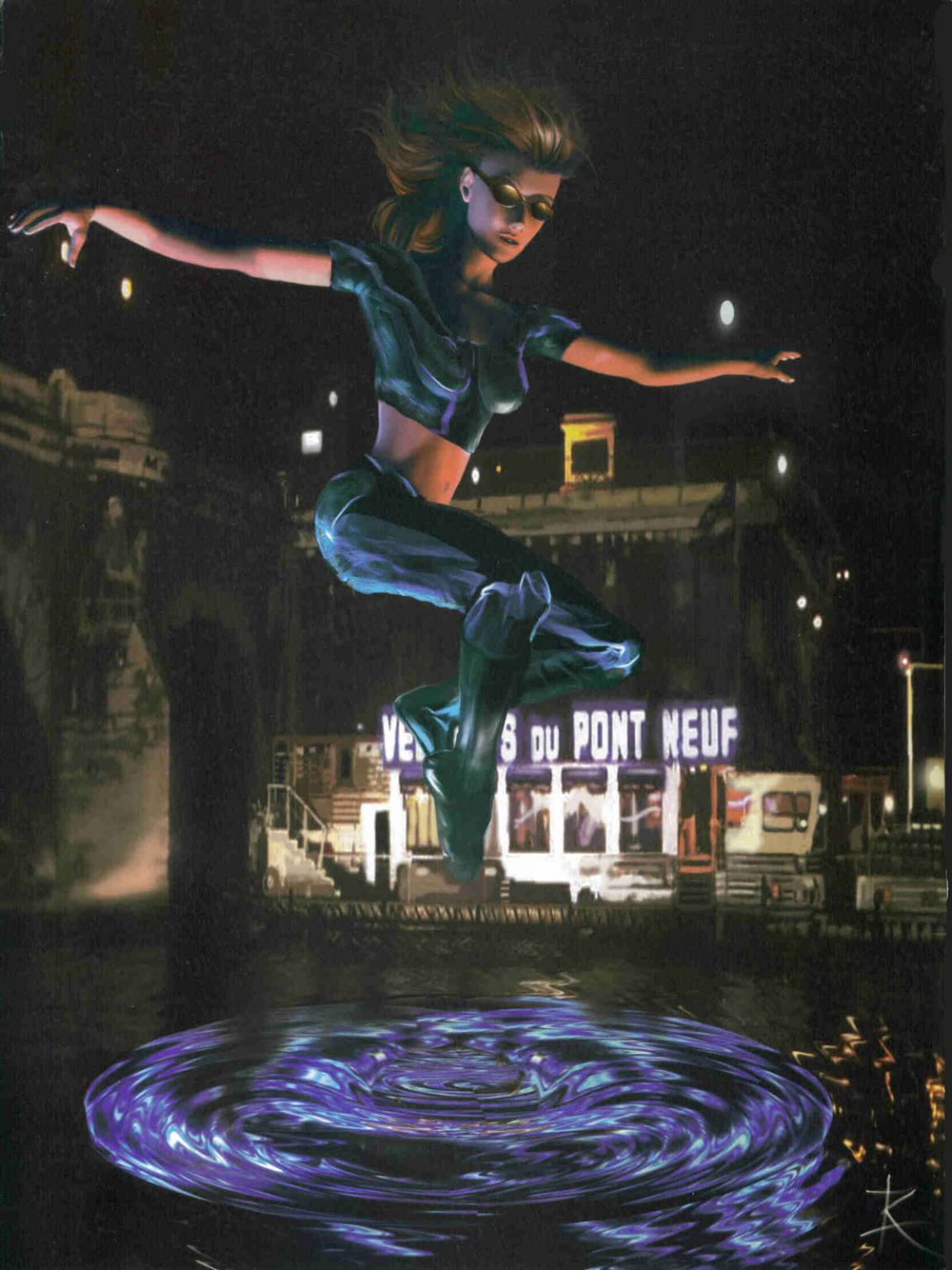




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Precedence Publishing

P.O. Box 28397 • Tempe, AZ 85285 • USA

What is immortal?

Immortal is a role-playing game. It is an interactive story in which you become a key figure both as a player in the game and as a character in the story. The story of Immortal concerns the end of the modern world and the return to dominance of immortal beings that existed before human civilization. Like a character in an exciting novel or film, you will experience adventure, romance, power, and hard choices that test your courage and compassion.

The myths humanity holds dear will crumble when ancient gods rise from their secret places to fight a final war with the forces of darkness. A new age of legend is dawning. Whether this new age will be terrible or breathtaking depends to a large extent on how you and the other players handle the challenges that will face you.

The world of immortal

Immortal is a free-style narrative game. Like any game, it has rules to define what the players can do and to guide the referee (called a narrator) in resolving disputes.

History

Sixty-five million years ago, the Sanguinary crashed into our world and shattered like glass into millions of shards which rained around the globe. She had been cast out of another universe, a dimension higher than our own, composed entirely of thought. Gigantic and unbearably beautiful, she plunged out of control through our universe until Earth blocked her path.

The Sanguinary did not die when she shattered. An immortal being, even her scattered parts had a life of their own and a fragment of her alien intellect. Slowly they invaded the living biosphere of the Earth like parasites, seeking hosts among the animals that then dominated the world—the dinosaurs. Each shard had the same purpose, to reunite with others and thereby bring the Sanguinary back into a single, terrible body. The shards made everything they invaded immortal, to protect the host while the shard sought to physically locate and merge with others of its kind.

The first race, reborn from the perishing dinosaurs, became even more sleek and deadly as the shards rewrote their DNA and transformed them. Men would call them dragons, but when the intellect of these creatures grew to sentience, they called themselves the Abzulim.

The Abzulim grew in power. They discovered how to use the power of the shards inside themselves. Men called this power "magic." The Abzulim used this magic, and similar resources, to power their technology. They spread forth from Earth and conquered galaxies beyond. They built slave races, also immortal, to manage their expanding dominions. To control their servants, the Abzulim created psionic weaknesses that could be manipulated through intricate body language. The Abzulim learned to trigger any response in their slaves with mere gestures, expressions, and shapeshifting manifestations. These weaknesses have evolved through time, and in their modern form they are known as emotions.

As the Abzulim grew in power, they also began rebelling internally against the shards that possessed them. They became fiercely individualistic and unable to work together. Despite the mental conditioning, their slave races revolted. Eventually, in spite of all their power, the reign of the Abzulim was brought crashing down by countless far-flung rebellions. Abzulim who survived the holocaust hid themselves in distant fortresses and plotted their return to power.

