

The Alchemist's Guild

The Vendel League, Book 1

Introduction

Founded in 1639, the Alchemist's Guild of the Vendel League remains as controversial today as it did when it was grudgingly accepted by the Chairs of the League. It was in fact only through intense politicking and the personal charisma of its founder, the enigmatic Teodorus von Hafen, that it even came into being. An eclectic scholar and writer, von Hafen is known to have published at least thirty-five treatises on subjects ranging from the alchemical properties of mercury to the effectiveness of ancient Avalon druidic healing salves. The exact circumstances of his death have also been a subject of some debate, while most accept that he died in a freak accident during an experiment, some have attributed the explosion to a jealous rival scholar.

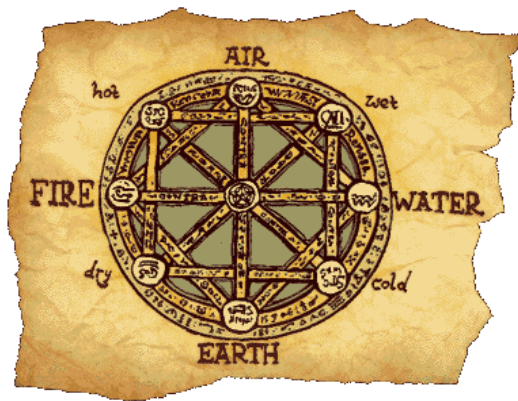
The study of alchemy has fascinated Théan scholars for centuries, ever since the craft was brought back from the Crescent Empire during the early Crusades.

The modern rational practice of chemistry, promoted strongly by the Invisible College among others, developed out of this knowledge. The name itself derives from the Crescent word *al-Kemia* and supposedly relates to a now extinct civilisation in which scholars first experimented with the nature of substances. Some have even speculated that this may be a currently unknown Synchron civilisation from the deep deserts. While the Crescent scholars themselves wrote extensive texts on all areas of natural philosophy and human anatomy, it was the minority area of transmutation of materials that so inspired western adepts and became synonymous with the term alchemy. The pinnacle of this was the ability to change a base metal into gold, which is regarded as the purest of all metals. Although many have made fortunes on such claims, no one has to date reliably demonstrated a means to do this and more than a few have paid for false claims with their lives.

Organisation and Goals

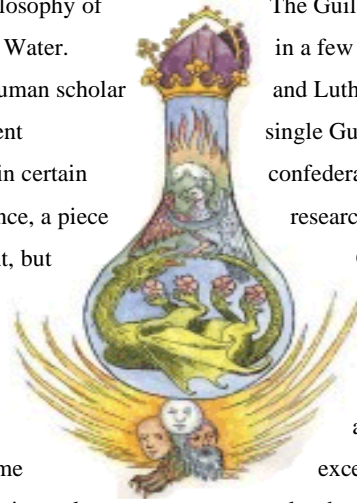
The Guild is a very loose affiliation of scholars and does not pretend to be as comprehensive in its membership as other Vendel organisations. While many scholars with an interest in alchemy have seen the advantages of joining the group, there exist small enclaves of experimenters throughout Théah who have never heard of the Guild or have little interest in joining. In total the full membership of the Guild numbers a little over two dozen scholars, mostly located in Vendel itself.

When Theodorus founded the Alchemists' Guild, the stated aims was furthering studies of esoteric knowledge he and his associates were conducting, and perhaps also to give more credence to a craft that was starting to lose its place to the new sciences of the College. A number of long-time associates gathered together in Kirk, and used their wealth to establish several well-equipped laboratories in the city, even to the extent of importing high-quality glass apparatus from Vodacce, much to the annoyance of certain merchants. Since that time, however, membership has fluctuated and very few younger scholars have entered the Guild. The usual practice of apprenticeship is starting to break down, with experienced scholars now having to employ paid assistants instead of relying on the work of junior members. In the past, an initiate could spend up to ten years working in one of the Guild facilities before seeking funding to establish his own laboratory and start his own research. A few new members still join each year, but some mutter that they are more looking for the quick Guilder than actually dedicated to the art of alchemy.



