaves can be found the secrets of life and death, of purity and corruption, and of spirits and the earth. It is both medicine and poison, both a conduit to the Other World and a pathway to nightmares. Because it is such a versatile and ubiquitous tool, tioye is found throughout the Supplies category. The tioye plant’s color defines its game rules.

CONSUMABLES

The red and green tioye plants have curative properties and are considered medical supplies.

Green Tioye: The green leaves of this plant can be found in deep valleys. When dried, ground, and snuffed, it cures many common ailments. A character eating green tioye loses the *sickened* or *slowed* condition.

Table 2.5: Epoch Goods

Name	Effect	SZ/Hand	Const	Comp	Weight	Era	Cost
Coup stick	No penalty with Count Coup trick	S/1h	Hard 1	10 W	2 lbs.	Primitive	10s
Ghula-taan-ich	No Appearance penalties, -4 gear penalty with Disguise checks	T/—	Hard 1	15 W	1 lb.	Primitive	150s
Medicine pouch	+1 gear bonus with saves vs. spells	S/—	Soft 1	18 W	2 lbs.	Primitive	175s
Spirit drum	+4 gear bonus with Impress checks vs. spirits	S/2h	Soft 2	12 W	3 lbs.	Primitive	50s

Table 2.6: Epoch Consumables

Name	Effect	Uses	SZ/Hand	Const	Comp	Weight	Era	Cost
<i>Medical Supplies</i>								
Green tioye *	Cancels <i>sickened</i> or <i>slowed</i> condition	3	D/2h	Soft 1	10 D	1/2 lb.	Primitive	10s
Red tioye	Target gains 1d6 vitality or 1 wound	3	D/2h	Soft 1	7 D	1/2 lb.	Primitive	15s

* You may benefit from this item only once per day

Table 2.7: Epoch Elixirs

Name	Effect	SZ/Hand	Const	Comp	Weight	Era	Cost
Blue tioye	Ignore first <i>fatigued/shaken</i> suffered this scene	T/1h	Brittle 1	12 D	1/4 lb.	Primitive	25s
Grey tioye	+1d4 Str & Con, <i>enraged</i> 1 hour	T/1h	Brittle 1	18 W	1/4 lb.	Primitive	150s

Table 2.8: Epoch Food & Drink

Name	Effect	Uses	SZ/Hand	Const	Comp	Weight	Era	Cost
Brown tioye *	+2 gear bonus with Resolve (8 hours)	3	T/2h	Soft 1	5 D	1/2 lb.	Primitive	10s
Root ale *	Decreases <i>shaken</i> condition by 1 grade	3	T/1h	Brittle 1	7 W	2 lbs.	Primitive	10s
White tioye	Decreases <i>tainted</i> condition by 1 grade	1	T/2h	Soft 1	15 W	1/2 lb.	Primitive	100s
Yellow tioye	Gain 1 hint	3	T/2h	Soft 1	10 W	1/2 lb.	Primitive	50s

* These items spoil slowly enough that tracking when they go bad is pointless. They remain with the character until consumed or discarded.

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Table 2.9: Epoch Poisons

Name	Effect	Incubation	Uses	Comp	Weight	Era	Cost
Black tioye	1 temporary Con & Wis impairment	1 hour	3	25 D	1/10th lb.	Primitive	75s
Ghula's blood	Tainted	1 hour	3	20 D	1/10th lb.	Primitive	100s
Orange tioye	Fatigued	1 minute	3	18 D	1/10th lb.	Primitive	50s

Table 2.10: Epoch Armor Upgrades

Type	DR	Effect	DP	ACP	Speed	Disguise	Const	Comp	Weight *	Era	Cost
<i>Customization</i>											
Beaded	—	+1 to Appearance	—	—	—	—	—	+2	—	Primitive	+100%
Demon-Warded	—	Horror/Outsider Resistance 4	—	—	—	—	—	+5	—	Primitive	+200%
Horrific	—	+2 gear bonus to Threaten	—	—	—	—	—	+2	—	Primitive	+50%
Toothed	—	+2 gear bonus to unarmed damage	—	-1	—	—	—	+2	—	Primitive	+50%
<i>Materials *</i>											
Bark	—	Soft only; Cold & Heat Resistance 2	—	—	—	—	—	+2	—	Primitive	+25%
Demon Hide	—	+5 with recognition/contact Trust	—	—	—	-4	—	+5	—	Primitive	+200%
Mammoth Pelt	—	Soft only; Blunt & Cold Resistance 2	—	—	—	-2	—	+2	+25%	Primitive	+50%

* Armor may receive only one upgrade from this category

Table 2.11: Epoch Weapon Upgrades

Name	Effect	Const	Comp	Weight	Era	Cost
<i>Materials *</i>						
Bone	Hard only; adds <i>finesse</i> quality	—	+2	-25%	Primitive	+25%
Greenstone	Hard only; inflicts subdual damage only, adds <i>massive</i> quality	+1 Save	+2	+50%	Primitive	+50%
Heartstone	Hard only; adds AP 10/+2 damage vs. horrors/outsiders	—	+5	+25%	Primitive	+200%
Keeper Iron	Hard only; adds AP 4 quality	+1 Save	+5	+25%	Primitive	+100%
Razor-glass	Hard only; adds <i>bleed</i> and <i>keen</i> 4 qualities	Brittle	+2	—	Primitive	+50%

* A weapon may only receive 1 upgrade from this category.

Red Tioye: This blood-red plant is common to forests across Tuwa. When chewed and applied to wounds, it makes an excellent bandage and antiseptic. Each application of red tioye heals 1d6 vitality or 1 wound.

Table 2.13: Epoch Holdings

Scale	Example Residence
1	Burrow, lean-to
2	Cave, fishing grounds
3	Grazing lands, treetop shelter
4	Isolated cavern, subsistence farm
5	Mud-daub hut, private farm
6	Hunting ground, stone hut
7	Lodge, winter camp
8	Longhouse, sacred grove
9	Great lodge, cave complex
10	Chief's longhouse, isolated camp
11	Small village, temple
12	PWar-camp, fortress-city

ELIXIRS

The warriors of Tuwa make extensive use of elixirs — often in the form of fetishes to be crushed or powders sprinkled to release their power. The blue and grey tioye plants are also favorite tools for harii warriors who frequently cross paths with the Taken.

Blue Tioye: Blue tioye grows in the peat bogs and swampy foothills of the Giant's Teeth Mountains. Harii berserkers often chew its stems before battle to increase their bravery and inure them to wounds. A character consuming blue tioye may ignore the first *fatigued* or *shaken* result he suffers this scene.

Grey Tioye: Growing only on the shadowy crags of the Maze of Whispers, this pallid grey plant is said to be tended by the angry spirits that reside there. Eating grey tioye fills the warrior with the ancient rage of these beings, granting him a +1d4 to both Strength and Constitution, but making him *enraged* as well. The effects of this potion are lost when the character makes a successful Resolve check to calm himself, or at the end of 1 hour, after which he falls unconscious for 1d6 hours.





FOOD & DRINK

Many forms of tioye are either common staples of daily life or special enough to be consumed in ritual feasts. White tioye is considered food, while brown and yellow tioye and root ale are considered drinks.

Brown Tioye: This common form of tioye is smoked or chewed for recreation and social events. A character using brown tioye gains a +2 gear bonus with Resolve checks for 8 hours.

Root Ale: The fermented juice of tioye roots is a popular beverage for hard-living warriors, canceling 1 *shaken* condition when consumed.

White Tioye: White tioye is found at the top of the world, where the sky meets the earth, and harvested only by the bravest and most foolhardy. When brewed, its delicate leaves cleanse ailments of the spirit. A character consuming white tioye loses one *tainted* condition (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 325).

Yellow Tioye: This golden arboreal plant is found in the tops of trees, reaching for the sun. When smoked, it opens a gateway to the Other World, allowing the smoker to speak with the ancestors. A character smoking yellow tioye gains 1 hint, for which the GM receives no action dice. If the GM refuses to grant the character the hint, the character instead gains 1 action die.

POISONS

The deadly black and orange tioye and the lifeblood of demons are potent poisons found only in Tuwa.

Black Tioye: The rarest form of the sacred plant is found deep underground or near Gates, where the corruption of Earth is strongest. Its blasted petals can be fermented into a deadly poison that chips away at the body and mind. Victims of this poison suffer 1 Constitution & Wisdom impairment.

Ghula's Blood: The high priests of the yaqyachi often dip their blades in the split blood of demons — a soul-twisting substance that can blacken the soul of any man. Characters suffering from ghula's blood become tainted.

Orange Tioye: This simple plant is found only where Earth bleeds lava, springing from the warm, bare rock. The Children of the Dawn have long used it when hunting mammoth and bison, for it saps the strength and speed of its target, making him easier to run down. The victim of this poison becomes *fatigued*.

ARMOR

The armors of Tuwa are simple, consisting mainly of hide but sometimes reinforced with bone ribbing, bark, and other stiff natural materials. The following upgrades may be added to armor.

ARMOR UPGRADES

Bark (Soft Construction Only): Strips of soft redwood bark can be woven into surprisingly weather-resistant garments, granting the wearer Cold and Heat Resistance 2.

Beaded: This armor is decorated with rich beads and other fineries, symbolizing the wearer's wealth and prestige and increasing his Appearance bonus by +1.

Demon Hide: The skin of the ghula is worn only by the bravest warriors as a sign of status and accomplishment. While this armor is worn, other characters gain a +5 bonus with Knowledge checks to recognize the wearer, and the Persuasion DC of his Contacts increases by 5.

Demon-Warded: Special glyphs scribed by vidutana elders on this armor protects against the predations of ghula, granting the wearer Horror and Outsider Resistance 4.

Horrific: The faces of defeated enemies and other horrible trophies are stitched onto this armor, granting the wearer a +2 gear bonus when Threatening.

Mammoth Pelt (Soft Construction Only): The First and Second Peoples prize the dense hides of the mammoth for their warmth and cushioning. The wearer gains Blunt and Cold Resistance 2.

Toothed: Sharp teeth from predator animals are sewn into the arms and legs of this armor, giving the wearer a +2 gear bonus to unarmed attack damage.

WEAPONS

Like armors, weapons of Epoch are made of natural materials, such as wood, leather, and stone. However, Tuwa's craftsmen can also make weapons from many other special substances native to their land.

WEAPON UPGRADES

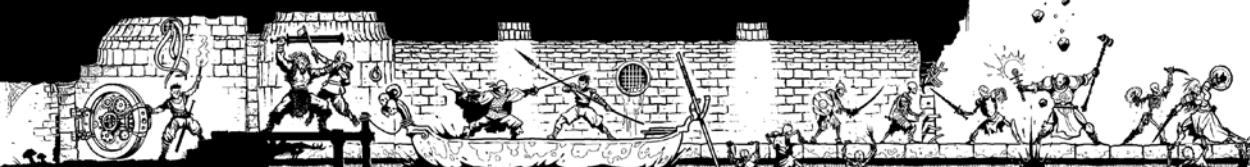
Bone (Hard Construction Only): Both light and strong, bone is an excellent material for dueling or small weapons. The weapon's weight is reduced by 25% and it gains *finesse*.

Greenstone (Hard Construction Only): This Hard material doesn't keep an edge well, but it has great weight and crushing power. A weapon made of this material inflicts subdual damage and gains *massive*.

Heartstone (Hard Construction Only): The physical soul of Tuwa, this red stone is stolen from deep within Earth and inflicts horrible wounds to ghula. The weapon gains *armor piercing 10* and a +2 gear bonus to damage against horrors and outsiders.

Keeper Iron (Hard Construction Only): The weapons of the Keepers are made of crude iron — an advancement that gives their weapons a tremendous advantage over the traditional gear of the Free Tribes. Iron weapons gain +1 Damage save and *armor piercing 4*.

Razor-Glass (Hard Construction Only): This jet-black volcanic stone, collected from the Glass Forest, is extraordinarily sharp but brittle. The weapon gains *bleed* and *keen 4* but its Construction becomes Brittle.





PRIZES

Because Epoch follows a different path from traditional fantasy settings, a slightly different take on how Prizes appear within the setting is appropriate. The following is a list of changes and guidelines for using them in your game.

RENOWN

The Free Tribes place great importance on deeds and actions over words or wealth, and the Renown titles on Table 2.12: Epoch Renown (*see below*) clearly show this difference. The heroic branch reflects the spreading of stories about the hero as he accomplishes great deeds, the military branch shows the hero's prowess as a hunter and warrior, and the noble branch defines the hero's wisdom and skill at weaving the stories that preserve the Old Ways.

HOLDINGS

The nomadic, outlaw nature of Epoch's protagonists changes the context of Holdings significantly. Most holdings in this setting are hideouts, seasonal camps, hunting grounds, or sacred groves where heroes may find peace in their violent world.

ROOMS

The following Rooms may also be added to Holdings in Epoch (*see Fantasy Craft, page 193*).

Dolmen: These standing stones are altars and places that gather power from Earth, purifying her flesh and allowing life to thrive. Horrors and outsiders suffer a -2 morale penalty with all checks while in your Holding.

Sacrificial Altar: Once per scene, you may Coup de Grace a single standard character here to gain an additional 1d6 spell points for the duration of the scene.

Totem: These intricately wrought cave paintings, carved posts, or crude idols all glorify the achievements of the owner. Your Legend increases by 2. You may benefit from only one Totem at a time.

Table 2.12: Epoch Renown

Rank	Heroic	Military	Noble
1	Coup-Counter	Brave	Seer
2	Trail-Blazer	Scout	Tale-Teller
3	Blood-Spiller	Hunter	Wise One
4	Far-Seer	Tracker	Story-Weaver
5	Scalp-Taker	Warrior	Elder
6	Path-Finder	Shirt-Wearer	Song-Singer
7	Foe-Smiler	War Leader	Ancient One
8	Demon-Slayer	Champion	Spirit-Speaker
9	Spirit-Walker	Warchief	Revered One
10	Savior of the Peoples	Chief of the Free Tribes	Voice of the Ancestors

EPOCH ADVENTURES

The exotic world of Epoch is ripe for adventure, whether the party wishes to battle the corruption of the ghula, engage in great hunts, or undertake a quest for personal glory. Whatever their plots, adventures in Epoch should balance wonder and mystery with danger and action to showcase the bravery, bravado, and resolve of its heroes as they triumph over all that Tuwa has to throw at them.

THEMES

First and foremost, Epoch is a game about heroism in the face of despair. Tuwa is a world on the brink — overrun by demons and their followers who not only have the advantage of superior numbers, but also wield both technology and magic. Their cities choke the natural world, and their armies issue forth to rape and pillage all that the First and Second Peoples hold dear. If they were a cowardly or sensible people, the Children of the Dawn would accept their fate, lay down arms, and bow before the Keepers — but they cannot. Their duty is to preserve their stories, their bloodlines, and the land given them by their gods, and so they cannot accept defeat, no matter the cost. That duty — be it to family, freedom, or deity — is the heart and soul of most Epoch campaigns.

Such resistance cannot be effective without blood, however, and the heroes should be ready to engage in wild and daring adventures against all manner of exotic dangers. Adventures in the deepest and wildest parts of Tuwa are a great balancing factor for the squalor of urban adventuring — spear-hunting mammoths, wrestling bears, and chasing down wild horses make just as good a game session as raiding Keeper temples or engaging in single combat against ghula. The heroes' understanding of their world is still new, and many mysteries await them in the dark.

But in spite of the clear-eyed heroism an Epoch campaign may instill in its characters, the world remains a morally ambiguous place. Yes, the harii fight for the freedom of their Peoples — but many fight for revenge, a chance at personal glory, or to claim





dominion over the future of their tribes. The priesthood of the Keepers has indeed unleashed hell on Tuwa — but are the people who live as slaves and civilians equally to blame? What of the elha, the Free Peoples who abandoned their tribes seeking a better life? Magic is a seductive and vile power in the wrong hands, but in the right ones, could it heal the land? Corruption — spiritual, mental, and even physical — can infect even the most stouthearted warrior — does their sacrifice make them enemies as well? These questions can be interwoven throughout your Epoch campaign to cast the shadow of doubt and nagging suspicion across superficially heroic plotlines and add the depth and opportunity for roleplaying that is at the heart of sword and sorcery gaming.

PROPHESY, PORTENTS AND THE DAWN OF HOPE

Tuwa is dying — rotting slowly under the unshakable grip of sorcery and the chill footsteps of the demons that roam the land. Many of the Free Tribes have slowly let their hope wither in the face of such dire predictions, passing on to the Other World or bending to the will of the enemies and becoming elha. But not all is lost, for prophecy and portent foretell both good and ill events that may befall the First and Second Peoples should they persist in their fight. This is the time of heroes — the time of Epoch — and the player characters are the men and women who will see these tellings fulfilled. The following themes and plots can provide ample fodder to get any Epoch campaign off the ground.

War on the Free Tribes: Though the Children of the Dawn have always been a warrior people, their wars have always been confined to skirmishes with rival tribes, in which success was measured more by coup-counting than by scalp-taking. The machinations of the Taken have built a massive army of slaves, mercenaries, elha, and raiders who are making a final, aggressive push to eliminate the Children of Dawn. Their raids lay waste to entire villages, enslave hundreds or thousands, and leave many more dead in their wake. Someone will have to fight this war, and most harii are only too glad to oblige.

The Unmaking: A growing faction of the vidutana believes that the ghula are the Third People, born of Moon to unmake all that is, for their steps bring winter and blight, and their presence warps nature. Some believe their presence is Moon's revenge on the children of Sun — the final blow that will forever bind Earth to him and make the world one of night and beasts. Is this explanation true, and if so, how will the Unmaking come to pass? No one knows the answers, but many would die to discover them, for in the truth lies the secret of victory over the Keepers.

Closing the Door: Among the first actions the Keepers take after establishing a city is to build a great arch that will serve as a door to admit their ghula masters from the Other World. The greatest of these are the Bright Gate, which lies far to the west

on the Great Glacier, and the Shining Gate, located deep in the crags of the Giant's Spine Mountains in the north. To close one of these gates would be tremendously dangerous, but the reward — stemming the flow of demons into Tuwa — is worthy of an honored place in the songs of the Free Tribes.

The End of Magic: A secret belief whispered among the harii is that magic may not be an endless power source, but rather a limited reserve, like the trees of a forest or the creatures of a herd. The more hopeful of elders believe that with the great expenditures the Keepers have made to forge their unholy cities, make iron from stone, and bend the wills of their slaves, their ties to the Other World are growing weak, and the right blow could sever them altogether. More and more harii are going forth to investigate these rumors and strike at the yaqyachi, in the hope that their successes may turn the tide for the Free Peoples.

The Return of Wakanachi: Wakanachi is the creator of the Second People — the first man who guarded ntowema against the first ghula and brought him up to be as mighty as any elf, dwarf, or ogre. When Wakanachi left the first tribe of the Second People, he promised that he would one day be reborn to them to lead them away from the End. Today, this prophecy burns ever brighter in the hearts of all Free Peoples, feeding the fires of resistance. The Keepers have taken great pains to tamp down such rumors, while watching tirelessly for the birth of a child who might be the reborn Peacemaker. Should such a child exist, protecting him or her would be one of the most important things a Child of the Dawn could do to preserve freedom and hope across Tuwa.

ENCOUNTERS

Scenes in Epoch should be big, exciting, and loaded with action, danger, and challenge. Sure, it's challenging to climb a mountain and pick tioye for a local healer...but it's far more exciting to climb a mountain in a blizzard, pursued by a mated pair of sabretooth tigers who haven't eaten in a week! Stopping the sacrifice of a slave-tribe to power a yaqyachi's summoning ritual is exciting, but it's far more challenging to do so at the top of a temple during a festival that the entire region has is attending!

Like all good action stories, play at the table in Epoch should be fast, furious, and rewarding to the player who thinks outside the box. Coming up with a good "set" — especially one that provides the opportunity for creative play and emphasizes the exotic feel of Tuwa — is a great way to make encounters more than just your run-of-the-mill fantasy adventure.

OPPOSITION

Epoch's threats concentrate on two central themes — the enemies, namely the Keepers of the Gate and their ghula masters — and the native creatures of Tuwa, such as mammoth, dinosaurs, dire animals, and other "natural" threats.



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These opponents shouldn't be your standard fantasy pushovers in most circumstances; rather, each should have a specialty that can provide a genuine threat should the players not mix up their strategies and adapt to their environment. Try giving the NPCs high expertise in a narrow specialty (for instance, skill with an axe or tracking) to provide the heroes with a tangible challenge, but average to poor performance in other aspects. Such a setup rewards creative tactics (such as switching to unarmed combat against the melee fighter, or climbing

through the trees when pursued by the tracker.) Getting this balance right will ensure your games emphasize the setting's dangerous nature while creating a diverse and fun play experience at the table.

Some common NPC types that characters might encounter include:

Men (page 63): The heroes are not the only good men left in the world — nor does everyone see them as heroes. Many of the Free Tribes still doubt the righteousness of the "harii's war" and question the wisdom of fighting against what seems to be an edict of Time itself. Thus, some may take up arms to stop the heroes lest they doom the entire tribe.

Dinosaurs (Fantasy Craft, page 259):

Predatory dinosaurs still exist in remote locations, such as the Glass Forest and the Giant's Spine Mountains, where they stalk man and beast alike.

Dire Animals (Fantasy Craft, page 288):

These descendants of the spirit-animals still roam the land, posing a formidable threat to heroes. Dire bears, sabretooths, mammoths, and other prehistoric creatures are the most common dire animals found in Tuwa.

Ghostly Creatures (Fantasy Craft, page 288):

The spirits of the dead now linger too long on Tuwa, particularly in the Maze of Whispers. Such creatures can be wildcards — sometimes seeking only vengeance on the living; other times wishing to show heroes the secrets of the Other World.

Ghula (page 65):

Demons from the Other World, the ghula are the greatest threats any harii can face in mortal combat. They are encountered wherever magic abounds and the world is dying, shrouded in a life-drinking cold.

Keeper Raiders (page 64): The vanguard of the Keepers of the Gate, raiders go forth as scouts or pillagers to herd isolated tribes to holding areas and capture slaves to haul back to the city.

Risen Creatures (Fantasy Craft, page 293): The poisonous touch of magic can trap the spirits of the dead in their flesh, causing them to rise as marbaq. These creatures typically roam battlefields and burial grounds, consumed with grief and seeking a way to join their ancestors in the Other World.





Soul Eaters (page 64): Soul eaters are the elite warriors of the Taken — men given over completely to their demonic lords. The heroes will do well to avoid confronting them head on, lest they lose their heads entirely!

Yaqqachi (page 64): The deadly sorcerer-priests of the ghula are the architects of Tuwa's ruin and the most reviled of all the enemies.

Rewards

Because Epoch is a land where technology is scarce and magic is distrusted by the protagonists and abused by the villains, GMs should be creative in how they use Prizes to reward good adventuring.

Coin and Mundane Items

As travelers and nomads, the heroes of Epoch are by necessity light on equipment, and they have to spend much of their time fixing what they have. Consider offering the characters new or premade equipment periodically, for they rarely have the time to make things themselves, and towns tend to be few and far apart. Furthermore, mundane items made of rare materials — such as iron or greenstone weapons, demon hide armor, and copper jewelry — can be treasures in their own right, even though they have a silver cost. Even useful trade goods, such as hides from slain beasts or good ivory, are handy for a party on the go.

Reputation

The champions of the Children of the Dawn are larger than life and held in great regard by the remaining Free Tribes. Thus, Instant Rewards of Reputation are fitting tools for keeping the heroes happy (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 344). Reputation is particularly handy if the party's antics are bold but don't quite merit a Favor or rank of Renown.

Renown

The courage and skill at arms that Epoch's heroes display makes Renown a natural Prize for adventurers (see page 64). Free levels in the Military and Heroic tracks, in particular, fit well for the classic party of warrior-braves, though Noble can be useful for those who follow a more spiritual path or regularly consort with the denizens of the Other World.

Favors

Favors tend to be more common in Epoch than in other settings because access to material goods is limited, and many people have little to share. But a simple favor — whether safe harbor for the night, a servant letting the party slip into a high priest's temple, or a blessing said by a holy man — can be worth more than the largest chunk of heartstone or the sharpest iron weapon.

CONTACTS

In a world where a hero can call few people friend with any surety, a contact is an invaluable resource. Common contacts for an Epoch hero might include an elha informant, a blind soothsayer, a city merchant with access to privileged information, a warchief of a harii mage-hunting party, or even a talking spirit-animal who shares a bond with the children of Sun and Earth.

Magic Items & Artifacts

The Children of the Dawn view magic as a vile and corrupting force, and by extension, magic items are considered the physical incarnation of the spiritual corruption that threatens all of Tuwa. Though some members of the Taken and yaqqachi carry magic items, most self-respecting harii never do so, for fear of how their battle-brothers may take it. Thus, magic items and artifacts should be rare and hard-won, and those who carry them should be regarded with a certain suspicion as to the reasons why. It's far better to focus on other rewards than magic items — but when they do appear, they should be both meaningful and potent.

EPOCH ROGUES GALLERY

The rogues listed below are specific to the Epoch campaign setting. Additionally, the following rogues from the Fantasy Craft rogues gallery are also common in Epoch: apprentice, bowman, brigand, craftsman, cutpurse, damsels, devotee, entertainer, farmer, guide, hunter, merchant, outrider, peasant, servant, strumpet, town drunk, warlord, and worshipper (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 244 for statistics).

Berserker (Medium Folk Walker — 41 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk V; Def II; Res IV; Health V; Comp I; Skills: Athletics V, Intimidate III; Qualities: *Feat (Charging Basics)*, *fearless I*, *frenzy II*

Attacks/Weapons: Hatchet × 2 (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20; qualities: *AP 2*, *hurl*, *trip*)

Gear: Grey tioye (1 dose)

Treasure: None

Enslaved Tribesman (Medium Folk Walker — 20 XP):

Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init I; Atk I; Def II; Res V; Health III; Comp I; Skills: Blend II, Crafting III, Search II; Qualities: *Banned action (Browbeat, Coerce)*, *feat (Anonymity Basics)*, *meek*

Attacks/Weapons: Unarmed (dmg 1d3 subdual; threat 20)

Gear: Stonecutter's kit

Treasure: None



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Harii Brave (Medium Folk Walker — 47 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init III; Atk IV; Def V; Res IV; Health IV; Comp III; Skills: Athletics III, Resolve V, Survival V, Tactics III; Qualities: *Class ability (Scout: stalker, trail signs), favored foes (horrors & outsiders), superior traveler II*

Attacks/Weapons: Dagger (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *bleed, hurl*), throwing spear (dmg 1d8 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *hurl, reach +1*)

Mount or Vehicle: Riding horse (Spd 50 ft. ground (Run 250 ft.; Travel 7; SZ/Def L/IV) or none

Gear: Coup stick, medicine pouch

Treasure: 1C, 1G



Keeper Warrior (Medium Folk Walker — 29 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init III; Atk IV; Def IV; Res IV; Health IV; Comp II; Skills: Athletics IV, Intimidate II; Qualities: *Feat (Wolf Pack Basics), tricky (Relentless Attack)*

Attacks/Weapons: Dagger (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *bleed, hurl*), jagged sword (dmg 1d8 lethal; threat 20; qualities: *bleed, hook*)

Gear: Moderate padded armor with light fittings (DR 2; DP –0; ACP –1; Spd —; Disguise +0), 3 days' rations

Treasure: 1G

Raider (Medium Folk Walker — 37 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk III; Def III; Res IV; Health III; Comp II; Skills: Ride VII, Search III, Survival III; Qualities: *Charge attack, class ability (Scout: rough riding), expertise (Ride)*

Attacks/Weapons: Club (dmg 1d8 subdual; threat 20), short bow + 20 standard arrows (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 19–20; range 20 ft. × 6; qualities: *AP 2, cavalry, poisonous*)

Mount or Vehicle: Riding horse (Spd 50 ft. ground (Run 250 ft.; Travel 7; SZ/Def L/IV) or none

Treasure: 2C

Slaver (Medium Folk Walker — 41 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init II; Atk III; Def III; Res IV; Health III; Comp III; Skills: Intimidate VII, Haggle IV, Survival IV; Qualities: *Feat (Whip Basics, Whip Mastery), grueling combatant, menacing threat*

Attacks/Weapons: Bullwhip (dmg 1d6 subdual; threat 20; qualities: *reach +3, trip*), net × 3 (dmg —; threat —; range 10 ft. × 3; qualities: *cord, trip*)

Mount or Vehicle: Cart (Spd 20 ft. ground (Run 160 ft.; Travel 2; SZ/Def L/9) or none

Gear: Hemp rope (50 ft.)

Treasure: 3C

Soul Eater (Medium Folk Walker — 75 XP): Str 15, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init V; Atk VII; Def III; Res VII; Health VII; Comp II; Skills: Athletics VI, Intimidate IX; Qualities: *Condition immunity (fatigued), fearless, fearsome, feat (All-Out Attack, Glint of Madness), repulsive II, tough I, treacherous*

Attacks/Weapons: Dagger × 2 (dmg 1d6+2 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *bleed, hurl*), Keeper iron great club (dmg 2d6+2 lethal; threat 20; qualities: *AP 4, massive; special: +1 dmg save*)

Mount or Vehicle: War horse (Spd 50 ft. ground (Run 250 ft.; Travel 5; SZ/Def L/IV) or none

Gear: Partial hardened leather armor with heavy fittings (DR 5; DP –2; ACP –2; Speed –10 ft.; Disguise –8), ghula-taan-ich

Treasure: 1C, 1M, 2T

Tribal Elder (Medium Folk Walker — 47 XP): Str 8, Dex 8, Con 8, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 20 ft. ground; Init I; Atk II; Def II; Res III; Health II; Comp V; Skills: Impress IV, Sense Motive VII, Medicine VII, Survival IV; Qualities: *Beguiling, burden of ages, class ability (Priest: saved! I, Sage: best of the best II)*

Attacks/Weapons: Short staff (dmg 1d6–1 subdual; threat 20; qualities: *double, trip*)

Gear: Spirit drum, pipe + brown tioye (3 uses)

Treasure: 1C, 1L, 1M

Yaqyachi (Medium Folk Walker — 81 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 14; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init II; Atk III; Def II; Res III; Health III; Comp IV; Skills: Impress V, Investigate V, Intimidate VIII, Spellcasting VIII, Tactics V; Spells: Charm Person II, Call from Beyond IV, Cone of Cold, Control Weather II, Dimension Door, Dominate Undead I, Hold Person, Scare II, Shield, Wall of Ice; Qualities: *Bright II, cagey II, damage defiance (cold, stress), expanded spellbook II, spell defense III, unlimited spell points*

Attacks/Weapons: Razor-glass dagger (dmg 1d6 lethal, threat 19–20, qualities: *bleed, hurl, keen 4, special: Brittle const.*)

Gear: Mage's pouch, ghula-taan-ich, ghula's blood (3 doses)

Mount or Vehicle: Mammoth (Spd 30 ft. ground; Travel 3; SZ/Def H/IV) or none

Treasure: 3C, 2L, 2M, 1T





THE GHULA

The following creatures are just a few samples of the ghula horrors summoned from the Other World to wage war on the Children of the Dawn. Because new horrors issue through the Bright and Shining Gates all the time, you should feel free to create your own interesting, horrific, and bizarre demons to challenge the heroes. Most should be outsiders or horrors, have the *Achilles heel* quality for heartstone weapons, and — because they are literally made of magic — possess some degree of magical ability, either in the form of innate spellcasting or extraordinary attacks that warp the laws of nature.

BLIGHT-DRIPPER

Huetmiq (hoo-ET-mick), as they are known in the foul tongue of the Keepers — are plodding, endlessly eating creatures that spread the ghulas' poison wherever they roam. A huetmiq looks something like an immense slug or blob covered in grasping feelers. Crackling ice coats their bodies and is shed with each ripple of their boneless forms. Though not outright hostile, blight-drippers are some of the most dangerous of all demons, for they draw their sustenance from the body of Earth herself, robbing the air and land of warmth and all Earth's children of life. They mindlessly shuffle across the steppe in great herds, consuming all that crosses their path and leaving only frozen, lifeless husks behind.

Tactics: Blight-drippers are simple demons that the Keepers employ like bulldozers to annihilate whatever lies in their paths. Keeper "handlers" (who are careful to maintain a great distance) use fire to drive the beasts at enemy camps, villages, and forests, where they can catch the scent of life and begin feeding. In combat, they favor trampling as they move about, vacuuming up any organic matter they can find. If they sense many different smaller creatures or are injured, they use their Consume Life attack to weaken everyone within range and heal themselves. Killing hungry huetmiq is no mean feat. They are incredibly tough, and the thick rime on their flesh makes ranged combat ineffective (*damage defiance*), so the heroes must risk contact with the beast (and thus its cold *natural defense*). Only the threat of death or huge amounts of fire can dissuade these creatures from trying to eat whatever lies ahead.

Blight-Dripper (Gargantuan Animal Outsider Walker — 121 XP): Str 10, Dex 6, Con 20, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 6; SZ C (6×8, Reach 1); Spd 20 ft. ground; Init I; Atk III; Def IV; Res IX; Health VII; Comp —; Skills: Search V, Survival V; Qualities: *Achilles heel* (heartstone, fire), *damage defiance* (bows, hurled), *improved sense* (scent), *improved stability*, *natural spell* (Harm), *monstrous defense* I, *natural defense* (cold), *shambling*, *tough* IV

Attacks/Weapons: Slam III (dmg 2d10 cold; threat 19–20; qualities: *venomous* (*slowing poison*)), Trample III (dmg 2d12 lethal; threat 19–20; notes: Large and smaller only, Fort (DC equal to damage inflicted) or become *sprawled*), Consume Life (life drain III: 30 ft. aura; Fort DC 20 or suffer 1 lethal damage per Threat Level + NPC heals equal to damage inflicted), Ruin Life (rotting attack IV: dmg 1d10 lethal per 2 Threat Levels (plants and wood only))

Treasure: 2A, 2L, 2T

CAVE-GNAWER

Called *camoztotl* (cam-oz-TOT-el) by the Keepers, these stony-fleshed demons burrow like beetles into the body of Earth to suck at her lifeblood. Each is a hunched, thick-trunked humanoid brute with stumpy legs, powerful corded arms, and savage claws for digging through soil. Its head is bulbous, and the only feature on its face is a round, blight-touched mouth that lets it chew rocks as men chew meat. Braves foolhardy enough to face one of these beasts in melee quickly find themselves doused in acidic sputtle, their weapons dissolved and flesh blistered and melting.

Cave-gnawers are most common in the North, where the Keepers have unleashed them through the Shining Gate to feast in the Giant's Spine Mountains and dig ever-deeper mines at the City of Iron. Some have even been "domesticated" by powerful yayachi of the north to guard valuable mines and hunt down runaway slaves. Though they are slow-witted and simple creatures, they are nearly undetectable within their underground homes, so they can spring upon intruders in a whirling wave of limbs, teeth, and claws.

Tactics: Cave-gnawers are found almost exclusively in deep, dark places, where they can take best advantage of their enemies' lack of sight and their own *chameleon* II ability. Above ground, they dig tunnels or holes from which they can launch surprise attacks. If expecting intrusions, some of these creatures may use their Move Earth natural spell to close off escape routes or create deep pit traps. When the cave-eater decides to strike, it often does so as a straightforward charge into melee combat, using its natural attacks and rend to win a war of attrition.

Cave-Gnawer (Large Beast Outsider Burrower Walker — 80 XP): Str 16, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 4; SZ L (2×2, Reach 1); Spd 20 ft. ground, burrow 40 ft. ground; Init II; Atk III; Def III; Res IV; Health VI; Comp I; Skills: Notice III, Search III, Tactics II; Qualities: *Achilles' heel* (heartstone), *blindsight*, *chameleon* II (caverns), *damage defiance* (subdual), *damage reduction* 2, *natural spell* (Move Earth), *rend*, *tough* I

Attacks/Weapons: Bite II (dmg 1d10+3 acid; threat 17–20), Claw III (dmg 2d8+3 lethal; threat 19–20)

Treasure: 1L, 2T



CHAPTER 2



FIREBACK

Tletmictia (let-el-mic-TEE-ah) belong to the savage warrior caste of the ghula, and as such are committed to the annihilation of the Free Peoples. They were the foot soldiers who laid waste to the Tribe of the Forest during the Invasion, and they now continue a relentless hunt for all who oppose the coming of the Third People.

Firebacks are massive creatures built something like huge, horned, many-eyed, four-armed apes. (The *harii* on page 67 are battling a fireback.) They earn their names from the unearthly blue-green flames that lick their spines like the fires that burn in the northern sky. Firebacks first entered Tuwa through the Bright Gate, and they are most commonly found in the West or marching with armies from the City of Bones. Tracking them is easy — just follow trail of carnage.

Tactics: Firebacks are sadistic and completely ruthless creatures who take great pleasure in murder and rampant destruction. They've got it all — they're big, they're fast, and they will pound the stuffing out of anything they can get their hands on. Though they can speak, firebacks rarely deign to give any creature native to Tuwa the respect of a single word unless forced.

Fireback tactics are simple — wade in and kill everything in the way. With *frenzy II*, the Scout's *overrun* ability, and a heap of attacks, they head straight for melee without considering the possibility of defeat. They are by no means stupid, however, and they're often accompanied by Keeper warriors (who trust them about as much as the heroes, as a fireback will abandon its Keepers for a tactical retreat if it obviously has no chance of winning).

Fireback (Huge Horror Outsider Walker — 174 XP):
Str 18, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 6; SZ H (3x4, Reach 2); Spd 50 ft ground; Init III; Atk VII; Def IV; Res VII; Health VII; Comp II; Skills: Athletics VIII, Intimidate V, Spellcasting II; Spells: Brawn I, Scare I; Qualities: *Achilles heel (heartstone)*, *class ability (Scout: overrun)*, *damage reduction 6*, *dramatic entrance*, *fearsome*, *frenzy II*, *knockback*, *natural defense (fire)*, *never outnumbered*, *tough III*, *treacherous*

Attacks/Weapons: Gore III (threat 2d10+4 lethal; threat 18–20; qualities: *bleed*), Slam II × 2 (dmg 1d10+4 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *AP2*), Trample II (dmg 1d12+4 fire; threat 19–20; notes: Medium or smaller characters only, Fort (DC equal to 1/2 damage suffered) or become *sprawled*), Sweeping Blow (subdual damage attack III: 10 ft. aura; dmg 1d8 subdual per 2 Threat Levels, Ref DC 20 for 1/2 damage)

Treasure: 2L, 2M, 3T

FLESH-EATER

The blight of magic lies heavy on Tuwa and its people, changing everything from the weather and the seasons to the beasts — and even women who are heavy with child. Flesh-eaters are malevolent spirits that supplant the unborn children

in a woman's womb and gestate there. When they are born, they often slay their "mothers" and anyone else who witnesses their horrific arrival, then flee into the dark woods and foothills to join their savage tribes in the wild.

The body of a flesh-eater looks that of a child missing its head, with skin black as pitch. In the abomination's chest is a massive mouth filled with knife-like teeth that can shear through a grown man's arm. They are supernaturally quick, and they tend to hunt in packs, stalking lone travelers or ambushing small bands of warriors who enter their realms for food and sport.

Tactics: Flesh-eaters are ravenous monsters whose small stature belies the incredible danger they can pose to a party. They are almost always found in groups of 4–10, and they work together with aggressive gang and ambush tactics to take down foes much larger than themselves. Flesh-eaters' high Speed and *superior jumper III* ability helps them pounce on foes like cats. Once they have grabbed a victim, they try to latch on with their *grappler* quality — or just bite off a large mouthful with their powerful jaws. If a flesh-eater manages to pin a foe, the pack abandons any noncombat tasks to descend on the victim like a school of piranhas, making the best use of their Ferocity and Misdirection feats to finish them off as quickly as possible and *devour* the body.

Flesh-eater (Small Horror Outsider Walker — 90 XP):
Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8; SZ S (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 40 ft ground; Init VII; Atk V; Def VII; Res II; Health IV; Comp III; Skills: Acrobatics V, Sneak VIII, Tactics V; Qualities: *Achilles heel (heartstone)*, *blindsight*, *devour*, *feat (Ferocity Basics, Misdirection Basics, Misdirection Mastery)*, *grappler*, *repulsive II*, *superior jumper III*, *unnerving*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite V (dmg 3d6+1 lethal; threat 16–20; qualities: *bleed*)

Treasure: 1L, 1M, 1T

FORMLESS

The *mochipatl* (MO-chee-pah-tel) are beings of pure magic. In their native form, they appear as floating blobs of glowing energy, scintillating in a mind-bending pattern that mesmerizes the unwary. To look on a formless in its "natural" state is both beautiful and horrific, for through them mortals gain a small taste of the Other World and the terror that may befall mankind.

The greatest delight of a formless is deceiving the Free Peoples, and they plot with high-ranking yaqyachi to corrupt and undo all that is free and good. These foul beings have many tools available to aid them in leading Tuwa into darkness — exceptional intelligence, limitless magical power, and the ability to take on the flesh of loved ones, elders, and trusted friends. Formless are most common in the cities of the Keepers, where they have easy access to victims and an audience to appreciate their evil plots.



Tactics: The formless are some of the most powerful spellcasters of the ghula, and as such they are exceedingly dangerous to the unprepared observer. Though not as physically tough as most of their kind, they are exceptionally cagey and difficult to pin down. Formless make judicious use of their *shapeshifter* quality to keep a low profile and keep enemies off balance (usually by mimicking allies) until they either sense the time is right to strike or realize that their chosen form has outlasted its usefulness. When they do reveal themselves, they attempt to stay at arm's reach and break the foes' will using spells and their Mouth of Madness and Stunning Visage extraordinary attacks. Formless are too clever to stay in a losing fight, and they gladly throw pawns and bystanders in the way of heroes (via *beguiling* or the Command II or Insanity II spells) to cover their escape.