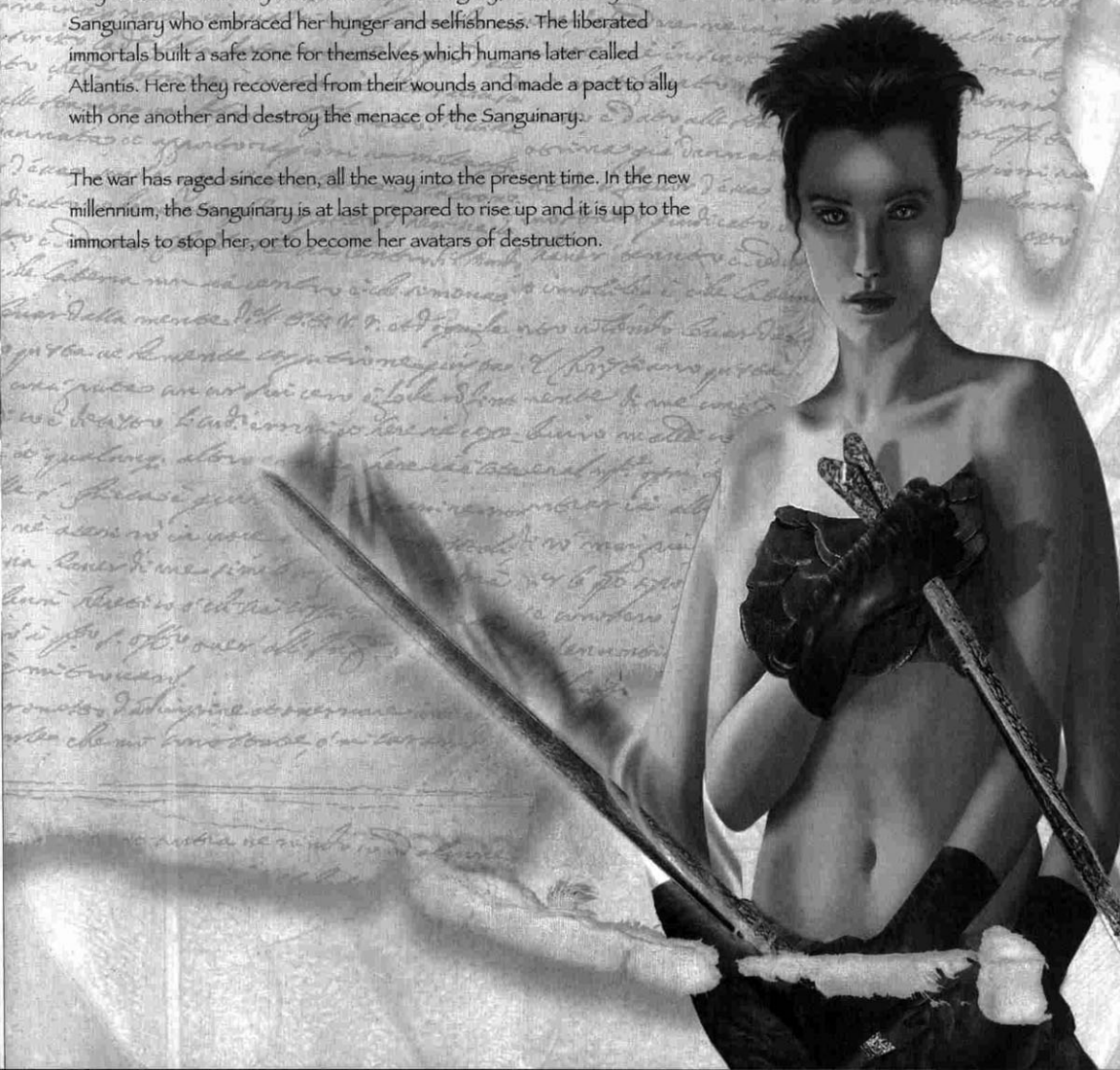
The young immortals, free of Abzulim oppression, divided the empires of their fallen masters. Yet they, too, became intolerant of one another and soon went to war. The rediscovery of humanity only exacerbated this conflict as the immortals competed with one another for the worship of humanity. Worship became an insidious drug, and the immortals were addicted.

Their conflicts led to a terrible war, the Shouting War. During this time, when immortals used their powerful voices to rip apart reality, they fell prey to a new slave race of the Abzulim, an elemental race of shadows called the Shadowen. Serving their Abzulim masters, the Shadowen confined the other immortals in a barren, dimensional prison.

The Sanguinary, during all of this time, had not been idle. She almost succeeded in her quest to rejoin the fragments of her body, but was thwarted when the master shard she was building was found by the young immortals and smashed. On the verge of perishing for good, she instead found refuge in the collective unconscious of a newly emerging humanity, transferring her psionic essence into the young race. At the moment she possessed the human race, the dream realm came into being, a lair in which the Sanguinary hid and planned her eventual resurrection.

The immortals eventually freed themselves from their awful prison. Their guards, the Shadowen, were powerless to prevent the escape because they faced a new enemy in the form of the Progeny, immortals loyal to the Sanguinary who embraced her hunger and selfishness. The liberated immortals built a safe zone for themselves which humans later called Atlantis. Here they recovered from their wounds and made a pact to ally with one another and destroy the menace of the Sanguinary.

The war has raged since then, all the way into the present time. In the new millennium, the Sanguinary is at last prepared to rise up and it is up to the immortals to stop her, or to become her avatars of destruction.



What is immortal? (Continued)

Immortals

Immortals are created when an animal is invaded by a gemlike shard of the Sanguinary's shattered body. The shard always enters a wound, liquefying on contact with blood. Inside, it lodges in the throat, becoming a reed-like organ very similar to a vocal chord, called a "vox." This new organ interfaces with the brain and the nervous system in order to process all sensory data from the host.

The Abzulim discovered the reason why the shard metamorphoses into the vox: communication. Once a shard invades a host and becomes a vox, it can communicate with others of its kind to coordinate the effort of reunification. Sometimes this communication between voxes can cause an immortal disorientation and stress.

Most of the immortals that exist were created intentionally by the Abzulim, who forcefully injected shards into them. Later, when humans evolved, immortals were affected, against their will, by human spiritual faith. Their bodies took on human appearance to suit the expectations of their worshippers. Still, immortals maintain the ability to revert to their more primitive *himsati* ("the form that kills") at will, calling upon natural powers such as fangs, claws and wings.

Over time, the immortals learned to make the vox work for them. Because the presence of the vox telepathically opened their senses to the true nature of the universe, they used the vox to imitate the celestial din. This is the origin of the serenade, the ability to change reality with a whisper, a muttered word, or a song. The discovery of this ability nearly destroyed the immortals, as serenades became the ultimate weapon.

Immortals are superior to humans in almost every way. They are stronger, quicker, and more resilient. Their intellect and perception are exceptional. Their spirits burn brighter and give them supernatural powers.

Although they can disincorporate from their physical form when their vox is separated from their body, it is impossible to permanently kill immortals. Once disincorporated, they wander the world in spiritual form until they can regain a foothold in the world of the living.