Theory of Alchemy

Théan alchemy is based on an ancient philosophy of four prime elements - Earth, Air, Fire and Water. These were originally suggested by the Numan scholar Basilides and later expanded on by Crescent alchemists. A substance was said to contain certain amounts of each prime element. For instance, a piece of wood was mainly Earth as it had weight, but if you burned it you could see the Fire it contained. Smoke was the Air escaping and you could also see Water had formed on the surface. The four prime elements were then further associated with four prime states - Hot, Cold, Dry and Wet. The eight in total reflected the classical number of Numan deities and the spheres that were said to hold the planets in place. Unbeknownst to Théan scientists until fairly recently, this theory of the elements had been developed centuries before in Cathay and was the foundation of that culture's faith and science. Specific substances were associated with each of the eight, for instance sulphur is the prime example of Hot as it was associated with volcanic activity and the alchemist's favourite element, mercury, is quite obviously the signature metal for the elemental Water. Early alchemists believed that each substance was defined by its specific properties, so by combining materials to give those properties you could create that substance. Thus, gold could be defined as being soft enough to bend, yellow in colour and would sink in water. If you combined the right combination of other substances with some of these properties you could make gold. Early experiments developed a higher level of sophistication as techniques to purify and extract new substances were developed. The distill became the crucial piece of equipment for any respected scholar, by which he could achieve the very essence of a substance through carefully controlled applications of temperature and water. By varying the amount of Hot, Cold, Dry and Wet in this way the alchemist transmuted the substance with the ultimate goal always being the creation of the universal solvent that could dissolve all other materials or the creation of gold from other base metals.



Locations

The Guild has small laboratories throughout Kirk and in a few other Théan cities, most notably Charouse and Luthon. Each is usually the personal property of a single Guild member, although a few belong to small confederations of alchemists who have combined research and resources. The headquarters of the Guild is a small set of rooms above the 'Shining Guilder', a fairly up-scale and well-respected tavern in central Kirk. The facilities are maintained by a small staff but are rarely used by the senior members, excepting the occasional conference. Most recently, the main room has been used for a number of meetings with members of the Usury Guild to secure additional financial support. The Guild pays a small peppercorn rent in gold nuggets to the owner of the tavern, per a very favourable agreement signed by Theodorus himself when the group was first established. Some members have suggested renting out the rooms to other small Guilds due to their favourable location near the major League offices. However, the senior members are unwilling to risk upsetting the current owner and jeopardise the standing agreements.

Patrons

While most rational scientists dismiss the alchemists as outdated crackpots, the allure of gold and immortality means that the Guild has enjoyed a history of strong patronage from rich nobles seeking to enhance their status and fortune. Some have been rendered destitute in the process, but the fact that the answer may come from the very next experiment keeps a steady stream of, some would say, gullible financiers. Many of these nobles were Montaigne gentry who regarded themselves as scientists and philosophers, but were sadly amateurs in the extreme. The revolution in that nation has seen this previously almost limitless source of funding dry up with astonishing speed. The Guild has yet to reveal to the League that instead of being one of the wealthier of the minor Guilds, it is now heavily in debt to a number of lenders including some of the Usury Guild's senior members.

Important Members

Jans Ulkopf ~ Guild Master

The current head of the Alchemist's Guild is a very eccentric Vendel born and raised in Kirk. The ageing scholar was once apprentice to Theodorus von Hafen and has continued much of that research, although he has yet to outstrip his mentor in sheer volume of writings. While a dogged researcher, Ulkopf has also impressed many with his organisational skills which is one of the reasons that the

Jans Ulkopf, Hero (7th Sea™)

Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Panache 2

Advantages: Alchemist, Connections: Numerous, Emergent Personality, Membership : Alchemist Guild, Patron (Numerous), Published, University, Language: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Theah (R/W)

Background: Debt

Reputation: 30

Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 3 Fashion 2, Oratory 4, Diplomacy 3, Gossip 3, Mooch 3, Politics 3, Scheming 3, Sincerity 3

Doctor: Diagnosis 3, First Aid 3, Examiner 1, Surgery 1, Quack 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw (Knife) 2

Merchant: Accounting 2, Alchemist 4, Hagglng 2

Performer: Acting 1, Cold Read 3, Dancing 2, Oratory 4, Singing 1

Professor: Law 2, Mooch 3, Natural Philosophy 4, Oratory 4, Politics 3, Research 4, Tinker 3, Writing 4