Formless (Medium Ooze Outsider Flyer — 131 XP): Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 16; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft flight; Init V; Atk III; Def V; Res VII; Health V; Comp IV; Skills: Bluff IX, Haggle VI, Spellcasting IX; Spells: Bestow Curse, Calm Emotions, Command II, Confounding Images, Counter Magic I, Entropic Shield, Insanity II, Ray of Enfeeblement, Scintillating Pattern; Qualities: *Achilles heel (heartstone)*, *beguiling*, *blindsight*, *cagey* III, *monstrous defense* II, *shapeshifter* III, *spell reflection*, *unlimited spell points*

Attacks/Weapons: Mouth of Madness (stress damage attack III: 70 ft. gaze; dmg 1d8 stress per 2 Threat Levels, Ref DC 20 for 1/2 damage), Stunning Visage (stunning attack II: 70 ft. gaze; Will DC 15 or become *stunned* 2d6 rounds)

Treasure: 1L, 3M





CHAPTER 3: SUNCHASER

***"RISE LIKE THE SUN, HERO
— OR WE WILL ALL FALL TO DARKNESS."***

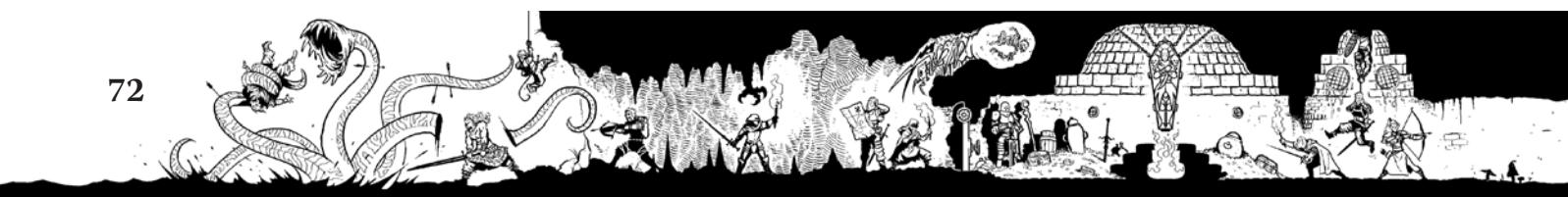
Come sit with me, youngsters, and hear the tale to end all tales. I know your Pa taught you about the dark times, when all men were enslaved in the Underheart and the Crone wiped her boots in our blood. No doubt Gram tucked you in with stories about Longtooth the Brave, his beloved Lady Snowblade who died to see us free, Brighteyes who never gave up hope — and of course, that wily trickster, the Rascal. Those are good stories all — and truer than you know — but now I'll tell you of the world those heroes led us to — this world we live in.

Just over that rise runs the Morru-Braid, the greatest of all rivers in the valley, that winds the Thousand Rivers together into a single course. I'm sure a few of you have fetched buckets from it when the wells were low. Named for the Lady of the Moon, it rolls across the lands of men like a strand of Morru's hair fallen from the heavens. I've seen its source and mouth with my own eyes.

You there! Your sour face says you don't believe, but I know the Braid's entire course, for I rode with the Rascal in my youth! Oh, mention of the Rascal makes you more skeptical, does it? Think, boy. It's not like he stopped chasing the sun when he got here!

The Morru-Braid's source lies far to the south in the Black Peaks. A pure spring gushes out between great crystals more than twice the height of a man. Fill a skin at that spring, and the waters will last you three weeks — they are so sweet and filling! Below that lies the High Mirror — yes, the very mountain lake where the Rascal bested the drake-king in a riddle game and won a thousand years of peace for the last of Snowblade's people. The College of Riddles stands over where the great river joins the Rimewater, and many of the finest mages in all the world learn their letters in that school nestled amid the high peaks and snow.

Here on the Anmai Plains, the water slows and pools, curling through farms and fields on its way past fair Pahdris, the City of Kings. It was here that men first set foot in the Thousand-River Valley, fighting for their lives as the Crone's goblin soldiers chased them. Yes, goblins are wily — they pursued those first men as you would stalk a lost sheep, knowing it cannot escape you. Ever the war-captain, dour Longtooth of the Ahset led the goblins to the banks of the Morru-Braid and taunted them from great rafts on the water, using his own people as bait. A flood swept away Ahset and goblins alike, and at that cost we slept free under the sky at last.





The Rascal's folk — the Janno — found countless ruins scattered across the Anmai like children's blocks thrown down in a tantrum. They also found the last of the elves. Some great calamity had destroyed the strength of that ancient race, and only a final few remained huddled in the ruins. As the land welcomed the Janno, so did we adopt the elves, and these days there is hardly a palace or farmhouse that doesn't have a bit of that fey blood flowing through it.

The river runs north, turning fierce as a wounded boar when it enters Longtooth's Roar — the canyons and cliffs that separate our plains from the great swamp called Gron'Ver. There the hero Brighteyes, priestess of the Sharos, led her kin in search of Longtooth and the other Ahset lost in the flood. Instead she found a battlefield, for the swamp is home to so much more than just birds and beasts! Cunning Vessa warriors with shining black scales did battle there with the mighty Erron — the tree-spirits of the swamp. Even the Erron, who have memories longer than their branches, had forgotten the cause of their feud. But where others saw calamity, Brighteyes saw hope and promise. She taught both the Erron and the Vessa the worship and glory of the Sun-Lord. Uniting saurians and rootwalkers in shared faith, the Sharos built a nation of light in the cool waters of the Ver, and thus was planted the seeds of our modern world.

Beyond the swamp mists, a thousand miles or more from here, the Morru-Braid pours at last into the lapping waves of Morru's Mirror. Here Longtooth's broken rafts were finally swept out to into open water. Cast ashore like a piece of driftwood, Longtooth was the first man to gaze upon the Fang Reaches. Those bitter spires of stone dot the grey waters like the teeth of some fallen drake-god. The Ahset found great carvings along those cliffs, and kindred souls in their sculptors, the dwarves. Those stalwart miners knew the Underheart and the Crone of old, for they too had been her slaves long ago. The dwarves made a blood-pact with the Ahset to stand together against the Crone's forces, and now they both ply those far-off seas as one people.

Yes, we have done well in the many years since our Flight. We have built cities, empires, colleges, and farms; but all is not suncakes and firebloom wine. The Crone has never forgotten us, and with every passing year the dark omens grow. Her goblins stalk the roads by night, preying on the unwary, and the merchants bicker over who will be chosen as the new Raven King. I even hear tales that the Century Briar blooms once more, and the Crone's Ninety-Nine Knights are loose in the land. Ever is she reaching out with her black, black claws to pull us under once more.

So, youngsters — whether you grow up to be a fruit merchant or a farmer, a wind-knight or a sunchaser, you must never forget that the Crone is coming. When she does, we'll need heroes as stalwart and clever as the champions of old if we are to remain free!

UNDER A NEW SUN

We know little about the old world, youngsters, but I'll tell you what knowledge we have from legend. The old world was graced by the light of the sun-god Tohn, and in his care the race of men flourished. That world was nurtured by the songs of Morru, Lady of the Moon, and in her light our spirits were lifted. Many kingdoms flourished there — certainly more than the four that survive today. Some escaped the Crone's notice; others were utterly destroyed by the Ninety-Nine Knights of the Maw. It may be that the surviving kingdoms exist in that world still, but we'll never know for sure.

Then there's another place — a cavernous shadowland *between* the worlds lit by the light of sun and moon. In the days of our forefathers, four mighty kingdoms were drawn down into this Underheart. Taken from different lands, the people tried to cling to their own cultures, to preserve their ways, and to protect the blood of their kings. But the Crone ground them all beneath a single boot and cared nothing for their differences.

It must have been hard to judge time in a place without night and day, much less count the turning of the seasons, but the Wise believe we bore the yoke of the Crone for four hundred years before the rise of the heroes — before Lady Snowblade, hero of the Matha, solved the riddle of the moon pools. The light of Morru shines on all lands, and those waters that reflect her radiance can become a bridge between them. It was through those shimmering gates that the Crone had ensnared the men of Tohn's world, and it was through them that Snowblade proposed our flight from the darkness.

Snowblade's lover, the mighty Ahset hero Longtooth, was a great strategist. Seeing the need for soldiers, he secretly trained warriors from each of the kingdoms. He united their varied skills and built their loyalty until each man was a soldier ready to die at his command if it would save just one more of their loved ones. Longtooth's wisdom would buy the four kingdoms time, though the coin would be their own blood.

Brighteyes, a priestess of the nearly forgotten Sun and hero of the Sharos, planned the flight of the captives. Her designs and preparations insured that thousands would be able to flee at a moments notice, but still carry with them the supplies that would save them from exposure and starvation once they had left the Underheart. Her preparations gave the nations hope for a new life — a rich life that was more than just survival.

Finally, the Rascal — champion of the Janno and irrepressible trickster — crept into the throne room of the Crone and stole her black-scaled whip — the very one that had tasted the blood of ten thousand innocents. Not content just to humiliate her in the eyes of her slave-lords, he planted that vile weapon on one of her most powerful knights. Well, youngsters — when she found out, her rage was terrible to behold. She killed her that poor knight





TELLING THE TALE

As you add your own chapters to the Tale of the Rascal, you might find a use for the local phrases and unique expressions that sprinkle the speech of Thousand-River folk. Many of these refer to heroes of the Flight from the Underheart, such as Brighteyes, Longtooth, the Rascal, and Snowblade. Others date back to when humans served the Crone, reflecting the dark and perilous caverns where they were coined.

Brighteyes' Luck: Not actually luck at all, but the product of skill and planning.

Brushed by a Rose: Fortunate in romance; sometimes used ironically to indicate harm by too much attention. The rose is the Spirit of Joy's sacred plant.

Falcon Dance, The: The affairs of nobles, politics. The falcon dance is an elaborate traditional folkdance in which dancers play many different parts and are identified by simple animal masks. At the beginning of each chorus, those wearing falcon masks have a choice of steps they may take, and all the other dancers must react appropriately to the falcons' decisions.

Fiery Maw, The: The symbol of the Crone, Empress of the Underheart and Liege Lady of the Ninety-Nine Knights.

Goblin's Tooth: A physical sign of impending trouble. Goblins often leave their teeth behind when scouting a location for an attack.

(Looks Like a) Goblin's Trophy: Bedraggled.

(Has) Nine Thoughts: Confused.

In the Eye of the (Glass) Serpent: In mortal peril. The deadly glass serpent is a poisonous predator of the Underheart.

Like Firebloom Wine: A source of great pleasure. Fireblooms are rare subterranean flowers that produce a sweet nectar.

(Take) Longtooth's Stride: Move quickly and decisively, strike without warning.

(You'll) Pay the Crone: Hurry up. Before the exodus from Underheart, those who failed to meet their labor quotas "paid" for their sloth by enduring severe beatings.

Pearl Harp, The: A sign of nobility or hope. The hero Snowblade carried a pearl harp, and it has since become a symbol of all the peoples who escaped the Underheart.

right on the spot and took up her lost icon, right in front of the other knights! You can imagine what kind of effect that had on them! Some jockeyed for the lost knight's power and position, and others sought to put as much distance between themselves and their dark Lady as the sunless caverns would allow.

That infighting and confusion among the knights became the call to freedom for our waiting people. The four kingdoms united as one and rose in rebellion, fighting back against the Crone's overseers and vassals! Upon gaining our freedom from her labyrinths of darkness and stone, we waded across the sacred moon pools by the thousands to escape to this world — the lands of Avvis. We emerged dazzled into the light within this vast valley, rich with game and water. No men waited here to greet us — only the ruins of a mighty nation. Well, we lost no time in claiming those empty towers and forgotten cities and making their hollow stones into homes once again. Here we were free at last to live and build and prosper under the light of a new sun that we now know as Avva.

But we didn't come here alone — oh no! The Crone's foot soldiers crossed the moon pools right behind us. Those goblins poured out onto the Anmai plains in numbers equal to or greater than those of the escapees — and behind them came the Ninety-Nine Knights. None can say how many of the Crone's champions crossed the moon pools before Snowblade gave her life to seal the doorway she had opened. And none can say when the unending hate of the Crone will pry that passageway open once more.

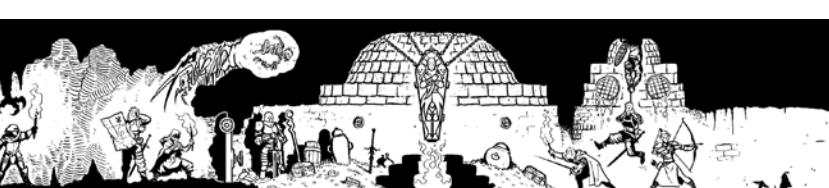
We've had nearly two hundred years to make this valley our home, youngsters. We will not be dragged under again.

GODS AND SPIRITS

When we came to Avvis, we brought with us the faith of all those who had been trapped in the Underheart — the worship of the Sun and Moon. The Lady of the Moon and Lord of the Sun are our patrons, embodying all those qualities that give life value. They are Love and Ambition, Grace and Power — the source of simple comforts and the spur to achieve more.

The first men to reach the open skies of Avvis were quick to offer their prayers of thanks to the heavens. Lady Morru, whose pale radiance shines down on all worlds, lit up the darkness of the first night, her white light burning deep within the moon pools like a glowing white ember. By dawn, those priests and mystics who favored the Sun had been granted visions of the coming light and knew that this world was warmed by the glory of the Sun-Lord Avva — a heroic god of light and warmth much like the Sun-Lord Tohn of our old world, though Avva was perhaps younger and more brash.

While many kept to the old faith and simply revered the skies, we quickly found that Avvis had its own powerful spirits, who could also lend their blessings to the favored. While not as triumphant or all-encompassing as the Lights of Heaven, these spirits still grant their faithful significant boons. They gather in



four camps, and none seem to care much for the worshippers of any other camp. Perhaps your Gram has told you stories of them while tucking you into bed. Best known to men are the Insia, also known as the spirits of the Silver Crown, who embody the virtues of the elves. In Anmai, the worship of the Insia has become the most common of faiths, since the Janno have embraced many elven traditions as their own. Along the shores of the Iron Sea, the dwarves build mighty monuments to the Ruul, the Faces of the World. These spirits are of a more ordered and elemental nature, each lending a portion of its essence to fill the world with form and substance. The Ahset had no problem incorporating this belief into their own, since Moon and Sun had never claimed to be responsible for the basic craftsmanship of creation.

The other two camps of godly spirits have their human followers, but few would speak of those faiths openly. The Lyss are devilish creatures — beings of violence, seduction, and power both stolen and unearned. While meticulous bargainers, they are also cunning and deceptive in their terms, allowing the worshipper or would-be bargainer to plunge himself into unending damnation. The Soregg are avatars of simple, fundamental decay — less intellectual, but no less insidious — than the Lyss. Champions of life run amok, the Soregg offer terrible strength to those who embrace vile power — right up until their final, inevitable dissolution into a pool of filth. Many of the more aggressive races of Avvis have open dealings with these dark forces. For instance, the orc war-priests of the Kaia Jungle make an art out of bargaining with the Lyss and Soregg to gain ascendance in the bloody struggles for status among their tribes.

Avvis is also home to beings that can be thought of only as living gods — creatures so ancient and powerful that it seems their songs may never end. While some are likely no more than myth, a few are almost certainly real. The drakes give their respect to six dragon kings — beings that the drakes claim are as far beyond their mighty kind as they are above a fence lizard. The Vessair princes — lords of the saurians who did not convert to the faith of Brighteyes — also speak of six dragons as the founders of their race, likely the same ancient patrons as the drakes revere. More ominously, the ogres of Silt-Rift make cruel offerings to the Bloodghost, a spirit of destruction said to haunt the wastelands to the east. If you believe the worst tales, the rootwalkers of Gron'Ver have piled up a mountain of bones trying to appease such a being — an embodiment of death that resides somewhere in the desolation that is Ashenaad.

And of course, the Crone — whose most zealous servants command strange gifts that match those of any priest — must also be ranked among such titans. You have to wonder at her hidden history, and consider that she too might have fallen into the trap that is the Underheart from some other place. If the rumors of her return are more than rumors, then learning the truth of our ancient enemy's origins may become much more than just an exercise for librarians and riddle-masters.

TELLING THE TALE (CONT.)

Polishing Rubble: Wasting effort, sometimes on an assigned task.

Rascal's Breakfast: An impossible task. The Rascal allegedly finished many such deeds before lunch.

Rascal's (Only) Child, The: A clever person, or possibly a lucky one.

Rain and Stones: Things that can wait until tomorrow, but not much longer than that; important but not critical concerns.

Sawing a Stone: Making a great effort where only a great effort will succeed.

(Take) Seven Paces: Perform a good day's work. A work-party can dig seven paces of a tunnel in a day.

Song and Stillness, The: The lot of men, the way of the world, an unchangeable fate.

Stout Hand (of Ahset/Janno/Matha/Sharos): A person displaying the noblest qualities of his culture. This is a high compliment.

Stride Across Needles: Act like a conqueror, achieve an easy victory. See also *Walks on Needles*.

(Sing a) Summer Tune: Be infatuated, or have a passing love untested by time. See also *Winter Chorus*.

"(It's All) Sun and Moon:" A phrase asking for a broader perspective, usually in reference to something that's too large or established to change.

Taken by Silence: Dead. See also *Song and Stillness*.

The Serpent Blinked: An escape from certain death (often by luck), or a rare event. Serpents of the Thousand-River Valley do not have eyelids. See also *In the Eye of the (Glass) Serpent*.

Walk on (Pine) Needles: Be fortunate in war. The pine tree is the sacred plant of the Spirit of Triumph.

(Sing a) Winter Chorus: Have a friendship or love that's been repeatedly tested and stayed true. See also *Summer Tune*.

THE HIDDEN RIVER

Magic is a natural force, flowing through the world like a great stream of moonlight. Fey are living incarnations of this force, rising from the world to reflect its inner character. Understanding and guiding this energy flow is all-important to the working of magic, and places or people whose inner harmony is disrupted may lose their grip on that invisible river and either abandon their powers or be immolated by an uncontrolled flood of silver light.

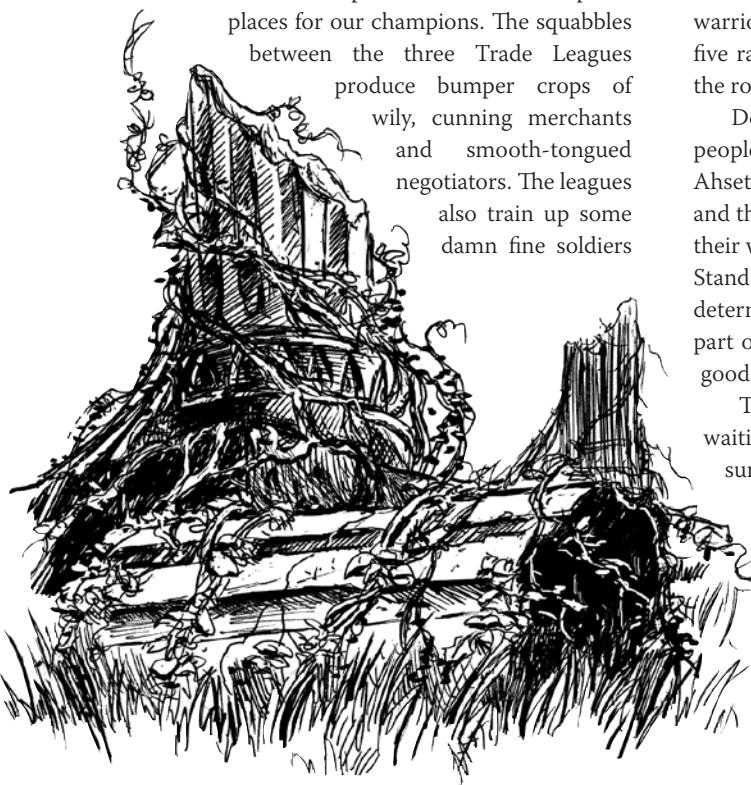


The race of men can draw upon and shape this flow only through the grace of Lady Morru, who bestowed this gift upon us so that we might rise to greater heights. As a result, all humans with the capacity to use magic are marked by it with hair the color of her light — either a single streak or an entire head of white hair. Those who study the ways of magic diligently may find such streaks appearing in their hair after they have mastered its lore — a sign that Lady Morru approves of their passion and diligence. Those with all-white hair do not seem to possess any greater magical aptitude than those with but a single streak, though it is true that “Morru’s favor” is almost twice as likely to be laid upon women as men, and is far more common among the Matha and Sharos than it is among the Ahset or Janno.

ON THE MADNESS OF SUNCHASERS

They say in the Anmai that heroes aren’t born — they’re taught. It’s true that many adventurers whose deeds are now sung in the Tale of the Rascal got their starts as anything but sunchasers. The banks of the river offer a lot of different pathways for the hero-to-be — some through schools that offer formal training, and others that teach the young mostly through hard knocks. Don’t laugh — even the lowliest cutpurse learned his trade from some sort of master. Those who didn’t probably ended up in the stocks long before thievery became a vocation!

In these parts, we look to a couple of places for our champions. The squabbles between the three Trade Leagues produce bumper crops of wily, cunning merchants and smooth-tongued negotiators. The leagues also train up some damn fine soldiers



for those days when negotiations sound a lot more like the ringing of steel than the jingling of coin. The Library of Kings in Faer Pahdris has an endless appetite for lore and the means to gather it. The Blue Magisters in the Six Lakes have put many a mage on the road to greatness, and not all of them wear the blue robes forever.

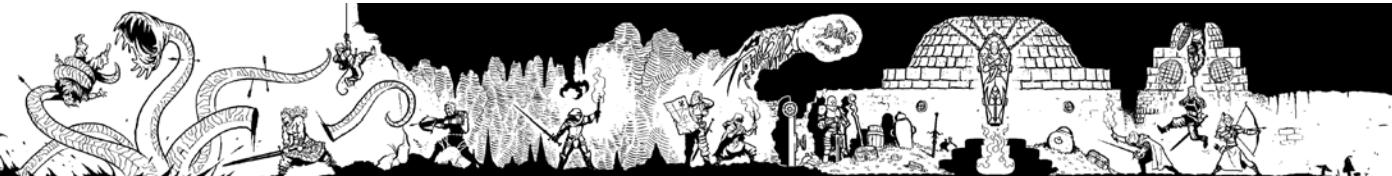
Even the Rolling Circle — the traveling performers who claim to maintain the ways of the old world — have given us some noble rogues whose bare knuckles and quick thinking have felled villains who thought themselves beyond the reach of a brave man with empty hands. You can’t deny that such rogues carry the Rascal’s spirit as much as they do his blood. Then there are the faithful servants of the Silver Crown — the followers of the elven spirits. Rising above it all, literally, is the Order of Pearl — the noble knights who guard all of Anmai against the minions of the Crone from the backs of their flying steeds.

In other lands, I hear it’s much the same. To the south, in the lands of the Matha, you hear tales of the Crag-Guard — men who fight atop ember-striders with such skill that you would swear the two had a single heart beating for both bodies. Their riddle-masters might sound like a bunch of scribes buried under books, but they see the worlds of might-have-been and pull forth answers to questions you never even thought to ask.

As the river runs north, you cross paddles with Brighteyes’ folk. The Sharos have their own schools, their own legends, and their own sunchasers who stride across the world. Why, I bet if I just say the word “Hazelighter,” you’ll picture the sacred warriors in their grey robes arrayed around the Sharos temples five ranks deep! Brighteyes won over both the lizard-men and the rootwalkers of the swamp, and their traditions live on.

Down where the Great River meets the sea, you’ll hear of people who rise high and carry the dreams of their brothers. The Ahset have built great academies where they teach the art of war and the art of dance as one. The fame of the Blade-Weavers and their wicked spears reaches across all the world so far as I know. Standing close beside them are the dwarves — so focused and determined that every one of them takes to a craft like it was a part of his soul. There’s a reason you’ll pay a dear price for any goods of theirs that make it this far up the river.

This valley has a thousand rivers and a thousand songs waiting for heroes to sing them. What sets the heroes — the sunchasers — apart from others is their willingness to take that knowledge and run with it as far as the Sun and Moon will let them. The wind-knight who leaves the daily patrols of the Order of Pearl never forgets where he came from, nor who taught him to put a harness on the sky, but he knows that his destiny calls out to him from the horizon and beyond. He may sever all ties, or he may make a graceful exit, but when the fever is upon him, go he must. Heh. I’m sure you youngsters of all people understand.





Once a sunchaser sets out for glory — now that's when things get interesting. To really claim the title, you've got to wade through some sunpools — those doors to far-away places, or into the corners of your own land that you never knew or were warned away from as a young one. Every song is different, but many start with the same tune — a fresh adventurer who needs to escape the life he's always known decides to chase the sun to a new beginning. He looks for a place where all people expect of him is that he shine like a beacon of courage and share his tale with those who have to stay close to hearth and home, doing the steady work that must be done. After all, they dream of adventure too.

Most folks will welcome a sunchaser — or even a small band of them — with open arms. The true sunchaser is ready to lend a keen mind and a strong back to the simple chores that are always wanting for extra hands. That plus a few stories is usually enough to secure a night's lodging and some decent fare. Mind your manners, and you'll find your welcome lasts even longer in the smaller villages, which have both more tasks to share and a deep thirst for news from beyond their borders. In turn, you're sure to hear about the people's woes — bandits, a lost wagon, even those damn beetles. If there is some outstanding task that calls for more cunning than the local sheriff can muster, or more steel than a dozen pitchforks, you can bet you'll know about it soon enough. Don't complain about them trying to put their problems on your plate right next to the roasted bird and slice of bread. They're handing you the keys to glory — the raw notes for the next verse in your song.

THE THOUSAND-RIVER VALLEY

Here's the secret, youngsters — it all comes down to the river, and in many cases through it, or along it. The mighty, rushing Morru-Braid gathers a thousand creeks, tames a hundred streams, and unites a dozen mighty rivers into one tapestry of water and life. Four kingdoms of men escaped the Underheart into the light of Avva and the Thousand-River Valley. In the three centuries since their flight, those same four peoples have become well established across this new land. The river is both the lifeline and the lifeblood of humans in this new world.

The Morru-Braid's course is divided into four regions. The largest and most populous of these is the Anmai. To the south lie the Black Peaks, where the headwaters of the Morru-Braid spout from icy springs. North of Anmai is the Gron'Ver, an enormous stretch of wetlands that eventually empties into Morru's Mirror, a vast gulf sheltered from the Iron Sea by the many islands of the fourth region — the Fang Reaches.

PEOPLE OF THE VALLEY

The Thousand-River Valley was home to many races even before the arrival of men. In most places, those folk joined with the new settlers in creating new cities — or at least traded with and visited their new neighbors. Other, more exotic travelers sometimes found their way into the valley by chance or accident. When one misstep can send you skipping across a sunpool halfway around the world, it's not too strange to meet someone from so far off that you've never even heard of the place they call home. As your tale unfolds, you may find yourself among companions of almost any race.

Men came to the valley after escaping from slavery in the Underheart. Life beneath a common yoke taught these people a mutual respect even as they struggled to preserve their separate heritages. In the three centuries since the Flight, men have spread to all corners of the valley. The race of men includes the studious Matha, the cunning Janno, the serene Sharos, and the hardy Ahset. While most humans enjoy relatively peaceful lives and travel infrequently, many exhibit a powerful wanderlust that produces generation after generation of strong-willed sunchasers.

Drakes might have seen the new arrivals as little more than easy prey if not for the Rascal's famous duel with the drake-king. Wily and powerful, the drakes of the Black Peaks still regard the drake-king as their greatest champion, and they do not casually disregard his voice. The Rascal's quick wits elevated all men in the great reptilians' esteem, and the surviving Matha were allowed to build new cities below the drakes' cavernous homes.

Dwarves arrived on Avvis millennia ago, tunneling their way out of the Underheart and slavery at the hands of the Crone. When Longtooth's people washed up on the shores of the Fang Reaches, the dwarves were quick to offer them shelter. Upon learning that the Ahset had fought a bloody revolution against the Crone's armies, the dwarves embraced them as brothers! Although the strongest of the dwarf-halls are constantly battling for supremacy, they are quick to present a common front to any outsiders. Dwarven traders and sunchasers are common sights along the length of the valley.

Elves, also known as the Rainen, once claimed dominion over both the Anmai Plains and the fertile kingdom where the desert of Avva's Anvil now smolders. The fair ones are nearly extinct, and the few who remain make their homes among the Janno ruin-holds. Adventurers are rare among the elves, and those who set out to chase the sun quickly become figures of story and song. Despite their reputation as powerful sorcerers, the elves are more pitied than feared, for it's widely believed that the last of them will die soon, leaving behind nothing but memory and salt.

Pech, known to men as "the Westfolk," live in modest villages dotting the Brenne-Stones to the west of the Anmai, sometimes sharing their pastures with Matha or Janno shepherds. These small folk are normally content to live out their lives in their alpine domains, but pech adventurers are not unheard of. When



CHAPTER 3



they do leave their homes to chase the sun, their small size and quick wits are considered an advantage among bands that ply their trade as ruin-delvers.

Rootwalkers, known to most as the Erron, live in the Great Swamp. I tell you, young ones, you've never seen anything like these tree-folk. Though they are loath to travel, they still manage to produce a handful of sunchasers who feel the call of lore not known in the Gron'Ver. To have a rootwalker seek out your expedition is considered a good omen, and sunchaser bands actively try to court the favor of the Erron when they can.

Saurians were the other folk that Brighteyes found in the Gron'Ver. Even the most casual visitor to the Great Swamp has heard of the Vessa and their nine princes. Two of the Vessa princes converted to the worship of Avva and joined the Sharos, while the others sent champions out into the world beyond the swamp, searching for glory and honor. While saurian tribesmen are warlike and occasionally raid their neighbors, a saurian sunchaser draws little comment so long as he doesn't actively antagonize the locals.

ANMAI

At the heart of the Thousand-River Valley are the ruin-studded grasslands of Anmai — the proving grounds of sunchasers seeking glory through discovery and battle. These plains are rolling and fair, with small woods filling the valley's broad center. Waterways cut narrow canyons through the hills and highlands, and sometimes you don't see these clefts in the ground until you're standing at the very edge of a fatal tumble. Life is everywhere here — green moss and thick brush cling to every surface, and animals both meek and massive browse among the foliage. The white limestone bed of the valley is riddled with natural caves and caverns in which flowing water produces fairytale landscapes of carved passages and living flows of stone.

The elves must have lived here in huge numbers once, building sleek monuments and twisting towers from the Sand Scour Pass in the east right up to the foothills of the Brenne-Stones in the west. Unless you're in the heart of a thicket or have your head in a barrel, you can be certain that at least one of their hundred-foot statues or spires is visible somewhere between you and the horizon. The elves built them to last too, carving their towers from moonshell — a pretty white stone that's still as smooth as the day it was cut, even after centuries of Anmai's hard summer rains. They decorated their creations with a greenish metal that's a bit like aged bronze. You can see the winding filigree between





the blocks and along the huge arches on most of these ancient structures. The metal didn't hold up quite as well as the stone, and a lot of the spires have fallen in on themselves where pins and braces gave way. The weirdest parts of the ruins are the lihm-crystals — long blades of grass-green stone that spring up like weeds in the white rubble. Lihm-crystals can grow to be 10 — maybe 12 feet long in time. Seems like they were part of the buildings once, but like crops untended, they've turned wild. You probably played in them as a kid if you grew up here.

I've heard the elves who are left say that the buildings and monuments we've moved into were once part of a nation called Faer Wernan, but even they don't know the song of how it all came to ruin. Some of those lost cities run deep into hillsides or far below the fields. You can still find elf-jewels or even better treasures deep in the fallen halls of this valley. Just don't buy any treasure maps while you're in town — they're all fakes, you know?

If you are like most travelers in Anmai, you'll soon end up on one of the ships or barges that ply the rivers, for that's the easiest way to reach the towns and marketplaces of the Janno. But if you don't quickly learn to drive a hard bargain with the river captains, you'll find yourself with an empty purse before you're halfway across the Anmai! The boats run into them big river serpents just often enough that you might be able to barter your sword arm against a cheap cabin if you're actually good with that blade you're carrying.

Ancient roads connect the largest of the ruin-holds, but most places have only simple trails to lead you to the next hearth or inn. You'll see wagons on the roads, but those who want to travel the trails or strike out across country usually rely on their own two feet. Some with a bit more coin ride horses or tame rybou — and I do mean tame! Don't go trying to climb up on just any rybou you see out on the plains — those horns aren't just for show! Of course if you really want to see the countryside, you'll need a hippocryph. The wind knights all ride them, but I've known a few other brave souls who've also managed to harness them as mounts.

Crops are good, and people do all right here, but that doesn't mean it's safe. All kinds of beasties roam those hills, and clearing a ruin to make a new settlement can be deadly work. You get a nest of beggar beetles near your home, and the whole town could wake up with nothing to eat one fine spring morning!

We get our share of the veteran sunchasers too. We've got goblin teeth lying around worse than just about anywhere, and even a couple of Knights of the Maw have settled in and made their presence known here. Anmai is also the site of the Bitterwell — the moon pool through which men first came to the valley. Most will tell you that the next great battle against the armies of the Burning Maw will take place here as well. That plus the outcry over the coming of a Raven King keep the Wise and the Mighty in Anmai pretty busy.

HOME OF THE JANNO

After our escape from the Underheart, the Janno began to settle in Anmai. The first villages were born in the shadows of the elves' broken towers. These ruin-holds came together quickly as the new settlers reshaped the ruins to meet their needs. Most Janno were stonecutters then — a skill hard-earned from their servitude to the Crone. Later came the free-holds — settlements along the riverbanks where the rich soil could support them.

Having just fought a goddess for their freedom, the Rascal's people were in no rush to set up new masters — even among their own. Instead, the villages elected headmen to oversee the needs of each town. A headman usually serves until a challenger makes his case and the residents call for a vote at the next major festival. Years can pass with but one headman in charge. Many headmen are former soldiers or wardens, trusted by the townsfolk for their strength and their restraint. In the towns and cities, they call headmen mayors, but it's the same job, just on a larger scale.

When a village gets big enough to be called a town, its people usually elect a judge to settle disputes and see to it that all are dealt with fairly. Though the mayor is a man more often than not, the judge is usually a woman of middle years, known for her loyalty to the hold and sense of fairness.

In the largest communities, the mayor might have dozens of assistants, and the judge might command a sizable force of wardens to keep the peace, but most places don't need more than a dozen folk to keep things running. The Janno are a self-reliant people, and they get suspicious real quickly of those who would command others by any means but their own persuasiveness. This part of their nature means the bigger towns, where a soul can't know all his neighbors by name, get a bit lively (some would say lawless) for most folks' taste. But I bet you'll hold your own if you find yourself in such a place.

While the free-holds and ruin-holds make up the bulk of the Janno settlements, there are two cities worth the name: Faer Pahdris and Lin Moran. Oh, you've heard of Pahdris, the City of Kings? The greatest ruin-hold in Anmai, Faer Pahdris has become the center of trade and politics for most of the valley. It's a huge place that spans both banks of the Morru-Braid, right where it curls around a massive outcropping of white rock that looks like a tiny mountain thrusting out of the plain. The city spreads out for miles like a wheel around this rocky hub. Ancient elf-towers mix with the industrious constructions of men and the open markets that the Janno so prize.

The current High Mayor — one Aldo Genessar — has governed Faer Pahdris for the last ten years. Its First Judge, Talarii Morad, might be the richest and most powerful woman in the world, for she presides over the one court that the three Trader Leagues have all accepted as binding in their disputes. Indeed, most major powers in the land have some holdings in this city, making it a wild mixture of opportunity and danger for residents and sunchasers alike.





THE RAVEN KING

Who is the Raven King you ask? Well, it's been a while since we had one, so it's not so surprising you haven't heard of them. You see, the lore of the ancient elves — well, it lives on. Spirits are born out of the ruins the same as they rise from the natural features of the land. You might have seen them sometimes — they usually look like huge birds made of jagged, inky runes. The elves call them Korret, which is a good enough name for some, including me.

Sometimes a Korret takes a shine to a person and follows him about for a while. Once in a while, one will even start to whisper to its chosen person, becoming first an advisor and then maybe a friend. Each Korret has a bond to the place of its birth that gives it an instinctual grasp of that area's secrets, as many of Anmai's spirits have.

The In'Korret is born of Faer Pahdris, and is the largest and most powerful kind of Korret. As soon as an In'Korret forms, it begins to seek out its chosen. A man or woman marked by the companionship of such a Korret becomes the new Raven King. He alone commands the Pahnoru — hundreds of elemental guardians who defend the white spires of the old city.

Since men resettled Faer Pahdris, there have been only five Raven Kings. Most have been worthy caretakers who ensured times of prosperity for the city, but no one will ever forget the horrors of the third Raven king and the misery he inflicted upon the city for nearly twenty years.

Four years ago, a new In'Korret emerged from the depths of the city and set out to find its chosen one. Many who covet the power of the Raven King are trying to track it down and earn or seize its favor to become the next master of Faer Pahdris.



Lin Moran is the largest of the free-holds and a tribute to what we've accomplished since we came to Anmai. Built on the shores of Lake Oremir, it's the crossroads of the Six Lakes and Anmai's shield against the ogres of the Salt-Weep. It may not be as flamboyant as Faer Pahdris, but it still combines the sophistication and sharp wits that are the best traditions of the Janno. Lin Moran is, on the whole, a safer place than Faer Pahdris — as long as you don't count the dangers presented by the ogres.

VOICES OF THE SONG

The Janno line of kings was broken long ago in the Underheart. Though Anmai now has no nobility, its various orders, covenants, and guilds wield considerable power.

The Ganren League: The old nations that emerged from the Underheart are now scattered to the far corners of the Thousand-River Valley, but it is the flow of coin up and down the Morru-Braid that continues to bind them together. The Ganren League is one of three great merchant houses that ply the waterways, spreading news and goods to waiting customers. Competition between the leagues has turned fierce and ugly in the past few years, and civil greetings between ship captains and caravan masters have been replaced with suspicious glares and occasional violence. Cadres of guards — once protectors of the League's goods — are becoming standing armies that the merchants use to batter the trade routes of their rivals.

The Library of Kings: In Faer Pahdris, an ancient spire sometimes called the Sixth Tower houses the sages of the Library of Kings. These learned men and women work with the city's surviving elves to reconstruct the true history of the former elven nation and discover how it fell into ruin. As the foremost source of experts on artifacts taken from the ruins dotting the plains, the Library commands awesome wealth and is a patron for many of the sunchaser bands that delve the hidden depths of Anmai. For those seeking lost lore of the land, advice about an upcoming expedition to the ruins, or simply a place to fence their discoveries, a visit to the Sixth Tower can be an invaluable resource.

The Magisters: Across the lake from Lin Moran stands Miyad, also called the Third Tower. Miyad is home to the most famous gathering of mages in Anmai. Known for their blue robes, the Magisters deal with rogue mages who present a threat to the people. Magic is a new skill for the Janno, which they acquired along with elven blood only after their arrival in the valley. Because most folk are still a bit fearful of mages, they are happy to let the Magisters collect, guide, and police those with a talent for the magical arts. Second only to the academies of the Matha in turning out skilled and disciplined mages, the Blue Magisters are currently stretched thin by the rise of a new Blood-Lord in the Salt-Weep.

Order of Pearl: In Anmai, "knights" are actually wandering champions — brave heroes committed to the causes of their order rather than noble lords. The most esteemed and maybe the most recognizable of these knightly orders is the Order of Pearl. The Knights of the Pearl have made the war against the Crone their highest calling, seeking out and destroying her servants wherever they may hide. Thus, their primary foes range from petty goblins to the mightiest of the Crone's Ninety-Nine Knights. At the Order's main chapterhouse in Faer Pahdris, the knights train and stable the famous hippogriff steeds that have become as much a symbol of their order as their gleaming white shields.



PERILS OF ANMAI

A sunchaser seeking to make a name for himself in Anmai will find no shortage of foes. Villages of every size face constant threats from the beasts native to the valley. As I've told you before, the worst of the bunch are those damned beggar beetles, which can strip fields and storehouses bare in hours, leaving folk to starve. Goblins and other servants of the Crone still lurk in the countless caves and ruins, taking their orders from the Knights of the Maw, who still hunt the race of men. The ruined spires of ancient Faer Wernan offer the prospect of fame and wealth, but they also hold sudden death for the unwary. Strange, warped creatures leftover from the fall of the elf nations — including the so-called gaunt elves — call many of these structures home. With competition among the Merchant Leagues flaring to violence and the rise of a new warchief among the ogres of the Salt-Weep, Anmai offers plenty of opportunities for sunchasers of a more martial sort. Hovering over all other conflicts like the black thunderheads of summer is the prospect of the Crone's imminent return, and the need to safeguard the entire region from the grip of her awful tyranny, no matter what the cost.

YOUR FIRST STEPS

While folk speak of Anmai as if it were one big patch of grass, there's a lot to see as you make your way across the heart of the Thousand-River Valley. You sunchasers who are just starting out would do well to familiarize yourselves with the local landmarks.

The Runewaters: The western half of the Anmai is the most heavily populated, with villages and towns scattered along the length of the Morru-Braid and the other streams that feed it. Here long banks of tumbled grey stones gird the paths of a hundred creeks that wind down from the Brenne-Stones to the west. If you look closely at the maps, or have the chance to fly with the wind knights, you'll see that the courses of the rivers here form letters of flowing Elvish script. Even when floods or landslides change the course of a river, it always settles into a new rune. None can say if the language of the elves was inspired by these waters, or if the rivers here were somehow enchanted in the times of Faer Wernan.

Though Faer Pahdris is the largest settlement in the Runewaters, dozens of towns have been built upon the banks of the rivers, and the whole area is a bustling corridor for trade. At the northern end, the Morru-Braid runs past the Four Sisters — four low hills, each topped by a temple to the greater spirits of the Insia. Near the southern end, a brief hike will take you up one of the largest tributaries to the Faces of the Lost — one of the largest and most famous vaults of Faer Wernan. Beneath the running waters of the river, you can make out the faces of four elf lords carved into the rock. This abandoned city and the caverns within it are still largely uncharted.

The Brenne-Stones: This high mountain range bounds the western edge of Anmai. Nestled in the high alpine meadows and stony canyons of the Brenne-Stones are many villages of the Westfolk, also known as the pech. These sheepherders and farmers maintain a simple but pleasant standard of living and are excellent trade partners for men living along the waterways. The two greatest mountain peaks of the range are Firda to the distant north and Grunne at the south end, not far from the Black Peaks. Legend holds that King Grunne and Queen Firda of the fey hold court in their namesake mountains, plotting against each other from afar. Stretching between these two peaks is a thick band of clouds called the River of Snow that eddies and twists through the mountain range. This mysterious cloudbank is said to be a conduit to the fey courts, sweeping all those who enter away to one or the other, to live in servitude to the twisted monarchs. Not surprisingly, few overtaken by the clouds are ever seen again.

The Six Lakes: Not everyone cares to live at the beck and call of the lords of Pahdris. Those Janno who plot their own courses and hold no love for grand kingdoms or the schemes of nobles often make their homes in the Six Lakes region at the southeastern corner of the Anmai. Free-holds and ruin-holds dot the shores of these lakes. But for all their love of independence, the residents here cannot seem to leave one another alone. Two of the most vicious wars among men since our arrival here had their roots in disputes among Six Lakes residents, and three kings of Pahdris were born along the shores of Scarlet Lake.