The Face of the Enemy

The Sanguinary is the ultimate enemy. Immortals give her the male and female gender, depending on what aspect the creature outwardly displays, but make no mistake—the Sanguinary is alien, unknowable, and without remorse or compassion. Its goal is the reunification of all its scattered parts, which means the voxes in all living immortals and the shards that lay dormant, waiting to enter a living host. This reunification will also absorb the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of the immortal host, destroying him or her utterly. For the immortals, the Sanguinary represents genocide.

Many creatures, caught in the web of obsession the Sanguinary generates in living things, serve and worship her as their mother. Called the Progeny, they battle the immortals and tempt humans with visions of power, money, sexual gratification, and all the other "deadly sins." The Progeny are defectors that have embraced the freedom of indulgence granted by the Sanguinary and forsaken the immortal creed of self-sacrifice for the good of all life.

It is suspected by the immortals that the Abzulim, defeated long ago, still exist and are moving into the world with the aid of servants and allies. Their purpose is the reconquest of all they once ruled, including the slaves who revolted against them. It is not known if the Abzulim are still under the control of the Sanguinary, but they are certainly opposed to the immortal courts in any case.

Humans

Humans are something of a paradox to immortals. On one hand, humanity is a deadly race; any human could have the mind of the Sanguinary lying dormant in the subconscious. On the other hand, most humans are innocent pawns or completely harmless. Immortals realize that humanity may be instrumental in their victory over the Sanguinary. A human's faith, if his spirit is strong enough, can damage or even cripple an immortal. Yet these are precisely the humans immortals would like to bring into the fold. The tricky part is enlightening mankind to the beast that sleeps inside the world of its dreams.

Immortal Characters

There are six steps to creating an Immortal character.

1. Choose auras (ability scores)
2. Choose skills
3. Choose Himsati (true form)
4. Choose a court
5. Choose a calling
6. Choose avatars

Auras

The inherent abilities of all living creatures are represented by three auras: Body, Mind, and Spirit.

BODY measures a character's physical strength, reflexes and resistance to damage.

MIND measures a character's initiative, perception, and willpower.

SPIRIT measures a character's charismatic presence and his control over and resistance to the supernatural.

never dream

1. Choose Auras

Beginning characters in Immortal start with three dice: two d10s and one d12. Plug these into your three auras in any order you wish. As you play, you will have opportunities to improve your auras.

Skills

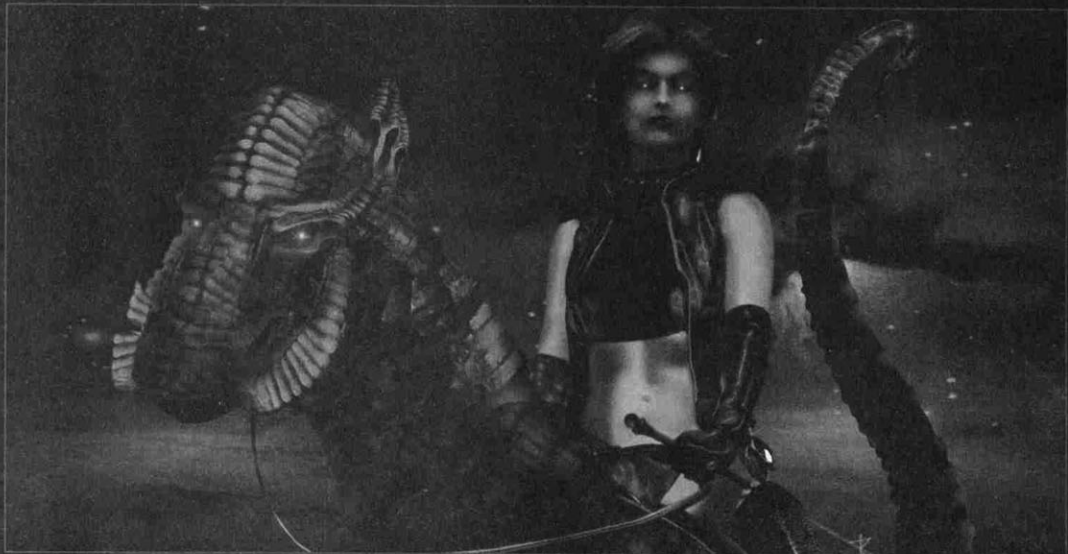
As it is with humans, immortals also have skills to ply in their daily dramas. Immortal breaks skills down into three categories, each corresponding to one of the auras.

BODY skills include martial arts and other combat skills that rely on strength and agility, such as kendo or athletics.

MIND skills include sciences, academics of all kinds, most performance skills, martial skills that call for aim (such as firearms or bows), and mental powers such as telepathy and telekinesis.

SPIRIT skills are all skills that humans would consider supernatural in nature, plus skills based on seduction and intimidation. Serenades, the main arsenal of the immortal, are spiritually based.

Players will use skills in most tasks they attempt to perform in the game, from climbing a cliff to reprogramming a computer to reading the mind of another character.



2. Choose Skills

The starting skills for beginning characters are based on what the player can do in real life, though the skill levels will be low compared to what an immortal can accomplish. For this adventure, you do not need to generate every skill each player should have. Instead, if a player wants to utilize a skill that he currently has, use the following guide for what die he rolls:

- D10 – The player has a college degree in the subject. For weapons, it must have been his specialization in the military.
- D12 – The player is very knowledgeable about the subject. For weapons, it is the equivalent of basic military training, or a black belt in a martial art.
- D20 – Everything else. Characters can get a -1 modifier to their roll if they have some experience with the skill.

List a few obvious skills now, and fill in the rest as situations arise during the game. Remember that your narrator has the final say on how your skills translate to your character. No skill should start with anything smaller than a d10.

Himsati and Natures

Each immortal began its existence as an animal, a plant, or even an element such as water or fire. As it evolved into a human form, this primitive true form (himsati, or “form that injures”) became recessive. The dangerous attributes of their primitive forms, such as claws, fangs, thorns, or fiery corona, remained locked inside their human forms.

An immortal can take on attributes of the primeval himsati form in stages or can completely revert to the form at will. While this often is an advantage in combat, it also exposes the immortal to the danger of possession by the vox. Immortals know that a shard can control the base animal intellect of a creature until the creature develops self-determination.

3. Choose Himsati (true form)

In this introduction to Immortal, the himsati is used only for role-playing purposes, to help define a character's personality. The full rules detail the powers each immortal gains from assuming true form. The player



should choose a form that fits the personality he or she wants to play. For example, a logical and unemotional character may have the himsati of an insect, while someone who loves the wind and rain may have the himsati of a bird or plant. During play, the narrator should encourage the players to exhibit signs of their true form and perhaps even use some special effects that fit their chosen form. In fact, the narrator might describe partial shifting of the characters, revealing this aspect of the character's nature as if by instinct.

*“help us to cover their smiling fields with
the pale forms of their patriot dead”*

Courts

Immortal society is divided into Courts, and each immortal belongs to a court. While the divisions are somewhat political, they are also deeply connected to aspects of reality. Immortals choose their Courts based on their strongest connections to reality. The dominant Courts are War, Death, Life, Making, Secrets, Dreams, Desire, and Fate.