Scholar: History 1, Mathematics 3, Philosophy 1, Research 4, Law 2, Natural Philosophy 4

Jans Ulkopf, Guild Master (d20™)

Vendel Alchemist 5/Courtier 3 : CR 8; SZ M (humanoid); HD 5d6+3d6+8; hp 37; Init+1; Spd 30 ft; AC 11; Atks: Knife +3 melee (1d4), pistol +4 ranged (1d10); SA Craft Elixirs (cure minor wounds, feather fall, jump, purify food and drink, resistance, virtue, endure elements, goodberry, bull's strength), Brew Potion (4th level spells), Wealth, Talent, Style and Grace, Iron Will, Gossip; SV Fort+6, Ref+3, Will+11; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 13; AL LN; Skills: Alchemy+16, Bluff+6, Craft (potions and elixirs)+13, Concentration+10, Decipher Script+10, Diplomacy+8, Gather Information+7, Heal+10, Innuendo+4, Knowledge (bureaucracy)+11, Knowledge (chemicals)+10, Knowledge (natural philosophy)+10, Perform (oratory, writing)+3, Profession (Alchemist)+11, Search+5, Sense Motive+7, Speak Languages (Castillian, Montaigne, Vendel, Thean), Spot+4; Feats: Member (Alchemist's Guild), Emergent Personality, Skill Focus (Alchemy), Craftsman

Guild still functions to this day. However, in recent years the strain has begun to show and his public appearances have decreased. Those who have met with him comment in hushed tones that his behaviour seems to be getting even more erratic. Usually a calm and rational man one minute, he has begun to explode into a tirade of politics and opinions that most never thought they would hear.

The truth behind Jans' increasingly bizarre behaviour lies in his primary research. He has continued to experiment with mercury compounds, which Theodorus believed held the secret to the universal solvent which would in turn unlock the full potential of transmutation. A lifetime of exposure to such chemicals has had a profound effect on the old scholar, who in modern terms would be termed as suffering from multiple personality disorder. A number of close friends are becoming aware of the problem, but they are uncertain what to make of the mood swings, sudden changes in attitude, and

Jans Ulkopf, Villain (7th Sea™)

Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Panache 2

Advantages: Emergent Personality, Language: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vendel (R/W)

Reputation: 0

Ambrogia: Exploit Weakness (Ambrogia) 2, Feint (Fencing) 3, Pommel Strike (Fencing) 2, Riposte (Fencing) 3

Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 3 Fashion 2, Oratory 4, Diplomacy 2, Gossip 4, Mooch 2, Politics 2, Scheming 4, Sincerity 4 Dirty

Fighting: **Attack** (Dirty Fighting) 4, Eye-Gouge 4, Throat Strike 4

Doctor: Diagnosis 3, First Aid 2, Examiner 1, Surgery 1, Quack 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 4, Throw (Knife)

Performer: Acting 1, Dancing 1, Oratory 4, Singing 1, Cold Read 4

Jans Ulkopf, Evil Mastermind (d20™)

Vendel Assassin 8 : CR 8; SZ M (humanoid); HD 8d6+8; hp 37; Init+1; Spd 30 ft; AC 16; Atks: Knife +6/+1 melee (1d4), pistol +7/+2 ranged (1d10); SA Poison Use, Sneak Attack+4d8, Death Attack, Inconspicuous, Ambush Attack+2, Conceal the Evidence, Uncanny Dodge; SV Fort+3, Ref+6, Will+4; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 13; AL NE; Skills: Bluff+12, Diplomacy+7, Gather Information+10, Heal+8, Hide+9, Listen+7, Move Silently+9, Open Lock+6, Pick Pocket+6, Search+5, Sense Motive+8, Speak Languages (Vendel, Castillian, Montaigne, Thean), Spot+6, Use Rope+3; Feats: Assassin's Hand, Gifted Liar, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (Beginner), Improved Sneak Attack

even tone of voice. The pragmatic researcher they knew appears to be losing ground to a number of other emerging identities, one of which is the volatile and opinionated persona that has caused concern in social gatherings. Jans' friends would be even more worried if they were completely aware of how much of a problem this personality represents, since it is borderline megalomaniac and trying to use the research carried out by the rational persona to further its goals. One lab assistant inadvertently overheard Jans arguing with himself about a new form of explosive that he is developing. That researcher died a few days later when a distillation column somehow overheated and set fire to one of the smaller rooms in which he was working.