Lin Meras, the largest free-hold here, stands on the northern shore of Scarlet Lake, close to the Salt-Weep. The wealth of this free-hold stems from a brisk trade in goods and metals making their way downstream to the Morru-Braid. The money flowing through this free-hold and the presence of the Blue Magisters within its walls make it the effective capital of eastern Anmai. The south edge of the region gives way to the rising foothills of the Black Peaks, and also to a wooded expanse dotted with elven ruins known as the High Tombs. The gaunt elves, a dying people who rejected the Janno, lurk among these ruins, slaughtering any who come to walk among their fallen towers.

The Salt-Weep: The curse that struck down the ancient elves was not entirely confined to Avva's Anvil. Like a white tide of death overflowing a levy, the Salt-Weep bears the scars of something poisonous that once flowed through Sandscour Pass and spread across the Anmai. A vast fan of barren yellow earth and harsh, broken stones provides a stark contrast to the green grass that springs up just a few feet beyond the salt monoliths marking the area's borders. At the center of the waste lies a great crater called Spur Crest, where a falling star smashed into the salt fan, raising a circle of stone and low cliffs. The creeks that flow out of the Salt-Weep are bitter and undrinkable at best, or poisonous at worst. Most of them join the Morru-Braid among the rocky canyons of Longtooth's Shout, no doubt contributing to the unwholesome nature of Umru Ver's high marshes.





The most famous location in the Salt-Weep is the Bitterwell — the great moon pool through which men first entered this world. Hot springs feed this small lake from below, and its water constantly bubbles and swirls with foul-smelling mist. The Order of Pearl and the servants of the Burning Maw have been fighting for control of the Bitterwell almost continuously since the Flight from the Underheart, and now it is surrounded by fortified camps of goblins, ogres, and no less than four of the Crone's dreaded knights. Twice before, the Crone has managed to breach the wards that Snowblade threw up during the Flight, and a third War of the Well seems imminent to some.

Second only to this concentration of evil is the Silt-Rift — a great ogre burrow in the southern portion of the Salt-Weep whose inhabitants threaten the people of the Six-Lakes with almost weekly raids.

THE BLACK PEAKS

The source of the Morru-Braid lies in the volcanic Black Peaks. In this stark landscape painted in fire and ice, hidden Matha academies train some of the valley's greatest minds.

It's simple to see how this region got its name — the smoldering volcanoes of the south are easy to pick out because their warm flanks refuse the white blankets of snow that drape over their frozen neighbors. Hot springs and rich black soil turn pockets of this cold waste into lush gardens where men can flourish in numbers far beyond the expectations of anyone gazing upon the piled snows not a mile away. The Matha build their towns and cities around such heated sites, guarding and cultivating the hot spring at the heart of each settlement as a natural treasure. But men are not the only beings who call this volcanic wonderland home. Caverns riddle the black peaks, and many fierce creatures thrive in the glow of heated rock.

Before the coming of men, drakes were the uncontested masters of these mountains. Their cavernous lairs still dot the ridges, and challenges for territory and status are still carried out under the old laws of claw and flame. Since the arrival of men, the drakes have been in decline — not because of their new treaty-neighbors, but because with the men came vast swarms of goblins.

Many died in this harsh environment, but a few of the more clever and agile goblins survived and thrived. A few became strong enough to challenge young drakes, and feasting upon the flesh of these magical creatures transformed them and their descendants, granting them draconian characteristics. Black Peaks goblins are heavily scaled and coldly intelligent, as well as cunning and fierce like their goblin forebears. Even now these warlords and chieftains stalk the remaining drakes in well-organized war parties, seeking the flesh needed to elevate their next generation to this heightened condition.

As in the plains to the north, most travelers here follow the rivers. While many streams are too steep and rocky for even small rafts, trails follow their courses, enhanced with small rope bridges and ledges that the Matha have carved out of the bare cliffs since their arrival. Here the traveler need not fear brigands, for the land is not rich enough to support such vermin, and the knights of the Matha make short work of those who prey on others. However, natural predators and the ever-present goblin hordes still make travel hazardous.

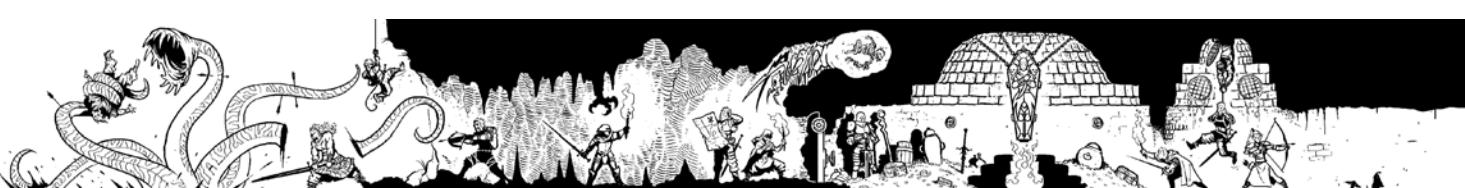
The harsh cliffs of the Black Peaks tend to confine anyone who can't fly to a narrow web of valley floors. Sunchasers are welcome here, and those who visit have their hands full dealing with constant cattle raids by the scaly mountain goblins and the massive waves of Kaia orcs who throw themselves against the Matha every few years. Add the delicate politics of the Matha houses and the rumors of the old drake-king's failing health to this mix, and you have a web of threats that requires sophistication as much as a good sword arm to overcome. While the Matha may not be squarely in the path of the Crone's return, they are a people in powerful need of heroes.

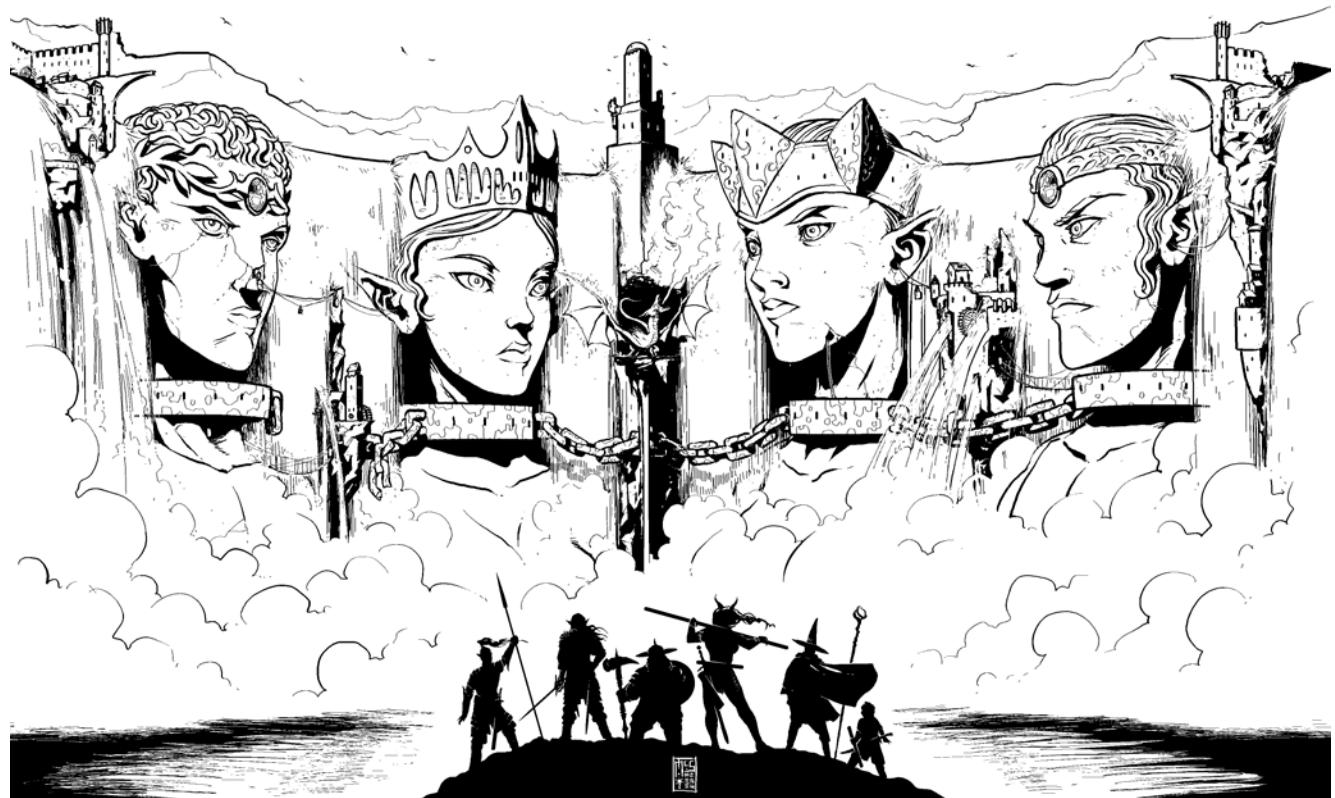
HOME OF THE MATHA

When the hero Snowblade sacrificed herself to seal the Crone and her armies in the Underheart, her people — the Matha — were deeply shocked. Few in number even before the Flight and devastated by their losses, they were slow to explore the new world before them. With his own people swiftly settling into the ruined cities of the Anmai, the Rascal set out to find a place the Matha could call home. High in the mountains, near the headwaters of the Morru-Braid, the Rascal became embroiled in many adventures with the ancient drakes that made their lairs in the towering peaks. Eventually he won the right to personally duel the drake-king. Taking the advice of the Matha leaders, he chose a battle of riddles and bested the drake-king with a series of four cryptic questions that the great beast could not answer. As his prize, he took an oath from the drakes that the Matha would be allowed to settle undisturbed in the valleys between the peaks.

Four noble lines had survived among the Matha during their time in the Underheart, and these houses reasserted themselves as the survivors began to settle into their new home. Each house sponsors an order of knights charged with keeping the people safe and enforcing the simple laws necessary for survival in such harsh climes. With the constant threat of raiding by orcs and goblins, these knights have ample opportunity to prove their value, and they are on the whole well-respected, despite also serving as tax collectors and sheriffs in many of the smaller enclaves.

Rulership of the kingdom is passed among the four noble houses. When a king dies, the next king is chosen from one of the other three houses by tournament, with the old king's house hosting and overseeing the competition in the interests of fairness. Such competitions usually include challenges of wit





and intellect as well as displays of martial skill, since the Matha set high standards for their rulers as both scholars and generals. The final challenge before the coronation is to gain the approval of the drake-king to secure the renewal of the treaty between men and drakes, so contestants who do not measure up are occasionally eaten.

The Matha have two cities of note — well, actually one city and one very large town that everyone has heard of. The city is Caskanneth, also called the City of Cascades. Caskanneth is a vast elf-ruin at the base of the Black Peaks where the Morru-Braid flows out of the mountains. Layers and levels of aqueducts and waterfalls weave their way down the steep cliff-sides, bringing water to every home of the old city. The river drops some 700 feet as it makes its way through the settlement, and the King's Spire at the edge of the first waterfall rises another 300 feet above that, giving residents a magnificent view of the plains to the north. Tunnels, cisterns, and storehouses bore into the stones of the mountainside, making the city even larger than it appears from above. At the base of the city, a series of embankments traps a fair-sized lake, regulating the Morru-Braid's flow before it enters the Runewaters in Anmai.

The town is Arun, home to the College of Riddles, a center for learning and scholarship unmatched upon Avvis. Here on the floor of a narrow valley, specialized academies teach all the arts the Matha hold dear. The terrain offers little room for further expansion, so the schools must accept only a limited number

of candidates each season. Those who excel in their studies are certain to find offers of service waiting for them upon graduation — not just from the noble houses, but from schools and guilds as far away as Morru's Mirror.

VOICES OF THE SONG

Noble houses guide the Matha's affairs of state, though their hereditary power is often offset by the College of Riddles, which can grant persons of almost any background wealth and status.

House Estolin: While the Estolin were not first, they have certainly become the strongest since the Matha moved to the Black Peaks. King Orran of House Estolin is the current ruler of the Matha — the eleventh king since the Flight and the fifth to come from the Estolin line. The Estolin like to believe that their line epitomizes the virtues of the Matha nobles — kindness, fairness, thoughtfulness, and daring in battle. House Estolin also boasts many skillful archers, so its warriors have developed a reputation for ravaging their enemies even before battle is joined.

House Faran: The Faran are loyal stewards, content to protect the common folk and manage their affairs quietly without involving themselves in the machinations of other houses. This house is perhaps best known for its integration of mages and knights on the battlefield — a tactic that brings decisive magical force to bear against the armies of orcs that boil out of the lowlands each year. Faran Bloodsworn are bodyguards of the highest caliber, and their service is welcomed in all the houses.



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House Morset: Though respected for their martial prowess, the Morset have little scholarly inclination, and this has cost them time and again when vying for the throne. In fact, a Morset champion has claimed the crown only once. House Morset makes up for political weakness with military might, however, and its knights are famous for taking the offensive, striking deep into the Kaia Jungle for trophies and orc prisoners. Interrogation of these prisoners forms the basis for the Matha's understanding of politics among the local orc tribes. Some say, however, that this knowledge has stained the house, and that ambitious Morset lords sometimes traffic with the dark spirits of the Lyss.

House Savinar: The Savinar are by far the wealthiest of the Matha nobles, operating a trade guild rivaling the House of Iron and the Ganren League. This drive for mercantile supremacy has not dulled their blades, however. Savinar champions have risen to the throne three times, making them second only to the Estolin in their ability to claim rulership. The Savinar call for elimination of local menaces with the same fervor that the other houses crusade against the orcs. Their rivals claim — perhaps rightly — that this attitude stems from the fact that Savinar holdings are more widely distributed than those of the other houses, and are thus more vulnerable to goblin raids and depredations of the occasional beast stirred from some forgotten cavern.

The Riddle-Masters: Even within the hallowed halls of Arun, a few individuals rise above their peers. The riddle-masters are scholars and mages who seek to peer through the mists of time, both forward and backward, to ferret out answers to the great mysteries in the Song of Years. It has been said that an early riddle-master gave the Rascal the tools to beat the drake-king in his famous duel, and that Lady Snowblade herself was the inspiration for the order.

PERILS OF THE BLACK PEAKS

The southern mountains are not for the faint of heart, but sunchasers can certainly find glory there. Most of the nobles rule over only a thousand or so souls in each town, but the small size of their realms doesn't stop them from scheming against one another. Using sunchasers to do some of their dirty work is a tradition as old as the drake-treaty that makes it possible. Likewise, House Savinar is a willing participant in the escalation of hostilities between the trade guilds, and the opportunities for those willing to choose a side or to play all sides against the middle attracts many cunning men to Caskanneth.

Raids and counter-raids between the Matha and the orcs of the Kaia Jungle happen all the time, but every generation or so, these skirmishes spiral into grand crusades that send tens of thousands marching off to war. Even now, the lords of House Morset are pushing for another grand campaign against the dark priests to the west.

Even the College of Riddles is not immune to the intrigues of the Black Peaks. Old friends and teachers may call upon the heroes to return half-forgotten favors to gain a little outside support or perspective as some new plot unfolds. And if these opportunities for glory are not enough, the simple dangers of life in the shadow of the drakes, where unspeakable horrors come crawling out of the deepest caves to feed upon the unwary, ensure that no trip to the Black Peaks will be entirely uneventful.

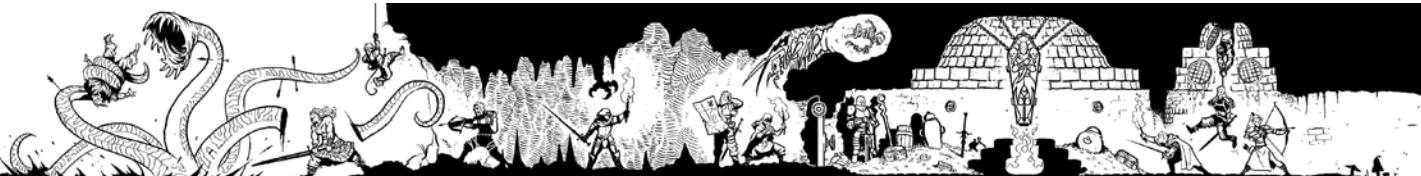
GRON'VER, THE DEEP GREEN

Before it reaches the sea, the great river widens and becomes shallow, creating an expanse of lush everglades known as the Gron'Ver. This slow-moving waterway is home to a number of saurian and rootwalker tribes locked in a savage war that has consumed their lives for a thousand years.

Though you've most likely heard that the Gron'Ver is a great swamp, only a few patches around the edge actually have the stagnant and murky waters of a true swamp. At the center of the Deep Green, as the Vessa call it, cool, clear waters run smoothly through hundreds of wide, shallow channels as the waters of the Morru-Braid spread and slow before reaching the sea. As with Anmai, life runs riot here where sun and water meet, and you'll find a thousand kinds of fish and beasts lurking in the dappled shade of deep-rooted march trees. As the sun sinks low, mists rise from the warm waters, and the thin fog turns the land into a mysterious canvas of shifting shapes and half-hidden dangers.

Two races have shaped the Gron'Ver's destiny since long before Brighteyes led the Sharos there in search of Longtooth and his people. The Vessa, a race of lizardmen, are by far the most numerous. A prince rules each of the wandering Vessa tribes. It is he who lays offerings at holy places dedicated to the saurians' scaly gods — the same gods as the drakes revere, if what the riddle-masters say is true. A cruel and cunning lot, the Vessa princes and their kin make travel in the Gron'Ver a risky proposition for those unable to defend their goods and lives with cold steel. But far worse those reptilian pirates are the Black Erron — the tree-folk of the everglade. Almost impossible to tell apart from common trees when they so choose, these Erron have piled up a mountain of Vessa bones in their secret temples through their centuries-long campaign of kidnapping and murder against the saurians. If you go to the Gron'Ver, bring your ax and your torch, youngsters, because Vessa and Erron alike will treat outsiders with the same viciousness as they do each other.

The Sharos have laid claim to the largest of the waterways, creating a thin ribbon of safe passage through the Gron'Ver that connects the dwarven ports to the north with the river trade of Anmai to the south. Of course, they collect toll from all the



barques that pass through, but you'll find this passage well worth the price. Even in such a vast expanse it's easy to find the route — the Sharos have used their sun-magic to place a great burning flare like a tiny sun thousands of feet in the air above each of their enclaves along the way. You can see the course from miles off as long as you aren't too deep into the trees. But with Vessa to the west and Black Erron to the north and east, only the brave or foolhardy try to avoid paying the Sharos and strike out on their own through the waterways of the Gron'Ver.

Barges are fine for moving great mounds of goods, but you might find yourself in need of a bit more speed in your journey. The Sharos put saddles on a lot of the Gron'Ver's native creatures, and you'll find swamp turtles, racing snakes, and even wyverns bedded down in the stables of larger towns. The wyverns make for a great view when you ride, but I don't trust them myself. The snakes are actually much more practical and trustworthy. Feed them well and they're loyal enough to fight for you in a pinch or to bring you back to town on their own should you take ill.

The sun and water in the Gron'Ver produce more plant life than you've ever seen before, and the waterways teem with tasty fish. One thing is sure — the Sharos don't lack for variety at their dinner tables! Fish, fruits, swamp vegetables, and marsh-grains combine to produce a feast of many colors and flavors. And the plants there are good for more than just eating — the swamp herbs give potency to all manner of potions and poultices. All of Avvis comes to the Sharos for their medicines, though they keep their most potent elixirs for their own champions. Perhaps one day you too will be found worthy to partake of such treasures.

Sunchasers sometimes have a hard stream to pole in the Gron'Ver. With enemies on every side, the Sharos have become even more tight-knit than they were in the Underheart. Their communities are like armed camps, and every citizen is a soldier when Erron slavers or Vessa raiders come to call. Their famous warriors — the mist dancers — may sleep in the temples and practice in the town courtyard, but they're the first to the walls when trouble is brewing. Still, the Sharos respect the traditions of the sunchaser, and they can usually find some wrongs that need righting. They're just more likely than other folk to check your sincerity by making you carry sacks for a few days before entrusting you with their woes.

HOME OF THE SHAROS

You'll find that the Deep Green has not been a forgiving land for men. Villages and trade posts there begin as armed camps — ready at all times to repel Vessa or Erron should either of those races take offense at the new construction. The Sharos choose sites close to the deepest waterways, so that the river can act as their lifeline to the outside world.

Citizenship among the Sharos is a privilege, not a right, and an adult must render up five years of service to his town to be considered for the honor. Many Sharos are content to go

FOOTSTEPS OF A PRINCESS

When Longtooth decided to sacrifice his people in a ploy to break the armies of the Crone that had come through the moon pool in pursuit, Brighteyes was devastated. She had planned and prepared the peoples of all the Four Kingdoms in the hope that such sacrifices would not be necessary — that such a cost in blood might be minimized. So when Lady Morru sent a flood that swept both human and goblin armies out to sea, Brighteyes could not bear to let Longtooth go. She led her people down through the winding canyons at the north edge of the Anmai into the Gron'Ver to search for survivors.

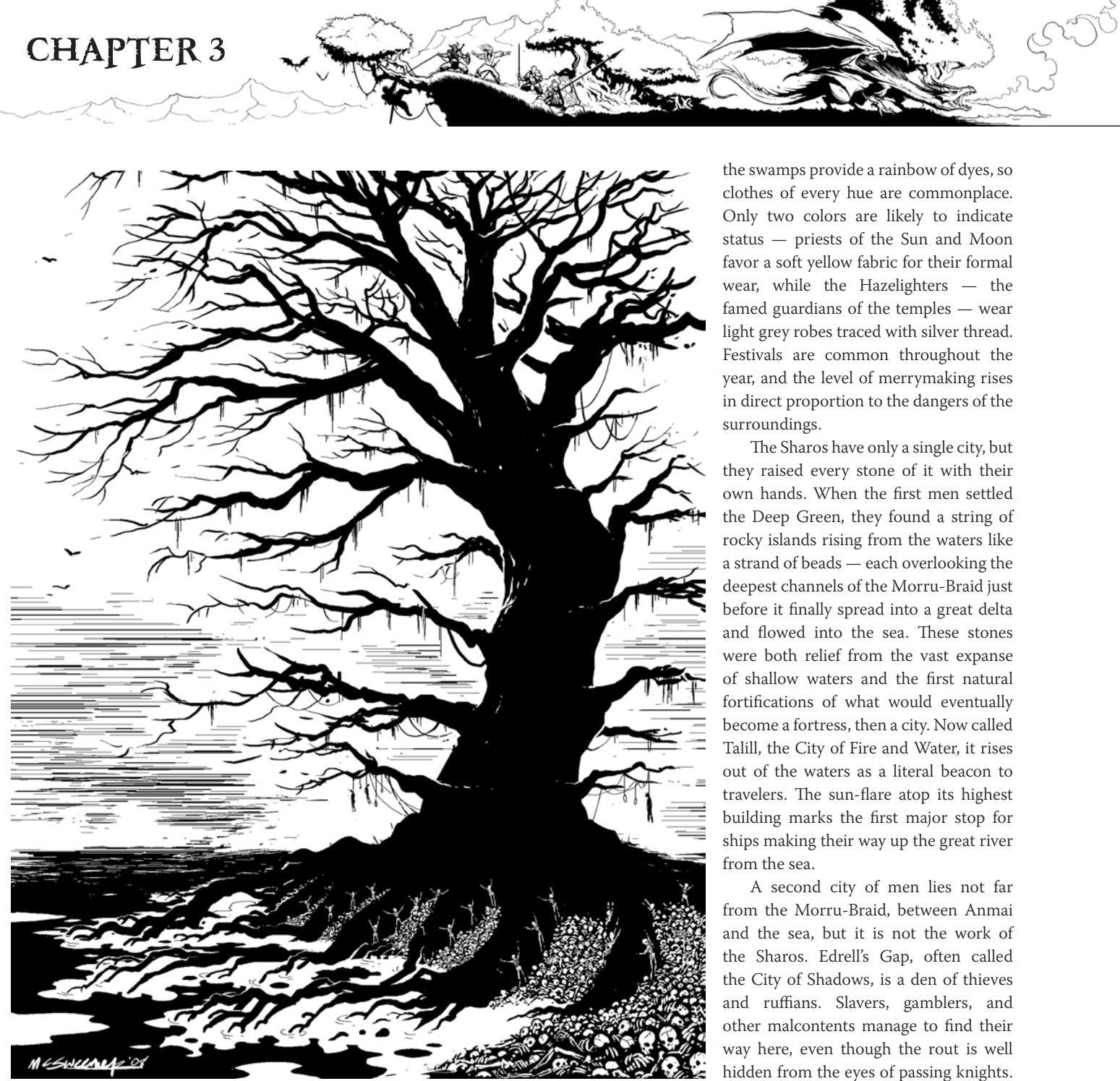
While she found a few of the Ahset scattered on the riverbanks, and many times more goblins still reeling from their haphazard descent, the bulk of Longtooth's people had been carried farther north into the mists. Striking out to follow their trail, she instead walked right into the battles between the Vessa and the Erron.

Though most folk of the Four Kingdoms revered both Sun and Moon equally, Brighteyes was without doubt a Sun-priestess. Legend says that as she strode into the blood-splattered and burning glade where lizardman and tree-folk were tearing one another limb from limb, a silence settled over the combatants. A peace bringer as much as a priestess, Brighteyes realized that Sun and Moon had called her to this place not to find her lost friend, but to spread her faith and rescue both sides from their unending conflict. Before the day was over, two of the Vessa princes and more than three hundred Erron had set aside their war in favor of working — and praying — with the Sharos.

It would be years before Brighteyes eventually made her way to the sea and found Longtooth's people. Though she did at last reconnect all the people of the Four Kingdoms and secure the full length of the Morru-Braid for the race of men, she never spoke or laughed with Longtooth again, for he had already given his life for his people in the stone halls of the dwarves.

about their business as residents instead — free to travel among the cities, but barred from holding posts of leadership. A ten-member council elected by and from the citizenry leads each Sharos town. Each council member holds his post for a four-year term and cannot serve consecutive terms, though alternating

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four years on and four years off is permitted. The Sharos tend to be spiritual souls, but they make a strong point of separating their faith from their governance. Priests rarely seek citizenship, as their duties often call for travel.

Although the Sharos are a people of deep faith, their towns are neither quiet nor somber. Citizens and residents alike wear flowing garments to stay cool in the often-oppressive heat. Voices are always raised, but usually to hawk wares or engage in long-running "scrub debates," in which folk argue about all aspects of life — mostly for the enjoyment of the crowd. Plants from

the swamps provide a rainbow of dyes, so clothes of every hue are commonplace. Only two colors are likely to indicate status — priests of the Sun and Moon favor a soft yellow fabric for their formal wear, while the Hazelighters — the famed guardians of the temples — wear light grey robes traced with silver thread. Festivals are common throughout the year, and the level of merrymaking rises in direct proportion to the dangers of the surroundings.

The Sharos have only a single city, but they raised every stone of it with their own hands. When the first men settled the Deep Green, they found a string of rocky islands rising from the waters like a strand of beads — each overlooking the deepest channels of the Morru-Braid just before it finally spread into a great delta and flowed into the sea. These stones were both relief from the vast expanse of shallow waters and the first natural fortifications of what would eventually become a fortress, then a city. Now called Talill, the City of Fire and Water, it rises out of the waters as a literal beacon to travelers. The sun-flare atop its highest building marks the first major stop for ships making their way up the great river from the sea.

A second city of men lies not far from the Morru-Braid, between Anmai and the sea, but it is not the work of the Sharos. Edrell's Gap, often called the City of Shadows, is a den of thieves and ruffians. Slavers, gamblers, and other malcontents manage to find their way here, even though the rout is well hidden from the eyes of passing knights. A narrow channel off the main river

— easily overlooked when you make your way down through Longtooth's Shout — leads to this hidden city of crime. In the night markets and back alleys of Edrell's Gap, you can find any forbidden treasure and many, many lost goods stolen from every corner of the valley.

VOICES OF THE SONG

Though all citizens are considered equal — and of higher status than the residents of each town — other groups also wield considerable influence among the Sharos.



Dawnbringers: Since the days of Brighteyes, priests of the Sun and Moon have gone out to work with the saurians and rootwalkers of Gron'Ver. Though such missions once ended in bloodshed, the Vessa and Black Erron have come to accept the visits as part of the natural order, and while few convert to the worship of the "human gods," the Dawnbringers have become a vital link in communication and trade between men and the Deep Green's other inhabitants.

Green Erron: Those rootwalkers who chose to follow Brighteyes and her ways took the name Green Erron to distinguish themselves from their more violent kin. These tree-folk took well to life among the humans, finding the Sharos' penchant for debate a source of constant amusement. While physically indistinguishable from their more savage kin, the Green Erron have a calm and even kind manner that makes it difficult for any Black Erron to masquerade as one for long.

Hazelighters: Though citizen-soldiers and resident levies make up the bulk of the armies that Sharos fields in times of war, it is the temple guardians — the Hazelighters — who are the region's most famous warriors. First established to guide and guard pilgrims traveling to holy sites, these gray-clad champions study unarmed combat and favor simple weapons made from the trees of the swamp. Far from cloistered, they often practice in the streets and give demonstrations at festivals.

The Vessa Princes: The Vessa once lived in utter terror of the Black Erron, but the dwindling numbers of the cruel tree-folk have fueled the saurians' rise toward ascendancy in the Deep Green. The Vessa claim the lands west of the Morru-Braid, all the way up to the Rainwall Mountains, and if they can hold it, they may well become the next great threat to the region. Originally nine princes ruled the scattered tribes, but two chose to join Brighteyes and her people, melding their tribes with the Sharos as residents — and sometimes citizens — of the new towns. Of the other seven, only four remain, the bloodlines of the three weakest have been absorbed. These four tribes constantly plot against each other, hoping to unite their folk under a single banner.

PERILS OF THE GRON'VER

While the back-and-forth warfare between Vessa and Erron ensures that something is always happening, other tasks compete for sunchaser attention. Great and seemingly unique beasts often come forth from Ashenad to the north. Rumors claim these beasts were spawned from the fallen fruit of a great black tree in the deepest depths of that poisoned swamp. Whatever their origins, they rampage across the Gron'Ver for weeks or even months, until either the humans or the Vessa finally lay them low. A less spectacular but far more bloodthirsty threat comes from desert ogres who periodically make their way down through the Moon Glare pass. These man-eaters seldom stay long — the soggy ground makes for poor burrows, and the damp seems to produce disease in their numbers more often than not.

LANDS BEYOND THE VALLEY

While most sunchasers ply their trade within the Thousand-River Valley, a few inevitably feel the call of the lands beyond. Few of these places are well known to men, except as the homelands of fearsome races that spawn vast raider armies and send them into the valley to attack and plunder our towns and cities. Here are a few of the places about which such sunchasers sing.

The Ironsea: The Morru-Braid eventually empties into this vast body of water. Only the most daring sailors attempt to cross these metal-grey seas, and even then, they do so only in the calmer summer months.

Avva's Anvil, the "Accursed Sands:" Blasted by heat and magic, this wasteland was once the heartland of the elves. Now it's the realm of a breed of ogres unconnected to those who serve the Crone in the Underheart.

Kaia Jungle, the "Emerald Shadows:" A verdant rainforest teeming with life, the Kaia is the primary home of the orcs on Avvis.

MORRU'S MIRROR

A broad gulf circled by dwarven fortresses and crisscrossed by the white sails of Ahset warships, Morru's Mirror is the center of a fierce battle between god-like spirits of Order and Chaos.

The waters of Morru's Mirror are comparatively calm for a portion of the Ironsea. In the west, the Fang Reaches break up storms and great waves coming in from the open ocean. To the south, the bases of the sheer and crumbling Swordcliffs are riddled with twists and caverns that soften the crashing waves. To the east lie the marshes of the Gron'Ver's great delta, as well as many coastal islands that soak up the last of the sea's fury, allowing the waters to — on occasion — settle to the glassy sheen that gives the gulf its human name.

For centuries, the only folk to live along these shores were dwarves. Having escaped from the Underheart and collapsed their tunnels behind them, they found themselves trapped on a meager island in the midst of stormy seas. Standing on the shore, they could only faintly see other lands to the south. It would take long years for the dwarves to spread to the other islands of the Fang Reaches by tunneling under the waters between

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the barren peaks — an undertaking requiring decades even for dwarven picks and shovels. While the bulk of the dwarven halls lay underground, they found a use for the many harsh cliffs they found, treating them as a grand canvas on which to honor their elemental gods. All across the island chain, the Faces of the World were made manifest in hundred-foot-high carvings.

Today, sail power dominates the island chain, and all the inhabited islands of the Fang Reaches have ports great and small. Many a captain knows a few sheltered coves where one can take on water or hold a quiet meeting, away from prying eyes. For those who find the prospect of water-travel daunting, the deep roads still connect many of the islands around Tahr Muan, though they have fallen into disuse and some creatures of the deep have adopted isolated stretches as their new hunting grounds.

The Ahset brought the traditions of the sunchasers with them to the halls of the dwarves. While the dwarves found the notion of gallivanting around the world a bit unsettling, their notions of hospitality and hard work fit in well with the expectations when a sunchaser arrives, and they quickly took to the practice. Sunchasers arriving on the shores of Morru's Mirror can look forward to a fair load of chores and a fair share of food and coin for their troubles, assuming they're also willing to tip a flagon of ale in the bargain. While dwarves can be reluctant to share their problems, the constant threat of the Soregg and their thralls means there is usually some task awaiting extra hands calloused by weapon practice or stained from reading old lore.

HOME OF THE AHSET

Immediately following the Flight, the continuing battles with the goblin armies of the Crone under the banners of the Burning Maw forced the bands of humans to scatter. The great hero Longtooth, mightiest general of the Ahset, used his own folk as bait in a trap that broke the might of the goblin horde, but also washed most of his people out to sea far to the north, into the vast bay now known as Morru's Mirror.

When Longtooth first washed ashore in the Fang Reaches, he and his followers were astounded to see giant faces carved into the cliff by stonecraft as fine as any of them had ever seen. It did not take the survivors long to find the entrances into the great dwarven hold within the island. There the dwarves welcomed the Ahset — first as unfortunate refugees, and then as long-lost brothers when tales were exchanged and common ground found in their mutual nemeses — the Crone and her Ninety-Nine Knights. Alliances were soon sworn in blood, and the Ahset became part of the dwarven kingdom — a vibrant part that has led the deep halls into a new age of prosperity.

Longtooth's people were absorbed into the dwarven nation as a new clan, with Longtooth himself as their king. It is rare for an Ahset patriarch to become the high king of all the clans, but not completely unheard of. While some men chafe at this perceived slight, on the whole the dwarves are so manifestly

grateful to their human "brothers" for the skills they bring that there is little stigma of second-class status attached to them. Human sailors — starting first with the crude rafts that delivered them into the Fang Reaches, but now piloting graceful sailing vessels — have completely altered the course of life on the shores of Morru's Mirror. Because dwarves are deathly afraid of deep water, they had never before attempted to construct sailing vessels — everyone aboard a ship was certain to drown should a sudden storm arise. In a few short years, the Ahset and their ships had connected the clans with every corner of the gulf, and the dwarves had started new colonies as far away as the Rainwall Mountains. Now dwarves and men both sail across Morru's Mirror and up the great river beyond.

While dwarf-holds and deep roads stretch across the Fang Reaches, the center of human power on the surface is Tahr Muan, City of the Oath. A vast port sheltered by high cliffs, this city is the heart of Ahset shipbuilding and shipping, featuring a training hall for the Mitya Clan's many undertakings. Its nautical heritage is apparent to even the most casual visitor, as broad, triangular sails decorate the taller building and drive simple windmills along the ridges that power the industry below.

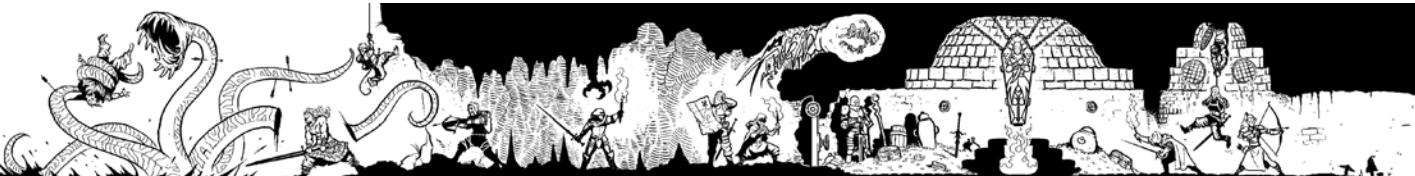
VOICES OF THE SONG

Blade-Weavers: Human music and dwarven steel have found a strange union in the training halls of the Blade-Weavers. Combining the best of both races' fighting techniques, the Blade-Weavers have built up a peerless reputation for skill at arms. Each clan strives to train and recruit the finest Blade-Weavers — both as status symbols and for the obvious practicalities of having such deadly warriors at your side.

Clan Ayross: The current High King, Orvon Ayross, comes from this powerful clan. A paladin of the Faces, he has led an unrelenting crusade against the chaotic "demons" of the Soregg for almost forty years. For now, the primacy of the Ayross remains unchallenged among the dwarven clans, and the fortunes of its members have prospered. Ayross mines are rich in iron, from which the clan's smiths forge the very best of weapons.

Clan Borogg: Sometimes called the Unspoken, the Borogg invested heavily in holdings on the northeastern shores of Morru's Mirror. No one knows for sure whether their delving awakened some great slumbering Soregg, or whether the spirits of chaos and blight sought out the Borogg because of their isolation. Either way, the clan swiftly fell under Soregg thrall. Now mutated Borogg — almost unrecognizable as dwarves — lead bands of the Soregg's lesser minions into battle.

Clan Mitya: The Mitya have become the heads of the Ahset clan, and their king Genai Mitya is a tenth-generation descendant of Longtooth himself. With a treasury built on trade and a standing guard built on Blade-Weavers, the clan stands ready to reclaim the High Throne once again should the Ayross falter after their long struggle against the Soregg.



The House of Iron: The third of the great trade guilds, the House of Iron combines both the best and the worst of human and dwarven natures into a perfect blend of craftsmanship and avarice. With headquarters in Tahr Muan, the guild has numerous skilled sailors in its ranks, giving it plenty of advantages over its rivals whenever long-distance travel is required to complete a bargain. The house also makes a brisk profit on small prospecting camps, deploying both human and dwarven miners to remote regions in search of rich ore veins.

PERILS OF MORRU'S MIRROR

Like all the great trade guilds, the House of Iron is looking to sunchasers to act as its irregulars and special agents as it moves into direct conflict with the other guilds. While open war would drain profits, the struggle is now in uncharted territory and seems to be speeding toward disaster.

Of more immediate concern is the skin-forge — a great infestation of Soregg on the northeastern shores of Morru's Mirror. Blighted creations and worshippers flow from these fungus-crusted caverns night and day. Rumors hold that one of the Ninety-Nine Knights of the Burning Maw now worships the Soregg here, an unholy paragon of dark powers.

THE BURNING MAW

Though the Crone herself remains trapped behind the barred gates of the moon pools, imprisoned by the sacrifice of Lady Snowblade when men first fled to Avvis, her presence is still strongly felt here. Even a world away, her priests and chosen servants receive boons like those offered by the very gods! Foremost among her servants are her Ninety-Nine Knights. We believe that no more than thirty of these dark champions crossed over before the moon pools closed. Time and strife should have reduced their number in the centuries since, but when a knight is slain, the mantle seemingly passes on to a new vile servant who is immediately knighted in the Crone's name. A mix of war-captains, schemers, dark priests, and vengeful mages has given

the armies of the Burning Maw an ever-changing face and an unending stream of new gambits and ploys, as the Knights of the Maw seek to free their mistress and destroy all that men have wrought on Avvis. Infighting and treachery among the knights is common, and only the strongest of them can command the loyalty of more than two or three of the others.

The armies of the Burning Maw are much reduced from their former glory. Individual knights now command bands that number only in the hundreds or low thousands. These forces draw their numbers from three sources. By far the most prolific are the goblins, who arrived in the greatest numbers and have since bred to even greater numbers despite the terrible losses they endure as the fodder of choice when their generals launch assaults. The second major group is the ogres of the Underheart. These towering beasts are the Crone's overseers and slave-drivers, and they perform those same duties on Avvis, marshaling and directing the troops. Last are the slaves —chiefly men and dwarves — but almost anyone the goblins catch might be pressed into service if not shoved into a cookpot first. Some few of these convert to the worship of the Burning Maw and are eventually released from their iron manacles to serve the army of their own free will. Such traitors are special delights to the Crone, who hopes one day to take all men back under her rule.

THE SONG OF YEARS

Even if you haven't learned your numbers up past a thousand, you'll have no trouble remembering the date. All who escaped the Underheart agreed to start a new calendar from when we first set foot on Avvis. By that reckoning, it's now the year 228.

Men keep time by the light of Sun and Moon. The lengths of days, weeks, months, and years are all set by the will of the heavens. Morru, the Lady of the Moon, goes through her phases every thirty-six days. A month is divided into four weeks, and a week has nine days. The last night of each week is easy to figure: just look up — it'll be a new moon, a half-moon, or a full moon, and if it's the full moon, you know it's the end of the month.

Table 3.2: The Sunchaser Calendar

Days of the Week		Months of the Year
1	Avvana — Day of the Sun	Assimet
2	Besna	Cadulemet
3	Dorelna	Dulanmet
4	Feruna	Eraadmet
5	Tohna — Day of the Father	Hennamet
6	Irrilna	Jodemet
7	Jovanna	Morrumet
8	Keesna	Sharosamet
9	Morruna — Day of the Moon	Tohnemet
10	—	Vanelmet

CHAPTER 3



There are ten months in each year, or three hundred sixty days. It was early autumn when we arrived, so that's when we celebrate our new year. A child could remember it all.

Most races in Avvis don't fuss so much about the date. The elves, saurians, and rootwalkers all seem pretty content to note the season and how many seasons have passed since an important event. I've heard even the orcs of the Kaia Jungle record their victories that way. On the other hand, the dwarves of the far north are a bit more particular about their dates. They don't care so much about the lights in the sky, having living underground so much — so instead they do everything in tendays, with thirty-six tendays in a year. They don't name their days for gods, heroes, and monsters either — it's just first-day, second-day, third-day, and so forth with them. That's a lot like how the Crone and her minions kept time, so I'm inclined to believe the stories that say the dwarves were once her slaves like us.

I don't put much stock in it myself, but the Keepers at the Library of Kings say that numbers have power over our lives — that they tie each day to Fate like the gears of a clock. Folklore says that 4 is the number of completion, while 10 is the number of stability — favored by the Sun above all others. Combinations of numbers are important too. Tales say that 9 is the number of chaos, while 11 is the number of power. That makes 99 a special number — the perfect blend of power and chaos. If you believe that, then the Crone keeping ninety-nine knights makes a sort of sense — they're powerful and crazy! Another important number is 7 — the number of travel. Some say the Crone tries to break the seal between this world and the Underheart every 77 years. If you do know your numbers, then the next part is easy — the Crone should try again in the year 231 — only three years from now. Nonsense, all of it — but if you like campfire tales, then here's one that'll really scare you. The number of change is 3, and this will be the Crone's third try.