The Court of Death holds influence over spirits and the wandering dead, and is concerned with saving human souls from being consumed by the Sanguinary or her minions.

The Court of War holds influence in conflicts the world over and is concerned with opposing the Sanguinary's plan to unify all humanity into a single, consolidated army that she can command against the immortals.

The Court of Life holds influence over nature and living things. Its purpose is simple; to preserve life and to destroy threats to life, especially weapons of mass destruction.

The Court of Making is technologically based, holding sway in all manufacturing and high-tech spheres. Its purpose is to advance humanity beyond its biological weaknesses and thus eradicate potential vessels for the Sanguinary to inhabit. This court also strives to unlock the ancient mysteries of Abzulim technology.

The Court of Secrets observes all things ever written, filmed, or preserved in any medium. Its members amass this information, searching for clues to the Sanguinary's weaknesses—including the ultimate prize, her true name. Possessing that may give immortals power over the Sanguinary.

The Court of Desire walks perilously close to the Sanguinary's sphere of power by exposing its members to all sensations, pleasure and pain, in order to make them immune to the lure of the Sanguinary's temptations. The other Courts trust the contention that most

instead open the way to manipulation and downfall.

Even so, they still fear that this dangerous experiment could thrust the Court of Desire into the Sanguinary's grasp. If risks can be minimized, this Court's knowledge could prove a valuable weapon against the Sanguinary and its minions.

The Court of Dreams also walks a dangerous path, entering into the dream state of human beings and turning them away from the lure of the Sanguinary. Dreamers also establish dream fortresses from which they launch direct assaults against their enemy in her own lair.

The Court of Fate is concerned with the future. Members do not seek to know the future as much as to influence it through their own force of will. This Court, surreal and unapproachable, makes prophesies and then does all it can to make them come true, hoping eventually to create a future in which the Sanguinary is ultimately defeated.

All Courts are dedicated to the destruction of the Sanguinary's influences, if not the Sanguinary herself. This overriding purpose is known as the Cause.

4. Choose a Court

For this adventure, a character's selection of Court will only be used for role-playing purposes. The full Immortal rules detail the powers gained from joining a specific court. Furthermore, characters do not normally begin the game as a member of a court, because they are just beginning to remember their pasts. However, by letting the narrator know which court appeals to your character, he or she can do a better job of fine-tuning the adventure to suit your preferences.

Callings

Probably the most important aspect of an immortal character is his or her Calling. Real people gravitate toward certain careers because they have an interest, an aptitude, or both, in the job. In the same way, immortals gravitate toward one of the Callings. These are more than simple careers. Think of them as guilds, all sharing similar skills but training to apply those skills in very different ways. A Calling is a simple brotherhood with no goals other than perfecting the skills of its members.

There are twelve Callings in Immortal, corresponding to the twelve signs of the Babylonian zodiac. While humans have incorporated these into their own culture as birth signs, they are an immortal invention that predates much of human civilization.

The twelve Callings are further divided into four categories.

THE BUILDERS

The Callings that fall under the Builders category are dedicated to building up all aspects of immortal society. This includes extending physical boundaries, gathering wealth, and building new structures and strongholds. It also includes efforts to improve as a species, which is very important to immortal beings.



Tacticians (Leo)

Tacticians are focused on bettering the immortal species. They decide what actions should be taken by the Courts and assign people to those tasks. Immortals are assigned to tasks not only for their ability to succeed, but also for their capacity to learn from working on the task. Those who are weak must be challenged and strengthened through adversity. If they cannot be improved, they must either be destroyed or placed in situations that offer minimum danger to immortal society. In such cases, Tacticians make recommendations after testing individuals, and the Scourge makes the final determination as to the subject's fate.

Explorers (Aries)

The Explorers wander the unknown fringes of mortal and immortal society, pioneering new trails and recovering lost artifacts or other knowledge that can be useful in the war against the Sanguinary. They travel constantly between worlds in pursuit of the undiscovered or the forgotten. Explorers exist outside most social laws. They have their own code which works for them in the wilderness they must wander. Honor is everything to an Explorer.

Merchants (Taurus)

Merchants are creators and deal-makers, and the immortals' main connection to the world of humans. Money and comfort are important to this Calling. Its creations (anything from a tool, to a temple, to an empire) are based on practicality and a return on investment. In the Merchants' view, immortals can only survive in the materialistic world of mankind by amassing their own fortunes and economic power. In fact, it was probably this Calling that helped create the materialism of human culture to gain control over it. A Merchant can, given a little time, come up with most anything a person could possibly want or need, for a price. There is always a price.

THE INTELLECTUALS

The Intellectuals are dedicated to all things dealing with knowledge. They study the actions and weaknesses of their enemies, make plans for the future of the immortals, and are responsible for the teaching, guidance, and education of both mortal and immortal societies.

Profilers (Virgo)

Profilers are driven by the need to solve mysteries. Whenever a mystery confronts immortal society, it is a Profiler who is sent to investigate. They are only interested in facts, not supposition, and are ruled by deduction, not intuition. Often their enhanced abilities allow them to spot clues even rigorous search has left uncovered. If not for the work of Profilers, the Sanguinary would be more deeply entrenched within immortal society. Facts are everything to Profilers.

Emissaries (Libra)

Emissaries are ambassadors. They negotiate, grant concessions, and gain power, prestige and

resources for their allies through treaties. An Emissary is a walking storehouse of treaties and alliances, the cup-bearer of peace and the messenger who delivers decrees of war. A Court will stand still and silent when an Emissary enters the room, for he carries the words of powerful allies and rivals alike. Truth is everything to an Emissary. If an Emissary cannot tell the truth, he will not speak.

Mentors (Aquarius)

Probably the most human of the callings, Mentors are dedicated to teaching others. They focus on finding young immortals who are just learning of their true natures and bringing them into the fold of immortal society. Patience is everything to a Mentor.

THE MANIPULATORS

The Manipulators are a group that would not have much purpose in mortal society. However, they are necessary for the survival of the immortals. The Manipulators are responsible for divining and, to whatever extent is possible, channeling the future actions of the Sanguinary and its minions, as well as keeping the Sanguinary from learning their plans. On a more practical level, they are also responsible for keeping mortals unaware of the immortal society that exists around them.



Chameleons (Gemini)

Chameleons are natural spies, shape-shifting masters of disguise and guile. They can mimic others and get close to any target, either to gather information, plant misinformation, or gain trust. Before joining this Calling, a chameleon must first search for a compatible partner.

A complex and mystical ritual then transforms the two into twins, identical in every way. Not only are they perfect physical and mental copies who can function as each other, but they are probably the only beings each will ever be truly close to, for the Chameleon's reputation as a deceiver and betrayer leaves few opportunities for making friends. Guile is everything to a Chameleon.