Matthew Ferryman ~ Golden Boy

One of the most celebrated of the Guild's researchers is the flamboyant Avalon scholar who appears to be the closer to the creation of gold than anyone has achieved thus far. While working with Jans Ulkopf on his research in solvents that can alter mercury, Matthew discovered a combination of mineral acids that could dissolve gold. He called his new solvent *agua regia*, or 'royal water', due to the high status that gold holds to the alchemists. While there did not seem to be any practical use for this new material at the time, his later research into the power of lightning to change metals led to an unusual discovery. He found that a metal strip running up a stone tower near his laboratory would attract lightning in a storm, which he could then channel into vats of the liquid formed by application of his *agua regia*. Through trial and error he found an arrangement whereby another metallic object placed in the vat took on a slightly golden appearance. He hoped that by changing the amounts of various substances he would be able to completely change the metal object to appear as gold and present the

Historical Note

The process that Matthew has accidentally discovered is electroplating. This was developed in our world by Brugnatelli in 1805, so the Theans have something of a lead in this field. However, as noted in the text, the scholars are unaware of the true importance of the discovery and it may be a long time until it has any other applications beyond this minor miracle. Matthew has also invented the first lightning rod as part of these experiments, but if his demonstration proves to be fraudulent, both important discoveries could be dismissed.

Matthew Ferryman, Hero (7th Sea™)

Brawn 2, Finesse 3, Wits 5, Resolve 3, Panache 3

Advantages: Alchemist, Brilliant, Connections: Hans Bjork and Felix du Martise, Membership : Alchemist Guild, Patron: Vincent Ulfson, Published, Spark of Genius (Alchemy), University, Language: Avalon (R/W), Vendel, Theah (R/W)

Reputation: 10

Courtier: Dancing 1, Diplomacy 1, Etiquette 1, Fashion 1, Gossip 1, Mooch 1, Oratory 2, Sincerity 1

Doctor: Diagnosis 3, First Aid 3, Examiner 3, Quack 2, Surgery 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw (Knife) 2

Merchant: Accounting 1, Alchemist 4, Hagglng 1

Professor: Law 2, Mooch 1, Natural Philosophy 5, Oratory 2, Research 4, Tinker 4, Writing 3

Scholar: History 1, Law 2, Mathematics 3, Natural Philosophy 5, Philosophy 1, Research 4,

Matthew Ferryman, Golden Boy (d20™)

Avalon Alchemist 7 : CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 7d6+7; hp 35; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 12; Atks: Knife +4 melee (1d4+1), pistol +5 ranged (1d10); SA Craft Elixirs (cure minor wounds, enlarge, feather fall, purify food and drink, resistance, virtue, bull's strength, darkvision, endure elements, goodberry, obscuring mist, delay poison), Brew Potion (4th level), Modify Metal; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 12; AL LG ; Skills: Alchemy +16, Bluff +4, Craft (potions and elixirs) +14, Concentration +9, Decipher Script +6, Diplomacy +2, Gather Information +2, Heal +12, Knowledge (chemicals) +14, Knowledge (natural philosophy) +18, Perform (oratory, writing) +3, Profession (Alchemist) +8, Speak Languages (Avalon, Vendel, Thean), Spot +3 ; Feats: Member (Alchemist's Guild), Skill Focus (Alchemy), Spark of Genius (Knowledge : Natural Philosophy)

result to the rest of the Guild, thereby providing a solution to their financial worries in one act.

The biggest problem for Matthew so far has been the unpredictability of storms. Even though the Norvik Isles are known for their harsh weather, there are often long periods between thunderstorms and he is worried that other researchers will work out his methods and beat him to the prize. Being based in Kirk, a solution that has occurred to Matthew is to acquire the services of a Laerdom mage who could summon lightning on demand. A number of such mages have been responsible for attacks on League shipping near Kirk in the last few months and Matthew has been trying to work out the best way to approach the Vestenmannavnjar raiders to present his idea.