It's all up to you now, youngsters. Keep your hearts true, your weapons sharp, and your mind quick. Go chase the sun.

THE SUNCHASER CAMPAIGN

The heroic songs of Sunchaser are taken from the most readily recognizable popular fantasy fiction. The primary human cultures are simplified reflections of feudal Europe, with a touch of the exotic added via Greek and Arabic influences. The world is divided into several regions to provide clear sets of threats and situations, and to allow characters to form parties representing the best of many cultures. Diversity is key here — the successful group will create its own ensemble cast that has the strengths and tools to overcome challenges that the folk of any one region seem incapable of defeating on their own. The fact that adventurers

are a common and accepted component of society confers immediate respect and legitimacy on the heroes' exploits. Like all good traditional fantasy, the heroes of this campaign face an escalating series of challenges, since no matter where they first build their reputations, they must eventually contend with the growing menace of prophecy as the signs of the Crone's return give way to apocalyptic battles. Once the moon pools open again to spill enemies of the various regions and races across the land, all eyes will turn to the new heroes the players have created.

INSPIRATIONS

Avatar: the Last Airbender (television), *Greyhawk* (RPG), *Hawk the Slayer* (movie), King Arthur (legend), Larry Elmore (artist), *The Lord of the Rings* (books, movie), *Mystara* (RPG), *The Record of Lodoss War* (anime), *The Riddlemaster of Hed* (books), Rob Alexander (artist), *The Twelve Kingdoms* (anime, books), *The Wheel of Time* (books)

ERA

Feudal. The Thousand-River Valley is a populous land with plenty of opportunities for craftsmen to develop their trades without being locked in a constant struggle for survival. Diligent scholarship and an infusion of advanced techniques from long-dead civilizations place the people of the Four Kingdoms at the upper edge of the Feudal Era. Character options and gear from the Feudal, Ancient, and Primitive eras are available in this setting (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 305).

CAMPAIN QUALITIES

The following campaign qualities are suggested for the Sunchaser campaign setting (see page 322 of *Fantasy Craft* for more on campaign qualities).

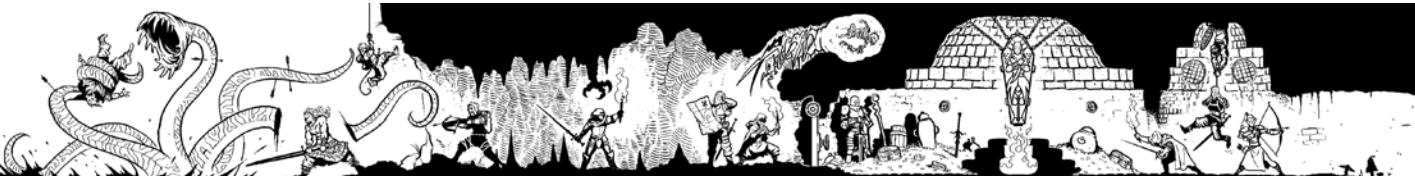
Adventure Insurance: The heroism of sunchasers is always rewarded, even when they suffer setbacks.

Dramatic Pacing: Events move along at the pace of need — as the pressure rises, the opportunities to rise to greatness multiply.

Greater Magic Items: The legendary tools of heroes are often integral parts of their stories and can incorporate a wide range of benefits and effects.

Miracles: The God and Spirits of Avva take a constant and direct interest in their followers' lives, often playing out elaborate schemes against each other through their servants and worshippers. (The *generous universe* and *warring universe* qualities might also be appropriate additions when running in this setting, as befits the GM's vision.)

Sorcery: Morru's gift is an uncommon but potent talent given to those who seek out its mysteries. GMs wishing to play up the ebb and flow of the river of magic might also consider using the *cyclical magic* or *wild magic* campaign qualities from time to time (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 326).



SUNCHASER CHARACTERS

The heroes of Sunchaser are a wildly diverse lot. Almost anyone who turns away from his bonds to society to serve the common good through heroic exploits is welcomed among the bands of sunchasers that roam the land. These free-wheeling heroes plot their own courses and pursue danger almost as often as it pursues them. The following character options are available to characters in Sunchaser.

HUMAN TALENTS

This section provides four new Talents representing the people of each of the Old Kingdoms and the lifestyles they have established for themselves in the Thousand-River Valley. Characters do not have to take these Talents to be part of the new nations. Instead, each Talent offers a collection of benefits that have become symbolic of that culture and its people.

AHSET

The followers of Longtooth had no difficulty joining with the dwarves of the Fang Reaches to build a nation dedicated to fighting the Crone and her minions.

- *Attributes*: +2 Strength
- *Base Speed*: 30 ft.
- *Enlightened Haggle*: Your maximum Haggle rank increases to your Career Level + 5. Only the highest bonus from any single enlightened ability may apply to each skill.
- *War of Attrition*: You may Tire up to three opponents at once. You roll only once for the action, while each opponent rolls to resist separately.

JANNO

The inheritors of the Rascal have made Anmai their new home and are prepared to defend it against all tyrants.

- *Attributes*: +2 Charisma
- *Base Speed*: 30 ft.
- *Double Boost*: You may spend and roll 2 action dice to boost Dexterity-based skill checks.
- *Mixed-Blood*: You are considered to be both a Human and an Elf.
- *Mix-Up*: You gain the Mix-Up trick (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 221).

MATHA

The few survivors of Lady Snowblade's folk have become fast friends with the drakes of the Black Peaks and are slowly recovering from the terrible cost they paid during the Flight from the Underheart.

- *Attributes*: +2 Constitution
- *Base Speed*: 30 ft.
- *Broad Learning*: You gain 2 additional Studies.
- *Called Shot*: You gain the Called Shot trick (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 221).
- *Double Boost*: You may spend and roll 2 action dice to boost Intelligence-based skill checks.

SHAROS

Dedicated to building a new life in the rich waters of the Gron'Ver, the followers of Brighteyes have established a thriving nation of enlightenment in the midst of a terrible war.

- *Attributes*: +2 Wisdom
- *Base Speed*: 30 ft.
- *Free Hint*: Once per session, you may request a hint from the GM. If he refuses, you gain 1 bonus action die.
- *Natural Elegance*: Your Appearance bonus increases by +1.
- *Sharp Mind*: You gain 1 additional skill point per level.

INTERESTS OF SUNCHASER

The following Interests are common in Sunchaser.

LANGUAGES

Life in the Underheart forced the race of men to adopt a single language, although the Old Kingdoms still brought distinctive accents to the language that emerged. As such, most humans can understand each other regardless of where in the valley they hail from. The other peoples of Avvis have their own distinct tongues. The most common found in the Thousand-River Valley are...

- **Melios (Human)**: The spoken language of men comes from times and nations even older than the Four Kingdoms. Its origins are now lost to the mists of broken history on the world from which the Crone first stole humans.
- **Kamalil (Elf)**: The elves once served an even greater power responsible for a vast empire, of which the Thousand-River Valley was but one small region on a much larger frontier. The elves who survived its fall share a single melodious language, a remnant from when their people strode across all the world, laying claim to all in their sight.
- **Vidoss (Drake & Saurian)**: The sibilant tongue of the two reptile races is a gift from the dragon kings. Speakers who are not themselves dragons suffer a -8 penalty with Lie checks attempted while speaking this language, making it a favorite in negotiating deals among the Vessa and Sharos.
- **Woanish (Ogre & Pech)**: While they could hardly vary more in stature, pech and ogres share this caustic, colorful language. It includes an extensive range of words for tastes and cooking methods, which well supports the species' mutual love of eating.



COMMON CHARACTER OPTIONS

ORIGINS

Species: Drake, Dwarf, Elf, Human, Pech, Rootwalker, Saurian

Human Talents: Adaptable, Agile, Ahset, Cunning, Intelligent, Janno, Matha, Savvy, Sharos, Striking, Unpredictable, Wily

Specialties: Acrobat, Adept, Adventurer, Archer, Bard, Cleric, Corsair, Fencer, Fighter, Guardian, Mercenary, Merchant, Nomad, Physician, Ranger, Rogue, Scholar, Sorcerer, Vanguard, Wizard

CLASSES

Base Classes: Burglar, Captain, Explorer, Keeper, Lancer, Priest, Mage, Martial Artist, Sage, Soldier

Expert Classes: Deadeye, Gallant, Mist Dancer, Monster Slayer, Paladin, Rune Knight, Swashbuckler

Master Classes: Dragon Lord, Wind Knight

FEATS

Basic Combat: Elusive, Lightning Reflexes, Iron Will, Veteran Adventurer, Surge of Speed, Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Guard

Melee Combat: Blade-Weaver Basics, Cleave Basics, Darting Weapon, Greatsword Basics, Knife Basics, Sword Basics, Sword-Circle Basics

Ranged Combat: Angry Hornet, Bow Basics, Bow Master

Unarmed Combat: Combo Basics, Fluid Style, Haze Basics, Martial Arts, Sword and Fist

Chance: Adventurer's Luck, All In, Fortunate, Fortune's Fool, Lady Luck's Smile

Covert: Ambush Basics, Ghost Basics, Misdirection Basics, Mobility Basics

Gear: Bandage, Favored Gear, Scroll Casting

Skill: Basic Skill Mastery (Horseman, Investigator, Trader), Depth of Study, Well-Rounded

Species: Cliff-Born, Cool-River Folk, Draconic Heritage, Elf Blood, Elixir of the Golden Thorn, Farstrider Folk, Hart Nation, Hidden Promise, Hill-Born, Larger than Life, Lore of the Old Kings, New Leaf, River Clutch, Spider Nation, Swamp Clutch, Tales of the Rascal, Unbroken, Voices of the Past

Spellcasting: Blessed, Casting Basics, Spell Conversion: Effect, The Gift

Style: Hero of the People, Personal Lieutenant

Terrain: Coordinated Attack, Pathfinder Basics

- **Gamok (Dwarf & Goblin):** The dwarven clans of the north speak a blunt, literal tongue shared by the goblins still in service to the Burning Maw. This fact lends credence to the legends that dwarves were once slaves to the Crone and escaped by literally digging their way out of the Underheart.
- **Susuran (Orc):** The tribes of the Kaia Jungle use a guttural tongue to direct troops and appease the spirits. The clarity of instructions in this language should not be mistaken for the product of simple minds — the very lives and souls of orc shamans and war-chiefs negotiating with dark powers are forfeit if they make an error in reciting their pacts. This language's rigid grammar reflects that need for precision.

STUDIES

The following are some of the most common Studies held by Sunchaser characters:

Armies of the Underheart; cultures (Ahset, Baigar, Erron, Janno, Kaia, Matha, Rainen, Sharos or Vessa); dancing; legends of the Four Heroes; moon-pools; navigation; the Ninety-Nine Knights; regions (Anmai, Avva's Anvil, Black Peaks, Gron'Ver, Kaia, Morru's Mirror); riddles; river piloting; tomb-raiding; the Trade Leagues

ALIGNMENTS

The faiths of Sunchaser focus on pantheons rather than the worship of particular deities. Men revere the Sun and Moon as gods, but the several camps of powerful spirits that maintain and embody the various aspects of the world command the devotion of Avvis' native races. (see *Gods and Spirits*, page 74).

MELEE COMBAT FEATS

For more about Melee Combat feats, see *Fantasy Craft*, page 87.

BLADE-WEAVER BASICS

You have learned the staccato strikes of the Ahset's mightiest warriors, and like them you seek out the heart of every battle.

Prerequisites: Special character only

Benefit: When an adjacent opponent hits you while you have an edged weapon armed, you may spend 1 Edge to immediately inflict 1d6 lethal damage on him. You also gain a trick.

Sweeping Slash (Edged Attack Trick): You may attack exactly two adjacent opponents. Make a single attack check at a -4 penalty and compare the result to the Defense of both opponents. Your damage from this attack is halved (rounded down, minimum 1). If at least one opponent hit is an adversary, you gain 1 Edge. You may use this trick once per round.



BLADE-WEAVER MASTERY

The point of your blade seems to leap in all directions, leaving a trail of crimson across a wide swath of enemies.

Prerequisites: Blade-Weaver Basics

Benefit: Each time you score a critical hit with an edged weapon against an adversary, you gain 1 Edge. You also gain a trick.

Bladestorm (Edged Attack Trick): Spend 4 Edge. You may make a single attack check against any number of characters within 10 ft. Roll damage for each opponent hit separately.

BLADE-WEAVER SUPREMACY

You take to battle with explosive fury, seeking to surround yourself with foes so you can cut them down all the faster!

Prerequisites: Blade-Weaver Mastery

Benefit: Once per combat, you may spend 2 action dice to gain 5 Edge. You also gain a stance.

Seize the Center (Stance): If two or more adversaries are adjacent to you at the start of your Initiative Count, you gain 1 Edge, then recover a number of vitality points equal to your current Edge.



Table 3.3: Alignments of Sunchaser

Alignment	Alignment Skills	Paths	Ritual Weapon	Avatar *	Opposed Alignment
The Eyes of Heaven (Sun & Moon)	Athletics, Ride, Search, Tactics	Light, Magic, Travel	Fork/trident	Pegasus	Burning Maw
The Silver Crown (Spirits of Insia)	Acrobatics, Sneak, Survival, Tactics	Good, Heroism, Life, Spirit	Longbow	Herald Angel	Circle of Whispers
The Faces of Creation (Spirits of Ruul)	Athletics, Crafting, Haggle, Tactics	Air, Earth, Fire, Order, Water	Broad axe	Lahskil	Fount of Change
The Circle of Whispers (Spirits of Lyss)	Bluff, Disguise, Haggle, Prestidigitation	Curses, Strength, War	Hook	Lyss Bargainer	Silver Crown
The Fount of Change (Spirits of Soregg)	Blend, Disguise, Ride, Survival	Evil, Life, Nature, Water	Barwhip	Soregg Corruptor	Faces of Creation
The Dragon Kings	Acrobatics, Bluff, Investigate, Survival	Destruction, Knowledge, Life	Hand claw	Drake Warlord	—
The Burning Maw	Athletics, Bluff, Sneak, Tactics	Darkness, Deceit, Fire	Paired daggers	Nightmare	Sun & Moon

* These avatars can be found in the Bestiary (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 253) or starting on pages 98.

UNARMED COMBAT FEATS

For more about Unarmed Combat feats, see *Fantasy Craft*, page 93.

HAZE BASICS

The gray-clad temple warriors of the Sharos move like ghosts and can upset a foe's balance with a touch as gentle as a breeze.

Prerequisites: Special character only

Benefit: Once per round, you may spend 1 Edge to gain a +2 bonus or to confirm a threat on an Acrobatics, Athletics, or unarmed attack check. You also gain a trick.

Touch of Cool Waters (Anticipate Trick): The adjacent target suffers a -4 penalty to all damage rolls until your next Initiative Count. If this target is an adversary, you also gain 1 Edge. You may use this trick once per round.

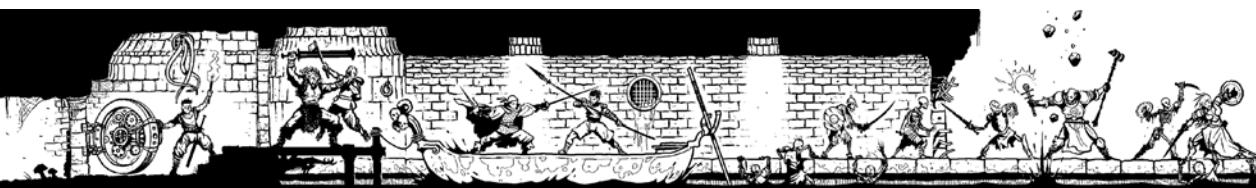
HAZE MASTERY

The Hazelighters' uncanny style disrupts the natural rhythms and flow of energy through their enemies' bodies. This often has a dire impact on spellcasting.

Prerequisites: Haze Basics

Benefit: Each adjacent opponent suffers a -4 penalty with Concentrate and Initiative checks. You also gain a trick.

Dam the River (Unarmed Attack Trick): If this attack hits, you may spend 3 Edge to force the target to become stunned for 1 round and (if an arcane caster) lose the ability to cast spells for 1d6 rounds. An arcane caster may lose the ability to cast spells in this fashion only once per combat.



CHAPTER 3



HAZE SUPREMACY

Like the mists from which they draw their name, Hazelighters seem to be ethereal — until they cave in their attackers' skulls.

Prerequisites: Haze Basics

Benefit: You may use a flail or staff to perform unarmed attack tricks. You also gain a stance.

Sunlight and Fog (Stance): You gain a +4 dodge bonus against ranged attacks, and opponents may not activate critical hits on ranged attacks that target you.

SPECIES FEATS

The traditions of men have mixed and blended with those of Avvis' native folk, creating new and unique opportunities for those who become champions of the Four Kingdoms.

For more about Species feats, see Fantasy Craft, page 99.

ELIXIR OF THE GOLDEN THORN

You have imbibed the sacred nectar distilled from the rarest and deadliest of the Gron'Ver's native herbs.

Prerequisites: Human or Saurian, Study (Sharos or Vessa)

Benefit: You cannot be *paralyzed* and are immune to soul drain effects. Also, each time you level, you may spend 50 Reputation to increase your Strength by 1 (maximum +3).

LORE OF THE OLD KINGS

You have been entrusted with knowledge contained in the few remaining pages of the Book of Elder Kings.

Prerequisites: Drake or Human, Study (Matha)

Benefits: You gain 5 skill points. Also, each time you level, you may spend 50 Reputation to increase your Charisma by 1 (maximum +3).

TALES OF THE RASCAL

People often compare your exploits to those of the Rascal himself!

Prerequisites: Human or Pech, Study (Janno)

Benefit: Your action dice explode on a 1 *and* the natural highest result (e.g. a "6" on a d6). Also, each time you level, you may spend 50 Reputation to increase your Dexterity by 1 (maximum +3).

UNBROKEN

You have partaken in the ritual of the Iron Gauntlet.

Prerequisites: Dwarf or human only, Study (Ahset)

Benefit: You gain Subdual Resistance 4. Also, each time you level, you may spend 50 Reputation to increase your Constitution by 1 (maximum +3).

VOICES OF THE PAST

The spirits of the ruins speak to you, warning you of danger and sharing lore long lost to the living.

Prerequisites: Elf or Ogre, Study (Baigar or Rainen)

Benefit: You gain a +4 insight bonus to avoid traps and cannot become lost while outdoors. Also, each time you level, you may spend 50 Reputation to increase your Intelligence by 1 (maximum +3).

TRADE AND GEAR

The Morru-Braid is like a massive road connecting all of the people of the Four Kingdoms. Merchants traversing it bring news, stories, and ideas along with crates of goods. This free flow of information has allowed the race of men to gain a foothold in this new world quickly and to spread from one end of the valley to the other in only a few generations. With this prosperity have come advances in many fields that were lost during the centuries of enslavement in the Underheart.

LIFESTYLE

The verdant and untamed terrain of the Thousand-River Valley provides its denizens with a rich bounty of vegetables, fruits, fish, and animals, and the mines of the Ahset and dwarves offer a wealth of iron and copper for armor, jewelry, and weapons. Yet the peoples of the valley do not take such riches for granted, and most try to live in relative harmony with the world around them. Sunchasers in particular tend to live as simply as possible, surviving on the game they can catch and the fruits they can pick. Their clothing is sturdy — made to survive the rough-and-tumble life of the vagabond, explorer, and troublemaker.

Sample nourishment and apparel available to a character based on his Panache can be found on Table 3.4: Panache in Sunchaser (*see right*).

COINAGE AND TRADE GOODS

The Morru-Braid's booming commerce is made possible only by the existence of a shared currency. The concept of the silver coin was well established in the Underheart, and the people of the Four Kingdoms have carried it forward here as well. Though each Kingdom technically mints its own coin, widespread trade up and down the valley ensures that Anmai silver spends just as well in the Fang Reaches as it does in the Deep Green. Consequently, the listed price of all goods and the unit of currency in Sunchaser is unchanged from the entries in Chapter 4 of the Fantasy Craft Rulebook, and all gear from the Primitive, Ancient, and Feudal Eras is available for purchase (within reason and with GM approval, of course).

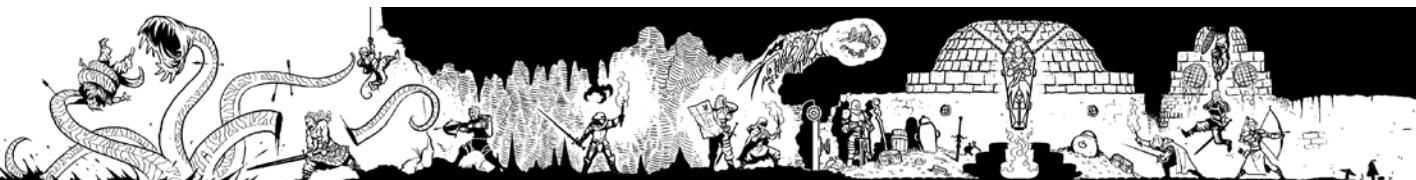


Table 3.4: Panache in Sunchaser

Rating	Example Dress	Example Sustenance
0	Simple tunic, breeches, and foot-wrappings	Dried vegetables, broth
1	Dyed cloth and buckled sandals	River fish, root vegetables, and mushrooms
2	Leather pads or jacket	Flatbread and wild fruit
3	Hooded weather cloak and simple shoes	Game birds, root tea, and garden vegetables
4	Feathered hat, formed shoes or boots	Small game and jerky
5	Soft quilted linings and polished stones	Baked bread, cheese, and orchard fruit
6	Embroidered decorations and copper wire jewelry	Milk, nuts, and meat buns
7	Beaded decorations or bells, tooled leather patches	Dried fish, fried grains, and fruit pies
8	Fur trim, rare dyes, or silver jewelry	Honey, leaf tea, and sweat cakes
9	Precisely tailored garments	Fresh butchered livestock
10	Gold wire jewelry	Imported wines and rare cheeses
11	Cloth-of-gold	Exotic meats and mushrooms
12 or higher	Fey-stones and mistcloth	Spices from beyond the Ironsea

Table 3.5: Sunchaser Mounts

Name	Breeding	Training	Weight	Availability	Cost
<i>Military Mounts</i>					
Ember-strider	20 (350 days)	12	1300 lbs.	15	1,000s
<i>Riding Mounts</i>					
Rybou	15 (225 days)	15	750 lbs	20	700s
Takern	12 (160 days)	15	800 lbs.	12	500s

Though silver is reasonably abundant, gold is exceedingly rare — a single ingot can mean early retirement in the lap of luxury for most common folk. Gold coins carry tremendous value, a single piece worth 500s. Those lucky enough to find, filch, or finagle gold are well-advised to keep their “discoveries” under wraps, lest unscrupulous parties relieve them of their treasure.

MOUNTS

The Thousand-River Valley features many terrains, and while horses are common, folk have pressed many other creatures into service for traversing these obstacles. Fiery ember-striders, graceful elk-like rybou, and scuttling takern are just a few of the more exotic riding beasts employed by sunchasers who are wealthy, lucky, or committed enough to break one (*see above*). The diverse terrain makes flying mounts particularly valued — ownership of a hippogryph being a hallmark of the legendary Knights of the Pearl (*see the Wind Knight master class, page 122*).

PRIZES

Like most “classic” fantasy settings, Sunchaser places no restrictions on the types of Prizes the heroes may acquire in their adventures. All Renown, titles, Favors, Holdings, and Magic Items presented in Chapter 4 of the Fantasy Craft Rulebook are fitting options for inclusion in this campaign.

SUNCHASER ADVENTURES

The heroes of the Thousand-River Valley have no shortage of opportunities to shine. Sunchasers are a diverse and free-spirited lot, using the sunpools to leap from location to location as they seek out wealth, glory, and a sense of purpose. As they hone their skills, they naturally graduate to greater and greater tasks, eventually joining the major figures of their time in determining the fate of men in the world of Avvis.

THEMES

Courage, hope, and trust — these are the virtues that drive a successful sunchaser and a successful campaign.

The Thousand-River Valley is a place of high adventure. People can easily recognize their heroes, and they love them. Brave adventurers fling themselves into the wilds and forgotten ruins to bring back ancient knowledge and precious treasures. Daring captains turn the tide in pitched battles against the bloodthirsty invaders that threaten even the greatest cities. Wise priests travel the land, strengthening communities, soothing fears, and showing men that their gods are with them. Traveling mages use their secret lore to smite dangerous beasts and save loved ones believed to be lost to the night. It is a land where



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heroes win, though they may face terrible odds. A sunchaser's defining characteristic is a willingness to step into the sunpools and go wherever adventure takes him!

When men arrived in Avvis, their numbers were meager and their possessions few. Recovery from the tortures of the Underheart is still in progress, even if none alive today personally remember those bleak gray halls of stone. After more than two centuries, most of the land is still untamed, and many parts remain unexplored. Good folk strive to eke out a living in the face of the unknown — or worse, the well-known threats of beasts, raiders, and malicious spirits. People look to sunchasers drive back this

darkness, through exploration as much as combat. They want to know the secrets of their new home, to make the mysterious familiar, and to build the sense of community that has allowed them to survive when trouble comes to call. Sunchasers build the links between scattered towns and isolated farms, bringing people together just by their willingness to dare the wilds between the ruin-holds and the cities, and the empty places between villages and port-towns. Just by being heroes they bring hope.

Perhaps the most important theme of Sunchaser is camaraderie. Each adventurer comes from a unique background, with circumstances that inspired or forced him to leave all that

he knew. And yet these heroes manage to find common ground. They live and work and fight together against dangers that send most folk fleeing for the shelter of locked doors and high stone walls. By their actions, they show that unity of purpose is more important than the conflicts of the past. They show how different people can live and strive together to make a better life.

COMING OF THE CRONE

As if the folk of the Thousand-River Valley didn't have enough troubles with internal politics, racial wars, and the machinations of dark spirits, the Crone gets to have a go at reclaiming all men as her slaves every seventy-seven years — and the next such opportunity is only three years away at the start of the default campaign. This arrangement should allow the player characters just enough time to make names for themselves in the world.

Depending on the pace of the campaign, the players can reach almost any level you choose as the signs of this climax event lead into a final epic series of adventures. The Ninety-Nine Knights provide a solid base of named, unique enemies at all power levels to fight along the way. Tales from the last two great battles against the Crone at the Bitterwell can give players clues about their current circumstances. Like the river, life moves in cycles, though each one has its own twists.



Introducing the Third War of the Well can be as in-your-face as having a goblin raider scream out his thanks for the return of his distant goddess, or as spooky as discovering prophetic references in the tomb of a long-dead elf scribe. Whatever your introduction, you'll probably want to ramp up the activities of the Ninety-Nine Knights of the Maw slowly throughout the campaign. Letting the heroes watch the enemy armies grow and strike out more boldly as the time foretold draws near should help players to focus their efforts, even as they try to pursue their own agendas of amassing fame, wealth, power, and respect.

ENCOUNTERS

Variety is the spice of life, and it's a primary ingredient in Sunchaser adventures. It's important to mix up the types of threats the party faces — remember that for a sunchaser, exploring a two-chamber tomb, finding lost cattle, and going out to check on scouts in the field are all as much part of the job as locking swords with ogre brigands or leading the charge against a bunch of Soregg mutants! Chasing the sun is a way of life, and it can't *always* be an immediately life-threatening undertaking. However, the action should slowly escalate as the heroes build their legends, with the focus shifting from day-to-day threats to progressively more memorable challenges and grander foes.

OPPOSITION

Like the situations in which they find themselves, sunchasers often face a wide array of threats in their endeavors. In particular, the wild lands of the Gron'Ver and those corrupted by the Soregg's machinations open the doors for inclusion of nearly any creature or enemy from the Fantasy Craft bestiary (or of your own creation). The following threats may be found in all parts of the valley.

Wild Beasts (Fantasy Craft Bestiary and page 98): No region of Avvis is so thoroughly settled that it's free from the incursions of wild beasts. Travelers must be especially wary as they trek between settlements. Many of the large animals native to Africa and India can be found in Anmai and the Gron'Ver, while bears and wolves range throughout the Black Peaks and the distant north. Takern and other more aggressive reptiles and insects make their homes in Avva's Anvil, while 60-foot water serpents and hungry beggar beetles can be found along the entire length of the Morru-Braid and its tributaries.

Goblins, Ogres, and Orcs (Fantasy Craft, page 244–245): The warrior-bands of the Crone gather into massive packs that descend upon the towns and cities of men from time to time. These dark reflections of humanity allow us to see ourselves in the worst light — bestial, merciless, and hungry for the blood of innocents. Raiding parties harass smaller communities even more frequently, providing ample opportunity for passing sunchasers to test their mettle.

Lyss (page 99): The vile and corrupting Lyss provide a subtle but incredibly dangerous threat to the party, both directly and indirectly. Sunchasers may become targets of Lyss temptation, or they might oppose those who have already succumbed to that seductive power. Thus, the Lyss provide an excellent focus for a longer story-arc or series of adventures.

Ruin-Haunts (page 100): For fortune-seekers and tomb-delvers interested in exploring lost elf ruins, the raging garamat, korret, and pahnoru are deadly and ever-present nemeses. Though these tough guardians rarely leave the areas they are charged to defend, sunchasers would be well advised to treat these creatures with respect and/or decisive violence.

Soregg (page 101): Another grave spiritual threat, the Soregg revel in creating vicious monsters and releasing them into the wild. Their minions and spawn create cancerous nests that must be purged with fire lest all folk in the area face physical corruption and agonizing death.

Traps (Fantasy Craft, page 338–339): Many sunchasers spend a great deal of time as ruin-delvers, so they must face the ingenious defensive contraptions of the long-dead elves. With the right combination of advanced engineering and ancient magic, the buried cities and tombs of the elves can present an unending array of deathtraps and puzzles to heroes trying to extract the lore and treasure hidden below.

Greed and Politics: While most towns and even cities are relatively isolated, men have reached a critical tipping point in the last few decades. The merchant guilds and houses have become powers unto themselves, and their reach extends the entire length of the river. These new powers are now poised to do battle with each other, both at the bargaining table and along trade routes, as their guard contingents begin to resemble armies. Closer to home, each region has its own authorities whose grasp on power may be tenuous, and some of these authorities might seek to shore it up with subterfuge and strife. Sunchasers may not want to delve deeply into such struggles, but the pay can be excellent, and their skills are certainly in demand.

Success: Sunchasers are the rock stars of the adventuring world, and the consequences of their accomplishments can present hazards of their own. Some of these challenges may be humorous — for instance, a hero might have to fend off the amorous advances of a teenager seeking to escape farm life. At other times, they can be deadly serious business — perhaps powerful men whose schemes have been disrupted send hired knives to take revenge.

REWARDS

As GM of a Sunchaser campaign, you should feel free to use any and all rewards at your disposal during play. The world of the Thousand-River Valley is one of great variety, diverse cultures, and hidden treasures. The following list details a few of the *most* common rewards you may want to consider.



ACTION DICE

Though not a tangible reward, action dice are the best and most instantly gratifying reward a GM can use to encourage heroic play. Share (and gain) them liberally throughout the session whenever a character's play makes the experience at the table more fulfilling. A daring act, insane stunt, clever plot, or joke that makes everyone laugh are just a few examples of play worthy of action die rewards.

REPUTATION

Reputation is the true currency of heroism, and thus the sunchaser's most prized possession. Make liberal use of Reputation as an Instant Reward, particularly when the heroes shows exceptional courage, bravado, or self-sacrifice.

HOLDINGS

Even though many sunchasers are drifters floating from one adventure to the next, having a safehouse, merchant's guild, or friendly town to call one's own can be a great advantage. Holdings are places where the heroes can take refuge, rest their weary bones, and plot their next tomb-crawl or raid against the Crone. For more creative groups, a slow-moving barge or other "mobile" Holding can be a perfect base of operations for adventures along the Morru-Braid or the valley's countless other byways.

MAGIC ITEMS & ARTIFACTS

Magic items and artifacts are likely to be the sunchaser's most prized possessions because they are small, portable, and eminently utilitarian. Thought still limited by a hero's Renown, even a single item can have a significant impact on a hero's path, thanks to the *greater magic items* campaign quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 324). The acquisition of a powerful item is as good a motive as any for the party to delve into elven ruins, trek into the lands of the Black Erron, or even raid a war camp of the Underheart!

SUNCHASER ROGUES GALLERY

Any rogues listed in *Fantasy Craft* (pages 244–248) can fit well into the Sunchaser campaign, and they provide a great way to highlight the diversity of cultures and occupations in this setting. Rogue templates are convenient tools to make the denizens of the Thousand-River Valley's cultures seem different. For example, using the Dwarf template liberally when setting an adventure on the Ironsea or Morru's Mirror, or the Drake template for a Black Peaks scenario deepens the feel of the region. Using the Goblin, Orc, and Ogre templates for adversarial rogues or in Crone-dominated lands is also a must.

SUNCHASER MONSTERS

The Sunchaser campaign setting features many unique creatures, including the following.

BEGGER BEETLE

These warhound-sized, gray-and-brown beetles are among the most insidious threats on the plains of Anmai, though they exist in smaller numbers all the way north to the Swordcliffs. Beggar beetles form huge communal nests, burrowing into soft soil and leaving distinctive mounds at the entry points. The colony then sends out scouts and scavengers for miles around in search of food, which they bring back to the nest to share with the entire colony. Because they also collect shiny objects, their nests are treasure troves of polished rocks, scrap metal, and loose coins. Unlike ants, beggar beetles have no singular queen — each female is constantly laying eggs and expanding the nest while each male forages for food or takes a turn on guard duty protecting the eggs.

Tactics: Scouting parties of two to four beetles are not overtly aggressive; they simply try to stealthfully snatch food or trinkets and flee. When on guard duty, however, they become implacable killers that fight to the death anywhere in or near the confines of the hive.

Beggar beetles fight cooperatively, swarming most enemies, gouging with their barbed horns, and biting coin-sized morsels from targets. Once a target is down, beggar beetles often become distracted by the wealth of food the carcass represents and may briefly ignore other enemies to devour it.

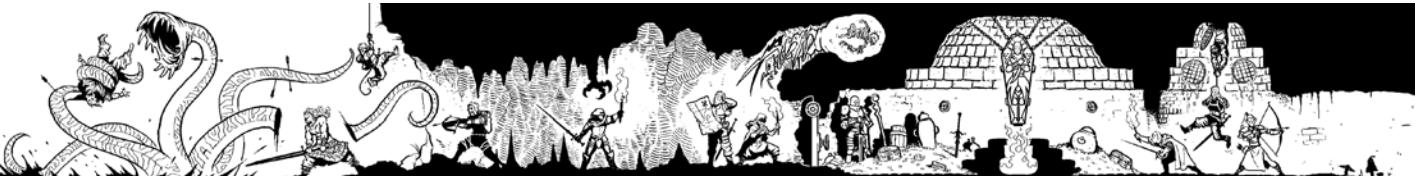
Beggar Beetle (Small Animal Burrower Walker — 61 XP): Str 16, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 6; SZ S (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground, 10 ft. burrow; Init VI; Atk III; Def II; Res IV; Health III; Comp —; Skills: Notice IV, Sneak VII, Survival IV; Qualities: *Darkvision II*, *improved sense (scent)*, *improved stability*, *nocturnal*, *swarm*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite I (dmg 1d6+3 lethal; threat 18–20; qualities: *AP 4*), Gore III (dmg 2d4+3 lethal; threat 18–20; qualities: *bleed*)

Treasure: 1L

EMBER-STRIDER

At first glance, an ember-strider might be mistaken for a common draft horse whose soot-black hide blends in well with the volcanic stone of the Black Peaks. Closer inspection reveals that its legs have the same reddish glow as the molten rock that flows through its homeland, brightening to a cherry red at the hooves, which strike sparks on stones and can start small fires where they tread on dried fodder.



Tactics: Trained for war, ember-striders are employed by the premier cavalry of the Matha's noble houses. They have no fear of fire and can easily be taught to ignore the sounds and smells of battle. Their tactics are simple — crush, stomp, and burn anything that gets in their way!

Ember-Strider (Large Animal Walker — 61 XP): Str 16, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 9; SZ L (1x2, Reach 1); Spd 40 ft. ground; Init III; Atk IV; Def IV; Res V; Health III; Comp —; Skills: Athletics IV, Notice III; Qualities: *Damage defiance (heat), fearless I, improved stability, superior traveler II, tough I*

Attacks/Weapons: Kick II (dmg 1d8+3 fire; threat 19–20), Trample II (dmg 1d10+3 fire; threat 19–20)

Treasure: 2T

KNIGHT OF THE CRONE

The Crone's reach in the sunlit world may only be a fraction of what it was beyond the moon-pools, but her 99 Knights still do her bidding here. These robed and armored warriors are encountered singly or in small groups, cutting across the land like a bitter scythe. They are equipped with high-quality weapons of ancient manufacture, using them to butcher all who stand in their way, without mercy and without sound (for none of them ever speak a word).

No one knows what these Knights look like under their black shrouds and armor, and few have thought to ask. Even when defeated their bodies decay and turn to dust, denying their killers a glance at their true faces. Indeed, it's been said that they cannot be permanently killed — that only the Crone has the ability to claim their lives.

Tactics: The Knights of the Crone fight without pause and without mercy. They aren't stupid, however, and in true warrior fashion take the time to set up ambushes, arrange flanking maneuvers, and retreat from lost battles, returning only when they believe their enemies have been lulled into a false sense of security. The 99 Knights prefer to close to melee range as quickly as possible, and seem to relish one-on-one duels with skilled combatants.

Knight of the Crone (Medium Undead Walker — 101 XP): Str 16, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init V; Atk VII; Def V; Res VII; Health VI; Comp III; Skills: Athletics VI, Intimidate IV, Ride VI, Tactics VI; Qualities: *Class ability (Lancer: master rider I), dramatic entrance, everlasting, fearless II, feat (Armor Basics, Charging Basics), telepathic, treacherous*

Attacks/Weapons: Superior armor-piercing broadsword (dmg 1d10+4 lethal; threat 20, qualities: *AP 2, massive*), superior lance (dmg 1d8+4 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *AP 4, cavalry, massive, reach +1*), superior metal shield (dmg 1d4+4 subdual; threat 20; qualities: *guard +2*)

Mounts and Vehicles: War horse (Spd 50 ft. ground (Run 250 ft.); Travel 5; SZ/Def L/IV)

Gear: Superior ceremonial full plate (moderate platemail with heavy fittings: DR 6; Resist Blunt 2; DP –4; ACP –4; Spd –10 ft.; Disguise obvious)

Treasure: 1C, 2T

LYSS

Architects of corruption and pain, the Lyss exist to tempt mortals with easy power granted by the Circle of Whispers, always at the price of the victims' souls. Lyss are master bargainers, offering the sweetest of enticements and exploiting the strict letter of their agreements to lead the unwary into everlasting damnation. While they are best known for exchanges with the orc shamans of the Kaia Jungles, they have found the race of men to be an interesting and delightful challenge as well. Most of all they prize the souls of elves, who as worshippers of the Silver Crown should know better than to traffic with their ilk.

Lyss appear as satyr-like beings, clothed and decorated in the fashion of their current target. Their manner is usually quite dignified, but they are capable of great menace if negotiations call for a little fear to seal the deal. They *never* violate agreements once signed in blood by both parties, but they are not above letting others deceive themselves about Lyss goals, intentions, and suggestions.

Tactics: Lyss fight only when confined, or when a client is unwilling to surrender his life (and soul) after a contract is complete. Though capable of physical violence, they rely instead on magical skills to subdue enemies. Lyss deliberately avoid random killing, as it limits the number of souls they might eventually collect.

Lyss Bargainer (Medium Outsider Walker — 79 XP):

Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 12; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init III; Atk III; Def IV; Res VI; Health IV; Comp V; Skills: Bluff VI, Haggle IX, Spellcasting VII; Spells: Call from Beyond III, Heroism II, Magic Missile, Mark of Justice, Permanency, Prayer, Wish II; Qualities: *Attractive I, class ability (Assassin: offer they can't refuse), feat (Glint of Madness), natural spell (Dimension Door, Geas), tough I*

Attacks/Weapons: Kick I (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20)

Gear: Mage's pouch, parchment (10 sheets), quill.

Treasure: 2A, 1L

RIVER KING

Treated with reverent respect by the Vessa, these hulking reptiles can be found in nearly any river that leads into or out of the Great Swamp. River kings are powerfully built and their strength is easily the match of an ogre. It is rumored that they are living ancestors of the Vessa, a pause on the path of their



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evolution. Their skin ranges in color from browns to deep greens, and they often display bright markings in contrasting colors such as yellow or blue.

River kings effortlessly switch from bipedal to quadruped movement when speed is required. In the water they move faster than any rowing boat, and they can hold their breath for hours. They also possess sharp teeth and large jaws, and can bite a Pech in two if provoked.

Tactics: In the wild, river kings mark out a stretch of river and defend it to the death. They prefer to launch ambushes from the deep, grappling their target and dragging it under where it will drown. They can, however, move with surprising speed over short distances, and think nothing of pursuing foes several hundred yards from their territory.

River King (Large Beast Walker — 91 XP): Str 16, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 10; SZ L (2x2, Reach 2); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk IV; Def III; Res V; Health VI; Comp II; Skills: Athletics IV, Sneak IV, Tactics IV; Qualities: *Aquatic II, chameleon I (aquatic), charge attack, cold-blooded, damage reduction 3, darkvision I, feral, feat (Ambush Basics, Wrestling Basics), grappler, superior swimmer IV*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite II (dmg 1d10+3 lethal; threat 17–20; qualities: *grab*), Tail Slap II (dmg 1d10+3 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *reach +1*)

Treasure: 1A, 2T

RUIN-HAUNTS

The ruins of Faer Wernan that dot the western plains are more than just piles of stone from a previous age. Even now, these edifices collect and concentrate the flows of magic drifting through the world, giving rise to new life — of a sort. While the beautifully wrought pahnoru are clearly deliberate creations from the times when the ancient elves worked moonshell into servants as well as buildings, the feral garamat, brutal lahskil, and perhaps even the sly korret are born more of random chance, as the gilded spires slowly weather away to rubble.

Garamat: Called thistle stones by the elves that remain, these ferocious creatures appear to be equal parts broken lilm-crystals and twisted shrubbery. They scurry about elven ruins, attacking any and all living creatures they come across — with one exception. Those in the company of a korret are completely ignored; perhaps they are even invisible to the tiny elementals' senses. While the typical garamat is the size of a pech, some grow to be more than 10 feet tall. Garamats metamorphose abruptly when they accumulate enough magical energy.

Korret: These living manifestations of ancient elven lore are common only in ruins that contain hidden libraries and other founts of lost or forbidden knowledge. A korret looks like a long-plumed bird composed entirely of inky runes, and its sharp, jerky movements are nearly as swift as the thoughts that

make up its body. Korret seem to abhor loneliness, so they often befriend sunchasers or other folk who pass through the ruins that spawned them. Some even chose to accompany these new companions on their travels rather than be left behind amid dust chambers and forgotten books.

