

THE SECRET OF
ZIR'AD
Hand of Fate Book



BY: HOCKABOUT, CAPLAN, FLORES, & GUTOWSKI



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Paragon Games
Presents

THE SECRET OF ZIR'AN FATE BOOK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Running the Game.2
Chapter 2: Environment.....20
Chapter 3: Conspiracies.....38
Chapter 4: Magic.....68
Chapter 5: Antagonists.....86
Index.....110

මෙහි ඇති චරිතයන් ඔබේ ජීවිතයේ
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A terrifying scene of transmutation from deep within the Tilerian Empire.



CHAPTER 1

RUNNING THE SECRET OF ZIR'AN

The Hand of Fate

In role-playing games, one person becomes a meta-player, a combined storyteller, referee, and character actor who describes the people, places and things the other players encounter during the game session. In *The Secret of Zir'An*, this person is known as the Hand of Fate. She is responsible for creating the framework of the adventure's plot and antagonists beforehand, creating an atmosphere, narrating and adjudicating the game during a session, and visiting the consequences of player's action in the adventure's epilogue: treasure, experience, tragedy, or all three.

Preparation

Each Hand of Fate has a different way of preparing. Some buy supplements or published adventures and run them with no modification whatsoever. Others create their own adventures, complete with maps,

NPCs, timelines, and rewards. Still others make a few mental notes and dive into running the game, making things up as they go along. Most mix all three methods to their own tastes and what they know their players desire in terms of a fun gaming session.

Experienced storytellers try to bolster their weaknesses with preparation. A HoF who isn't good at making up names might keep a list handy for randomly encountered NPCs, while one who isn't comfortable with off-the-cuff environment descriptions would write paragraphs to read when the players enter a new area. The main thing is to keep the session flowing and not lose the suspension of disbelief that allows the Hand of Fate and the players to immerse themselves in the adventure.

Suggestions for things to take care of beforehand include:

- A map for every important location. It's helpful to have the locations of your adventure sketched out on paper so you have an idea of the environment and resources available to your NPCs and players in terms of travel distances, tactics in combat, hiding and ambush locations, secure areas with locks and traps, placement and awareness areas of opponents, and so on. Making maps also is an effective way to concretize in your imagination how an adventure will unfold, like scouting locations for a film.
- Create and define the puzzles and traps that might be encountered. These are particularly hard to make up on the fly, so it's a good idea to define a puzzle before the session. Traps or hazardous situations are a bit easier to improvise, but it's usually easier to define the how the trap is activated, how it can be disarmed or avoided, and what it does to anyone caught in it so that game play can continue when it's encountered without a pause.
- Keep a summary sheet of your players' characters. Items to include are their Acuity + Awareness total (for secret surprise or notice situations), Vitality & Lethal Wounds, and any negative Valdreyr so you can incorporate them into the game (if they chose to have a Dark Fate, they deserve to have it affect 'em during the game!).
- Add up all rolls that NPCs will be likely to make (Acuity + Personal + Awareness, Physique + Personal + Stealth, Physique + Personal + Weapon Skill, Intelligence + Knowledge + Runemagic, etc.) and note them down for reference (you'll only have to roll a d10 and add one number to it to determine their totals this way). Note one or two Finesse Effects they will employ if they get the chance. Also helpful is a sentence or two for each NPC to remind you of their goals, their favorite combat tactics and general role-playing attitude and style. For spellcasters, make sure you decide what Runes or Cardinal

Spells they have available and what their current Fatigue or Animus pools are.

- A list of significant events in the adventure that you can check off to determine experience awards and skill grants.

Atmosphere

The transition from sitting at a table with drinks and munchies to feeling immersed in a land of exotic adventure needs all the help it can get! Since the Hand of Fate is the nominal authority figure he should endeavor to create a game session that removes distractions and enhances mood to the benefit of the game. Some suggestions:


- Sit around a table if you can
- Have chairs for everyone
- Set cell phones and pagers to silent mode
- Have a private area close by but out of earshot for 1-on-1 conferences
- Keep the lights low but bright enough to read character sheets and dice
- Play appropriate music at a low volume in the background
- Use props that help players visualize, like Items of Power, maps, notes, telegrams, and dossiers their characters find in the game.

Narration

The Secret of Zir'An is all about adventure: heroic people discovering secrets, challenging adversaries, and exploring a world filled with excitement and mystery, guided by the enigmatic designs of Fate. Zir'An is a big place, and it is possible to create a variety of narrative tones in games that use it as a setting. Scattered through the following are sections of boxed text with hooks for adventures for the various tones.