Dmitri Kuloi Malenkov, Scoundrel (7th Sea™)**Brawn** 3, **Finesse** 2, **Wits** 3, **Resolve** 4, **Panache** 2**Advantages:** Able Drinker, Alchemist, Membership : Alchemist Guild, Patron (Several), Tough, Language: Ussuran (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Theah (R/W)**Reputation:** 20**Doctor:** Diagnosis 3, Examiner 1, First Aid 3**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 3, Throw (Knife) 3**Merchant:** Alchemist 3**Professor:** Mooch 1, Natural Philosophy 3, Oratory 3, Research 3, Tinker 2, Writing 2**Scholar:** History 1, Mathematics 2, Natural Philosophy 3, Philosophy 2, Research 3,**Dmitri Kuloi Malenkov**, Unorthodox Naturalist (d20™)**Ussuran Alchemist 4/Fighter 1** : CR 5; SZ M (humanoid); HD 4d6+1d10+20; hp 42; Init+0; Spd 30 ft; AC 10; Atks: Knife +5 melee (1d4+2), pistol +3 ranged (1d10); SA Craft Elixirs (cure minor wounds, enlarge, jump, purify food and drink, resistance, virtue, endure elements, bull's strength), Brew Potions; SV Fort+12, Ref+1, Will+4; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 12; AL NG; Skills: Alchemy+3, Craft (potions and elixirs)+8, Concentration+12, Heal+8, Knowledge (chemicals)+11, Knowledge (natural philosophy)+11, Profession (Alchemist)+10, Speak Languages (Ussuran, Vendel, Thean), Spot+5; Feats: Member (Alchemist's Guild), Able Drinker, Great Fortitude**Dmitri Kuloi Malenkov ~ Unorthodox Naturalist**

The elderly experimenter is one of the most prominent members of the Guild to express public disinterest in the transmutation field. Instead, the natural philosopher from the forests of central Ussura is devoted to testing and cataloguing all known substances. However, his idea of testing involves eating a small amount of every chemical as part of a series of experiments. One of his notebooks contains detailed notes of his impressions of the taste of substances from throughout Théah, alongside a comprehensive study of specific densities, their reactivity, as well as other more traditional observations.

Over the last few years a number of substances he has sampled have caused serious problems, often requiring periods of convalescence or in the most extreme cases urgent medical attention. The local doctors tolerate this only because they are Vendel and he pays well for them to treat

him. However, two months ago Dmitri received a shipment of exotic herbs from the town of Breslau which were reported to have been smuggled out of Cathay. Having paid a hefty sum for such a rare treasure, Dmitri halted all other research to catalogue these latest additions. He does not remember much after this point. In fact, he remembers nothing of the two weeks following his initial experiments, only that his notebook states that he had started to test the first of the plants. There are a few entries after this point in Dmitri's own handwriting, but they do not appear to make that much sense. Since that time, he has had a few other occurrences during which cannot remember what he did for the last few hours. The bouts of amnesia seem to be fading now, but small clues of what happened during some of these periods continue to emerge and each raises more questions than they answer.

Story Hooks

1. The evil personality of Jan Upkopf does not believe that his research is proceeding as fast as it could, so he has decided to give himself a little extra incentive. He wants to hire a small group of mercenaries to threaten himself into speeding up his work. The players could either be hired anonymously to put the pressure on the elderly scientist, or the scholar personality could hire them in order to protect him from these threats while completely unaware that he is in fact asking them to protect him from himself.
2. The near success of Matthew Ferryman has come to the attention of League member Peter Vel, otherwise known as the Living Rune of Velstand. The greed-obsessed Vel has arranged for a Laerdom mage to assist in the research and as soon as it is successful a group of mercenaries will attack and steal the work. The blame will easily be placed on Vestenmannavnjar raiders, especially with the dead body of a Laerdom mage as proof. This will only heighten tensions between the groups, while Vel's presence continues to corrupt the League from the inside. (For more information on Peter Vel, see the *Vendel-Vesten*™ sourcebook)

Owes and Responsibilities

All full members of the Guild are expected to pay an annual retainer of 50 Guilders. Some younger members have argued that the more established Alchemists have always had greater prestige and therefore earning potential so they should pay more, but understandably the senior members fail to see the logic of this argument.

Each member is also expected to send a bound copy of their findings for that year to the main branch in Kirk, where the information is placed in the Guild library.