Empaths (Capricorn)

Empaths are master manipulators, plotting, scheming, and weaving webs of confusion or deceit against their enemies. Theirs is among the most mysterious and most feared of Callings, because no one ever knows truly where he stands with an empath. They often use their abilities to confound human authorities and conceal the existence of immortals or to orchestrate the downfall of another immortal. They will not hesitate to use what they learn about their opponents against them. Cleverness is everything to an Empath.

Visionaries (Pisces)

Visionaries are mysterious and surreal. They live in the world of dreams, entering into the collective human subconscious where the Sanguinary plots her resurrection and the destruction of the immortals. It is here, in her lair, that they create dream fortresses, the advanced bases of their counter-attack. From these fortresses they launch preemptive strikes against the Sanguinary, hoping to disrupt her schemes and prevent her rebirth. Visionaries often speak in riddles and metaphors because their minds are so steeped in the constantly shifting landscape of the dream world. An open and receptive mind is everything to a Visionary.

THE SOLDIERS

Soldiers are the troops of the immortals. They engage in offensive and defensive battles, ranging from small commando raids to large-scale actions. Some specialize in group tactics while others are loners. They are equally capable of functioning as a bludgeon or a scalpel. All military commanders come from the ranks of the Soldiers, though they rely heavily on information and advice from other Callings.

LAST
WAR

Guardians (Cancer)

Guardians protect objects of value, whether people, places, or things. They are also called Keepers. Guardians are sleepless and alert. They are superb bodyguards and close-in fighters. Guardians are often dispatched into the mortal world to safeguard a human who has been foreseen to be of great value to the immortals. Vigilance is everything to a Guardian.

Slayers (Sagittarius)

The warriors of the perpetual society are known as Slayers. Whether they are gladiators, assassins, or bounty hunters, their methods are direct and often lethal. Slayers are dispatched against enemies of the immortals, whether those are humans who have learned too much and cannot be reasoned with, or minions of the Sanguinary herself. Slayers are superb and patient stalkers. Duty, though often unpleasant, is everything to a Slayer.

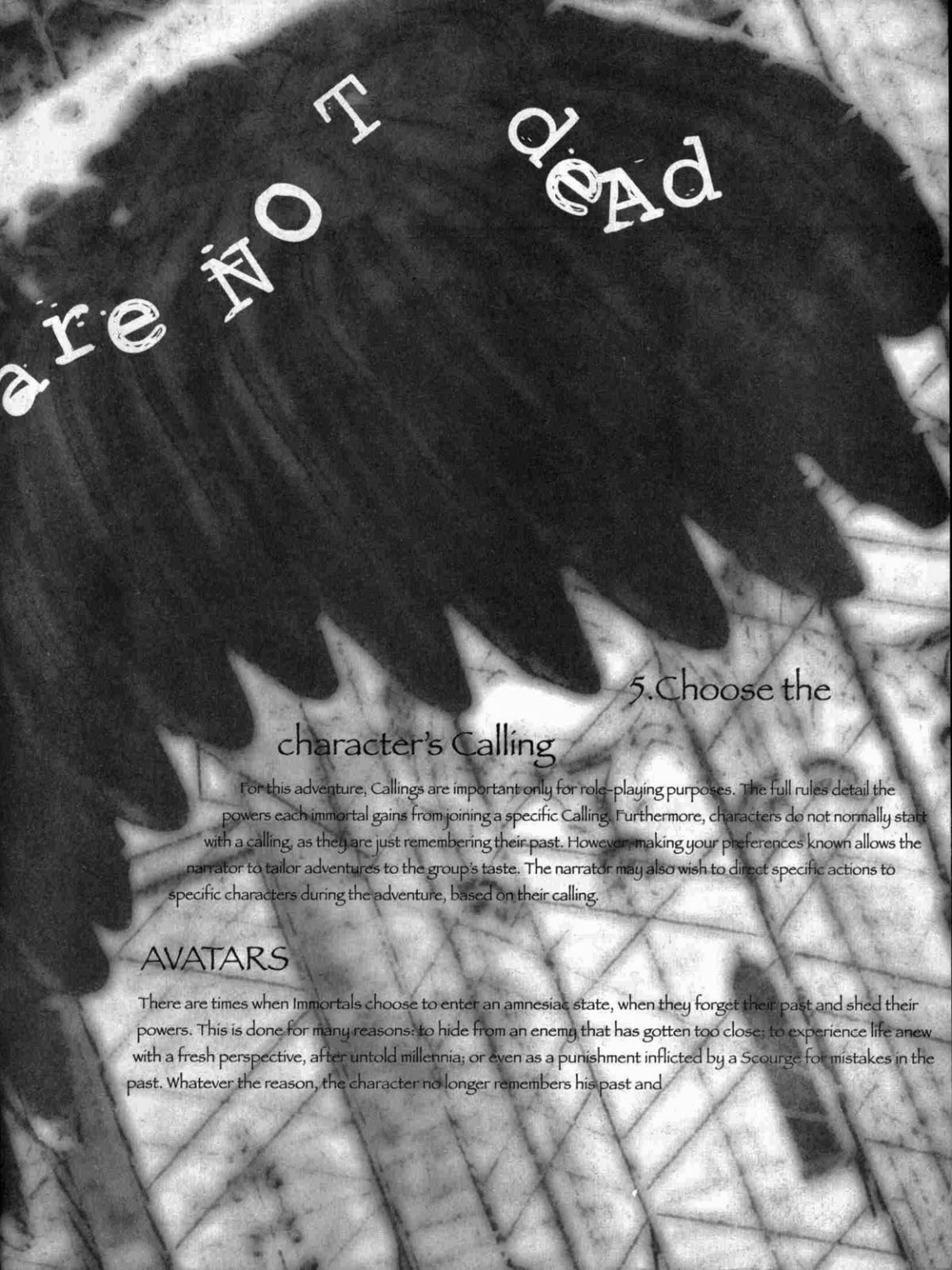
Scourges (Scorpio)

Scourges attract the most perceptive immortals. Little is

hidden from them. Scourges are truth-seers, able to detect lies. Their reputation for being dispassionate and incorruptible is legendary, and their alien, emotionless quality makes them both respected and feared throughout immortal society.

A visit from a Scourge always means an investigation and usually means someone will take a fall. They are used by the Courts to root out insurrection and treason in the ranks, and to pass judgement and carry out sentences on the guilty. Justice is everything to a Scourge.

THE gods



are NOT dead

5. Choose the character's Calling

For this adventure, Callings are important only for role-playing purposes. The full rules detail the powers each immortal gains from joining a specific Calling. Furthermore, characters do not normally start with a calling, as they are just remembering their past. However, making your preferences known allows the narrator to tailor adventures to the group's taste. The narrator may also wish to direct specific actions to specific characters during the adventure, based on their calling.