Lahskil: Known as grave-banes amongst the elves, these savage things are composed of large blocks of stone, twisted plant roots, and a whole lot of malice. With bodies made up of grave stones, tomb doors, and ancient tree roots, lahskil contain the bitter hatred — and regret — of those who died before their time. They mainly haunt tombs and graveyards, and want nothing more than to be left alone. Considering their ordinarily ponderous nature, they are capable of shocking violence when intruded-upon and attack mercilessly until they are left alone. While they shrug off mundane assaults, magic and fire can quickly whittle them down. See page 72 for an illustration of this creature.

Pahnoru are commonly called glass-eyes, and were once servants in the larger elven cities. They resemble tall elf warriors cut from alabaster, and they have eyes that shine brightly when they are active and “awake.” A scattered few still remain in various spires and complexes, posing a deadly danger to unwelcome explorers. Hundreds of pahnoru still stand guard in the city of Faer Pahdris, dotting the gardens and standing atop the walls of the old city, mimicking common statuary while they stand in endless vigil. These pahnoru constitute the city’s secret army, for they will obey only the commands of Faer Pahdris’ in’korret and the Raven King.

Garamat (Small or Large Animal Elemental Walker — 59 XP): Str 12, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ S (1x1, Reach 1) or L (2x2, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init III; Atk IV; Def II; Res V; Health V; Comp —; Skills: Athletics II, Search V, Tactics II; Qualities: *Achilles heel (fire, sonic), chameleon I (indoors/settled, plains), damage reduction 2, damage splitter (by spells only), darkvision I, feral*

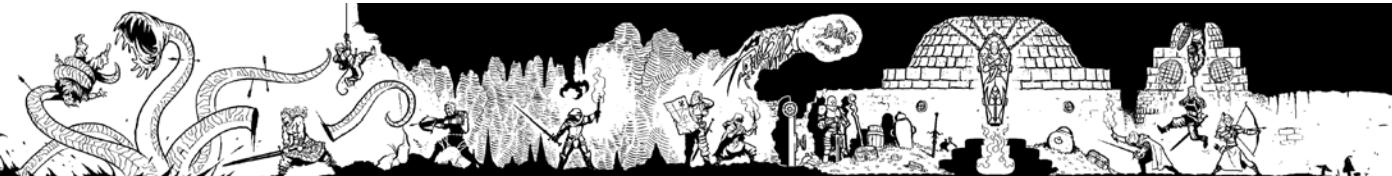
Attacks/Weapons: Slam III (dmg 2d4+1 lethal (Small) or 2d8+1 lethal (Large); threat 19–20; qualities: *AP 2, venomous (paranoia poison)*), Grasping Tendrils (Tentacle Slap I: dmg 1d6+1 lethal (Small) or 1d10+1 lethal (Large); threat 20; qualities: *grab, reach +2*)

Treasure: 2L

Korret (Medium Beast Elemental Flyer Walker — 64 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 40 ft. winged flight, 20 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk III; Def V; Res IV; Health V; Comp V; Skills: Investigate VI; Qualities: *Darkvision I, everlasting, natural spell (Detect Magic, Find the Path, Illusionary Image III, Living Library II)*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite I (dmg 1d8 lethal; threat 19–20)

Treasure: 1A, 1L





Lahskil (Huge Elemental Plant Walker — 93 XP): Str 22, Dex 6, Con 20, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 1; SZ H (4x4, Reach 3); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init III; Atk IV; Def III; Res VIII; Health VIII; Comp I; Skills: Athletics VII, Notice V, Search I; Qualities: *Banned action (tumble)*, *battering chameleon I (indoors/settled)*, *clumsy*, *damage defiance (lethal)*, *impaired sense (hearing)*, *knockback*, *lumbering*, *tough I*, *tricky (Shove)*

Attacks/Weapons: Massive fists (slam V: dmg 3d10+6 lethal; threat 18–20)

Treasure: 2A, 2L, 2M

Pahnoru (Medium Elemental Walker — 57 XP): Str 15, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 20 ft. ground; Init I; Atk VI; Def V; Res V; Health VI; Comp III; Skills: Search IV; Qualities: *Achilles heel (sonic)*, *attractive II*, *banned checks (Swim)*, *chameleon II (indoors/settled)*, *damage defiance (edged)*, *darkvision I*, *everlasting*, *feat (Greatsword Basics, Greatsword Mastery)*

Attacks/Weapons: Claymore (dmg 1d12+2 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *massive*, *reach +1*), Slam I (dmg 1d6+2 lethal; threat 20)

Treasure: 2L, 1T

RYBOU

Related to elk and elands, rybou are tawny-gold grazing animals native to Anmai. Swift of foot and capable of incredible leaps, they are difficult to hunt and even more difficult to capture alive. Those that are caught can sometimes be trained to the saddle, but these powerful steeds are not for the faint of heart or anyone who is afraid of heights.

Tactics: Rybou are reluctant to kick with their cloven hooves, but they often sport impressive spiraling horns that they use to defend themselves. When possible, they lie in wait for prey, using their superior hearing to determine the best time to attack.

Rybou (Large Animal Walker — 59 XP): Str 12, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 5, Wis 10, Cha 7; SZ L (1x2, Reach 1); Spd 50 ft. ground (Run 250 ft.); Init III; Atk II; Def VI; Res III; Health III; Comp —; Skills: Acrobatics VIII, Athletics IV, Notice IV; Qualities: *Class ability (Burglar: evasion I)*, *expertise (Acrobatics)*, *feat (Lightning Reflexes)*, *improved senses (hearing)*, *superior jumper III*, *superior runner I*, *tough I*

Attacks/Weapons: Gore I (dmg 1d8+1 lethal; threat 20; qualities: *bleed*)

Treasure: 2T

SOREGG

Unlike the elemental spirits of the Faces of Ruul, the Soregg are agents of change and capricious violence. They wander the land, spreading both momentary vitality and enduring conflict wherever they go. Though an accomplished shapechanger, a

Soregg in its natural state resembles a large, diseased sea urchin. Its black-and-purple striped spines stick out at all angles between several bright green nodules. Soregg may also appear as bat-like or spider-like creatures built up from an eyeless mix of spines and nodules. Their power and status are directly linked to their size, and the dwarves have on occasion fought Soregg more than 40 ft. across.

Tactics: Soregg prefer to work at a distance, seducing and slowing enemies with their abilities rather than directly engaging them in combat. When cornered and unmasked, Soregg fight savagely, using their spines to leave injuries that last long after their final defeat.

Soregg Corruptor (Large Horror Outsider Walker — 104 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 16; SZ L (2x2, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init II; Atk IV; Def V; Res IV; Health V; Comp IV; Skills: Bluff VI, Impress VI; Qualities: *Blindsight*, *natural defense*, *natural spell (Brawn II, Entangle, Resurrection I)*, *shapeshifter II*, *tough I*, *tricky (Venom Master)*

Attacks/Weapons: Stinger (slam III: dmg 2d8 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *keen 20*, *venomous (potent enraging poison)*)

Treasure: 1A, 1M, 1T

TAKERN

With their sharp, vinegar smell and foul disposition, these huge lizards aren't the likeliest choices for mounts, but many say their virtues outweigh their faults. Takern have sharp, splintered claws on all four legs that give them remarkable traction and the ability to climb the steepest rock faces even while fully loaded. Because they're also natural swimmers, the takern are strong "go-anywhere" choice for sunchasers who don't know where they might end up next. Especially large takern are often captured and trained by ogres for use in raids on fortified towns and strongholds.

Tactics: In the wild, takern prefer to pounce upon prey from above, bringing all of their wicked claws to bear simultaneously and using their mildly poisonous spurs to disable the target. Enemy weapons are disarmed as soon as possible. Takern are not swift enough to chase most animals, so they have become practiced at striking from ambush.

Takern (Large Animal Walker — 59 XP): Str 13, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 6; SZ L (2x3, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init III; Atk III; Def III; Res IV; Health VII; Comp —; Skills: Athletics VI, Notice III, Tactics III; Qualities: *Cold-blooded*, *feat (Ambush Basics, Expert Disarm)*, *superior climber III*, *superior swimmer III*, *superior traveler III*

Attacks/Weapons: Claw II x 2 (dmg 1d8+1 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *grab*), Toxic Spur (Slam I: dmg 1d8+1 lethal; threat 20; qualities: *venomous (intoxicating poison)*)

Treasure: 1L, 1T





CHAPTER 4: A HERO'S JOURNEY

You will encounter many strange and wondrous things in your travels through our worlds and yours, and along the way you're bound to pick up a few new tricks of the adventuring trade. This substantial expansion to the Fantasy Craft rules includes dozens of new character options, representing new Origins, training, and many variant and offshoot species.

SPECIALTIES

These Specialties are especially appropriate in *Cloak & Dagger*, *Epoch*, and *Sunchaser*, but are useful in any Fantasy Craft game.

BEGGAR

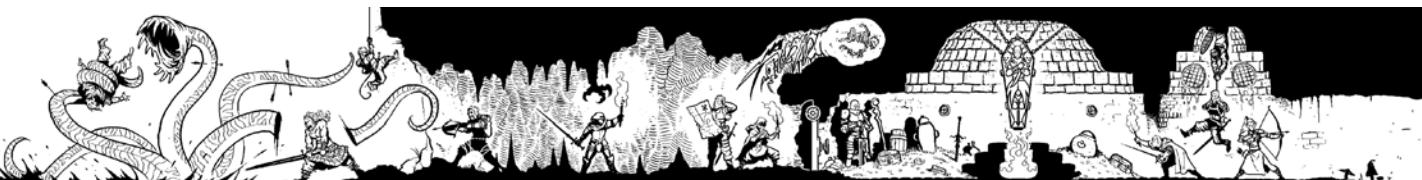
You're a student of the school of hard knocks, surviving on sympathy and guts.

- *Bonus Feat*: Fortune's Fool
- *Charming*: Once per session, you may improve the disposition of any 1 non-adversary NPC by 5.
- *Contagion Sense*: You may roll twice when making Fortitude saves prompted by disease and poison, keeping the result you prefer.
- *Odd Jobs*: You gain a +4 morale bonus with Downtime checks made to earn income (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 68).
- *Paired Skills*: Each time you gain ranks in the Survival skill, you gain equal ranks in the Search skill. This may not increase your Search skill beyond its maximum rank.

CULTIST

Your faith is your shield and sword, and curses on any who mock your beliefs.

- *Bonus Feat*: Black Cat
- *Chance Expert*: You're considered to have 2 additional Chance feats for any ability based on the number of Chance feats you have.
- *Devotee*: You gain 1 Alignment and a Study related to that Alignment. You may not have more than 1 Alignment.
- *No Pain*: You may ignore the first *fatigued* or *shaken* condition you would gain each scene.
- *Terrifying Look*: The Will Save DCs of stress damage you inflict increase by 4.





HIGHWAYMAN

You and your gang of two-bit thugs make a decent living harassing passersby. While initially a stretch, heroism seems like it might be just as rewarding for you.

- *Bonus Feat*: Wolf Pack Basics
- *Harsh Beating*: The Fortitude save DCs of subdual damage you inflict increase by 4.
- *Pick on the Little Guy*: You gain the Pick on the Little Guy trick (see page 141).
- *Practiced Intimidate*: If you spend an action die to boost an Intimidate check and it still fails, you gain the die back after the action is resolved. Against multiple targets you only regain the die if the check fails against all of them.
- *Riding Mounts Focus*: You gain the Ride skill's Riding Mounts focus.

JESTER

You grew up in a traveling circus or entertaining nobles at court, but you're no fool.

- *Bonus Feat*: Aggro Basics
- *Attribute Training*: The lower of your Dexterity or Charisma scores increases by 1 (your choice if a tie). Apply this bonus after any modifiers from your Species or Talent.
- *Charming*: Once per session, you may improve the Disposition of any 1 non-adversary NPC by 5.
- *Inquisitive Mind*: You gain 2 additional Interests.
- *More than Luck*: You gain 1 additional starting action die.

MERCENARY

You sell your sword to the highest bidder, and the money jingling in your purse is often dipped in blood. Still, no one can fault your results.

- *Bonus Feat*: Yeoman's Work
- *Decisive*: You gain a +5 bonus with Initiative.
- *Extra Proficiencies*: You gain 2 additional proficiencies or tricks.
- *Paired Skills*: Each time you gain ranks in the Haggle skill, you gain equal ranks in the Resolve skill. This may not increase your Resolve skill beyond its maximum rank.

PEASANT

You come from humble stock, where you learned to survive through hard work and diligence. If only your friends and family could see you now!

- *Bonus Feat*: Great Fortitude
- *Edged Proficiency*: You gain the Edged weapon proficiency.
- *Paired Skills*: Each time you gain ranks in the Survival skill, you gain equal ranks in the Resolve skill. This may not increase your Resolve skill beyond its maximum rank.
- *Ride Focus*: You gain 1 Ride skill focus.
- *Thrifty*: Your Prudence rises by 2.

SCHOLAR

You're a man of knowledge in a world where it is both rare and powerful.

- *Bonus Feat*: Perfect Memory
- *Inquisitive Mind*: You gain 2 additional Interests.
- *Inscription Focus*: You gain the Crafting (Inscription) focus.
- *Paired Skills*: Each time you gain ranks in the Resolve skill, you gain equal ranks in the Investigate skill. This may not increase your Investigate skill beyond its maximum rank.
- *Sharp Mind*: You gain 1 additional skill point per level.

SLAVE

You may be considered the dregs of society, but you've turned a life of anonymity and adversity into a source of great personal strength.

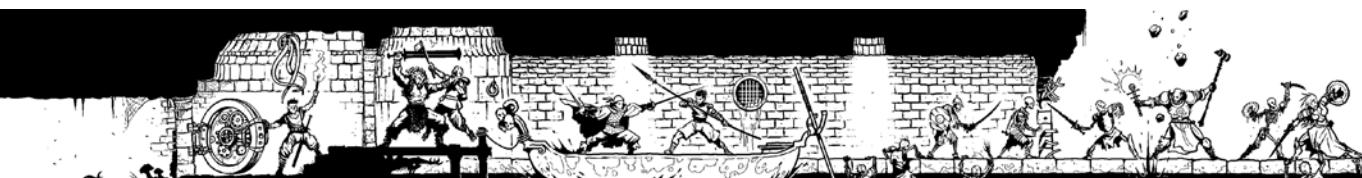
- *Bonus Feat*: Anonymity Basics
- *Crafting Focus*: You gain 1 Crafting skill focus.
- *Practiced Blend*: If you spend an action die to boost a Blend check and it still fails, you gain the die back after the action is resolved. Against multiple targets you only regain the die if the check fails against all of them.
- *Push it to the Limit*: You take exactly 1 point per die when suffering subdual damage from any Athletics/Push Limit check (no roll is required).
- *Tenacious Spirit*: You gain 1 additional vitality per level.

EMISSARY (BASE)

The Emissary is the original man of mystery, a covert operative in an age long before electronic telecommunication networks, global travel, and sophisticated gadgets. Here the Emissary walks a razor's edge between enemies who hunt him and lords who deny his existence at the first implication of their involvement. The Emissary's greatest weapons are his insights into foes' minds, his best defense is living without a name (or possibly with many), and his greatest advantage is the information always at his fingertips. With these at his disposal, he is without peer.

Depending on the campaign, an Emissary could be...

- A hand-picked agent of kings whose identity is known only to his nation's highest-ranking officials
- A suave manipulator, stealing royal secrets and ladies' hearts with aplomb
- A grizzled watchman shifting seamlessly between polite society and the criminal underworld
- A freelance rogue selling ill-gotten information to fund his next personal crusade
- A diplomatic liaison who secretly feeds information back to his military sponsors
- A beautiful courtesan who uses her... *unique* position to subtly manipulate the opinions of great leaders



CHAPTER 4



Party Role: Solver/Backer. The Emissary is an expert at sniffing out secrets... and keeping them, even when it means cleaning up other peoples' messes.

CLASS FEATURES

Favored Attributes: Wisdom, Charisma, Intelligence

Class Skills: Blend, Bluff, Crafting, Disguise, Haggle, Investigate, Notice, Prestidigitation, Resolve, Ride, Search, Sense Motive

Skill Points: 8 + Int modifier per level

Vitality: 6 + Con modifier per level

Starting Proficiencies: 3

CORE ABILITY

Sympathetic: You understand people and their troubles — that's what makes you so good at ensnaring them. Each time you spend 1 action die to boost a Charisma- or Wisdom-based skill check, you roll and add the results of 2 dice (e.g. at Career Level 1, 1d4 becomes 2d4).

CLASS ABILITIES

Human Nature: You always look past peoples' actions to the motives behind them. At Level 1, each time you fail an Investigate or Sense Motive check and don't suffer an error, you still succeed as long as the check DC (or your opponent's check result) is equal to or less than your Class Level + 20. If several grades of success are possible, you achieve only the lowest possible positive result.

If you gain this ability for either skill from two or more classes, add together your levels in all classes granting the ability when determining its effect.

Sources I: You carefully cultivate a network of beggars, government functionaries, watchmen, and lovers who feed you useful information. At Level 2, your Reputation cost for Contacts drops by 10 (minimum 1/2 base cost, rounded up).

Sources II: At Level 11, Contacts no longer count against the number of Prizes you may keep.

Sources III: At Level 19, your Reputation cost for Contacts drops by an additional 10 (total 20).

Bonus Feat: At Levels 3, 7, 11, 15, and 19, you gain an additional Covert or Skill feat.

Insightful: At Levels 4, 12, and 20, the lower of your Intelligence or Wisdom scores rises by 1.

Operative: Your experience in the field is a source of great influence and pragmatic knowledge. At Levels 5, 9, 13, and 17, your Military Renown increases by 1, or you gain 2 additional Interests.

King's Gambit: In the game of nations, you play to win — by hook or by crook. At Levels 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18, you may choose one of the following abilities. Each of these abilities may be chosen only once.



- **Black Vial:** You gain a +5 bonus with saves against poison. Also, the DC to save against poison you use increases by 5.
- **Expertise:** Choose one skill: Blend, Bluff, Crafting, Disguise, Haggle, Investigate, Notice, Prestidigitation, Resolve, Ride, Search, or Sense Motive. Taking 10 with this skill doesn't take twice as long and taking 20 takes only 10 times as long.
- **Intercept Message (city):** Once per session, you can devote Downtime of at least 1 day to secretly intercepting the next message from a target individual, organization, or location. You automatically learn the contents of this message.

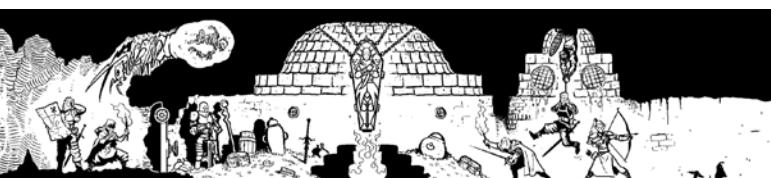


Table 4.1: The Emissary

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Def	Init	Lifestyle	Legend	Abilities
1	+0	+0	+1	+2	+1	+1	+0	+1	Human nature, <i>sympathetic</i>
2	+1	+0	+2	+3	+1	+1	+0	+2	Sources I
3	+2	+1	+2	+3	+2	+2	+1	+3	Bonus feat
4	+3	+1	+2	+4	+2	+2	+1	+3	Insightful
5	+3	+1	+3	+4	+3	+3	+1	+4	Operative
6	+4	+2	+3	+5	+4	+4	+2	+5	King's gambit
7	+5	+2	+4	+5	+4	+4	+2	+6	Bonus feat
8	+6	+2	+4	+6	+5	+5	+2	+6	Status quo I
9	+6	+3	+4	+6	+5	+5	+3	+7	King's gambit, operative
10	+7	+3	+5	+7	+6	+6	+3	+8	Master of secrets 1/session
11	+8	+3	+5	+7	+7	+7	+3	+9	Bonus feat, sources II
12	+9	+4	+6	+8	+7	+7	+4	+9	Insightful, king's gambit
13	+9	+4	+6	+8	+8	+8	+4	+10	Operative
14	+10	+4	+6	+9	+8	+8	+4	+11	Ready for the worst
15	+11	+5	+7	+9	+9	+9	+5	+12	Bonus feat, king's gambit
16	+12	+5	+7	+10	+10	+10	+5	+12	Status quo II
17	+12	+5	+8	+10	+10	+10	+5	+13	Operative
18	+13	+6	+8	+11	+11	+11	+6	+14	King's gambit
19	+14	+6	+8	+11	+11	+11	+6	+15	Bonus feat, sources III
20	+15	+6	+9	+12	+12	+12	+6	+15	Insightful, master of secrets 2/session

including its author, intended recipient, and mode of communication (though if it's encrypted, you must still decipher it). The sender or recipient is *not* alerted to this event.

- *Keen Senses*: Your visual, hearing, and scent ranges increase by 20 ft.
- *Leverage (city)*: You can devote Downtime of at least 1 day to digging into a specific person's past for damning information. This grants you a +2 gear bonus with Bluff, Intimidate, and Sense Motive checks targeting that individual, which lasts until you use this ability again or until the end of the adventure, whichever comes first.
- *Man of Mystery*: You keep your activities and identity well-concealed. The error ranges of attempts to research you or your activities — including Investigate and Knowledge checks — increase by 2.
- *Stash It*: As a free action, you may make a Stash check to hide 1 object weighing up to 1 lb. Inspection fails to find the object unless a threat or critical success is scored.
- *Warrant*: Once per adventure as a free action, you may gain a free Detention Favor with a cost equal to your Class Level + 5. Unless used, this Favor is lost at the end of the scene.

Status Quo I: You're as skilled at burying the truth as exposing it. At Level 8, once per adventure, you may attempt to convince 1 special character or 1 mob of standard characters to disregard an event they have witnessed. Make a Bluff check opposed by the target's Sense Motive. With success, the target

disregards the event for a number of days equal to the difference of the checks; with a critical success, they forget the event entirely.

Status Quo II: At Level 16, you may use this ability once per session instead.

Master of Secrets: You can spot the thread of truth in any web of lies. At Level 10, once per session when you make a successful Detect Lie check, you also gain 1 clue about the target (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 335).

At Level 20, you may use this ability twice per session.

Ready for the Worst: You plan for every contingency — especially failure. At Level 14, when you or a teammate who can see or hear you suffers an error, you may "take the action back." The action is entirely canceled and the acting character may instead take any other action requiring up to the same amount of time (he may not try the same action again until the time required for the first failed attempt has passed). You must use this ability before the GM or an opposing player spends action dice to activate the error as a critical failure. This ability may be used a number of times per session equal to your starting action dice, but only once per round.

Example: Brungil rolls a 1 when making a 1-minute Crafting check, suffering an error. Fearing a possible catastrophe, the Emissary aborts the action, taking that check back. Brungil may now choose a different action — such as checking his tools — but he must wait for 1 minute before making the Crafting check again.



MARTIAL ARTIST (BASE)

The Martial Artist wages a beautiful, bloody dance across the battlefield, keeping tempo with a dazzling array of graceful maneuvers and crushing assaults. He marries inner peace with intense personal discipline, achieving a level of physical perfection envied by the most accomplished swordsmen and most veteran soldiers in the land. His singular focus and lifelong dedication awaken unique abilities rarely seen among more traditional warriors, giving him a marked edge over the competition.

Depending on the campaign, a Martial Artist could be...

- A student of the fist, walking the earth to solve problems and assist the innocent
- A cocky swordsman, eager to test his blade against all comers
- A cloistered monk dedicated to mastering body and mind
- A thuggish brawler with a natural talent for pugilism
- A beast-warrior whose skill with tooth and claw far exceeds animalistic fury
- A talented gladiator leveraging his deadly talent for cold, hard coin
- A clever duelist keeping the art of the blade alive in the face of progress
- An ancient master whose great wisdom grants supreme discipline

Party Role: Combatant. You're a graceful warrior whose innate appreciation and talent for the art of fighting is unrivaled. You may not possess the toughness or flexibility of a Soldier but your insight into the human condition lets you routinely perform staggering, seemingly mystical feats of combat prowess.

CLASS FEATURES

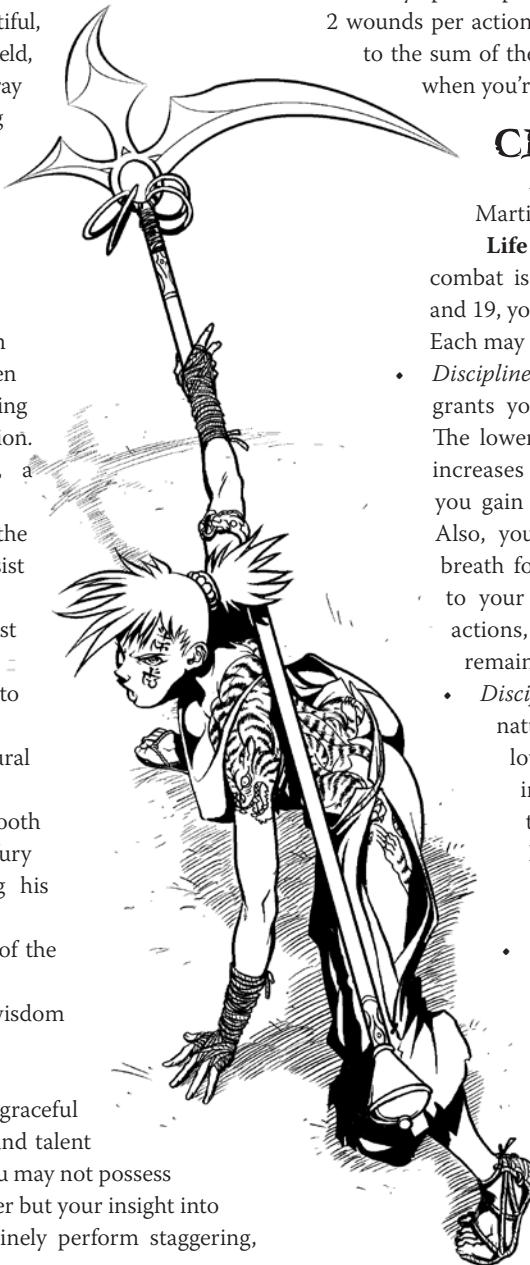
Favored Attributes: Strength, Dexterity, Wisdom

Class Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Impress, Intimidate, Notice, Resolve, Sense Motive, Sneak

Skill Points: 4 + Int modifier per level

Vitality: 12 + Con modifier per level

Starting Proficiencies: 6



CORE ABILITY

Unyielding: You can withstand massive physical punishment. You may spend up to 3 action dice when you Refresh, gaining 2 wounds per action die spent and an amount of vitality equal to the sum of the action dice results. You may also Refresh when you're unconscious or dying.

CLASS ABILITIES

Martial Arts: At Level 1, you gain the Martial Arts feat.

Life of Discipline: The secret to mastering combat is to first master yourself. At Levels 2, 11, and 19, you may choose one of the following abilities. Each may be chosen only once.

- *Discipline of the Body:* Your intense martial discipline grants you extraordinary control over your body. The lower of your Strength or Constitution scores increases by 1 (your choice in the case of a tie) and you gain a +1 insight bonus with Fortitude saves. Also, you may spend 1 action die to hold your breath for an additional number of minutes equal to your Constitution modifier while performing actions, or for an equal number of hours while remaining still.
- *Discipline of the Mind:* Your study into the nature of the mind unlocks inner powers. The lower of your Dexterity or Intelligence scores increases by 1 (your choice in the case of a tie) and you gain a +1 insight bonus with Reflex saves. Also, once per scene as a free action, you may spend 1 action die to shrug off 1 grade of *fatigued*.
- *Discipline of the Spirit:* Your contemplation of the spirit strengthens your resolve. The lower of your Wisdom or Charisma scores increases by 1 (your choice in the case of a tie) and you gain a +1 insight bonus with Will saves. Also, when an adjacent character scores a threat, you may spend 1 action die to activate their critical success.

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Way of the Warrior: You're constantly refining your martial style. At Levels 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, and 19, you gain an additional Melee or Unarmed Combat feat, or two additional proficiencies.

Improved Reach: You strike opponents with rapid lunges, or punch and kick loose objects toward them, increasing the effective range of your melee and unarmed attacks. At Levels 4, 12, and 20, your melee and unarmed Reach increases by 1.



Table 4.2: The Martial Artist

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Def	Init	Lifestyle	Legend	Abilities
1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+1	+0	+0	Martial arts, <i>unyielding</i>
2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+3	+1	+0	+1	Life of discipline
3	+3	+2	+2	+2	+3	+2	+1	+1	Way of the warrior
4	+4	+2	+2	+2	+4	+2	+1	+1	Improved reach +1
5	+5	+3	+3	+3	+5	+3	+1	+1	Way of the warrior
6	+6	+3	+3	+3	+6	+4	+2	+2	Ploy
7	+7	+4	+4	+4	+6	+4	+2	+2	Way of the warrior
8	+8	+4	+4	+4	+7	+5	+2	+2	Wuxia I
9	+9	+4	+4	+4	+8	+5	+3	+2	Ploy, way of the warrior
10	+10	+5	+5	+5	+9	+6	+3	+3	Master's touch I
11	+11	+5	+5	+5	+9	+7	+3	+3	Life of discipline, way of the warrior
12	+12	+6	+6	+6	+10	+7	+4	+3	Improved reach +2, ploy
13	+13	+6	+6	+6	+11	+8	+4	+3	Way of the warrior
14	+14	+6	+6	+6	+12	+8	+4	+4	Finishing move
15	+15	+7	+7	+7	+12	+9	+5	+4	Ploy, way of the warrior
16	+16	+7	+7	+7	+13	+10	+5	+4	Wuxia II
17	+17	+8	+8	+8	+14	+10	+5	+4	Way of the warrior
18	+18	+8	+8	+8	+15	+11	+6	+5	Ploy
19	+19	+8	+8	+8	+15	+11	+6	+5	Life of discipline, way of the warrior
20	+20	+9	+9	+9	+16	+12	+6	+5	Improved reach +3, master's touch II

NEW CROSS-TRAINING ABILITIES

The following class abilities are available to Sages through their *cross-training* class ability.

- **Emissary:** Human nature; sources I; bonus feat; insightful
- **Martial Artist:** Martial arts; life of discipline; way of the warrior; improved reach +1

Ploy: At Levels 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18, you may choose one of the following abilities. Each may be chosen only once.

- *Backhand (Unarmed Attack Trick):* The target suffers stress damage instead of your normal unarmed damage.
- *Beat Down (Unarmed Attack Trick):* The target suffers subdual damage instead of your normal unarmed damage.
- *Great Sweep:* You gain a +4 bonus with Bull Rush and Trip actions.
- *Grueling Combatant:* You gain the *grueling combatant* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 233).
- *Improved Stability:* You gain the *improved stability* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 234).
- *Knife Hand (Unarmed Attack Trick):* Your attack gains the *armor-piercing 4* quality.

- *Provoke:* You gain a +4 bonus with Taunt and Tire actions.
- *Quake Strike:* As a full action, you may attempt to Trip all adjacent opponents. You make a single Trip check and each opponent rolls to resist separately. If you suffer a critical failure or any opponent scores a critical success, you become sprawled.
- *Smack Down (Unarmed Attack Trick):* The target must also make a Fortitude save (DC equal to damage inflicted) or become sprawled.
- *Stare Down:* You gain a +4 bonus with Distract and Threaten actions.
- *Strut:* After scoring a threat or critical hit with an unarmed or melee attack, you may spend your next half action posturing (e.g. flexing your muscles, performing a kata, shouting a battle cry, etc.), at which point you gain a bonus d4 action die. This action die is lost if not used by the end of the combat.
- *Take It:* You gain Subdual Resistance 4.

Wuxia I: At Level 8, your Jump results are no longer limited by your height and the distance you Jump increases by 50% (rounded up).

Wuxia II: At Level 16, the distance you Jump increases by an additional 50% (total 100%) and you're considered to weigh only 1 lb. when determining if a surface or object can support you.

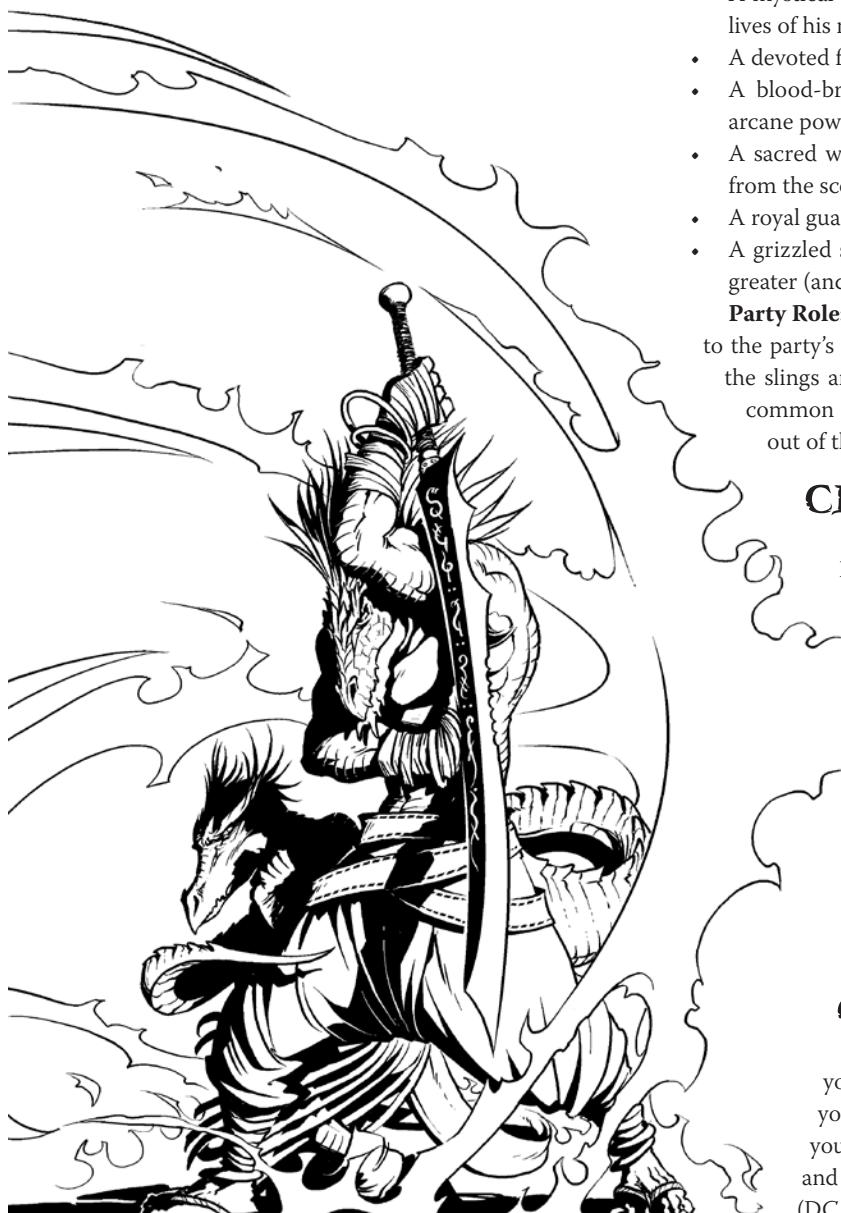
Master's Touch I: At Level 10, you may add 2 tricks to each attack. You may also apply unarmed tricks to melee attacks and vice-versa.

CHAPTER 4



Master's Touch II: At Level 20, you may add 3 tricks to each attack. You may also apply tricks for a specific melee weapon type to any melee weapon attack (e.g. you may apply a "spear attack trick" to a sword attack).

Finishing Move: At Level 14, once per scene when a target loses wounds or fails a Damage save due to one of your attacks, you may instead impair one of the target's attributes to exactly 1. This impairment heals normally (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 9).



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BLOODSWORN (EXPERT)

Death can lurk anywhere: around the next dungeon corner, in the shadows of a dark alley, or even in the cellars and gardens of noble homes. The Bloodsworn is blessed with preternatural awareness and uncanny toughness, and stands at eternal vigil to defend the weak and helpless. With a select few he shares a supernatural bond, a union that binds them in body and soul.

Depending on the campaign, a Bloodsworn could be...

- A mystical guardian, obliged by ancestral oath to guard the lives of his masters
- A devoted father going to any length to protect his child
- A blood-brother of mages who's absorbed some of their arcane power
- A sacred warrior sent by the gods to protect the innocent from the scourge of evil
- A royal guardian whose duty is fueled by sublime zeal
- A grizzled sell-sword whose love of gold drives him to ever greater (and perhaps reckless) action

Party Role: Backer/Combatant. The Bloodsworn is steward to the party's most vulnerable members, shielding them from the slings and arrows (and blades, bullets, and ballistae) of common foes. He also pretty consistently kicks the crap out of the bad guys.

CLASS FEATURES

Requirements: Notice 4+ ranks, Lightning Reflexes, The Extra Mile

Favored Attributes: Wis, Con, Dex

Class Skills: Athletics, Intimidate, Medicine, Notice, Resolve, Ride, Sense Motive, Tactics

Skill Points: 4 + Int modifier per level

Vitality: 12 + Con modifier per level

CORE ABILITY

Devoted Defender: Your toughness is legendary. Your Heroic Renown increases by 1. Also, at Level 1 and for each Class Level thereafter, you gain 1 additional wound point.

CLASS ABILITIES

Harm's Way I: You guard your friends with your life. At Level 1, at the beginning of each session, you may select one ally who can see and hear you as your ward. Each time your ward is adjacent to you and is struck by an attack, you may make a Reflex save (DC equal to 1/2 the attack check result, rounded up). With success, you suffer the hit as if you were the target instead. You gain DR 1 against this attack.



Table 4.3: The Bloodsworn

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Def	Init	Lifestyle	Legend	Abilities
1	+0	+2	+2	+1	+0	+2	+0	+0	<i>Devoted defender, harm's way I</i>
2	+1	+3	+3	+2	+1	+3	+0	+1	Ever-vigilant I
3	+2	+3	+3	+2	+1	+4	+1	+1	"Watch out!" I
4	+3	+4	+4	+2	+2	+5	+1	+1	Armor use I, blood-bound I
5	+3	+4	+4	+3	+2	+5	+1	+1	Harm's way II
6	+4	+5	+5	+3	+2	+6	+2	+2	Blood-bound II
7	+5	+5	+5	+4	+3	+7	+2	+2	Ever-vigilant II, "watch out!" II
8	+6	+6	+6	+4	+3	+8	+2	+2	Armor use II, blood-bound III
9	+6	+6	+6	+4	+4	+9	+3	+2	Harm's way III
10	+7	+7	+7	+5	+4	+10	+3	+3	Ultimate sacrifice

Harm's Way II: At Level 5, you may select your ward at the beginning of each scene, and your DR against this attack increases by an additional 1 (total DR 2).

Harm's Way III: At Level 9, you may select your ward at the beginning of each combat, and your DR against this attack increases by an additional 1 (total DR 3).

Ever-Vigilant I: You're always on the lookout for trouble. At Level 2, you gain an additional Basic Combat feat and your maximum Notice rank increases to your Career Level + 5.

Ever-Vigilant II: At Level 7, you gain an additional Basic Combat feat and your maximum Notice rank increases to your Career Level + 7.

Watch Out! I: At Level 3, while your ward can see and hear you and his Initiative Count is lower than yours, it becomes equal to yours.

Watch Out! II: At Level 7, while your ward can see and hear you and his Defense is lower than yours, it becomes equal to yours.

Armor Use I: At Level 4, you gain a +1 bonus to Defense while wearing armor, and a 20% discount when purchasing armor.

Armor Use II: At Level 8, this Defense bonus increases to +2 and this discount increases to 25%.

Blood-Bound I: Your devotion to your ward goes beyond mere protection — it binds you together in spirit. At Level 4, once per scene as a full action, you may select 1 condition your ward currently suffers. Your ward loses that condition and you gain it instead. If the condition persists beyond the end of the scene, your ward regains the condition at the end of the scene.

Blood-Bound II: At Level 6, as a full action, you may transfer up to 1/2 your remaining vitality to your ward (rounded down). This may not increase your ward's vitality points beyond their normal maximum. Also, you may use your *blood-bound I* ability an additional time per scene (total 2).

Blood-Bound III: At Level 8, when your ward is the target of a spell with the range of Self or a saving throw of Harmless, the caster may target you with an identical copy of that spell as well. Also, you may use your *blood-bound I* ability an additional time per scene (total 3).

Ultimate Sacrifice: You always keep your ward alive — even if it kills you. At Level 10, once per session when your ward is killed within Close Quarters, you may choose to die as well (by leaping after them when they plunge off a cliff, stepping before a coup de grace attack that impales you both, etc.). In this case, you and your ward both Cheat Death with the same Petty Fate and return to play at the beginning of the next scene (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 384).

DEADEYE (EXPERT)

In a world populated by heavily armored soldiers, proud mounted warriors, unarmed pugilists, and countless savage monsters, the Deadeye stands apart — a *quarter-mile* apart. Unlike most of his peers, this savvy sniper relies on ambush tactics, keen eyesight, and unmatched mastery with bolt or bullet to take down enemies at range. Some may think him cowardly but a single arrow loosed from his bow can send an army into disarray, lay flat a scout before he can warn his comrades, or silence a distant mage before his magic can rend the world apart.

Depending on the campaign, a Deadeye could be...

- A veteran hunter bringing down even the largest game with only a bow and arrow
- A talented sniper whose natural gift lets him pick off enemy leaders, throwing their troops into chaos
- An underhanded assassin whose calling card is a silver bolt projecting from his target's head
- An exiled noble robbing from the rich and giving to the poor
- A lowly longbowman whose incredible skills make him the terror of knights far above his station
- A wily gunslinger sharpening his aim in deadly pistol duels

Party Role: Combatant. The Deadeye is a patient, careful stalker, biding his time for the perfect moment... to shoot his targets to death.



CHAPTER 4



CLASS FEATURES

Requirements: BAB 3+, Dex 15+, Quick Draw

Favored Attributes: Dexterity, Wisdom

Class Skills: Athletics, Blend, Crafting, Notice, Resolve, Ride, Search, Sneak, Survival, Tactics

Skill Points: 6 + Int modifier per level

Vitality: 9 + Con modifier per level

CORE ABILITY

Right between the Eyes:

Your precision is truly deadly. Whenever you spend an action die to increase the damage of a black powder or bow attack, you may roll two dice and add both to the result.

CLASS ABILITIES

Farsight I: At Level 1, you gain an additional Ranged Combat feat and the range increment of bows and black powder weapons you fire increases by 25% (rounded up).