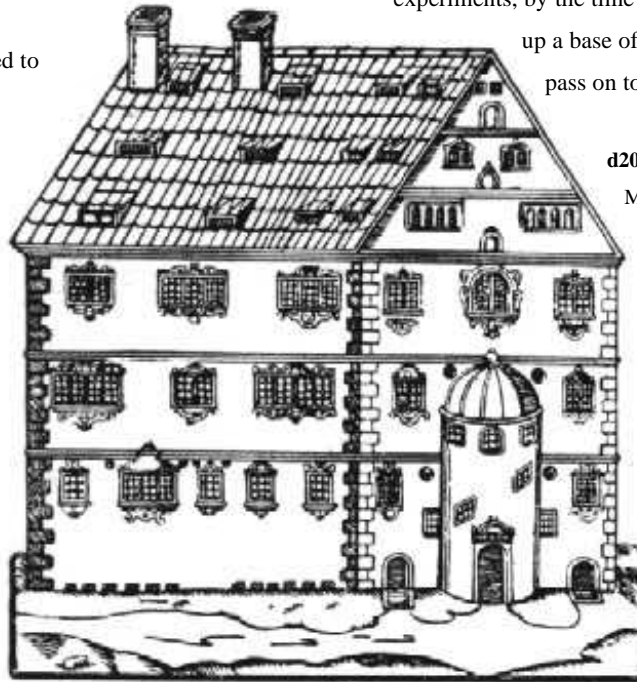
However, it is generally known that most members only share partial results, usually information that is not too important or likely to lead to profit. Influential patrons also have been known to receive an annual copy of findings from the members they sponsor, which means that new ideas may be mentioned in casual conversation for a few weeks. Even if the noble has no idea what he is talking about, such discussions can lead to a variety of outcomes, some of which could lead to more funding and some of which could lead to dead bodies in dark alleys.

Social Benefit

Although the Guild is looked down upon by most of the rest of the League it remains popular amongst many wealthy Vendel, as well as the undercurrent of esoteric thinkers throughout Théah.

d20™ Mechanics

Members who are known to be Alchemists receive a +2 circumstance bonus to Charisma and Wisdom based checks when in one of the courts of Théah (excluding Castille) or among other esoteric scholars.



7th Sea™ Mechanics

Members who are known to be Alchemists receive a free raise on Socialise skill checks while in one of the courts of Théah (excluding Castille) or among other esoteric scholars.

Training Benefit

Since apprentices in the Guild are usually given the mundane tasks of crafting apparatus and carrying out simple experiments, by the time they graduate they have built up a base of practical skills that they then pass on to their apprentices.

d20™ Mechanics

Members receive their Wisdom modifier in extra skill points when they gain a level in the Alchemist class which can only be spent on Craft or Knowledge based skills that relate to their profession.

7th Sea™ Mechanics

Advanced knacks in the Servant and Scholar skills cost 1 point less to purchase at character creation.

New Rules

Emergent Personality

(d20 Feat / d10 1-point Advantage)

Perhaps through exposure to mercury or other dangerous chemicals, or from birth for some other reason, the person has demonstrated a strange mental condition that they appear to be more than one person in the same body.

Mechanics : Create another player character at the same level of experience and with the same base attributes as the main character. Assign a number between 1 and 10 to this character sheet. At the start of every session roll 1d10 and if the number of the character is chosen, replace the normal character with the alternate character until the end of that session. This feat can be taken after character creation and may also be chosen up to five times, each time assigning a different number to the new persona.

Mercury Poisoning

The metal known as ‘quicksilver’ has always held a fascination for alchemists, especially when red mercuric compounds can be turned into the silver liquid as if by magic. However, there is growing evidence among scholars that prolonged exposure has a serious effect on the mental state of the experimenter.

d20™ Mechanics

Mercury acts as a poison with a Contact DC of 25. Those that fail the roll suffer a permanent 1 point loss to Wisdom. At the end of each hour still in its presence, may a new roll subtracting 2 from the DC for every success to date.

7th Sea Mechanics

-1k0 to all Wits checks / 1 hour / 1 month

About this Series

The Alchemists’ Guild is the first in a series of eBooks exploring the Vendel League and its many Guilds. Using the Social and Training benefit structure from the Legend of the Five Rings roleplaying game, each will detail the operations and advantages of professionals joining one of these diverse groups.

Credits

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Mark Stanton Woodward

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John Wick, Jennifer Wick and Kevin Wilson

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