AVATARS

There are times when Immortals choose to enter an amnesiac state, when they forget their past and shed their powers. This is done for many reasons: to hide from an enemy that has gotten too close; to experience life anew with a fresh perspective, after untold millennia; or even as a punishment inflicted by a Scourge for mistakes in the past. Whatever the reason, the character no longer remembers his past and

Immortal Characters (Continued)

develops a whole new personality. But the memories and skills are still present in the subconscious and slowly they begin to re-emerge in dreams and visions. The ancient Immortal is not lost, it still exists as a separate personality, or Avatar, deep inside the character's mind. Any Immortal character may have once been a famous personality from the past, and that personality is still alive inside of him. Your character might have been Alexander the Great, Sherlock Holmes, Attila the Hun, Abraham Lincoln, Mohammed, or Jimi Hendrix.



6. Choose the character's avatars

Avatars can be a boon and a nuisance. In this introduction, they serve as background color. The full Immortal rules detail the different consequences of an avatar making its presence felt. Of course, the narrator has final say over avatars. Players should let the narrator know which people and time periods interest them.

At this point, you are done with basic character creation and are ready to play! In fact, players in a hurry have only to complete the first two steps before play begins. The narrator can fill in the gaps as play progresses.

Rolling Dice

Immortal uses dice to resolve challenges and disputes and various other sorts of contests that have uncertain outcomes. Whenever you roll a die, you are checking to see how successful your character was at doing something. Normally only one die roll is required, but characters sometimes get to roll a second die and use the best result. A lower number is always better than a higher number. This means that the smaller the die is (small dice have few faces), the more powerful it is. One is the best result any die can roll. A die with more faces than the one you are currently using is inferior. A die with fewer faces than the one you are currently using is superior.

A die roll is either uncontested or contested. You make an uncontested roll when your character tries to do something and no other character tries to interfere. Climbing a cliff or programming a computer call for uncontested rolls. You make a contested roll when some other character actively opposes your character's action. Trying to stab an enemy while he dodges and parries calls for a contested roll, as would a tug-of-war or a chess game.

Uncontested Rolls



When a player must make an uncontested roll, the narrator assigns a target number that represents the difficulty of the task. Target numbers range from 12 (very easy) to 1 (almost impossible).

The character succeeds in his action if the die roll is equal to or less than the target number.

Trivial or mundane tasks don't require a roll. A target number of zero, or a negative number, means the task is normally impossible. In the world of Immortal, however, even the impossible can be accomplished with the help of special artifacts, celestial alignments, and supernatural powers.



Contested Rolls

When a character's action is opposed or resisted by another character, the die roll is contested. No target number is assigned by the narrator. Instead, a die is rolled for each character, and the lowest roll wins. A tie favors the defender, if there is one. Otherwise, a tie means the contest is not resolved and can continue into another round.

For example, if two characters play a game of darts, the lowest roller is the clear winner. If the rolls are tied then either the game ended with a tied score, if that is possible, or it turns into a marathon and another roll must be made to find the winner (or the characters can shake hands and walk away as equals). The narrator decides which applies.

On the other hand, if one character tries to kick another in the midsection and the second character defends himself, then the attacker needs to roll less than the defender to land the kick; the defender only needs a tie to block the kick.

Aura Rolls

The narrator can ask a player to make an aura roll whenever the character tries to do something using one of his auras. Aura rolls are usually uncontested. Examples include:

BODY: Lift a heavy object, catch a thrown object, resist poison.

MIND: Determine who has the advantage in a conflict, identify something in your surroundings, resist attempts to control or damage your mind.

SPIRIT: Resist the overwhelming presence of another character or attempts at seduction, heal yourself, resist the supernatural.

For example, Allyns of the Court of Fate wishes to find a particular computer terminal in an office building. The narrator decides the difficulty for this task is a 5 (it is a large building, the lights are out, and time is limited). He asks Allyns' player Alex to make a perception roll using his MIND aura. Allyns has a d8 MIND, which is exceptional. Alex rolls an 8-sided die and gets a 4. This is less than the target number of 5, so Allyns finds the terminal in time.



Rolling Dice (Continued)

Skill Rolls

The Narrator can ask a player to make a skill roll whenever the character tries to use a skill. Skill rolls can be contested or uncontested, depending on the situation. Skills have specific applications; the narrator has the final say over whether a particular skill applies in the current situation.

Because this introduction to the game allows players to use their real-life skills, some rational cooperation is necessary between the narrator and players. The narrator should be generous (within reason) when deciding what the characters can and cannot do. Players should be honest with the narrator when describing their abilities.

For example, having found the computer terminal, Allyns prepares to access the central core of a rival immortal's computer database. This is an uncontested roll. The narrator decides the difficulty for the task is a 3 (the database has protective software, Allyns is unfamiliar with its structure, and security guards will be on the scene in minutes). Allyns has a d8 skill in computer programming. Alex rolls a 6 and fails to gain the information he was after. He will have to find a different way to retrieve the information.

Rolling Two Dice

Sometimes the narrator will allow a player to roll two dice instead of only one. Usually this happens when both a skill and an aura apply to a situation. The target number is the same for both dice. If both rolls succeed, the narrator can allow a spectacular result, if appropriate.

For example, having failed to penetrate his rival's database, Allyns now seeks to evade the security guards that are stalking him. Alex is experienced with evading pursuit and has a good idea how the guards will close in. The narrator allows this to count as a d12 skill. He also allows Alex to roll a MIND die, to represent Allyns's natural cunning and instinct. The roll is contested (the guards' search vs. Allyns's evasion), so it will be the guards' d12 against Allyns' d12 or d8, whichever rolls lowest. The narrator rolls a 5 for the

guards while Alex rolls a 9 and 5 for Allyns. It is a tie, and ties favor the defender, so Allyns evades the dragnet.

The narrator rules, however, that because of the tie Allyns does not get away clean; the guards don't find him but he spends the night hiding in a garbage chute.

Penalties and Bonuses

Any condition or element that complicates a task is called a penalty. Whenever a penalty is present, it shifts one of the character's dice to the next inferior size. If the character is rolling more than one die, only one—the one most affected—is shifted. For example, Apollo tries to puzzle out a riddle on a parchment, but part of it has been destroyed by time. His MIND die shifts from its normal d6 to an inferior d8.

Some examples of when a penalty is appropriate: shooting at a target that is obscured by heavy brush or thick fog; trying to do anything while badly wounded and in pain; seeking or attacking anything in darkness or in blinding light; trying to swing a sword in an enclosed space.

Bonuses are the opposite of penalties. Instead of complicating a task, a bonus assists it, allowing the character to accomplish the task with more ease than normal. Whenever a bonus is present, a character shifts his die to the next superior one. Although multiple bonuses are possible, they are exceedingly rare.

Some examples of when a bonus might be appropriate: attacking a character from behind; figuring out a complicated device for which you have the manual; locating an informant who wants to be found.

In many cases the line between assigning a bonus or penalty, or assigning a higher or lower target number to the task, is not clear. Ultimately, it's the narrator's call. It usually is best, however, to set target numbers without too much consideration of immediate circumstances, and then let the circumstances dictate bonuses and penalties.