Farsight II: At Level 5, you gain an additional Ranged Combat feat and the range increment of bows and black powder weapons you fire increases by an additional 25% (total 50%).

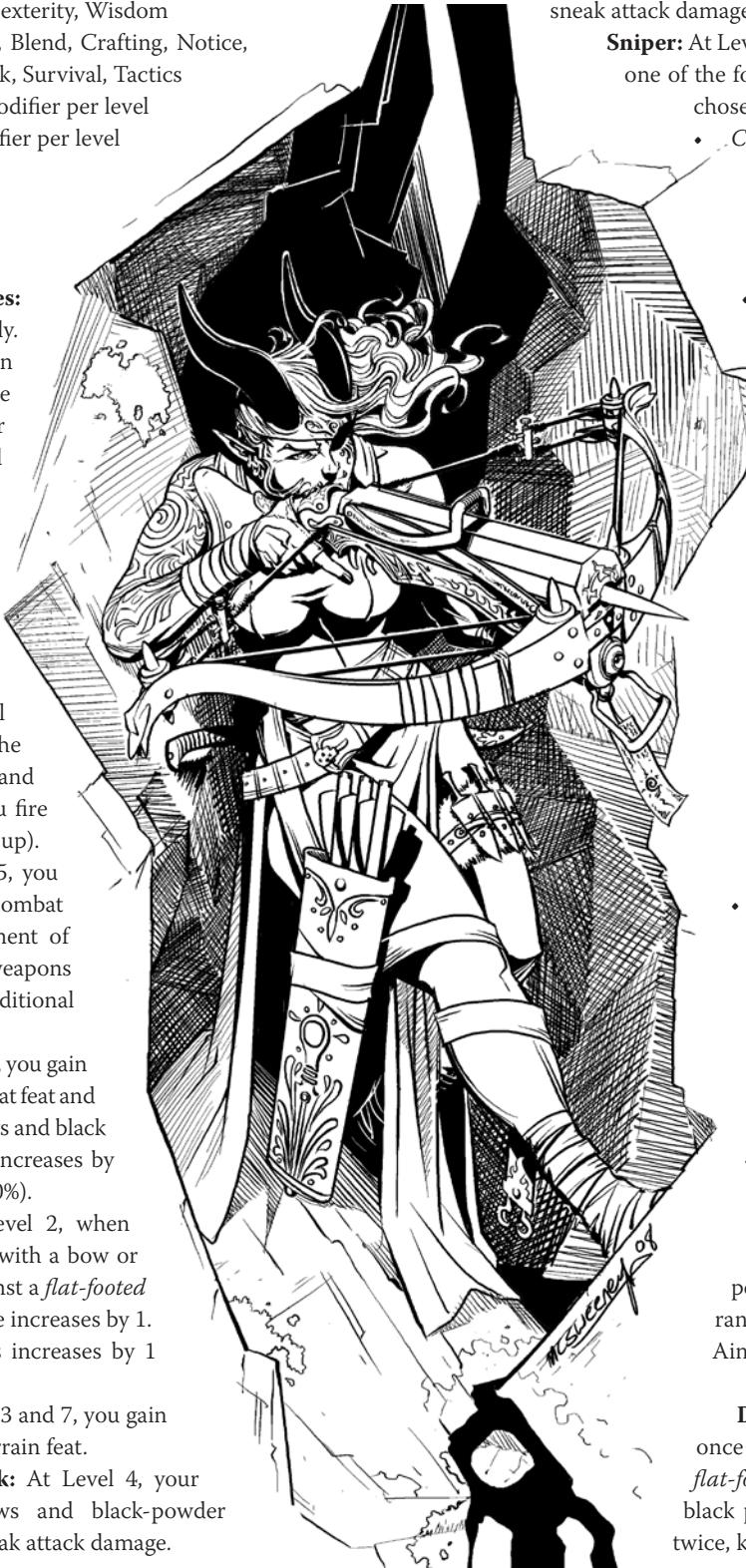
Farsight III: At Level 9, you gain an additional Ranged Combat feat and the range increment of bows and black powder weapons you fire increases by an additional 50% (total 100%).

Surprise Shot: At Level 2, when you make a ranged attack with a bow or black powder weapon against a *flat-footed* character, your threat range increases by 1.

At Level 7, this bonus increases by 1 more (total 2).

Bonus Feat: At Levels 3 and 7, you gain an additional Covert or Terrain feat.

Ranged Sneak Attack: At Level 4, your ranged attacks with bows and black-powder weapons inflict a die of sneak attack damage.



At Level 8, your ranged attacks with bows and black-powder weapons inflict an additional die of sneak attack damage (total 2).

Sniper: At Levels 4, 6, and 8, you may choose one of the following abilities. Each may be chosen only once.

- *Chink in their Armor:* When you make an Aimed attack with a bow or black powder weapon, your attack gains *armor-piercing 4*.
- *Every Shot Counts:* When you make a ranged attack with a bow or black powder weapon and miss by 5 or less, you may instead cancel the attack (wasting no ammunition and triggering no reactions).
- *Master Weaponsmith (Bows/Black Powder):* You're considered to have 5 additional ranks in Crafting when building, improving, or repairing bows and black powder weapons. This may cause you to exceed your maximum skill rank for these activities.
- *Most Deadly (Bows/Black Powder):* It costs you 1 fewer action dice to activate critical hits with bow and black powder attacks (minimum 0).
- *Sprint:* In combat, your Speed increases by 10 ft.
- *Thousand-Yard Stare:* Your visual range increments are equal to your Wisdom score \times 30 ft. You also ignore range penalties from the 2nd and 4th range increments while you're Aiming.

Dead to Rights: At Level 10, once per round when attacking a *flat-footed* character with a bow or black powder weapon, you may roll twice, keeping the result you prefer.



Table 4.4: The Deadeye

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Def	Init	Lifestyle	Legend	Abilities
1	+1	+0	+1	+0	+1	+2	+1	+1	Farsight I, right between the eyes
2	+2	+0	+2	+0	+1	+3	+2	+1	Surprise shot +1
3	+3	+1	+2	+1	+2	+4	+2	+2	Bonus feat
4	+4	+1	+2	+1	+2	+5	+2	+2	Ranged sneak attack (1 die), sniper
5	+5	+1	+3	+1	+3	+5	+3	+3	Farsight II
6	+6	+2	+3	+2	+4	+6	+3	+3	Sniper
7	+7	+2	+4	+2	+4	+7	+4	+4	Bonus feat, surprise shot +2
8	+8	+2	+4	+2	+5	+8	+4	+4	Ranged sneak attack (2 dice), sniper
9	+9	+3	+4	+3	+5	+9	+4	+5	Farsight III
10	+10	+3	+5	+3	+6	+10	+5	+5	Dead to rights

FORCE OF NATURE (EXPERT)

Nature's power is unquestioned: wild beasts stalk the dark woods, druids bend primal forces with devastating effect, and fundamental forces take physical form as elementals charged with restoring the Great Balance. The Force of Nature is a product of the most basic forces of life itself, a champion who can channel his intimate connection with the physical world to unleash primeval powers of devastating effect.

Depending on the campaign, a Force of Nature could be...

- A son of titans discovering the true power of his birthright
- A tribal champion elected by druids to avenge the wilds
- A cursed warrior trying to contain an ancient bloodline hex
- An avatar destined to bring balance to his world
- A mystical swordsman harnessing the elements as part of an unearthly fighting style
- A rampaging berserker embodying the pain of his land

Party Role: Combatant/Wildcard. The Force of Nature captures the fury of raw elements boiling in his blood, performing spectacular maneuvers and sending his foes flying to the cheers of his teammates. Like the physical world, the Force of Nature is a diverse character, his powers manifesting in many incredible ways.

CLASS FEATURES

Requirements: *Miracles* campaign quality, Constitution 13+, Athletics 6+ ranks, Elemental Heritage

Favored Attributes: Constitution, Strength

Caster: Each level in this class increases your Casting Level by 1.

Class Skills: Athletics, Acrobatics, Intimidate, Notice, Resolve, Search, Sneak, Survival

Skill Points: 4 + Int modifier per level

Vitality: 12 + Con modifier per level

CORE ABILITY

Inheritor: You're a child of the Wild, and heir to its great and untamed physical power. Your Constitution score rises by 1. Also, at Level 1 and for each Class Level thereafter, you gain 1 additional skill point that must be spent on Athletics or Survival.

CLASS ABILITIES

Path of the Elements: Your elemental ancestry grants you fantastical powers. At Level 1, you take one Step along a Path corresponding to your Elemental Heritage feat (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 310).

- *Crystal*: Path of Light
- *Darkness*: Path of Darkness
- *Dust/Sand*: Path of Earth
- *Earth*: Path of Earth
- *Fire*: Path of Fire
- *Ice*: Path of Water
- *Lava*: Path of Fire
- *Light*: Path of Light
- *Lightning*: Path of Air
- *Metal*: Path of Metal
- *Mist/Smoke*: Path of Darkness
- *Water*: Path of Water
- *Wind*: Path of Air
- *Wood*: Path of Nature

At Levels 3, 5, 7, and 9, you take an additional Step along this Path. If you've already completed this Path, you gain a Basic Combat feat instead.

Primal Rage I: You're a gateway to the vital forces of creation... forces you barely control. At Level 2, you gain the Rage Basics feat and your maximum rank in Athletics increases to your Career Level + 5.

Primal Rage II: At Level 7, you gain the Rage Mastery feat and your maximum rank in Athletics increases to your Career Level + 7.



CHAPTER 4



Table 4.5: The Force of Nature

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Def	Init	Lifestyle	Legend	Abilities
1	+1	+2	+1	+1	+1	+0	+0	+1	<i>Inheritor</i> , path of the elements
2	+2	+3	+2	+2	+1	+0	+0	+1	Primal rage I
3	+3	+3	+2	+2	+2	+1	+1	+2	Path of the elements
4	+4	+4	+2	+2	+2	+1	+1	+2	Elemental blast I, elemental legacy
5	+5	+4	+3	+3	+3	+1	+1	+3	Path of the elements
6	+6	+5	+3	+3	+4	+2	+2	+3	Turn elements
7	+7	+5	+4	+4	+4	+2	+2	+4	Path of the elements, primal rage II
8	+8	+6	+4	+4	+5	+2	+2	+4	Elemental blast II, shelter from the storm
9	+9	+6	+4	+4	+5	+3	+3	+5	Path of the elements
10	+10	+7	+5	+5	+6	+3	+3	+5	Wrath of nature

Elemental Blast I: You may focus the elements flowing through you into a powerful attack. At Level 4, you may make a special elemental attack as a half action. You may only make this attack if you have not used this ability in this or the preceding 3 rounds. The attack's Area and damage are determined by your Elemental Heritage.

- *Crystal*: 20 ft. cone inflicting 2d8 force damage
- *Darkness*: 15 ft. radius inflicting 2d8 stress damage
- *Dust/Sand*: 20 ft. cone inflicting 2d8 subdual damage
- *Earth*: 15 ft. radius inflicting 2d8 lethal damage
- *Fire*: 15 ft. radius inflicting 2d8 fire damage
- *Ice*: 15 ft. radius inflicting 2d8 cold damage
- *Lava*: 20 ft. cone inflicting 2d8 heat damage
- *Light*: 15 ft. radius inflicting 2d8 divine damage
- *Lightning*: 15 ft. radius inflicting 2d8 electricity damage
- *Metal*: 15 ft. radius inflicting 2d8 explosive damage
- *Mist/Smoke*: 20 ft. cone inflicting 2d8 stress damage
- *Water*: 20 ft. cone inflicting 2d8 subdual damage
- *Wind*: 20 ft. cone inflicting 2d8 sonic damage
- *Wood*: 15 ft. radius inflicting 2d8 subdual damage

Every character caught in the Elemental Blast's area may make a Reflex save (DC 10 + your Class Level + your Con modifier) to reduce the damage to 1/2 (rounded down).

Elemental Blast II: At Level 8, characters who fail their Reflex save against your Elemental Blast also suffer a condition, depending on your Elemental Heritage.

- *Crystal*: *Fixated* 1d6 rounds
- *Darkness*: *Frightened* 1 round
- *Dust/Sand*: *Slowed* 1d6 rounds
- *Earth*: *Sprawled*
- *Fire*: *Baffled* 1d6 rounds
- *Ice*: *Slowed* 1d6 rounds
- *Lava*: *Fatigued*
- *Light*: *Stunned* 1 round
- *Lightning*: *Paralyzed* 1 round
- *Metal*: *Bleeding*
- *Mist/Smoke*: *Blinded* 1 round
- *Water*: *Sickened* 1d6 rounds
- *Wind*: *Sprawled*
- *Wood*: *Entangled* 1d6 rounds



Elemental Legacy: At Level 4, you gain the Elemental Legacy feat (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 101).

Turn Elementals: Creatures of the elements recognize you as one of their own and often respect your wishes. At Level 6, you may Turn elementals a number of times per combat equal to your Constitution modifier, minimum once per combat (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 223).

Shelter from the Storm: You may direct your mastery of elemental forces to shield your party members from harm. At Level 8, each teammate who can see or hear you gains Damage Resistance 10 against the damage type inflicted by your Elemental Blast (e.g. a Force of Nature with the lightning elemental blast ability grants Electrical Resistance 10).

Wrath of Nature: At Level 10, you may unleash the unbridled wrath of nature. While in the Berserk stance during combat, you also gain the Elemental Type and the knockback and *natural defense* NPC qualities (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 234), and your unarmed and melee attacks inflict the same damage type as your Elemental Blast (rather than their normal damage).

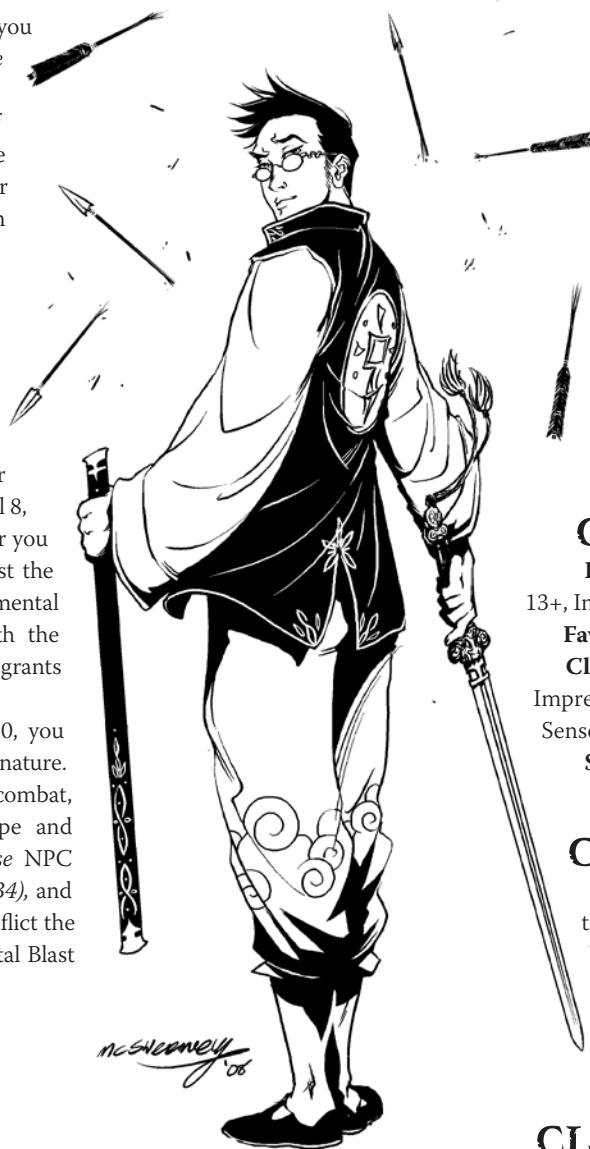
GALLANT

(EXPERT)

The Gallant trades dank dungeon halls for resplendent castle corridors, and pragmatic survival skills for keen insight into the machinations of high society. Wealthy, handsome, and brave, he fights for honor, land, and title with a vast arsenal of weapons financial, social, and martial. His tools are a keen blade and an equally sharp mind, which he uses to strike down foes and lead less refined teammates to everlasting glory.

Depending on the campaign, a Gallant could be...

- A samurai trained in courtly intrigue and lethal swordplay
- An swordsman obsessed with slaying his father's killer
- A chieftain on a mission of political and physical conquest
- An arrogant noble lashing enemies with a sharp tongue and sharper blade



- A bodyguard navigating his ward through the dangerous world of "polite" society
- A noble masquerading as a fop by day and a masked vigilante by night

Party Role: Combatant/Backer. The Gallant is a gentleman warrior, cunning in speech and battle. He relies on his honed political acumen and sophisticated swordsmanship to advance his status and that of his chosen companions.

CLASS FEATURES

Requirements: Dexterity 13+, Wisdom 13+, Impress 6+ ranks, any 1 Style feat

Favored Attributes: Wisdom, Dexterity

Class Skills: Acrobatics, Bluff, Haggle, Impress, Intimidate, Medicine, Notice, Ride, Sense Motive, Tactics

Skill Points: 6 + Int modifier per level

Vitality: 9 + Con modifier per level

CORE ABILITY

Practical Nobility: You don't get to the top by letting people exploit you. Your Noble Renown increases by 1. Also, at Level 1 and for each Class Level thereafter, you gain 1 additional skill point that must be spent on Haggle or Sense Motive.

CLASS ABILITIES

Famed Blade: You've made a name facing the

best warriors your rivals have to offer. At Level 1, when you hit a special adversary, you may roll damage twice, keeping the result you prefer. You also gain a bonus to Defense against attacks by special characters equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum +1).

Victory Flourish: At Level 2, once per scene when you kill or knock a special adversary unconscious, you may gain 1 temporary Basic Combat feat until the end of the scene.

At Level 7, when you use this ability, choose 1 teammate who can see and hear you. That teammate also gains the chosen feat until the end of the scene.

Worldly: You're rarely taken by surprise. At Levels 3, 5, 7, and 9, the lower of your Dexterity or Wisdom scores rises by 1 (your choice in the case of a tie).



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Table 4.6: The Gallant

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Def	Init	Lifestyle	Legend	Abilities
1	+1	+0	+1	+1	+1	+0	+2	+1	Famed blade, <i>practical nobility</i>
2	+2	+0	+2	+2	+1	+0	+3	+1	Victory flourish (self)
3	+3	+1	+2	+2	+2	+1	+3	+2	Worldly
4	+4	+1	+2	+2	+2	+1	+4	+2	No more games (self), power play
5	+5	+1	+3	+3	+3	+1	+4	+3	Worldly
6	+6	+2	+3	+3	+4	+2	+5	+3	Gifts and favors I
7	+7	+2	+4	+4	+4	+2	+5	+4	Victory flourish (teammate), worldly
8	+8	+2	+4	+4	+5	+2	+6	+4	Power play, war, by other means
9	+9	+3	+4	+4	+5	+3	+6	+5	Worldly
10	+10	+3	+5	+5	+6	+3	+7	+5	No more games (teammates)

No More Games: You've seen every twist and ploy, and know how to counter each in turn. At Level 4, opponents may not apply tricks to attack actions targeting you.

At Level 10, opponents may not apply tricks to attack actions targeting any teammate who can see and hear you.

Power Play: At Levels 4 and 8, you may choose 1 of the Courtier's power play abilities (*see Fantasy Craft, page 37*), with the same restrictions.

Gifts and Favors I (city): At Level 6, you gain an additional pool of money equal to your Lifestyle \times your Class Level \times 5 silver at the beginning of each adventure that may only be spent on Supplies and bribes. This represents the wide array of tools at your disposal, from desired trinkets to making and calling in favors to leveraging your position and influence.

War, by Other Means: At Level 8, your Style feats count as Melee Combat feats and your Melee Combat feats count as Style feats when fulfilling prerequisites and requirements or determining the effects of any ability.



MONK (EXPERT)

Fantasy tales abound of men and women whose faith drives them from cloistered halls and remote sanctuaries, who believe their devotion can only be validated through decisive action. The Monk takes this ideal to the next level, championing his beliefs through mastery and commitment to a core set of ideals. In a world of compromise and pragmatism, the Monk is a paragon of virtue — and his fidelity is rewarded with supernatural powers well beyond his mortal ken.

Depending on the campaign, a Monk could be...

- An acolyte of an ancient order, harnessing spiritual energy from within and without
- A *wuxia* hero sworn to protect the weak and defenseless
- A patriotic champion whose devotion to country fuels battlefield miracles
- A spiritual scholar whose meditations on the nature of reality help him bend it to his will
- A wandering pauper ministering to the oppressed
- A combat-trained philosopher compelled to correct the world's many flaws
- An ideological peacemaker, out to resolve the ancient feuds dividing his people
- An exemplar of faith, pure of body and spirit

Party Role: Wildcard/Combatant. The Monk's role is largely defined by his Sacred Vow and the Path he walks: he may become a righteous defender, a healer, or something else entirely. Like all of his kind, however, the Monk is a strong unarmed combatant wielding incredible power so long as he remains true to his convictions.

CLASS FEATURES

Requirements: *Miracles* campaign quality, Wisdom 15+, Martial Arts, Alignment

Favored Attributes: Wisdom, Strength

Caster Level: 1 per level



Class Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Blend, Impress, Intimidate, Medicine, Notice, Resolve, Sense Motive, Sneak

Skill Points: 6 + Int modifier per level

Vitality: 9 + Con modifier per level

CORE ABILITY

Centered: Your control of your body and mind is so great you can bring yourself back into balance through sheer force of will. Once per round, you may spend one action die to remove a condition you currently suffer (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 212). If the condition has multiple grades (e.g. *shaken II*, *fatigued III*, etc.), you may spend up to three action dice, removing the same number of grades.

CLASS ABILITIES

Sacred Vow: You walk a higher path. At Level 1, select a Path from the following list: Discipline, Harmony, Righteousness, or Purity (see page 116). You take one Step along this Path, along with the corresponding Vow.

- *Vow of Discipline:* Only absolute commitment can overcome the weakness of the flesh. You must never fail a Resolve check or Will save.
- *Vow of Harmony:* By living in peace with all creatures one may find the path to nirvana. You may never attack a character that has not first attacked you or who is *helpless*, unconscious, or dying.
- *Vow of Purity:* Free yourself of worldly attachments and achieve enlightenment. You may never keep more than 50s worth of gear or keep Holdings or Magic Items as Prizes. Also, your Coin in Hand and Stake must be 0s by the end of each adventure.
- *Vow of Righteousness:* The laws of the universe must be upheld both within and without. You may never make or cooperate in Ambush, Bluff, or Coerce checks.

So long as you comply with your Vow, your Wisdom is considered 2 higher. Should you violate your Vow for any reason, you lose this benefit for the rest of the adventure.

At Levels 4 and 8, your Wisdom is considered an additional 1 higher while you comply with your Vow (total 3 and 4, respectively).

Path of the Enlightened: At Levels 3, 5, 7, and 9, you take an additional Step along the Path corresponding to your Sacred Vow. If you've completed this Path, you may instead take a Step along one of your Alignment's Paths.

Iron Soul: Your devotion is your shield in times of crisis. At Level 2, during Dramatic scenes, you gain a bonus with saves equal to your Wisdom modifier.

Diamond Soul: Your spiritual integrity deflects the unnatural and arcane. At Level 7, you gain Spell Defense equal to 10 + your Wisdom score.

Spirit Fist: At Level 4, you may convert your unarmed attack damage to force damage without penalty (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 209 and 210).

Wuxia I: At Level 6, your Jump results are no longer limited by your height and the distance you Jump increases by 50% (rounded up).



CHAPTER 4



Table 4.7: The Monk

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Def	Init	Lifestyle	Legend	Abilities
1	+0	+1	+2	+2	+1	+1	+0	+0	Centered, sacred vow +2
2	+1	+2	+3	+3	+1	+1	+0	+1	Iron soul
3	+2	+2	+3	+3	+2	+2	+1	+1	Path of the enlightened (1 Step)
4	+3	+2	+4	+4	+2	+2	+1	+1	Sacred vow +3, spirit fist
5	+3	+3	+4	+4	+3	+3	+1	+1	Path of the enlightened (1 Step)
6	+4	+3	+5	+5	+4	+4	+2	+2	Wuxia I
7	+5	+4	+5	+5	+4	+4	+2	+2	Diamond soul, path of the enlightened (1 Step)
8	+6	+4	+6	+6	+5	+5	+2	+2	Heavenly fist, sacred vow +4
9	+6	+4	+6	+6	+5	+5	+3	+2	Path of the enlightened (1 Step)
10	+7	+5	+7	+7	+6	+6	+3	+3	Ascendant

Heavenly Fist: At Level 8, you may convert your unarmed attack damage to divine damage without penalty (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 209 and 210).

Ascendant: You've achieved true enlightenment. At Level 10, you gain the Outsider Type, the *contagion immunity* NPC quality, and Damage Reduction 5/opposing Alignment.

PATHS

For more about Paths, see *Fantasy Craft*, page 310.

PATH OF DISCIPLINE

Discipline I: You gain a +5 bonus with Resolve checks.

Discipline II: You gain the *honorable* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 233) and may cast Divine Favor once per scene.

Discipline III: You gain the Iron Will feat (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 86).

Discipline IV: You can never be *baffled* and you may cast True Seeing once per scene.

Discipline V: The error ranges of unarmed attack and class skill checks you make decrease by 1 (minimum 0).

PATH OF HARMONY

Harmony I: When you're a helper in a cooperative check, the leader's threat range increases by your Harmony Step. Only one character with Steps along the Path of Harmony may affect each cooperative check.

Harmony II: You may cast Charm Person I and Calm Emotions once per scene.

Harmony III: You gain the *best of the best* (1/scene) class ability (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 47).

Harmony IV: You may cast Mass Status and Natural Attunement once per scene.

Harmony V: Characters with a Disposition of Neutral or better will not attack you.

PATH OF PURITY

Purity I: You gain a +5 bonus with Medicine checks.

Purity II: You may cast Consecrate and Restoration I once per scene.

Purity III: When you make a saving throw, you may roll twice, keeping the result you prefer.

Purity IV: You may cast Heal and Remove Curse II once per scene.

Purity V: You gain the *take heart* class ability (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 48).

PATH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Righteousness I: You gain a bonus with attack and opposed checks against characters with an opposing Alignment equal to your Righteousness Step.

Righteousness II: You may cast Protection from Alignment and Righteous Aura once per scene.

Righteousness III: You may roll twice when making a Sense Motive check, keeping the result you prefer.

Righteousness IV: You may Turn characters with an opposing Alignment and cast Mark of Justice once per scene.

Righteousness V: It costs you 1 fewer action dice to activate threats with attack and skill checks targeting characters with an opposing Alignment (minimum 0).

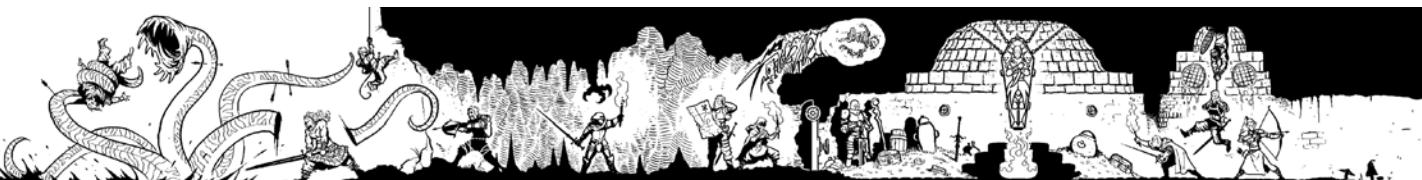
MONSTER SLAYER

(EXPERT)

Fantasy worlds are often plagued by terrifying creatures that subjugate the weak and defenseless. The Monster Slayer is among the brave and perhaps foolhardy few who take up arms against these creatures — for honor, sport, or defense of all they hold dear.

Depending on your campaign, a Monster Slayer could be...

- A blessed knight defending his realm against dragons
- A vigilante seeking revenge after a beast destroys his village



- A grizzled poacher stalking the most dangerous game of all (no, the *other* most dangerous game of all)
- An eager young brave hoping to claim a demon's hide so he can return home a man
- An enterprising weaponsmith collecting "exotic materials" for his wares — the hard way
- A boastful champion writing his legend in blood
- A gentleman hunter coping with the boredom of high society by launching exotic safaris

Party Role: Combatant. The Monster Slayer specializes in close combat with deadly creatures. He triumphs through incredible durability and decisive offense.



WHAT CONSTITUTES A "MONSTER"?

The Monster Slayer is a hunter of beasts large and small, and characters with this class may become vampire hunters, demon killers, dragon slayers, and more. Many of the class' abilities, including *getting the scent* and *the end is near II*, use the character's Studies to identify the monsters he's practiced at hunting. Being Interests, Studies are player-defined, though the GM approves them. This is another way the GM can customize the game world, working with the players to determine how monster Studies are divided. One obvious option is to use NPC Type (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 226), but we strongly recommend against this as it makes each Study far too widely useful and throws off the balance of Interests. Instead, we encourage you to define monster Studies by species, as they're presented in this class (e.g. "brain fiends" rather than "horrors" and "dragons" rather than "beasts").

CLASS FEATURES

Requirements: Base attack bonus 3+, Shield Basics, 2+ Studies (monster species)

Favored Attributes: Strength, Constitution

Class Skills: Athletics, Crafting, Investigate, Notice, Resolve, Ride, Search, Survival

Skill Points: 4 + Int modifier per level

Vitality: 12 + Con modifier per level

CORE ABILITY

Cut Deep and True: Each time you spend an action die to boost an attack check with a bow, thrown, or melee attack, the attack also gains the *keen* quality equal to the action die result.

CLASS ABILITIES

Getting the Scent (city): At Level 1, you can use Downtime of at least 1 day to prepare for upcoming confrontations with a monster for which you have a Study (e.g. "dragons" or "owlbears"). Until you use this ability again, you gain a +2 bonus with Track checks targeting the monster and Spell Defense 20 against that monster's spells.

Alternately, you may select a single monster covered by one of your Studies and which you're aware of by name or reputation (e.g. "The dragon Bloodfang" or "Mother Wisdom Gristleclaw the owlbear"). Until you use this ability again, you gain a +5 bonus with Track checks targeting that specific monster and Spell Defense 30 against that specific monster's spells.

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Table 4.8: The Monster Slayer

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Def	Init	Lifestyle	Legend	Abilities
1	+1	+1	+2	+0	+1	+0	+0	+1	Cut deep and true, getting the scent
2	+2	+2	+3	+0	+1	+0	+0	+2	Face the shadow (d12)
3	+3	+2	+3	+1	+2	+1	+1	+3	Clawbane I
4	+4	+2	+4	+1	+2	+1	+1	+3	Ride the avalanche (flurry), the end is near I
5	+5	+3	+4	+1	+3	+1	+1	+4	Clawbane II
6	+6	+3	+5	+2	+4	+2	+2	+5	Evasion I
7	+7	+4	+5	+2	+4	+2	+2	+6	Clawbane III, face the shadow (d20)
8	+8	+4	+6	+2	+5	+2	+2	+6	Ride the avalanche (gaze/trample), the end is near II
9	+9	+4	+6	+3	+5	+3	+3	+7	Clawbane IV
10	+10	+5	+7	+3	+6	+3	+3	+8	Scalebane

Face the Shadow: You excel in the shadow of death. At Level 2, you gain a bonus d12 action die at the start of each Dramatic scene and each time a scene becomes Dramatic. Unless used, this die is lost at the end of the scene.

At Level 7, you instead gain a d20 action die.

Clawbane I: Claws, fangs, deadly gazes, wasting touches — you know all the weapons in the monstrous arsenal. At Level 3, while armed with a shield, you gain Extraordinary Attack Resistance 2 and Natural Attack Resistance 2.

Clawbane II: At Level 5, your Extraordinary Attack and Natural Attack Resistances increase to 3.

Clawbane III: At Level 7, your Extraordinary Attack and Natural Attack Resistances increase to 4.

Clawbane IV: At Level 9, your Extraordinary Attack and Natural Attack Resistances increase to 5.

Ride the Avalanche: Now you use your enemy's massive arsenal against them, slipping between waves of fangs, claws, and spines. At Level 4, you gain a +5 bonus to Defense against flurry attacks (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 235).

At Level 8, this bonus to Defense also applies against Gaze and Trample attacks.

The End is Near I: Once the battle is joined it's "kill or be killed." At Level 4, you gain a trick.

Mortal Wound (Bow, Thrown, or Melee Attack Trick): If the attack hits by 5 or more, any effect that cures or restores the target's vitality or wounds is only 1/2 as effective (rounded up) until the end of the combat. A character may suffer only 1 Mortal Wound per combat.

The End is Near II: At Level 8, your threat range increases by 2 when you attack a monster for which you have a Study.

Evasion I: After dodging dragon breath, death rays, and acid clouds, getting out of the way is second nature. At Level 6, whenever you aren't *flat-footed* and make a successful Reflex save to reduce damage, you suffer no damage at all.

Scalebane: Your attacks can pierce even the thickest hide or armor. At Level 10, each of your bow, thrown, and melee attacks gains the *armor-piercing 10* quality.

DRAGON LORD (MASTER)

Dragons. The most iconic and powerful monsters in many fantasy worlds. The very mention of them sends chills through common folk and would-be champions alike. The Dragon Lord harnesses the fearsome might of these majestic creatures, gaining many of their most terrifying traits and abilities. Eventually, he can even assume their terrifying shape at will, walking — and flying — in their world as effortlessly as he does in ours.

Depending on the campaign, a Dragon Lord could be...

- An avatar of wyrm, sent to visit despair upon the world
- The bastard offspring of a draconic bloodline, inheritor of its supernatural traits
- A drake harnessing the full power of his draconic forebears
- A dragon-cultist blessed with the true form of his great and terrible god
- A dragonslayer who's consumed the heart of his prey, claiming some of its incredible power

Party Role: Combatant/Specialist. With great strength, devastating breath, and ferocious natural attacks, the Dragon Lord is a combat powerhouse, but he also evinces the greatest traits of his birthright, evoking awe and reverence wherever he goes.

CLASS FEATURES

Requirements: Intimidate 6+ ranks, Constitution 15+, Draconic Heritage, Unarmed proficiency

Favored Attributes: Constitution, Strength, Intelligence

Class Skills: Athletics, Bluff, Haggle, Intimidate, Resolve, Search

Continuity: At Level 1, choose 2 skills that are class skills for any of your other classes. These become Dragon Lord class skills for you.

Skill Points: 4 + Int modifier per level

Vitality: 12 + Con modifier per level



CLASS ABILITIES

Draconic Legacy: At Level 1, you gain the Draconic Legacy feat.

Deadly Breath I: At Level 1, your breath weapon inflicts an additional die of damage.

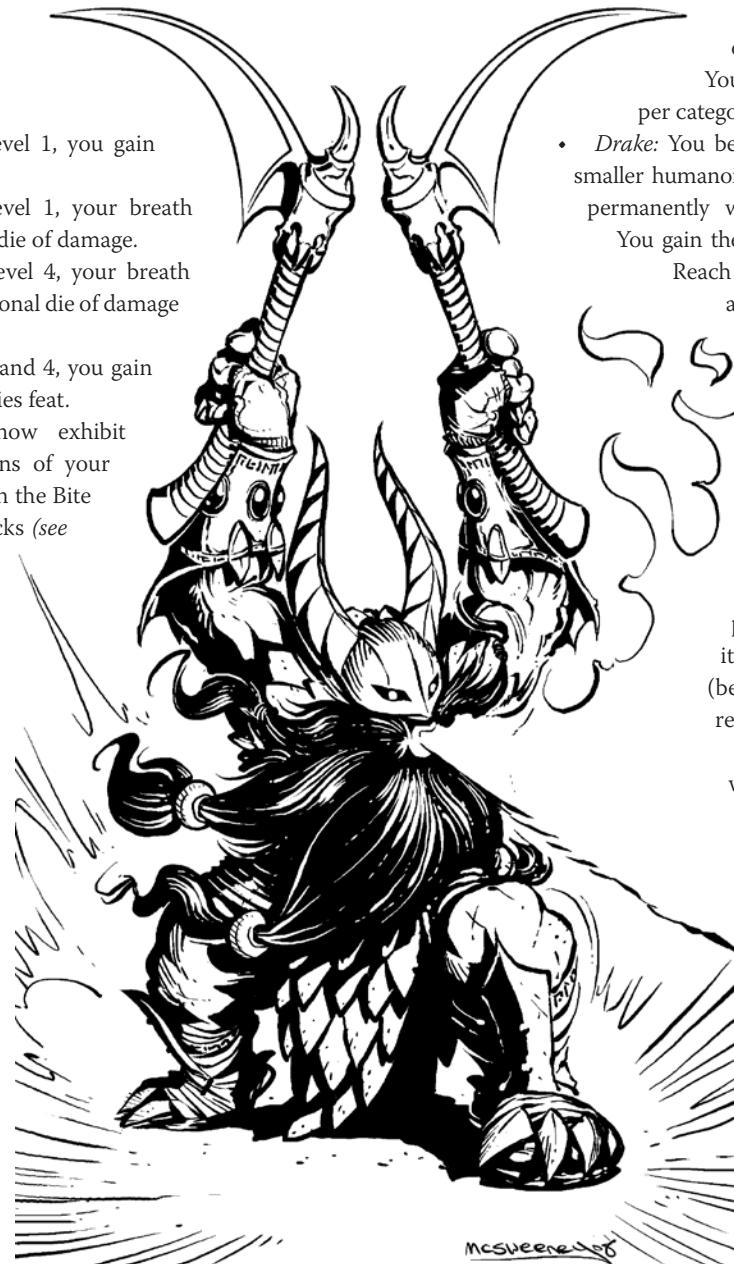
Deadly Breath II: At Level 4, your breath weapon inflicts another additional die of damage (total 2 additional dice).

Bonus Feat: At Levels 2 and 4, you gain an Unarmed Combat or Species feat.

Dragon's Fury: You now exhibit the powerful natural weapons of your ancestors. At Level 3, you gain the Bite I and Tail Slap I natural attacks (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 235). If you gain a natural attack from multiple sources, the attack's grade becomes equal to the highest single grade + 1 per additional benefit granting the same attack, to a maximum of V.

Dragonshape: At Level 5, you may assume the shape of a mighty drake — or, if you're already a drake, take the shape of a smaller humanoid species. This takes 2 full actions, during which you're *stunned* (as bones crack and reshape, organs dissolve and shift, skin peels and molds, and worse). Attempts to conceal the process suffer a -20 penalty. Some of your statistics change based on your natural form.

- **Non-Drake:** You become a Large (2x3, Reach 2) Beast with a winged flight Speed of 40 ft. You do not gain a drake's fire breath, natural attacks,



or other modifiers or abilities.

Your weight increases by 300% per category of Size increase.

- **Drake:** You become a typical member of 1 smaller humanoid species (your choice, made permanently when you gain this ability).

You gain the species' Size, Footprint, and Reach (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 9), and lose the Beast Type and winged flight. Your weight decreases by 50% per category of Size decrease.

Except for Defense, none of your other statistics change (specifically not vitality, wounds, or Ground Speed). Your new form also prevents actions and abilities it can't normally perform (beasts have various gear restrictions, for example).

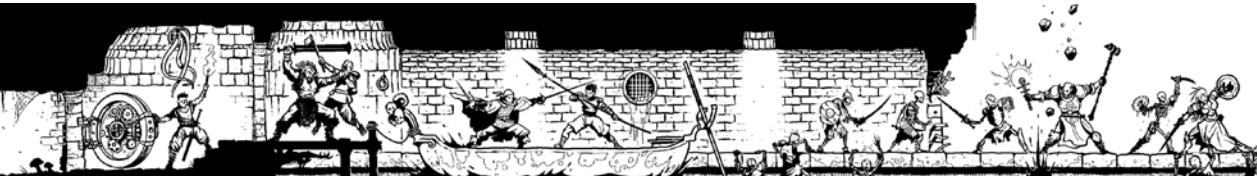
Your gear is unchanged, which may be a problem: non-magical clothes are shredded by a larger form or drape over a smaller one, possibly falling off; armor and weapons may no longer be usable due to Size, Type, or other changes; and a smaller Size reduces carrying capacity (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 154).

Any spell or effect that detects magic reveals your deception, and True Seeing also reveals your original form (but doesn't shift you back).

Changing back takes 1 full round and the return process is just as obvious. You're *stunned* during this period as well.

Table 4.9: The Dragon Lord

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Def	Init	Lifestyle	Legend	Abilities
1	+1	+2	+0	+1	+0	+1	+1	+1	Deadly breath I, draconic legacy
2	+2	+3	+0	+2	+1	+1	+2	+1	Bonus feat
3	+3	+3	+1	+2	+1	+2	+2	+2	Dragon's fury
4	+4	+4	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	Bonus feat, deadly breath II
5	+5	+4	+1	+3	+2	+3	+3	+3	Dragonshape



CHAPTER 4



REGENT (MASTER)

The Regent is a hero of lordly caliber, risen to the pinnacle of nobility by great wealth, brutal politicking, or divine right. Through his position he can leverage great political and social influence to further his ends and those of his allies, from changing the laws of the land to crushing or halting enemies with the force of a word.

Depending on the campaign, a Regent could be...

- An heir to kings, returned to claim his family's throne
- The head of an ancient crime syndicate, pulling political strings from the shadows
- A chieftain of a great tribe, named at birth as savior to his people
- A merchant-prince whose great wealth is overshadowed only by his incredible influence in society
- A legendary warlord, tasked with building an empire from the ashes of his conquests

Party Role: Talker/Backer. The Regent commands vast political capital and great respect from the people of the land.

CLASS FEATURES

Requirements: Cha 15+, Noble Renown 3+, Followers, Hero of the Court

Favored Attributes: Charisma, Wisdom

Class Skills: Bluff, Haggle, Impress, Intimidate, Investigate, Notice, Ride, Sense Motive

Continuity: At Level 1, choose 2 skills that are class skills for any of your other classes. These become Regent class skills for you.

Skill Points: 6 + Int modifier per level

Vitality: 9 + Con modifier per level



CLASS ABILITIES

Birthright: You've inherited a fiefdom of your own, through divine right, merit, or some other means. At Level 1, you gain the Extra Holding feat. Also, your Regent class levels count as Gear feats when fulfilling prerequisites and requirements, or determining the effects of any ability.

Game of Thrones I: Your influence in the courtly realm is unparalleled. At Level 1, at the start of each adventure, you gain an amount of Reputation equal to your Charisma score, which may only be spent to gain Noble favors (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 187). You may supplement this "free" Reputation with points you have earned in play if you like. Favors purchased using any amount of this "free" Reputation do not count against the number of Prizes you may keep, and are lost if not used by the end of the adventure.

Game of Thrones II: At Level 4, this Reputation may be spent to gain Favors from any category.

Clash of Kings I: Your position lends you great influence over your... *lessers*. At Level 2, when you make an opposed Char-based skill check, you may add your Noble Renown to the result.

Clash of Kings II: At Level 4, you may also apply this bonus with opposed Wis-based skill checks.

Storm of Swords: Your minions are fiercely committed to your safety. At Level 3, you may summon your Followers during a Dramatic Scene, and you no longer lose Reputation when they are lost or slain.

True Majesty: At Level 5, you leave no doubt of your right to rule. Once per session as a full action, you may project your innate majesty to others. All standard characters who can see and hear you immediately halt all hostile action towards you and your teammates for a number of minutes equal to your Noble

Table 4.10: The Regent

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Def	Init	Lifestyle	Legend	Abilities
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	+2	+0	+2	+1	Birthright, game of thrones I
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	+3	+0	+3	+2	Clash of kings I
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	+3	+1	+3	+3	Storm of swords
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	+4	+1	+4	+3	Clash of kings II, game of thrones II
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	+5	+1	+4	+4	True majesty



Renown (though special characters may spend 2 action dice each to ignore this effect). This ability lasts as long as you continue to speak, and you and your teammates make no hostile or threatening actions towards any affected characters (such as drawing or raising a weapon). If this ability affects all characters involved in a combat, that combat immediately ends (though a new one may very well erupt when the ability expires).

If you or your teammates attack affected character(s), the ability immediately ends and all affected characters gain a free surprise round against you and your teammates.

SPIRIT SINGER (MASTER)

The Spirit Singer stands astride the bridge of worlds, one foot in our realm and another in those beyond. Through this special connection, he draws wisdom and knowledge, not only of history but of times and events yet to come. He's greatly revered for his ability to predict famine and prosperity, disaster and hope... and sometimes, to turn fate itself.

Depending on the game, a Spirit Singer could be...

- A celestial bard singing the praises of her gods and stoking the fires of faith
- A scholar seeking knowledge along the footsteps of ancient heroes
- A *vidutana* tribal elder of the First and Second Peoples, keeping the Old Ways alive in the face of ultimate destruction



Table 4.11: The Spirit Singer

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Def	Init	Lifestyle	Legend	Abilities
1	+0	+1	+0	+2	+0	+1	+1	+1	Keeper of time, song of the past
2	+1	+2	+0	+3	+1	+1	+2	+2	Revered elder
3	+2	+2	+1	+3	+1	+2	+2	+3	Take heart 1/Dramatic scene
4	+3	+2	+1	+4	+2	+2	+2	+3	Revered elder, song of the future 1/adventure
5	+3	+3	+1	+4	+2	+3	+3	+4	Song of the heavens

- The reincarnation of a great sensei
- A divine aide with great insight

Party Role: Backer. The Spirit Singer guides his fellow heroes through mortal danger with great wisdom and the uplifting songs of the ancients.

CLASS FEATURES

Requirements: *Miracles* campaign quality, Wisdom 15+, Alignment, Impress 10+ ranks, Heroic Renown 1+

Favored Attributes: Wisdom, Intelligence

Caster: Each level in this class increases your Casting Level by 1.

Class Skills: Investigate, Impress, Medicine, Notice, Resolve, Ride, Search, Sense Motive, Survival, Tactics

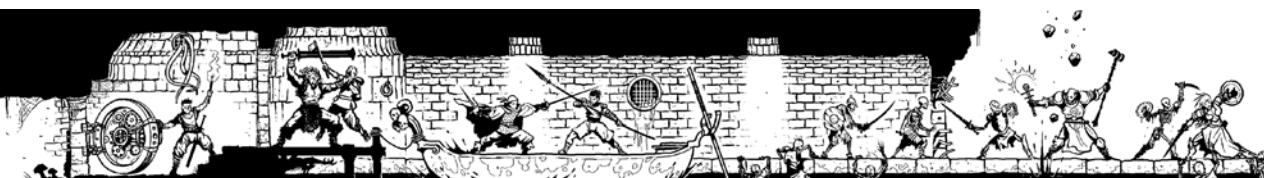
Continuity: At Level 1, choose 2 skills that are class skills for any of your other classes. These become Spirit Singer class skills for you.

Skill Points: 8 + Int modifier per level

Vitality: 6 + Con modifier per level

CLASS ABILITIES

Keeper of Time: You're a guardian of knowledge, preserving it for the next generation. You gain 5 additional Studies.



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Song of the Past: You bring the lessons of transcendent elders and long-dead heroes to your people. When you or a teammate who can see or hear you fails a skill check, Knowledge check, or saving throw, you may sacrifice your next full action to let them re-roll it. You may use this ability a number of times per scene equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum 1), but only once per check or saving throw.

Revered Elder: Your followers hold you in great esteem. At Levels 2 and 4, your Noble or Heroic Renown increases by 1.

Take Heart: In times of greatest need it falls to you to inspire your companions to greatness. At Level 4, once per Dramatic scene, you may spend a full action giving a powerful speech. You and each teammate who can see or hear you immediately recovers to 1/2 their maximum vitality (rounded up).

Song of the Future: In your communion with spirits you've enjoyed a glimpse of critical events to come. Once per adventure as a 1-minute action, you may sing this song. For the duration of the scene, the action die cost to activate threats scored by you or a teammate who can see or hear you decreases by 1 (minimum 0) and the cost to activate errors scored by you or a teammate who can see or hear you increases by 1 (minimum 1).

Song of the Heavens: You're a font of ancient wisdom. At Level 5, select 1 of your Alignment's Paths. You take 3 Steps along this Path.

WIND KNIGHT

(MASTER)

Knights have long been considered champions of the land, whether they're slaying monsters, rescuing maidens, or turning the tides of pivotal battles. The Wind Knight soars above his mighty brethren, however, astride a magnificent flying steed. At home in the clouds, he's the reason many look to the heavens in times of need — and the last shadow his enemies want to glimpse streaking across the sky.

Depending on the campaign, a Wind Knight could be...

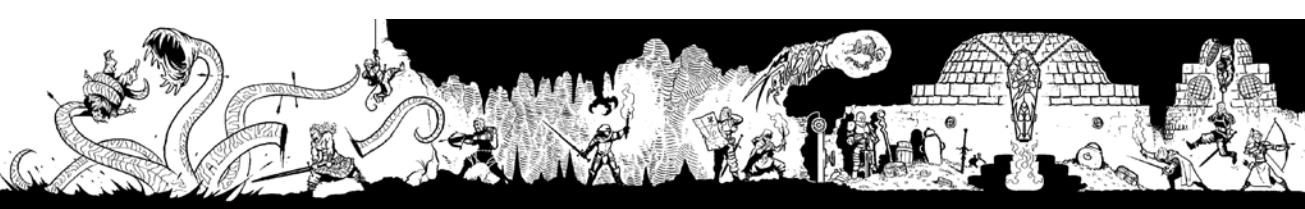
- An errant champion of the gods, gifted an aerial companion
- A defender of the people, rewarded with an exotic mount



- An Order of the Pearl warrior, charged with defending innocents from the predations of the Crone
- A humble farm boy whose bond with a mystical beast cements his place among heroes
- A conquering general whose legendary skill and reputation make him an icon of the realm

Table 4.12: The Wind Knight

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Def	Init	Lifestyle	Legend	Abilities
1	+1	+0	+1	+0	+1	+1	+1	+1	Best of the best 1/session, steed of the wind
2	+2	+0	+2	+0	+1	+1	+2	+2	Legendary cavalier I
3	+3	+1	+2	+1	+2	+2	+2	+3	Shield of the wind
4	+4	+1	+2	+1	+2	+2	+2	+3	Best of the best 2/session, legendary cavalier II
5	+5	+1	+3	+1	+3	+3	+3	+4	Glory of the wind



Party Role: Combatant/Backer. The Wind Knight leads his allies from the front, urging them to glory and running down enemies from above.

CLASS FEATURES

Requirements: Panache 4+, Ride 10+ ranks, Survival 4+ ranks, Charging Basics feat

Favored Attributes: Dexterity, Charisma, Strength

Class Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Impress, Notice, Resolve, Ride, Survival, Tactics

Continuity: At Level 1, choose 2 skills that are class skills for any of your other classes. These become Wind Knight class skills for you.

Skill Points: 6 + Int modifier per level

Vitality: 9 + Con modifier per level

CLASS ABILITIES

Best of the Best: Your knowledge of your companions' strengths and weaknesses lets you perfectly blend their talents. At Level 1, once per session when you or a teammate who can see or hear you makes a skill check, they may apply the highest available skill bonus among you.

At Level 4, you may use this ability 1 additional time per session.

Steed of the Wind: You own a personal mount, possibly a gift from the gods or a thankful noble or wizard, or perhaps tamed in the wild during an illustrious excursion. At Level 1, you control a griffon, hippogriffon, or pegasus as an additional character (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 267 and 278). This steed is a special character with a Threat Level equal to your Career Level minus 4 (minimum 1). It gains no action dice, but you may spend your action dice on its behalf.

If this steed dies or is dismissed, you lose Reputation equal to your Career Level. The steed is replaced with a new one at the start of the following adventure.

Legendary Cavalier I: At Level 2, you gain the Charging Mastery feat (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 85). Also, your Heroic Renown increases by 1.

Legendary Cavalier II: At Level 4, you gain the Charging Supremacy feat. Also, your Heroic Renown increases by an additional 1 (total increase 2).

Shield of the Wind: At Level 3, while you're mounted and in flight, non-flying characters suffer a -2 penalty with attack and damage rolls targeting you or your mount.

Glory of the Wind: At Level 5, your Panache rises by 1. Also, when you or a teammate who can see and hear you rolls an action die and the result is less than your Panache, the result becomes equal to your Panache (this may not cause the action die to explode).

NPC CLASS ABILITIES

The following new class abilities are available to NPCs using the class ability NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 231).

Table 4.13: NPC Class Abilities

Class Ability	Class (Page Number)	XP Value
Backhand	Martial Artist (107)	1
Beat down	Martial Artist (107)	1
Blood-bound I-III	Bloodsworn (109)	4 per grade
Chink in their armor	Deadeye (110)	1
Cut deep and true	Monster Slayer (117)	2
Dead to rights	Deadeye (110)	8
Dragonshape	Dragon Lord (119)	10
End is near, the I-II	Monster Slayer (118)	4 per grade
Every shot counts	Deadeye (110)	2
Famed blade	Gallant (113)	5
Finishing move	Martial Artist (108)	8
Getting the scent	Monster Slayer (117)	4
Great sweep	Martial Artist (107)	1
Harm's way I-III	Bloodsworn (108)	2 per grade
Heavenly fist	Monk (116)	4
Human nature	Emissary (104)	2
Intercept message	Emissary (104)	2
Iron soul	Monk (115)	2
Leverage	Emissary (105)	2
Life of discipline	Martial Artist (106)	2 per grade
Man of mystery	Emissary (105)	2
Master of secrets	Emissary (105)	2 per grade (1/session)
Master's touch I-II	Martial Artist (107)	5 per grade
No more games	Gallant (114)	4 per grade
Provoke	Martial Artist (107)	1
Quake strike	Martial Artist (107)	2
Ranged sneak attack	Deadeye (110)	1 per grade
Ready for the worst	Emissary (105)	5
Ride the avalanche	Monster Slayer (118)	2 per grade
Scalebane	Monster Slayer (118)	5
Shield of the wind	Wind Knight (123)	4
Song of the future	Spirit-Singer (122)	8
Song of the past	Spirit-Singer (122)	5
Spirit fist	Monk (115)	2
Stare down	Martial Artist (107)	1
Status quo I-II	Emissary (105)	5 per grade
Surprise shot	Deadeye (110)	2 per grade
Thousand-yard stare	Deadeye (110)	2
True majesty	Regent (120)	8
War, by other means	Gallant (114)	2
Watch out! I-II	Bloodsworn (109)	2 per grade
Wuxia I-II	Martial Artist (107)	2 per grade





BASIC COMBAT FEATS

For more about these feats, see *Fantasy Craft*, page 85.

AGGRO BASICS

You're skilled at drawing enemy attention.

Benefit: You may Taunt up to 3 opponents at once. You roll only once for the action, while each opponent rolls to resist separately. Also, you gain a stance.

Easy Prey (Stance): You gain a +4 bonus with Taunt checks, and suffer a -2 penalty to Defense.

AGGRO MASTERY

Your barbed insults sting worse than arrows.

Prerequisites: Aggro Basics, special character only

Benefit: Once per round, after a teammate is attacked within Close Quarters, you may spend 1 Edge to Taunt his attacker as a free action.

Your Father Smelt of Elderberries! (Taunt Trick): If this check is successful, you gain 1 Edge. You may use this trick once per round.

AGGRO SUPREMACY

To say you know how to get your enemy's goat is a *bit* of an understatement.

Prerequisites: Aggro Mastery

Benefit: When you hit an opponent with a melee or unarmed attack, you may Taunt him as a free action. Also, you gain a trick.

Mortal Insult (Taunt Trick): You may spend up to 5 Edge to make your target *enraged* for a number of rounds equal to the Edge spent. Opponents *enraged* in this way do not fall unconscious when the condition ends.

BAG OF TRICKS

Now for something *completely* different...

Benefit: You gain 3 different Mix-Up tricks (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 221).

COMBAT RIDER

You've trained extensively in fighting astride a mount.

Benefit: You and your mount do not suffer the typical attack and Spellcasting penalties associated with being mounted (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 215). Also, when you suffer damage as a mounted character, you may split the damage any way you like between yourself and your mount (for example, if you suffer 10 damage you could distribute 5 to each member of the pair rather than the full 10 to one or the other).

GIANT SLAYER BASICS

Little tailors have *nothing* on you.

Prerequisites: Pick On the Big Guy trick (see page 140)

Benefit: Your melee and unarmed attacks inflict a die of sneak attack damage against characters two or more Sizes larger than you. Also, you gain a stance.

Underfoot (Stance): You may occupy or move through any space occupied by a character two or more Sizes larger than you without making a Tumble check. While occupying the same space as such a character you gain a +4 dodge bonus to Defense against his attacks.

GIANT SLAYER MASTERY

The bigger they are...

Prerequisites: Giant Slayer Basics, special character only

Benefit: When you hit a character two or more Sizes larger than you with a melee or unarmed attack, you gain 1 Edge. Also, you gain a trick.

Can't Catch Me! (Total Defense Trick): When a character two or more Sizes larger than you attacks you and misses, you may spend 1 Edge to make him *flat-footed* until his next Initiative Count.

GIANT SLAYER SUPREMACY

...the harder they fall.

Prerequisites: Giant Slayer Mastery

Benefit: Your threat range with melee and unarmed attacks against characters two or more Sizes larger than you increases by 1. Also, you gain a trick.

Slice the Tendon (Melee Attack Trick): If the target hit is two or more Sizes larger than you, you may spend 2 Edge to also reduce his Speed by 10 ft. for the rest of the combat. This may not reduce any single character's Speed by more than 10 ft. in each combat.

TIGHTENING GUARD

When the going gets tough...

Prerequisites: Special character only

Benefit: You gain a +2 morale bonus to Defense and your Speed increases by 5 ft. while your vitality points are less than 1/2 your maximum (rounded up).

TWO-WEAPON GUARD

You turn a pair of defensive weapons into an impenetrable web of steel.

Prerequisites: Two-Weapon Fighting

Benefit: You may treat one *guard* bonus to Defense as an insight bonus. You also gain a trick.

Crossed Blades (Parry or Shield Block Trick): If you have two or more *guard* weapons armed, you may roll your save twice, keeping the result you prefer.



VETERAN ADVENTURER

Vile monsters, evil armies, mad sorcerers... You've survived everything the GM's thrown at you and asked for more.

Benefit: You gain a +1 insight bonus with Fortitude, Reflex, and Will saves. Also, once per session when making a saving throw, you may roll twice, keeping the result you prefer.

MELEE COMBAT FEATS

For more about these feats, see *Fantasy Craft*, page 87.

CRUSHING MASTER

Ever see a man's skeleton turn to jelly?

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus 3+, Blunt forte

Benefit: Choose one of the following weapon categories: clubs, flails, hammers, shields, staves, or whips. You inflict 1d4 additional damage with weapons in this category.

Special: You may take this feat multiple times, each time applying its benefits to a different category.

EDGED MASTER

Your blade and your wits are equally sharp.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus 3+, Edged forte

Benefit: Choose one of the following weapon categories: axes, fencing blades, knives, swords, greatswords, polearms, or spears. You inflict 1d4 additional damage with weapons from the chosen category.

Special: You may take this feat multiple times, each time applying its benefits to a different category.



LIONHEART BASICS

Your opponents know in their hearts that death has come for them.

Prerequisites: Special character only

Benefit: When you hit with a melee attack, you may spend 1 Edge to inflict 3 additional damage. This increases to 5 additional damage if you're in Stout of Heart stance (see right). You also gain a trick.

Face of Death (Threaten Trick): You gain 1 Edge if at least one adjacent opponent fails his Resolve check.

LIONHEART MASTERY

Courage always sees you through!

Prerequisites: Lionheart Basics

Benefit: Once per round you gain 1 Edge when you're attacked by a special adversary. You also gain a trick.

Roar of the Pride (Melee Attack Trick): Spend 4 Edge. Even if this attack misses, up to 3 allies adjacent to you may immediately make a free attack against the target.

LIONHEART SUPREMACY

Your victory cry leaves even the sternest foes trembling.

Prerequisites: Lionheart Mastery

Benefit: When you kill an adversary, you may spend 5 Edge to unleash a terrifying war cry and leave each standard adversary within 20 ft. *shaken*. You also gain a stance.

Stout of Heart (Stance): You gain a bonus with Intimidate checks, Resolve checks, and Will saves equal to your current Edge, and suffer a -4 penalty to Defense. Also, your Speed is considered 20 ft. higher when you take a Movement action that will end with you adjacent to an adversary.

SWORD-CIRCLE BASICS

To master the first sword-circle a candidate must dodge a dozen arrows fired by master marksmen — without lifting his feet from the ground.

Prerequisites: Edged forte

Benefit: When holding a readied fencing blade you gain a +2 gear bonus with Reflex saves. You also gain a stance.

Fencer's Circle (Stance): Opponents may not spend action dice to boost melee attack checks or melee damage rolls targeting you. You may not move out of your current square.

SWORD-CIRCLE MASTERY

Only when a trainer discovers a fresh wound hours after the match is a candidate considered for the final sword-circle.

Prerequisites: Sword-Circle Basics

Benefit: Your fencing blade attacks inflict a die of sneak attack damage. You also gain a trick.

Slashing Riposte (Fencing Blade Parry Trick): The attacker also begins *bleeding*.

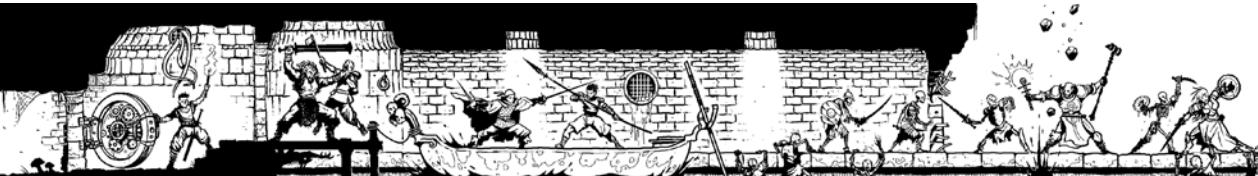
SWORD-CIRCLE SUPREMACY

Recognized masters of the sword-circle are rarely where they seem to be, using their opponents' momentum to turn them around.

Prerequisites: Sword-Circle Mastery

Benefit: When you wield a single fencing blade it gains *guard* +2. You also gain a trick.

Brushed Aside (Total Defense Trick): Each adjacent opponent who attacks you and misses becomes *flat-footed* at the end of his Initiative Count.





RANGED COMBAT FEATS

For more about these feats, see *Fantasy Craft*, page 92.

ARCHERY MASTER

“Thwang!” is the scariest — and last — sound your enemies will ever hear.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus 3+, Bows forte

Benefit: You inflict 1d4 additional damage with bows.

BLACK POWDER BASICS

Your extensive training with temperamental early firearms allows you to zero in on targets with lethal precision — so long as you don’t move, or breathe.

Prerequisites: Black powder forte

Benefit: When you attack with a black powder weapon, you ignore the *unreliable* quality. Also, you gain a stance.

Focused Aim (Stance): You retain your Aim bonus with ranged attacks even if your target moves more than 5 ft. in a round. Also, you may Aim at a target multiple times, gaining a cumulative +1 bonus until your next attack check or he leaves your sight (maximum bonus equal to your Ranged Combat feats + 1). You may not move while in this stance (though you may still take Bonus 5-ft. Steps as normal).

BLACK POWDER MASTERY

You have the uncanny ability to identify and hit just the right spot to send nearly any target reeling. The targets who live show off their bruises for weeks.

Prerequisites: Black Powder Basics

Benefit: Once per round, you may Aim with a black powder weapon as a free action. Also, you gain a trick.

Concussive Shot (Black Powder Ranged Attack Trick): With a hit, the target must also make a Fortitude save (DC equal to the damage suffered) or become *sprawled*.

BLACK POWDER SUPREMACY

The last thing your target sees is a puff of smoke, the last thing he hears is a distant crack, and the last thing he feels is his brain exiting his head. It isn’t pretty, but it gets the job done, and no one can fault your results.

Prerequisites: Black Powder Mastery

Benefit: Your threat range with black powder weapons increases by 1. Also, you gain a trick.

Headshot! (Black Powder Ranged Attack Trick): If your attack result exceeds a standard target’s Defense by 10 or more, he immediately fails his Damage save (no damage roll is required). You may use this trick once per round.

FIREARMS MASTER

Right between the eyes...

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus 3+, Black Powder forte

Benefit: Choose one of the following weapon categories: longarms or sidearms. You inflict 1d4 additional damage with weapons from the chosen category.

Special: You may take this feat multiple times, each time applying its benefits to a different category.

HURLING MASTER

Boomerangs, bolas, or big rocks — you can kill anybody with any of ‘em.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus 3+, Hurled forte

Benefit: Choose one of the following weapon categories: thrown weapons or grenades. You inflict 1d4 additional damage with weapons from the chosen category.

Special: You may take this feat multiple times, each time applying its benefits to a different category.

SIEGE BASICS

You always bring the *big guns*!

Prerequisites: Siege forte

Benefit: The *load* quality of siege weapons you use drops by 1 per adjacent ally (minimum 1/2, rounded up). Also, you gain a trick.

Range In (Siege Weapon Attack Trick): You ignore the -5 attack penalty from the *indirect* quality. Also, if this attack deviates, you may roll deviation twice and keep the result you prefer.

SIEGE MASTERY

Real castles? Ha! More like sand castles to you...

Prerequisites: Siege Basics

Benefit: You inflict double damage when attacking objects or scenery with a siege weapon. Also, you gain a trick.

Rain of Terror (Siege Weapon Attack Trick): Your punishing attacks assault the defenders’ will. A target hit with this attack also suffers 1/2 as much stress damage (after DR and Resistances are applied).

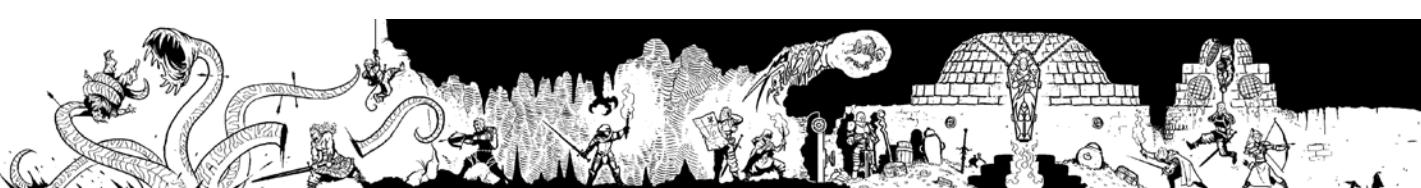
SIEGE SUPREMACY

Some underestimate your accuracy. You chuckle at the bloody smears they leave behind.

Prerequisites: Siege Mastery

Benefit: You may use siege weapons to perform black powder and bow tricks. Also, you gain a stance.

Engine of War (Stance): When you have a siege weapon with the *heavy* quality armed, it loses that quality; alternatively, if the weapon has the *stationary* quality, it loses that quality, gains the *heavy* quality, and is considered a 2h weapon instead. Your Speed drops to 1/2 normal and you may not Run, Jump, or Tumble.



UNARMED COMBAT FEATS

For more about these feats, see *Fantasy Craft*, page 93.

BLOCKING BASICS

The open hand is a perfect defense.

Prerequisites: Parry trick, special character only

Benefit: When you successfully Parry an attack while unarmed, you gain 1 Edge. Also, you gain a stance.

Fending Stance (Stance): While you have at least two hands free, the threat ranges of all melee and unarmed attacks targeting you decrease by 2 (minimum 20). You may not Jump, Run, or Tumble while in this stance.

BLOCKING MASTERY

When your hands are free, you fear no blade.

Prerequisites: Blocking Basics

Benefit: You may Parry a number of times per combat equal to the number of Unarmed or Melee Combat feats you have (whichever is higher). Also, you gain a trick.

Sword-Trap (Unarmed Parry Trick): If you successfully Parry a melee attack, you may attempt to Disarm the weapon used as a free action.

BLOCKING SUPREMACY

You're untouchable in close quarters. Pity your enemies can't say the same.

Prerequisites: Blocking Mastery

Benefit: While you have at least two hands free, you gain a +2 bonus to Defense. Also, you gain a trick.

Sweeping Block (Unarmed Parry Trick): With success, you may spend 2 Edge to cause the parried attack to hit another character adjacent to you instead of reducing its damage to 0.

COMBO BASICS

Your fighting style is unpredictable.

Prerequisites: Mix-Up trick

Benefit: You gain the Mix-Up trick again, and a stance.

Ready Stance (Stance): When you hit an opponent with a melee or unarmed attack while in this stance, he suffers a -2 morale penalty with attack checks until your next Initiative Count.

COMBO MASTERY

Your opponents never see it coming...

Prerequisites: Combo Basics, special character only

Benefit: Once per round, you may spend 4 Edge to perform an action designated by one of your Mix-Up tricks as a free action. Also, you gain a trick.

Clobber (Grapple Trick): If you have a melee weapon armed when you apply this trick, you suffer a -4 penalty with your Athletics check. With success, the target suffers your standard unarmed damage + the damage of one of your armed melee weapons, and then he becomes *sprawled* and the grapple ends. The damage from your unarmed and weapon attacks are resolved separately.

COMBO SUPREMACY

...there's just a blur, a flash of pain, and then the ground.

Prerequisites: Combo Mastery

Benefit: When you succeed with two different Attack actions in a single round, you gain 1 Edge. Also, you gain a trick.

Finisher (Melee or Unarmed Attack Trick): You may spend up to 5 Edge and add that many points to the attack check, skill check, damage roll, or threat range of this attack.

FLUID STYLE

In battle, your every action flows naturally to the next...

Prerequisites: 2+ Unarmed and/or Melee Combat "Basics" feats

Benefit: Once per round when you hit with an unarmed or melee attack, you may immediately change, gain, or lose a stance as a free action.

QI BASICS

You draw from a deep well of inner power, fortifying your body in ways that defy reason.

Prerequisites: Unarmed forte, special character only

Benefit: When you benefit from a Mend check or Refresh action, you gain 1 Edge. Also, you gain a stance.

Rooted Stance (Stance): Your opponents gain no Size modifiers for being larger during Bull Rush, Grapple and Trip actions, and you may not become *sprawled*. You may not move while in this stance (though you may take Bonus 5-ft. Steps as normal).

QI MASTERY

You project your *qi* through your strikes, shattering stone and blasting foes off their feet... even from paces away.

Prerequisites: Qi Basics

Benefit: You inflict double damage with unarmed attacks made against objects or scenery. Also, you gain a trick.

Qi Blast (Unarmed Attack Trick): You may spend 2 Edge to make this attack against a target within Close Quarters.

QI SUPREMACY

All foes — no matter how large or strong — are as insects when facing you and your *qi*.

Prerequisites: Qi Mastery

Benefit: Each time you hit with two or more unarmed attacks in a single round, you gain 1 Edge. Also, you gain a trick.



CHAPTER 4



Kiai (Unarmed Attack Trick): If you hit, you may immediately spend 5 Edge to double the damage inflicted and move the target a number of squares directly away from you equal to your Wisdom modifier + 2 (minimum 1 square). The target becomes *sprawled* at the end of this movement.

SWORD AND FIST

You blend melee and unarmed combat in a punishing dance.

Prerequisites: Blunt or Edged forte, Unarmed forte

Benefit: At the start of your Initiative Count when you have at least 1 open hand and you're armed with a 1-handed weapon with which you have a forte, you may accept a -2 penalty with your attack and skill checks until the start of your next Initiative Count. Once during your current Initiative Count you may take a half action to make 1 Standard Attack with that melee weapon and 1 Standard Unarmed Attack.

CHANCE FEATS

BLOODYED, BOLD, AND RESOLUTE

You stare in the face of death — and *laugh*.

Benefit: You gain a +2 insight bonus with action die results when your vitality is less than 1/2 maximum (rounded down). This insight bonus increases to +5 when you have 0 vitality.

FORTUNE'S FOOL

Even when Lady Luck slams a door in your face, she sometimes forgets to close all the windows.

Benefit: When you suffer a critical failure, you gain a d4 action die. You may use this ability a number of times per session equal to the number of Chance feats you have, but only once per critical failure.

LIVING ON THE EDGE

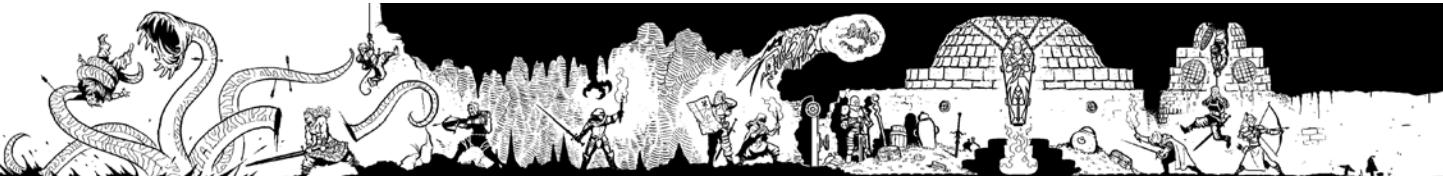
You thrive on big challenges.

Benefit: At the start of each Dramatic Scene, you and each of your teammates gain an action die. You and each teammate may only gain 2 action dice per Dramatic Scene in this fashion, no matter how many teammates have this feat.

COVERT FEATS

ANONYMITY BASICS

You're just another face in the crowd... and you prefer it that way.



Benefit: You may substitute your Wisdom modifier for your Dexterity modifier when making Stealth checks. Also, the time required for any skill check, class ability, or other option to research your past or determine your current location, intentions, or motives is tripled.

ANONYMITY MASTERY

People often barely realize you're in the room, to their peril.

Prerequisites: Anonymity Basics

Benefit: You may substitute your Wisdom modifier for your Charisma modifier when making Disguise checks. Also, your Stealth check penalties drop to 1/2, rounded down (see *Fantasy Craft Table 2.7: Blending, Sneaking, and Concealing*, page 71).

ANONYMITY SUPREMACY

Even your own mother questions your existence.

Prerequisites: Anonymity Mastery

Benefit: Your activities aren't found in any public record and the DC of any Investigate or Knowledge check to confirm your existence increases by 20. Also, when you succeed with a Stealth check, you become *invisible* instead of *hidden*.

SAFE HOUSE

No room at the inn? No problem.

Prerequisites: Panache 3+

Benefit: At the start of each scene when you're in a community with a population of 5,000 or more, you may declare you have a local safe house that's treated as a Holding with a Scale equal to your Panache minus 2 (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 192). You may use this ability a number of times per adventure equal to the number of Covert feats you have. All identified safe houses are lost (abandoned, discovered, or otherwise compromised) at the end of each adventure.

TRACELESS

You rarely leave signs of your passing.

Prerequisites: Wis 13+

Benefit: When you aren't present, the DCs of Search and Track checks to detect signs of your passing or follow your trail increase by 10, and the error ranges of these checks increase by your Wisdom modifier (minimum +1).

SKILL FEATS

CODEMASTER

You conceal messages in complex codes, riddles, and puzzles.

Prerequisites: Crafting (Inscription) focus

Benefit: For a character other than the intended reader(s) to read a written document you create, they must first make a

successful grueling Decipher check (see *Fantasy Craft Table 2.14: Puzzles*, page 77).

DEPTH OF STUDY

You've greatly expanded your knowledge of the world.

Benefit: You gain 5 additional Studies (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 61).

FALSE START

You recover quickly from mistakes.

Prerequisites: 1+ Basic Skill Mastery feats

Benefit: When you fail an unopposed check with a skill covered by one of your Basic Skill Mastery feats that requires longer than 1 round to complete, you may triple the time taken to roll the check again. There are no consequences for this failure in this case (such as expended materials, decreased disposition, etc.). You may use this feat a number of times per session equal to the number of Skill feats you have.

Special: You may not use this ability with Downtime checks.

PERFECT MEMORY

Your mind is like a steel trap.

Prerequisites: Int 15+

Benefit: When you make a Knowledge check, you may roll twice and keep the result you prefer. Also, you may spend 1 round to take 10 with a Knowledge check.

POLYGLOT

You've mastered many tongues.

Benefit: You gain 5 additional Languages (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 61).

SPECIES FEATS

AZURESCALE

The reclusive sea drakes typically live beneath the waves but might venture onto land to adventure, hunt, or lay eggs.

Prerequisites: Drake, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain a Swim speed of 60 ft. and the *aquatic* II NPC quality, but lose winged flight (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 230).

BEAR NATION

Native to the coldest climes, snow elves are skilled warriors and fierce hunters by harsh necessity.

Prerequisites: Elf, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain Cold Resistance 5 and your Constitution score rises by 1. When taking the Basic Skill Mastery feat you have access to a new skill pair: Ice-Walker (Blend & Survival).



CHAPTER 4



BEAR NOBLE

Veteran Bear warriors fight with a whirling, overwhelming style that mimics the bitter winter storms of their home.

Prerequisites: Bear Nation

Benefit: Your Cold Resistance increases to 10 and you need only 1 common meal per day to survive. Also, when you wield a 2-handed melee weapon, it gains the *finesse* and *lure* qualities.

BISON NATION

Living close to the land with few needs, “painted elves” are perhaps the most spiritual of their people.

Prerequisites: Elf, Level 1 only

Benefit: You lose *burden of ages*. When taking the Basic Skill Mastery feat you have access to a new skill pair: Great Hunter (Survival & Tactics).

BISON NOBLE

Bison elite are swift and certain, unpredictable and deadly.

Prerequisites: Bison Nation

Benefit: You suffer exactly 1 subdual damage per die when making Push Limit checks (no roll required), and you gain the *superior traveler II* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 235). Once per round when attacking a flanked opponent, you may Tire him as a free action.

CLIFF-BORN

Dwarves born where stone meets the sea are comfortable around water in ways most of their kinsmen cannot fathom.

Prerequisites: Dwarf, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain the Ride (Water Vehicles) focus, and Swim checks are no longer a restricted action for you. When taking the Basic Skill Mastery feat you have access to a new skill pair: Sea Trader (Haggle & Ride).

CLIFF-CLAN

The waves have delivered you to many distant ports and made you many friends.

Prerequisites: Cliff-Born

Benefit: You gain 2 additional Contacts, each with a Reputation value of 15 or less, who don't count against the number of Prizes you may keep.

COOL-RIVER FOLK

Tall and able, the Cool-River folk are the most likely of any pech to be mistaken for young humans.

Prerequisites: Pech, Level 1 only

Benefit: The lower of your Strength or Constitution scores rises by 2 (your choice in the case of a tie), and you gain the *superior swimmer II* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 235). When taking the Basic Skill Mastery feat you have access to a new skill pair: River-Rider (Athletics & Ride).

CRAG-BORN

Your nimble clan takes refuge in mazelike mountain chasms, isolated by geography and intent.

Prerequisites: Dwarf, Level 1 only

Benefit: Your base Defense increases by 1, Jump checks are no longer restricted actions for you, and you are always considered to have climber's gear.

CRAG-CLAN

Crag runners are the arteries of their clans, carrying their peoples' secrets with great speed and caution.

Prerequisites: Crag-Born

Benefit: You gain the *always ready* and *superior runner II* NPC qualities (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 230 and 235).

CUSTOM CONSTRUCTION

Your body is modified in ways most meatbags can't fathom.

Prerequisites: Unborn, Level 1 only

Benefit: Choose a construction.

- *Hollow Frame*: Your torso features a secret compartment in which you may store up to 1 object 1 Size smaller than you, 2 objects 2 Sizes smaller than you, 4 objects 3 Sizes smaller than you, and so on. Inspection fails to find the compartment without a threat or critical success. Objects carried in it count against your carrying capacity. The compartment can hold enough air for a character stored within to survive 10 minutes per Size difference between you (e.g. a character 2 Sizes smaller than you would have 20 minutes of air).
- *Hulking Frame*: Your Size increases to Large (2x2, Reach 1). This does *not* affect your maximum wounds.
- *Long Arms*: Your Reach increases to 2.
- *Long Legs*: Your Ground Speed increases by 10 ft.
- *Miniature Frame*: Your Size decreases to Small (1x1, Reach 1). This does *not* affect your maximum wounds.
- *Solid Frame*: Your wounds increase to your Constitution score \times 1.5.
- *Spindly Frame*: You gain a +4 gear bonus with checks and saves to avoid becoming *entangled*, *held*, or *pinned*.
- *Tool Hand*: Select 2 kits (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 159). You're always considered to have those kits.

Special: When you gain this feat you may reduce any of your attributes by 2 to gain an additional Species feat with the requirement “Level 1 only.”

CUTE N' CUDDLY

You're positively *adorable*.

Prerequisites: Small or smaller size, Cha 13+

Benefit: You gain a dodge bonus against melee and unarmed attacks equal to your Charisma modifier, and your Appearance modifier increases by an amount equal to your Size modifier to Defense (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 216).



DARK-EARTH FOLK

These reclusive pech lack their brethren's *joie de vivre*, preferring a hardscrabble existence deep in the earth.

Prerequisites: Pech, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain a +5 gear bonus with Blend checks while in caverns or mountainous terrain, a +2 insight bonus with saves against disease and poisons, and the *darkvision II* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 233).

DEEP-BORN

In your homeland the stones never see the light of day...

Prerequisites: Dwarf, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain the *darkvision II* and *light-sensitive* NPC qualities (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 233 and 234). Also, each time you gain 1 or more ranks in the Crafting skill, you gain equal ranks in the Sneak skill. This may not increase your Sneak skill beyond its maximum rank.

DEEP-CLAN

The craft-masters of the deepholds have taught you well.

Prerequisites: Deep-Born

Benefit: You gain 2 additional Crafting focuses and the lower of your Dexterity or Intelligence scores increases by 2 (your choice in case of a tie).

DESERT CLUTCH

The hooded *naja* have a fearful hiss that paralyzes their foes.

Prerequisites: Saurian, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain the *menacing threat* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 234).

DESERT CREST

The serpentine grace of elder *naja* mesmerizes prey, readying them for a quick and merciful death.

Prerequisites: Desert Clutch

Benefit: You gain the *beguiling* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 231). You also gain a trick.

Kali's Kiss (Bite Attack Trick): If the target is a standard character with a lower Constitution score than yours, he immediately fails his Damage save (damage isn't rolled). You may use this trick a number of times per combat equal to the number of Species feats you have.

DOLPHIN NATION

The sea elves have adapted to life in deep waters, and their ways and customs are often disturbing to the people of dry land.

Prerequisites: Elf, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain the *aquatic II* and *superior swimmer IV* NPC qualities (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 230 and 235), and the Disposition of any character who's aware of your species and doesn't share your native culture worsens by 10.

DOLPHIN NOBLE

The sea elves' elite are as captivating as the waters in which they reside.

Prerequisites: Dolphin Nation

Benefit: Your Appearance modifier increases by 1, you gain the *beguiling* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 231), and the Disposition of characters who know your species and don't share your native culture is no longer worsened.

DRAGON-TAILED

You have a massive wyrm's tail in place of legs.

Prerequisites: Drake or Saurian, Level 1 only

Benefit: Your base Defense increases by 1 but your ground Speed drops by 10 ft. and you may not use Kick tricks. You also gain the *improved stability* NPC quality and the Tail Slap I natural attack (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 234 and 235). If you gain a natural attack from multiple sources, the attack's grade becomes equal to the highest single grade + 1 per additional benefit granting the same attack, to a maximum of V (e.g. Bite IV, Bite III, and Bite I become Bite V).

Special: When you gain this feat you may reduce any of your attributes by 2 to gain an additional Species feat with the requirement "Level 1 only."

DRIFT-WIND FOLK

Like seeds on the wind, these pech cross great distances and endure many hardships.

Prerequisites: Pech, Level 1 only

Benefit: Your wounds are calculated as if your Size is 1 step larger (e.g. Medium instead of Small), and you gain 2 additional Languages and the *superior traveler I* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 235). When taking the Basic Skill Mastery feat you have access to a new skill pair: Strider (Medicine & Survival).

DUNE-BORN

The shifting desert sands give birth to dwarves who are not unlike ghosts.

Prerequisites: Dwarf, Level 1 only

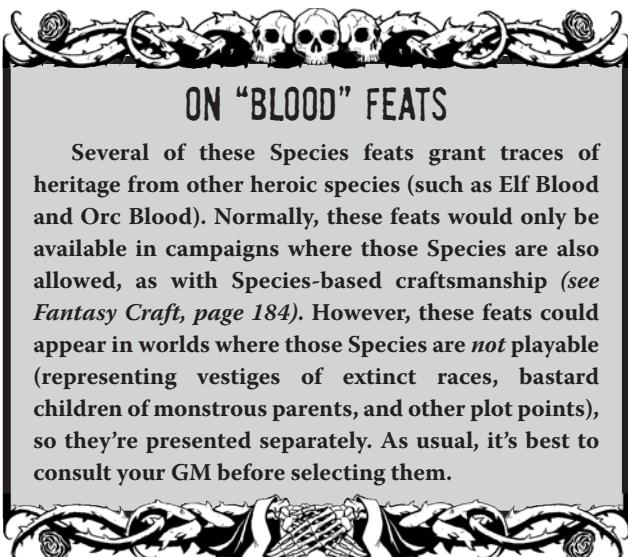
Benefit: You gain a +5 gear bonus with Blend checks in desert terrain, the DCs of Tracking checks to follow your trail increase by 10, and you suffer exactly 1 subdual damage per die from Push Limit checks (no roll required).

DUNE-CLAN

Like vengeful wraiths, dune dwarves seemingly appear from nowhere and are near-impossible to stop.