Dominance

Each immortal Court has places, relics, and specific holidays during which its power is ascendant over other courts and over the forces of darkness. A member of the Court of Death, for example, would be dominant in a place or during a time when death is observed, such as in a cemetery, on a battlefield, or on Halloween. A member of the Court of Desire is dominant on Valentines Day, in a bordello, or in a romantic restaurant. Dominance can also be gained through mystical relics, the faith of devout worshippers, or as a gift from more powerful entities known as the Transcendents.

Dominance is a special kind of bonus. Instead of shifting an entire die, dominance subtracts a point from a character's roll. A dominance bonus of more than one point is extremely rare. Dominance can, however, combine with normal bonuses and penalties.

Combat

When two or more characters take actions that oppose each other, combat occurs. Combat can take many forms. It does not have to be a physical struggle or fight. It can end without anyone getting hurt. As well as the usual ranged attacks and hand-to-hand battles, characters can challenge each other supernaturally with serenades, mentally with psionic powers, or even socially with graceful debate and witticisms.

Regardless of the setting for the combat, characters must take turns performing their actions. This assures that everyone gets a chance to perform their actions in order. Each character normally gets a chance to perform one action per round. The steps to follow in a combat round are:

Step 1: Determine Initiative.

Step 2: Take actions in initiative order, applying damage as it occurs.

Step 3: Resolve any end-of-round events and prepare for the next round.

This example of combat between two characters should help to clarify how Immortal combat works. Here's the scenario: Two immortals, Lin Do and Allyns, have been rivals for thousands of years. Lin Do has vowed to take his rival down, but Allyns is clever and very good at hiding. This night, both happen on one another in a dark alley. Lin Do draws his sword and Allyns, seeing no way out, does the same.

ALLYNS, Court of Fate

BODY: d10; MIND: d8; SPIRIT: d10

Skills: Sword (d12), Dodge (d8), Psi Knife (d10)

Weapons: Sword (d12)

LIN DO, Court of War

BODY: d8; MIND: d10; SPIRIT: d10

Skills: Sword (d8), Dodge (d10)

Weapons: Enchanted Sword (d10)

Step 1: Determine Initiative.

The Initiative roll determines the order in which characters take their actions. All combatants roll their MIND die. The lowest roller goes first, then the second lowest, etc. Ties favor the superior MIND, and if still tied, the characters' actions are simultaneous.

Both opponents roll their MIND dice. Lin Do rolls a 4, Allyns rolls a 5. Lin Do gets to act first.

Step 2: Take actions in initiative order.

When it is time for a character to act, he can take one action. This might be drawing a weapon, striking, blocking, parrying, picking up a weapon, or making a supernatural or mental attack.

Lin Do attacks Allyns with his sword. His sword skill is d8, which is very good. He rolls a 3. This is a contested roll, however, so his target number depends on what Allyns rolls to defend. Because Allyns's dodge skill (d8) is so much better

Rolling Dice (Continued)

better than his sword skill (d12), he chooses to dodge rather than parry. He rolls a 5. Lin Do's attack roll is lower than Allyn's dodge roll, so Lin Do's sword slash connects.

When a character is hit, a contested roll determines how much damage is done. The attacker rolls his weapon die or his BODY die (whichever is greater). The attacker uses his BODY or martial arts die if attacking unarmed. The defender rolls his armor die or his BODY die if he has no armor. The lowest number wins.

If the defender wins the contested roll, there is no damage. If the attacker wins the roll, check the Damage Table to see what effect the defender suffers. Damage is determined by the difference between the attacker's and defender's results in the contested damage roll.

Where the Damage Table indicates two different types of potential damage, the attacker chooses which takes effect. The attacker can also choose to inflict the category of damage that he rolled or any other type with a higher number.

A character can, if he desires, aim his attack against a specific target on his opponent's body, either to cripple, stun, or knock him out. Attempting a "called shot" shifts the attacker's skill die to an inferior one:

- To simply cause greater damage is a single shift penalty against the skill die. If the attack connects, then the attacker shifts to the next superior damage die.
- To knock an opponent back is a single shift penalty against the skill die. Knocked back characters go last next round.
- To daze an opponent (temporarily stun him) is a two shift penalty against the skill die.
- To knock out an opponent or to disarm him is a triple shift penalty against the skill die.

When making a called shot to knock back, knock out, daze, or disarm, don't use the Damage Table; instead, just use the special results listed above.

Injuries and Death

If aura rank reductions from the Damage Table reduce an aura beyond d20 (call it "d21"), that character falls unconscious. If the BODY aura is reduced to "d25," that body is killed. Death is usually a permanent state for mortals.

An immortal cannot be truly killed. Its body is killed only if the vox is removed. Otherwise the body appears dead to all examinations, but it is not truly dead. If the body is mystically healed, or is left alone long enough to heal itself, the character recovers with no ill effects. When a vox is removed, the body vaporizes in a blaze of fiery red light. The MIND and SPIRIT are all that remain. The immortal is now a ghost, or gossamer. A gossamer must recover its BODY aura to reform into a new physical body. Otherwise, it cannot affect the corporeal world unless using a MIND or SPIRIT skill that allows such an effect.



SAMPLE ADVENTURE :

COMPANY OF WOLVES

This is for narrators only. Don't read further if you are going to play in this adventure, you'll spoil all your own surprises. The adventure requires one narrator and one or more players.

The starting premise is that your characters don't realize that they are immortals many thousands of years old. They are living normal lives as humans, without a clue that they possess supernatural powers or that they are refugees from an ancient society that predates the dawn of human civilization. As the story progresses they will learn that there is something very unusual about themselves.

Preparation

This scenario follows a set of scenes. As the narrator, you should read all of these, then add your own touches to customize the adventure for your group of players.

If your players deviate from the events outlined here, don't panic! It's natural for players to have personal goals that often conflict with other players. Just make something up as you go along and try to subtly encourage them, through game events, to return to the plot.

Atmosphere

Before you start playing, turn down the lights and put on some interesting music. We suggest Delirium, Ayman, Opus III, or any great sci-fi movie soundtrack. But pick music that everyone can enjoy, and don't play it too loud. It's just for mood.

The Dream

Choose a character that works in a professional office or holds a white-collar job. Tell that character that he or she is dreaming, and in the dream is being stalked through dark woods by something. The character is running low to the ground, and realizes that he may be an animal of some kind. In a clearing, he turns and sees a dark, black creature spring over a rock and onto him. The beast's features are indistinct, but the eyes seem so black that light dies when touching them.

Just Another Manic Monday

The character awakens in a pool of sweat. He is late for work and the boss is in a foul mood. A mound of work waits on his desk. After several tedious hours, find an excuse for the character to leave the office: fetching lunch for everyone from the deli across the street, carrying parcels to the post office, or some trivial errand ordered by the boss as a petty punishment for arriving late. If more than one of the players' characters work in this office, send all of them out together.

As the character walks down the street, he encounters a pair of dogs fighting in an alley. Watching for a moment, he notices that one of them looks very much like a wolf, the other like a black rottweiler. The rottweiler is horrifyingly vicious, and within moments it has bitten and clawed the wolf dreadfully, perhaps mortally.

The character finds himself filled with rage and hatred for the black dog, stronger than any emotion he has known before. Its eyes seem to swallow the light, and the alley seems unnaturally dim around the beast. At this point you want the character to attack the rottweiler, or at least to enter the alley (perhaps to aid the wolf). Describe the dog as leaning arrogantly at the character. Mention that there are several boards or pipes lying about that could be used as weapons. Perhaps it has its teeth fixed on the wolf's throat, ready to deliver a killing bite, but seems to be holding back while it gazes challengingly at the character. It is, after all, only a dog.

If the character advances into the alley, the rottweiler immediately releases the wolf and snarls at the human. This incites an involuntary response from the character; he snarls back, with a strange voice that seems to come from deep within himself.

The rumbling reverberation of that snarl catches the rottweiler and throws it away from the wolf, smashing the dog so hard against a metal garbage dumpster that it leaves a deep dent. Its dark eyes blaze momentarily with hatred, then it turns and flees.

The wolf is badly hurt and unconscious. The character may want to take the animal to his home to care for it, or to a vet, or call the city animal control. Even if the character does nothing, he will see this creature later.

If the character leaves without entering the alley, the rottweiler trails him menacingly for a short distance, then disappears.

When the character returns to the office, he discovers to his horror that everyone in the office has been murdered (shot to death) and the office has been ransacked. There are no stray bullet holes in the walls, indicating that the murderer(s) probably used handguns and were very methodical.

What Happens Next

The character should feel he is in deep trouble. He's the only person alive from the office. He might call the police or flee. Encourage him to contact his friends (the other characters) for shelter, if they are not yet involved in the story.

That evening's news carries no mention of the massacre at the office, even if the character(s) reported it to the police. If the character is not in hiding, however, the police will question him and his acquaintances extensively about the crime. Any mention of supernatural happenings will be scoffed at, as will the notion that the rottweiler or the wolf are at all connected to the shootings.

What's Going On?

The office where the character worked was actually a front for a covert intelligence-gathering center set up by the immortal Court of Secrets. The office was attacked by progeny, immortal minions of the Sanguinary, who seek a data disk that contains damaging information about the progeny and their activities in the city. Most of the victims were loyal mortal servants of the Court of Secrets who died rather than reveal the location of the disk. In fact, it was removed just prior to the attack.

The wolf is Brinane, an immortal who escaped with the disk by transforming into her himsati as the progeny attacked the office. She was run down by one of the dark immortals in rottweiler form. The progeny would have captured the disk if not for the intervention of the character (we hope).

Brinane

If the character brought the wolf home, it heals within

a matter of hours (or a vet will call with that startling news and ask the character to come pick up "his" wolf). At any rate, try to get the wolf and the characters alone in someone's home. The wolf trots into the bathroom and a short time later, a very tall, very beautiful woman walks out, wrapped in a towel or robe and having obviously just emerged from the shower. She has a compact disk on a fine chain around her neck. Her name is Brinane. She thanks the characters for their help and tells them that she wishes to call her people to come get her. It will be two days before the pickup can be arranged, however. In the meantime, she asks if the characters can bring her some clothes and a sword; she will pay them back for any expenses when her people arrive.

When characters go out to procure these items, they are confronted by thugs who demand to know where Brinane is and where the disk is hidden. If they don't get what they want, they attack with knives, nun-chuks, blackjacks, and a sword in the hands of the apparent leader. They are mortals controlled by the progeny. The thugs should outnumber the characters enough to make this fight look pretty one-sided.

The Attack

This fight gives the characters a second glimpse into their true identities. The thugs are good at this sort of brawling and ought to kick the characters around pretty easily until desperation and fear cause the characters to manifest some of their unknown immortal powers. Keep the players in the dark until the situation looks desperate, and then start introducing the weird stuff.

This apparently hopeless battle ends with the characters strengthened and victorious. If characters interrogate the thugs afterward, the thugs will say only that Lord Blind sent them. They will never say more.

Climax

The characters should return to Brinane with the sword. She is not surprised at the news and appreciates the characters' help.

Suddenly, as Brinane is admiring and cleaning the new sword, the rottweiler crashes through a window (or a door, if the characters are above the ground floor). It moves directly to attack Brinane, unconcerned about anyone else nearby. The characters can either help Brinane in the fight or stand by and watch. Brinane wields the sword with amazing skill and ferocity. In the end, the rottweiler should be killed, but only after a desperate fight. When it dies, its body dissolves into a pile of salt.

Brinane thanks the characters and warns them that, in spite of its apparent death, the rottweiler may be back. If pressed for an explanation, she tells them that their world has just become a dangerous place. If they are smart, she says, they will find another place to live. She warns them that a war is coming . . . the final war.

If players want to continue with these same characters, Brinane may give the characters the name of someone who can help them in their journey; the narrator must fill in the details as required.

A very short time later, two men arrive in an unmarked van. One hands a paper bag to Brinane, who passes it to the characters. It is filled with \$20 bills, totaling about \$10,000 dollars. Brinane exits with the men, leaving the characters with more questions than answers and her dire warnings about the future.

Brinane

BODY: d8 (d12 when first found, because of injuries)
MIND: d10
SPIRIT: d10
Relevant Skills: Dodge (d10),
Sword (d8), **Bite** (wolf form, d10)
Weapons: **Sword** (d12 damage)
Himsati Natures (in wolf form):
Fangs (d10 damage)

Lord Blind (rottweiler)

BODY: d10
MIND: d12
SPIRIT: nil
Relevant Skills: **Dodge** (d8),
Bite (d8), **Claws** (d10), **Hypnotize** (d10)
Himsati Natures: **Claws** (d12 damage),
Fangs (d8 damage)
Armor: **Supernatural skin** (d10 armor)

Thugs

BODY: d12
MIND: d12
SPIRIT: d12
Relevant Skills: **Dodge** (d12),
Sword (d12), **Marial Arts** (d12)
Weapons: **Sword** (d12 damage)







Immortal Intro Prep Kit

"The future is the inexorable consequence of the past. Exalted as gods in one era. Reviled as monsters in the next. The pages of history turn; they turn, and soon enough become Legend. Ageless. Eternal. Waiting.

"But what if one day there were no more pages to turn? The last day would mark the end of History, a time of revelation in which our supernatural faces would be plain for man to see. The last day would mark the beginning of our last War against the Beast.

"Now ask yourself one question.

What if that last day were TODAY?"

- Shade, Scourge of the Shadowen.

It is the end of the modern world, the return to dominance of immortal beings that existed before human civilization. The myths that humanity holds dear are crumbling as ancient gods rise from their secret places to fight a final war with the forces of darkness. A new age of legend is dawning, terrible, magical and breathtaking.

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