Prerequisites: Dune-Born

Benefit: You may ignore the first *fatigued* or *shaken* condition you gain in each scene, and you are considered to have 2 additional Covert feats for any ability based on the number of Covert feats you have.



ON "BLOOD" FEATS

Several of these Species feats grant traces of heritage from other heroic species (such as Elf Blood and Orc Blood). Normally, these feats would only be available in campaigns where those Species are also allowed, as with Species-based craftsmanship (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 184). However, these feats could appear in worlds where those Species are *not* playable (representing vestiges of extinct races, bastard children of monstrous parents, and other plot points), so they're presented separately. As usual, it's best to consult your GM before selecting them.

DWARF BLOOD

Stout half-dwarves are typically mistaken for shorter, hairier members of their progenitor's race, but also exhibit many common dwarven traits.

Prerequisites: Non-Dwarf Folk, Level 1 only

Benefit: Your Constitution score rises by 1, your Ground Speed drops by 5 ft., you gain thick hide 2 (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 13), and you may select feats as if you're a Dwarf.

Special: You may only have 1 "Blood" feat. When you gain this feat you may reduce any of your attributes by 2 to gain an additional Species feat with the requirement "Level 1 only."

EBONSCALE

The many-headed swamp drakes are even more feared and reclusive than their winged cousins.

Prerequisites: Drake, Level 1 only

Benefit: You lose winged flight and your breath weapon, but gain 2 additional Bite I natural attacks, the regeneration 2 NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 234), and only become flanked when surrounded by 3 or more adjacent characters.

ELF BLOOD

Half-elves are blessed with a sliver of their parent's ancient blood — and few of their weaknesses.

Prerequisites: Non-Elf Folk, Level 1 only

Benefit: Your Wisdom score rises by 1, your Ground Speed increases by 5 ft., you gain *natural elegance*, and you may select feats as if you're an Elf.

Special: You may only have 1 "Blood" feat. When you gain this feat you may reduce any of your attributes by 2 to gain an additional Species feat with the requirement "Level 1 only."

ENHANCED NATURAL ATTACK

Your natural weapons have unique features that make them particularly dangerous.

Prerequisites: 1+ natural attacks

Benefit: Select one weapon quality from the following list: *armor-piercing* 2, *bleed*, *finesse*, *hook*, *keen* 4, *lure*, *poisonous*, or *trip* (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 176). All your natural attacks gain this quality.

Special: You may select this feat multiple times, each time applying a different weapon quality.

GHOST-EYE FOLK

Secretive and downright spooky, the Ghost-Eyes don't take kindly to outsiders.

Prerequisites: Pech, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain the Fey Type (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 227) and your Ground Speed rises by 10 ft. You also gain a +1 bonus with melee attacks against larger characters, but the Disposition of any character who's aware of your species and doesn't share your native culture worsens by 10.

GIANT BLOOD

Towering half-giants are rarely found today, as the children of titans seek solitude in the far corners of the world.

Prerequisites: Non-Giant Folk, Level 1 only

Benefit: Your Size increases by one step (maximum Large); if you're already Large or bigger, your Reach increases by 1 instead (maximum 2). You gain the *sterner stuff* NPC quality and may select feats as if you're a Giant (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 235).

Special: You may only have 1 "Blood" feat. When you gain this feat you may reduce any of your attributes by 2 to gain an additional Species feat with the requirement "Level 1 only."

GLACIER-BORN

Deep arctic dwarves forgo the earth's warmth for a bitter, hard-fought life on the ice.

Prerequisites: Dwarf, Level 1 only

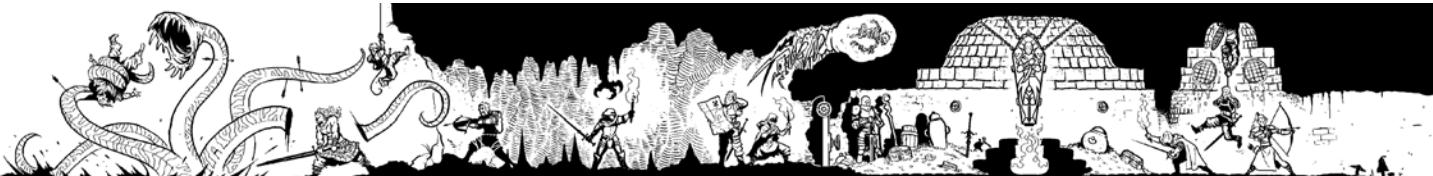
Benefit: You require only 1 common meal a day and are considered to have 2 additional Terrain feats for any ability based on the number of Terrain feats you have. You also gain Cold Resistance 10 and lose darkvision (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 12).

GLACIER-CLAN

Ice dwarf elders are great hunters, hunting and slaying prey many times their size.

Prerequisites: Glacier-Born

Benefit: You gain the *favored foes (animals & beasts)* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 233).



GOBLIN BLOOD

The hunched, twisted forms of half-goblins conceal their parent's low cunning and will to survive.

Prerequisites: Non-Goblin Folk, Level 1 only

Benefit: Your Size decreases by one step (minimum Small), you gain 1 additional vitality per level and the *darkvision* I NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 235), and you may select feats as if you're a Goblin.

Special: You may only have 1 "Blood" feat. When you gain this feat you may reduce any of your attributes by 2 to gain an additional Species feat with the requirement "Level 1 only."

GOLDSCALE

You're one of a handful of wingless drakes rumored to hail from the heavens themselves. This can be a blessing, but is also occasionally a dire curse.

Prerequisites: Drake, Level 1 only

Benefit: You lose winged flight and reviled, and gain flight 60 ft. and an Alignment of your choice. However, you're also an Outsider (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 227) and therefore vulnerable to various effects and potentially higher damage from some sources.

HORSE NATION

The riders of your culture are among the largest of all elves, sweeping across the plains like a gathering storm.

Prerequisites: Elf, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain the Ride (Riding Mounts) focus and a 20% discount when purchasing mounts and mount-related gear (if you already possess a discount with these purchases, it increases by 5%). Also, while mounted, you and your mount gain Electrical Resistance 5 and the *improved stability* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 234).

HORSE NOBLE

Horse nation raiders roll across the land like thunder and strike their enemies like chain lightning.

Prerequisites: Horse Nation

Benefit: While mounted, your Electrical Resistance increases to 10 and you may convert your melee damage to electrical damage at no penalty. Also, mounts you purchase gain the exceptional specimen upgrade at no cost (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 169).

JEWEL-BORN

The First Dwarf spread tears of joy through the vaults of the world, and from those tears sprang the most comely of his descendants.

Prerequisites: Dwarf, Level 1 only

Benefit: Your Panache increases by 1, your Charisma score rises by 2, and your Strength score decreases by 1.

JEWEL-CLAN

Your clan's vaults are filled with all the treasures of the earth.

Prerequisites: Jewel-Born

Benefit: Your Prudence increases by 1, and you gain a +4 bonus with all treasure rolls (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 344).

LARGER THAN LIFE

In life, deference is commonly extended to the biggest thing around. That would be you.

Prerequisites: Large or bigger Size

Benefit: You gain DR 1 against attacks from smaller characters, and suffer no Size penalties to Defense. Also, your Legend increases by 2.

LIVING WEAPON

When you're the weapon, swords and guns lose their luster.

Prerequisites: Rootwalker or Unborn, Unarmed forte

Benefit: Select one of the following benefits.

- *Crushing Grip:* You gain the Squeeze I natural attack, but suffer a -2 penalty with ranged attacks.
- *Hammer Hands:* You gain the Slam III natural attack, but you also gain the Beast Type and therefore lack hands or other fine manipulators and can't take actions requiring them.
- *Powerful Legs:* You gain the Trample I natural attack but suffer a -2 penalty with Balance checks.
- *Shearing Jaw:* You gain the Bite I natural attack but suffer a -2 penalty with Impress checks.
- *Spines:* You gain the *natural defense* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 234), but suffer a -2 penalty with Reflex saves and Tumble checks.

Special: You may gain this feat multiple times, each time selecting a different benefit.

LOST HORDE

The wandering Claw Tribe once traveled beyond the horizon, only to return with exotic fighting styles and tales of conquest.

Prerequisites: Goblin or Orc, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain 2 Languages and 2 proficiencies or tricks.

_MOUNTAIN-BORN

The mountain stones rise high above the rest — and crash down with killing force!

Prerequisites: Dwarf, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain the Unarmed proficiency and Kick attacks are no longer restricted for you. Also, you gain the Trample I natural attack. If you gain a natural attack from multiple sources, the attack's grade becomes equal to the highest single grade + 1 per additional benefit granting the same attack, to a maximum of V (e.g. Bite IV, Bite III, and Bite I become Bite V).

Note: Due to your *improved stability* quality, you may Trample characters just 1 Size smaller than you (rather than 2).



FANTASY CRAFT SUB-SPECIES

The dozens of Species feats here and in the *Fantasy Craft Rulebook* can simulate many classic fantasy races and tropes. Here are some examples.

Aasimar: Angelic Heritage

Aquatic Elf: Elf Species + Dolphin Nation

Arctic Elf: Elf Species + Bear Nation

Black Dragon: Drake Species + Truescale (acid) + Pathfinder Basics (swamp)

Blue Dragon: Drake Species + Truescale (electricity) + Pathfinder Basics (desert)

Cloud Giant: Giant Species + Elemental Heritage (air) + Larger than Life

Cyclops: Ogre Species + Steel Brave

Deep Dwarf: Dwarf Species + Deep-Born

Dragonman: Draconic Heritage + Draconic Legacy

Drow: Elf Species + Spider Nation + Abide in Darkness + The Gift

Drider: Elf Species + Spider Nation + Spider Noble + Abide in Darkness

Duergar/Grey Dwarf: Dwarf Species + Deep-Born + Abide in Darkness

Ent: Rootwalker Species + Larger than Life

Ettin: Giant Species + Two-Headed

Feytouched: Faerie Heritage

Fire Giant: Giant Species + Elemental Heritage (fire or lava)

Frost Giant: Giant Species + Elemental Heritage (ice)

Genasi: Elemental Heritage

Gatorman: Saurian Species + River Clutch + River Crest

Gobber: Goblin Species + Southern Horde

Gold Dwarf: Dwarf Species + Jewel-Born

Green Dragon: Drake Species + Truescale (acid) + Greater Breath (cone) + Pathfinder Basics (forest)

Grey Elf: Elf Species + Owl Nation

Half-Dragon: Draconic Heritage

Half-Dwarf/Mul: Dwarf Blood

Half-Elf: Elf Blood

Half-Giant: Giant Blood

Half-Orc: Orc Blood

Hobbit: Pech Species + Farstride Folk

Hobgoblin: Goblin Species + Western Horde

Hydra: Drake Species + Ebonscale

MOUNTAIN-CLAN

You've mastered a rolling, tumbling, and crushing battle-style inspired by the avalanches that shake your home.

Prerequisites: Mountain-Born

Benefit: Jump checks are no longer restricted actions for you and your Mountain-Born Trample attack increases by 1 grade (e.g. Trample I becomes Trample II). Also, each time you suffer attribute impairment, it decreases by 1 (minimum 0).

NASTY LITTLE GIT

Mean things often come in small packages.

Prerequisites: Small or smaller Size

Benefit: Your attacks against Medium and larger targets inflict a die of sneak attack damage. Also, you don't suffer the standard -4 penalty with attack checks when using the Cheap Shot trick against Medium and larger targets.

NIGHT HORDE

The cutthroat Doom Tribes live at the fringe of "polite" society, selling their blades to the highest bidder. Deal with them at your own peril.

Prerequisites: Goblin or Orc, Level 1 only

Benefit: The lower of your Intelligence or Charisma scores rises by 1 (your choice in the case of a tie), and you gain the *favored foes* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 233).

OGRE BLOOD

Half-ogres tend to inherit their parents' massive strength and durability, as well as the fear and misunderstanding that comes with being related to such "brutes."

Prerequisites: Non-Ogre Folk, Level 1 only

Benefit: You may ignore the first *fatigued* or *shaken* condition you suffer in each scene. Also, you gain the *improved stability* NPC quality and may select feats as if you're an Ogre. However, the Dispositions of non-ogres worsen by 5.

Special: You may only have 1 "Blood" feat. When you gain this feat you may reduce any of your attributes by 2 to gain an additional Species feat with the requirement "Level 1 only."

ORC BLOOD

Many believe a half-orc's siring is the result of an ugly backstory, mainly because anyone who asks gets a swift punch in the mouth.

Prerequisites: Non-Orc Folk, Level 1 only

Benefit: The higher of your Strength or Constitution scores rise by 1 (your choice in the case of a tie), you gain the *grueling combatant* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 233), and you may select feats as if you're an Orc.

Special: You may only have 1 "Blood" feat. When you gain this feat you may reduce any of your attributes by 2 to gain an additional Species feat with the requirement "Level 1 only."



PECH BLOOD

Half-pech often resemble runty versions of their non-pech parents... until their appetites betray them.

Prerequisites: Non-Pech Folk, Level 1 only

Benefit: Your Dexterity score rises by 1, you gain hearty appetite (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 16), and you may select feats as if you're a Pech.

Special: You may only have 1 "Blood" feat. When you gain this feat you may reduce any of your attributes by 2 to gain an additional Species feat with the requirement "Level 1 only."

RAVEN NATION

Gregarious and inquisitive almost to a fault, night elves have keen eyes and keen blades. None dare venture which is sharper.

Prerequisites: Elf, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain the Edged proficiency and the *darkvision* I NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 233). You also receive a 20% discount when purchasing edged weapons (if you already possess a discount with these purchases, it increases by 5%).

RAVEN NOBLE

Ravens appear unexpectedly — often behind their foes, where they excel at inflicting impressive and sometimes debilitating amounts of pain.

Prerequisites: Raven Nation

Benefit: You're considered to have 2 additional Covert feats for any ability based on the number of Covert feats you have, and your attacks with 1-handed edged weapons inflict a die of sneak attack damage.

RIVER CLUTCH

The squat, rugged *kaimyn* live in slow-moving rivers and swamps, eating anything that dares intrude.

Prerequisites: Saurian, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain thick hide 3 (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 13) and the *aquatic* I NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 230), but your Ground Speed drops by 10 ft.

RIVER CREST

The sluggish elder *kaimyn* have deadly jaws they use to drag their prey beneath the surface.

Prerequisites: River Clutch

Benefit: Your Bite increases to grade II and gains the *grab* upgrade (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 236). However, you lose your Tail Slap attack.

ROCK CLUTCH

The rare *bakilis* peoples are frequently driven from civilization by those fearful of their fell gaze.

Prerequisites: Saurian, Level 1 only

FANTASY CRAFT SUB-SPECIES (CONT.)

Mountain Dwarf: Dwarf Species + Mountain-Born

Naga: Saurian Species + Desert Clutch + Dragon-Tailed

Night Elf: Elf Species + Raven Nation

Nyss: Elf Species + Bear Nation + Bear Noble

Ogre Mage: Ogre Species + Fire Brave + Fire Elder

Oni: Ogre Species + Fire Brave

Oriental Dragon: Drake Species + Goldscale + The Gift (Spells: Create Water, Detect Alignment, Endure Elements)

Painted Elf: Elf Species + Bison Nation

Red Dragon: Drake Species + Draconic Heritage + Greater Breath (cone) + Truescale (fire)

Sea Serpent: Drake Species + Azurescale

Stone Giant: Giant Species + Elemental Heritage (earth)

Storm Giant: Giant Species + Elemental Heritage (lightning) + Larger than Life

Svirfneblin: Pech Species + Dark-Earth Folk + Abide in Darkness

Tiefling: Devilish Heritage

Tinker Gnome: Pech Species + Quick-Finger Folk

Titan: Giant Species + Larger than Life

Troll: Ogre Species + Stone Brave + Stone Elder

Trollkin: Ogre Species + Stone Brave

Uruk-Hai: Orc Species or Orc Blood + Eastern Horde

Wendigo/Yeti: Ogre Species + Winter Brave

Whisper Gnome: Pech Species + Ghost-Eye Folk

White Dragon: Drake Species + Truescale (cold) + Greater Breath (cone) + Pathfinder Basics (arctic)

Wild Elf: Elf Species + Wolf Nation

Winged Elf: Elf Species + Swan Nation

Wood Elf: Elf Species + Hart Nation

Yuan-Ti Hybrid: Saurian Blood

Benefit: Once per round, you may make a Gaze attack that inflicts 2d6 stress damage and has a threat range of 19–20. Each character hit may make a Reflex Save (DC 10 + the number of Species feats you have + your Wis modifier) to suffer only 1/2 damage (rounded down).

However, your Dexterity score drops by 2 and the Disposition of any character who's aware of your species and doesn't share your native culture worsens by 10.

CHAPTER 4



ROCK CREST

The crown-like crests of wizened *bakilis* are a sign for the wary... to *run*.

Prerequisites: Rock Clutch

Benefit: Your Ground Speed drops by 10 ft. and you gain a trick.

Eyes of Stone (Gaze Attack Trick): If the target is a standard character and he fails his Reflex save, he is instead turned into stone. You may use this trick a number of times per combat equal to the number of Species feats you have.

SAURIAN BLOOD

Though rare, half-saurians display a serpentine grace that many folk find enchanting.

Prerequisites: Non-Saurian Folk, Level 1 only

Benefit: The higher of your Dexterity or Charisma scores rises by 1 (your choice in the case of a tie), your base Defense increases by 1, and you may select feats as if you're a Saurian.

Special: You may only have 1 "Blood" feat. When you gain this feat you may reduce any of your attributes by 2 to gain an additional Species feat with the requirement "Level 1 only."

SKY CLUTCH

The oldest saurian species, *pterradans* have a thick membrane between their arms and legs that lets them glide through the air.

Prerequisites: Saurian, Level 1 only

Benefit: You suffer no damage from falling so long as you aren't *paralyzed*, unconscious, or dying. Also, when you make a running horizontal jump, the distance you travel is doubled and is no longer limited by your height (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 69). You lose these abilities if you wear moderate or heavy armor.



SKY CREST

Ancient *pterradans* ride the hot desert winds with heavy leathery wings.

Prerequisites: Sky Clutch

Benefit: You gain winged flight 40 ft. (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 227).

STEEL BRAVE

You descend from the *arges*, cyclopean ogres who were once smiths to the gods, now fallen into barbarism.

Prerequisites: Ogre, Level 1 only

Benefit: Your maximum rank in Crafting increases to your Career Level + 5, and you gain the *grueling combatant* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 233). When taking the Basic Skill Mastery feat you have access to a new skill pair: Steel-Blood (Crafting & Investigate). However, your Close Quarters range drops to 15 ft.

STEEL ELDER

You've reclaimed your birthright as favorite of the gods and claimed the gift of foresight your ancestors lost so long ago.

Prerequisites: Steel Brave

Benefit: Your Wisdom score rises by 2 and you gain the *always ready* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 230).

SWAN NATION

Blessed by the moon, the hollow-boned, winged elves are a peaceful-loving and graceful people.

Prerequisites: Elf, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain winged flight 40 ft. (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 227) and the *Achilles heel (blunt)* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 230). When taking the Basic Skill Mastery feat you have access to a new skill pair: Wind Rider (Acrobatics & Impress).

SWAN NOBLE

The most skilled Swans ride the wind effortlessly, as if they were born among the clouds.

Prerequisites: Swan Nation

Benefit: Your winged flight speed increases to 60 ft. and your error ranges with attack and Spellcasting checks are no longer increased when hovering or flying.

TIGER NATION

The lotus elves are possessed of a unique serenity that only comes from knowing they can easily quash their enemies at any time.

Prerequisites: Elf, Level 1 only

Benefit: You gain the Unarmed proficiency and your Strength-based damage rolls inflict 1 additional damage. When taking the Basic Skill Mastery feat you have access to a new skill pair: Jungle Stalker (Resolve & Sneak).



TIGER NOBLE

The Tiger Nation's mightiest warriors cut through lesser foes like swords through grass.

Prerequisites: Tiger Nation

Benefit: Your Species feats count as Unarmed Combat feats for any ability based on the number of Unarmed Combat feats you have.

Also, once per round you may make an unarmed attack against a standard character as a free action. You may use this ability a number of times per combat equal to the number of Species feats you have.

TOXIN SACS

You generate deadly venom, which you can deliver through one of your natural attacks.

Prerequisites: Drake or Saurian, Bite or Claw natural attack, Level 1 only

Benefit: One of your Bite or Claw natural attacks can transmit one of the following poisons (chosen when you gain this feat): agonizing, blinding, enraging, necrotic, numbing, paranoia, putrid, sickening, or slowing (see *Fantasy Craft, Table 4.12, page 166*). This poison is only transmitted to a target who suffers 1 or more damage after Reduction and Resistances, and may be withheld on an attack-by-attack basis. You may only transmit the attack's poison a number of times per combat equal to the number of Species feats you have.

TWO-HEADED

They really *are* better than one...

Prerequisites: Giant, Ogre, or Unborn, Level 1 only

Benefit: You are only *flanked* when surrounded by 3 or more adjacent characters, and the penalties you suffer when multi-tasking (see *Fantasy Craft, page 65*) or when making attacks with the Two-Weapon Fighting and Two-Weapon Style feats, drop by 2 (minimum 0).

Special: When you gain this feat you may reduce any of your attributes by 2 to gain an additional Species feat with the requirement "Level 1 only."

WHEELED

You have wheel or tracks instead of legs, letting you cover lots of ground in very little time. Sadly, they're particularly vulnerable to damage.

Prerequisites: Unborn, Level 1 only

Benefit: Your Ground Speed rises by 20 ft. in Settled terrain and you gain the *superior runner II* NPC quality (see *Fantasy Craft, page 235*). However, you suffer double the Speed penalty from broken leg (wheel/track) critical injuries.

Special: When you gain this feat you may reduce any of your attributes by 2 to gain an additional Species feat with the requirement "Level 1 only."

WOLF NATION

Wild elves live a simple, nomadic life, wandering between sylvan reaches and lightly wooded wastes.

Prerequisites: Elf, Level 1 only

Benefit: Survival is an Origin skill for you and your Strength score rises by 2, but your Intelligence score drops by 2. When taking the Basic Skill Mastery feat you have access to a new skill pair: Pack Hunter (Sneak & Tactics).

WOLF NOBLE

Wolf warriors are ferocious predators, overwhelming larger groups.

Prerequisites: Wolf Nation

Benefit: You count as 3 additional characters when determining numerical advantage, and you inflict a die of sneak attack damage when attacking a *flanked* opponent.

SPELLCASTING FEATS

DEVOTION BASICS

Your deep commitment has won the attention and blessing of your gods.

Prerequisites: *Miracles* campaign quality, 1+ Steps along a Path

Benefit: At the start of each adventure, choose one spell granted to you by a Step you've taken. You may cast that spell an additional time (e.g. once per scene becomes twice per scene) until the end of the adventure. You also gain a trick.

Focus of the Gods (Path Spellcasting Trick): You may spend 1 use of a Path spell from a Step equal to or higher than this one to also overcome the target's Spell Defense and Spell Reflection, if applicable. This trick may not be applied to Level 0 spells.

DEVOTION MASTERY

Your belief grants you the power to punish infidels and dispense blessings to the faithful.

Prerequisites: Devotion Basics

Benefit: At the start of each adventure, choose a second spell granted to you by a Step you've taken. You may cast that spell an additional time (e.g. once per scene becomes twice per scene) until the end of the adventure. You also gain a trick.

Might of the Gods (Path Spellcasting Attack Trick): You may spend 1 use of a Path spell from a Step equal to or higher than this one to increase this spell's save DC by an amount equal to the number of Steps you have taken along all Paths (e.g. if you have Fire 4 and Secrets 3, you increase this spell's save DC by +7). This trick may not be applied to Level 0 spells.



DEVOTION SUPREMACY

Through you, the gods speak justice and wreak vengeance.

Prerequisites: Devotion Mastery

Benefit: At the start of each adventure, choose a third spell granted to you by a Step you've taken. You may cast that spell an additional time (e.g. once per scene becomes twice per scene) until the end of the adventure. You also gain a trick.

Wrath of the Gods (Path Spellcasting Trick): You may spend 1 use of a Path spell from a Step equal to or higher than this one to cause this casting to become a threat, as if you rolled a natural 20 on your Spellcasting check. You may spend action dice to convert this threat to a critical hit as normal. This trick may not be applied to Level 0 spells.

MAGE HUNTER

You've undergone a ritual to inure you to the touch of magic.

Prerequisites: *Sorcery* campaign quality, Caster Level 0

Benefit: When you score a threat with an attack or skill check against a character with 1 or more Spellcasting ranks, it costs you 1 fewer action dice to activate it as a critical (minimum 0). You also gain Spell Defense equal to $10 + \text{your Career Level} + \text{your Charisma modifier}$.

Special: You may never gain levels in a class that grants Caster Levels after selecting this feat.

STYLE FEATS

FAN SERVICE

Chainmail bikinis have *some* practical uses...

Prerequisites: Appearance bonus +1 or higher

Benefit: You may use your Impress skill bonus when you Distract or Feint. You also gain a trick.

Yowza! (Distract Trick): If your target is a standard character, he also becomes *fixated* on you for a number of rounds equal to your Appearance bonus.

HERO OF THE ARMY

You've survived enough battles for *others* to tell the tale.

Prerequisites: Military Renown 1+

Benefit: Your Legend increases by 2. Also, the Reputation cost of Military favors you purchase drops by an amount equal to your Military Renown (minimum 1).

HERO OF THE COURT

You're admired and feared in noble circles.

Prerequisites: Noble Renown 1+

Benefit: Your Legend increases by 2. Also, the Reputation cost of Noble favors you purchase drops by an amount equal to your Noble Renown (minimum 1).

HERO OF THE PEOPLE

Your countless exploits have earned you quite the reputation amongst common folk.

Prerequisites: Heroic Renown 1+

Benefit: Your Legend increases by 2. Also, the Reputation cost of Heroic favors you purchase drops by an amount equal to your Heroic Renown (minimum 1).

ADVANCED ACTIONS AND TRICKS

Note that some of these tricks may only be taken if the character has a requisite ability score (e.g. Str or Dex 13+).

ARMORED ASSURANCE

Melee Attack Trick (Forte): The character's faith in his durability instills him with confidence. If his total DR is greater than his target's, he gains a +2 morale bonus with this attack check.

BACK AT YOU!

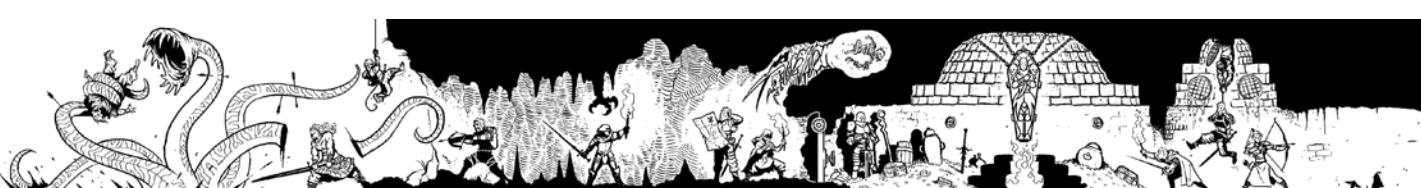
Initiative Action (Hurled Forte): The character snatches a hurled weapon out of the air and tosses it back. While he has two hands free, once per round after the character (or the square he's in) is hit by a hurled weapon but before damage is rolled, he may make a Reflex save (DC equal to the attack result). With success, the damage drops to 0 and he may immediately make a free hurled attack against the attacker with the same weapon, after which he becomes *flat-footed*. The character may take this action a number of times per combat equal to the number of Ranged Combat feats he has (minimum 1).

BREAKING TWIST

Initiative Action (Forte): The character catches an incoming attack and uses its momentum against his attacker's weapon. Once per round, immediately after the character is hit with a melee weapon, he may make a free attack against that weapon (vs. the wielder's Defense). This free attack inflicts full damage only if the character's weapon has the hook quality (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 176); otherwise it inflicts only 1/2 damage (rounded up). The character may take this action a number of times per combat equal to the number of Melee Combat feats he has (minimum 1).

CANNY GRAB

Grapple Trick (Unarmed Forte, Str 13+): The character may substitute his Intelligence modifier in place of his Strength modifier when making this Grapple check.



CANNY SHOT

Ranged Attack Trick (Forte, Dex 13+): The character may substitute his Intelligence modifier in place of his Dexterity modifier when making this attack check.

CANNY SWING

Melee Attack Trick (Forte, Str 13+): The character may substitute his Intelligence modifier in place of his Strength modifier when making this attack check.

CRUSHING FORCE

Melee or Unarmed Attack Trick (Forte, Str 13+): The character's attack is so powerful it partially punches through even the stoutest defenses. If this attack would normally be Blocked, Parried, or Shield Blocked, it instead inflicts 1/2 damage (rounded down).

DAMNED IF YOU DO

Attack Trick (Forte): The character always gets payback against his attackers... usually with interest. When the character attacks an opponent who has hit him in this combat, he may increase his error range by 1 to gain a +2 morale bonus to damage against that opponent. The character may use this trick a number of times per combat equal to the number of Basic Combat feats he has (minimum 1).

DAMNED IF YOU DON'T

Attack Trick (Forte): The character punishes all who dare attack him, even when they miss. When the character attacks an opponent who has attacked him and missed in this combat, he may increase his error range by 1 to gain a +2 morale bonus to damage against that opponent. The character may use this trick a number of times per combat equal to the number of Basic Combat feats he has (minimum 1).

DECEPTIVE GRAB

Grapple Trick (Unarmed Forte, Str 13+): The character may substitute his Charisma modifier in place of his Strength modifier when making this Grapple check.

DECEPTIVE SHOT

Ranged Attack Trick (Forte, Dex 13+): The character may substitute his Charisma modifier in place of his Dexterity modifier when making this attack check.

DECEPTIVE SWING

Melee Attack Trick (Forte, Str 13+): The character may substitute his Charisma modifier in place of his Strength modifier when making this attack check.

DECISIVE BLOW

Unarmed Attack Trick (Forte): The character gains a bonus to damage equal to his opponent's dodge bonus to Defense. A character may apply this trick a number of times per combat equal to the number of Unarmed Combat feats he has (minimum 1).

DECISIVE SHOT

Ranged Attack Trick (Forte): The character gains a bonus to damage equal to his opponent's dodge bonus to Defense. A character may apply this trick a number of times per combat equal to the number of Ranged Combat feats he has (minimum 1).

DECISIVE SWING

Melee Attack Trick (Forte): The character gains a bonus to damage equal to his opponent's dodge bonus to Defense. A character may apply this trick a number of times per combat equal to the number of Melee Combat feats he has (minimum 1).

DEFT GRAB

Grapple Trick (Unarmed Forte, Str 13+): The character may substitute his Dexterity modifier in place of his Strength modifier when making this Grapple check.

DEFT SWING

Melee Attack Trick (Forte, Str 13+): The character may substitute his Dexterity modifier in place of his Strength modifier when making this attack check.

DETERMINED GRAB

Grapple Trick (Unarmed Forte, Str 13+): The character may substitute his Constitution modifier in place of his Strength modifier when making this grapple check.

DETERMINED SHOT

Ranged Attack Trick (Forte, Dex 13+): The character may substitute his Constitution modifier in place of his Dexterity modifier when making this attack check.

DETERMINED SWING

Melee Attack Trick (Forte, Str 13+): The character may substitute his Constitution modifier in place of his Strength modifier when making this attack check.

DISRUPTING SHOT

Tire Trick: The character peppers his enemies with shots that wear them down. When the character has a ranged weapon armed and loaded, he may attempt to Tire an opponent in Close Quarters. This trick uses 1 shot.





DISTRACTING SHOT

Feint Trick: The character uses loose objects in the environment to distract and expose his enemy's vulnerabilities. When the character has a ranged weapon armed and loaded, he may attempt to Feint an opponent in Close Quarters. This trick uses 1 shot.

EXPLOIT VULNERABILITY

Melee Attack Trick (Forte): The character carefully directs his attack at his foe's most vulnerable spot. Once per combat, if his target has no armor or shield, the character may increase his error range by 1 to grant this attack the *keen* (10) weapon quality.

FEND

Melee Attack Trick: The character uses fancy footwork, staggering strikes, and warding blows to create a pocket of space between he and his opponent. If the character hits with this attack, he may immediately move 5 ft. as a free action.

GET OVER HERE!

Ranged Attack Trick (Forte, Str 13+): The character snares his enemies, dragging them closer to impending doom. If the character's weapon has the *cord* quality and the attack inflicts at least 1 point of damage, the target must make a Fortitude save (DC equal to damage inflicted after DR and Resistances are applied) or be moved a number of squares directly toward the character equal to the character's Strength modifier. This movement is interrupted if the target enters obstructing terrain or becomes adjacent to another character.

HUMILIATING SHOT

Ranged Attack Trick (Forte): The character's attack wounds his target's pride more than his body. If this attack would cause the target to fail his last Damage save or reduce him to 0 or fewer wounds, the target to become *shaken* instead.

HUMILIATING STRIKE

Unarmed or Melee Attack Trick (Forte): The character strikes at the target's dignity. If this attack would cause the target to fail his last Damage save or reduce him to 0 or fewer wounds, the target becomes *shaken* instead.

MERCIFUL SHOT

Ranged Attack Trick (Forte): The character deliberately targets legs, arms, or other non-critical body parts to wound rather than slay his target. If this attack would cause the target to fail his last Damage save or reduce him to 0 or fewer wounds, the target becomes *fatigued* instead.

MERCIFUL STRIKE

Unarmed or Melee Attack Trick (Forte): The character measures his blows not to slay but to draw out his enemy's agony. If this attack would cause the target to fail his last Damage save or reduce him to 0 or fewer wounds, the target becomes *fatigued* instead.

NIMBLE GUARD

Total Defense Trick: The character's tight defense lets him easily slide through grapplers' hands. While in Total Defense, the character also gains a +4 bonus to resist Bull Rushes and Grapples.

OVERPOWERING STRIKE

Melee Attack Trick: The character puts his weight into the attack, hoping to send the target reeling. If the character's weapon has the *massive* quality, he may increase his error range by 2 to apply the *massive* quality even if the target is *not* smaller than him.

PARTING SHOT

Initiative Action: The character lets no one escape his kill zone. Once per round when an opponent leaves Close Quarters, the character may immediately make a free ranged attack against him with a readied and loaded weapon, after which the character immediately becomes *flat-footed*. This attack occurs before the opponent moves and uses 1 shot. The character may use this trick a number of times per combat equal to the number of Ranged Combat feats he has (minimum 1).

PERCEPTIVE GRAB

Grapple Trick (Unarmed Forte, Str 13+): The character may substitute his Wisdom modifier in place of his Strength modifier when making this Grapple check.

PERCEPTIVE SHOT

Ranged Attack Trick (Forte, Dex 13+): The character may substitute his Wisdom modifier in place of his Dexterity modifier when making this attack check.

PERCEPTIVE SWING

Melee Attack Trick (Forte, Str 13+): The character may substitute his Wisdom modifier in place of his Strength modifier when making this attack check.

PICK ON THE BIG GUY

Attack Trick (Forte): The character takes full advantage of openings in a larger opponent's defenses. When attacking a larger opponent, the character gains a +2 insight bonus to damage. The character may use this trick a number of times per combat equal to the number of Basic Combat feats he has (minimum 1).



PICK ON THE LITTLE GUY

Attack Trick (Forte): The character overcomes a smaller opponent's innate defenses. When the character attacks a smaller opponent, the target's Defense bonus from Size drops to 1/2 (rounded up). The character may use this trick a number of times per combat equal to the number of Basic Combat feats he has (minimum 1).

PRACTICED BLOW

Initiative Action (Forte): The character has seen every pugilistic trick in the book. Once per combat when making an unarmed attack but before the die is rolled, the character may forgo rolling to instead automatically score a 10 with his attack check. No character may spend action dice to increase this result or activate a threat scored in this way.

PRACTICED SHOT

Initiative Action (Forte): With enough time on the range, *everything* starts to look like a target — and you're really good with targets. Once per combat when making a ranged attack but before the die is rolled, the character may forgo rolling to instead automatically score a 10 with his attack check. No character may spend action dice to increase the result or activate a threat scored in this way.

PRACTICED SWING

Initiative Action (Forte): Years of sparring can pay off in a single moment. Once per combat when making a melee attack but before the die is rolled, the character may forgo rolling to instead automatically score a 10 with his attack check. No character may spend action dice to increase the result or activate a threat scored in this way.

RECKLESS SWING

Melee Attack Trick (Forte): The character puts all his might behind his attack, dangerously exposing himself in the process. If the character hits with a two-handed melee weapon, he may roll the damage twice, keeping the result he prefers. However, until his next Initiative Count the threat range of attacks against him increase by 3 and any attack that scores a threat is automatically activated as a critical hit (even if the attacker can't normally crit against the character).

RETRIBUTION

Initiative Action (Forte): The character can usually get the last word in, even on his way out of the fight. Once per combat when the character suffers damage from an adjacent opponent's attack, he may immediately make a free attack against that opponent, even if the damage leaves him unconscious or dead. If the damage leaves the character with 0 or fewer wounds, his free attack inflicts double damage.



CHAPTER 4



RETURN THE FAVOR

Attack Trick: The character makes his enemy pay for overconfidence. If the character's target has spent 1 or more action dice since the start of his last Initiative Count, this attack inflicts +2 damage.

TARGET SHOOTING

Ranged Attack Trick: The character looks to inflict some property damage. When targeting an unheld object or scenery, the character gains a +2 bonus with his attack check. If he has a forte with his weapon, this bonus increases to +4.

TOPPLING SWING

Melee Attack Trick (Forte): The character brutally batters his target, throwing him off-balance until he can regain his footing. Each time the character hits an opponent of equal or smaller Size with a two-handed melee weapon, the opponent suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to Defense. This penalty lasts until the opponent takes a movement action or the combat ends (whichever comes first).

TURN THE TABLES

Initiative Action (Forte): The character gives as good as he gets — sometimes even *before* he gets. Once per combat when the character is *flanked*, *prone*, or *sprawled* and an adjacent opponent attacks him, he may make a free attack against that opponent *before* the opponent makes his attack check.

UNNERVING SHOT

Taunt Trick: The character uses a ranged weapon to draw his opponent out and shake his resolve. If the character has a ranged weapon armed and loaded and successfully Taunts his opponent, that opponent suffers a -4 morale penalty with attack checks against the character for 1d6 rounds or until he successfully attacks the character (whichever comes first). This trick uses 1 shot.

VETERAN'S ATTACK

Attack Trick (Forte): Experience guides the character's attack, especially against a less seasoned opponent. The character gains a +2 morale bonus with this attack if the target's Career Level or Threat Level is lower than his.

YOU DROPPED SOMETHING

Melee or Ranged Attack Trick: The character makes great use of a little something he "found" on the battlefield. The character gains a +1 morale bonus with his attack check and damage roll if his weapon belonged to an adversary at the start of the combat. If this is the first attack the character has made with this weapon during this combat, these bonuses increase to +2 each.



CAMPAIN QUALITIES

DANGEROUS MONSTERS (2 ACTION DICE)

Monsters of the world are particularly powerful. The Threat Levels of monster and other non-rogue NPCs increases by 2.

FEAR AND LOATHING (2 ACTION DICE)

Current tensions or ancient grudges engender distrust and fear between the world's species. The Dispositions of characters who don't share a Species worsen by 10.

LEGENDARY MONSTERS (4 ACTION DICE)

The characters live in a time of vicious monsters and legendary battles. The Threat Levels of standard monsters and other non-rogue NPCs increases by 2, and the Threat Level of special monsters and other non-rogue NPCs increases by 4.

RESILIENT HEROES (1 ACTION DIE)

The heroes easily shake off debilitating conditions. At the start of each special character's Initiative Count, he may make a saving throw against each of his conditions. The save is the same that prompted each condition, with a DC equal to 10 + the adventure's Menace + 1/2 the adventure's Threat Level (rounded up). With success, the character immediately loses the condition, or 1 grade of the condition if it's graded.



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BONUS MATERIAL

Keen-eyed readers may notice that a table is missing in Chapter 3 – the first table, in fact, which corresponds to a section that was pulled late in the process so we could hit 144 pages. Rather than trash it entirely, we saved the material and present it here in the PDF, where silly things like signatures and binding aren't important. For your convenience, we've kept the table numbering the same as it was in the original draft (matching the other two setting chapters), and incorporated bookmarks in their logical places in Chapter 3. Enjoy, and stay Crafty!

NAMES IN THE THOUSAND-RIVER VALLEY

Names given to those born along the Morru-Braid vary by culture. Appropriate names can be generated randomly using Table 3.1: Names in Sunchaser (*see below*).



Table 3.1: Human Names in Sunchaser

Result	Ahset		Janno		Matha		Sharos	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	Baruk	Arista	Azen	Anlori	Anborn	Amatha	Addon	Addea
2	Bavadin	Ayanna	Bachu	Carli	Artagan	Belwen	Anras	Aessel
3	Boradin	Fairah	Citril	Catena	Baland	Beth	Aradon	Areanna
4	Borith	Fatima	Diyor	Chendra	Brutas	Chessy	Bainen	Canina
5	Dagor	Findari	Eneki	Chermie	Ceol	Elethorn	Barlos	Cressida
6	Dagorith	Gabri	Issanth	Derranie	Dessen	Enryth	Brucin	Eranea
7	Donmin	Galelle	Jasric	Hannah	Deth	Hanna	Fainos	Escisa
8	Fadir	Heliz	Jaxom	Imbel	Faugrim	Katiara	Kalius	Fos
9	Felagar	Irkalla	Joban	Kiva	Gerard	Kitwyn	Kiyon	Halli
10	Gulgrim	Ishina	Killyon	Knyvey	Greylock	Melantha	Kilos	Irisa
11	Hahten	Jaielle	Komat	Lahsuun	Jeril	Micha	Kyras	Lilyana
12	Harkan	Jehdi	Orrid	Lomeloth	Mordecai	Millar	Messanth	Maurell
13	Krokin	Julial	Oryon	Lumaca	Mordimar	Norra	Mikos	Maurii
14	Minekal	Lomilli	Pand	Lysanth	Norrien	Postahn	Mironen	N ka
15	Oggur	Krystah	Rahn	Shandah	Northel	Rhianna	Nadon	Poh
16	Ororon	Sailah	Rupfern	Sharreth	Pennlan	Rhonwyn	Ormur	Shibaun
17	Oss	Shyrah	Seiryon	Sierra	Rostin	Roseleah	Sekess	Sinfaun
18	Tawan	Taradelle	Tallay	Taseth	Tramock	Sasha	Shiros	Tara
19	Uldaran	Yinora	Tavas	Valerie	Vandamar	Sibwen	Theelis	Thalis
20	Yaran	Yudina	Torkin	Wyndie	Wylin	Wenell	Tomphor	Thira