Adventure

Drawing from pulp fiction, action/adventure movies, and wondrous fantasy stories, *The Secret of Zir'An* has many dangerous places that players can go to simply explore and see what they find. Underground remnants of ancient civilizations like Gondolon and Casseonae



hide treasure from mighty empires. In their long history, the Seven Gods' cults have constructed and abandoned uncountable temples, catacombs, palaces, and secret caches. Vast tracts of unexplored land may hide rare fauna and flora whose discovery could bring fame and fortune were they brought back to civilization. The very stories of adventurers' travails can be sold to tabloid publishers at a tidy profit, and the promotional tour for a novel or exploit can be a whole new source of social adventure in a continuing campaign.

This type of game is the easiest for the Hand of Fate to prepare for and run. Create a far off or deeply hidden mysterious place with a population of monsters, traps, treasure and you're ready to go.

Adventure Hooks

The Jewels of Fire

It is said that gemstones litter the very ground of the Fire Reaches. Diamonds, rubies, and emeralds all encrust the volcanic rocks, guarded by the giant Gogachi. A Merchant Islander pirate (perhaps a player character) thinks she has the location of an isolated mine and she needs some muscle for the raid. The players might come along for a split of the loot, for the rare opportunity to see the Fire Reaches, or for the challenge of facing the famous brutes. What the would-be pirate queen doesn't know is the mine is inhabited by a powerful Mamba Brolo who has foreseen the coming of the small thieves, and has prepared her people in the mine accordingly...

Screaming Shadows

A powerful Shadowmage has gone mad, and has enslaved a small town in the wilderness in Drakan, Bhuket, or Ba-Dur. The people of the town are now soulless undead, stripped of their shadows. For weeks they have mindlessly dug, constructed, and built labyrinthine monuments to their liege, not to mention preyed on travelers to swell their ranks and the coffers of their master. The players may

be a force sent in to subdue and liberate (or eliminate) the people and the Shadowmage by the local authorities, or may merely happen upon the cursed place as they travel. Is there a way to restore the people's shadows? Or is the place doomed to be haunted by the undead and their screaming master? Even worse, the players may be the last of those in the town who have yet to be stripped of their shadows, though this may be more suited to the Horror narrative tone, below.

The Power in the Stones

Dorallia is uninhabited, even though it is prime tactical territory for the war between the Forces of the Treaty and the Tilerian Empire. Its very stones hide immensely powerful secrets, but these secrets protect themselves from all who would discover them. The entire country is a ruin of granite, tunnels, glass, and broken monuments that constantly shift, as if uneasy with the power that infuses them. Explorers can sometimes steal in and survive the traps and strange Rune Magic manifestations that the ghosts of the ancients left behind to emerge with wondrous Items of Power. Shadekin, military expeditions, slouching Kleshti merchants, and other prospecting adventurers who aren't picky about finding treasure in the hands of others can also be encountered there, making the place even more dangerous than it already is.

Horror

Investigating the secrets of Zir'An leads inevitably to encounters with terrifying beings and horrifying truths. The long history of Zir'An's cults, the machinations of Fane past and present, and the sleeping abominations of ancient civilizations all provide excellent trappings for a scary evening of gaming. Though adventurers are heroes and used to fighting toe-to-toe with villains and monsters of every stripe, there are things that lay in wait that can drive even the most

jaded to raving madness.

Relatively weak player characters, normal people who stumble upon something that was best left alone, best serve a horror narrative. Set the adventure in an isolated locale that limits the players' ability to get help and escape. If running an expressly horror-themed campaign, consider keeping the number of Character Creation Points available for new characters to the Tyroic level. This will ensure even minor monsters are a threat best defeated with quick thinking rather than brute force. Be sure to employ the Insane Handicap liberally, calling for its effect if the players encounter gruesome scenes or creatures like the undead, abominations, and Shadekin.

Horror Hooks

The Watcher in the Fog

The taint of Mirkule is felt in the savage lands of Neoll and Mikesk. When their airship crash lands in the middle of nowhere, the players have no option but to search for the closest village. The dwellers in Yhob are unfriendly at best, and warn the players to keep to their tents at night, for it is the time of the Festival of Yhob. Amid crazed dancing and scream-like chanting, a fog comes. When it lifts, the villagers are gone. What happened to them, and what is the buzzing in the fog? Why does it seem to emanate from a black structure to the north? And why do Shadekin suddenly begin to attack from out of the swamp?

The Isle of Four

Even the Periphery Marshalls, who aren't afraid of anyone or anything on the face of Zir'An, even their voices tremble a little when speaking of the cursed Isle of Four. An anomaly in the desert-swept Periphery, the small isle is visible as a curiously jungle-covered speck almost over the horizon to the South. Rumor has it no one has ever returned who has gone there, but occasionally the gnawed bones of would-be explor-

ers turn up on beaches facing the Isle. Those that dwell there are said to be cannibals, to transform from men to beast, and to possess strange Rune Magic powers never before seen, all ruled by four debased priest-chieftains who are not of any known race. An lanu Vossian royal has decided to mount an expedition to show the "savages" there the civilizing might of his country. The players might be adventurers drawn to his expedition, or be a marshal and some deputies investigating his disappearance.

Black Milk from the Hills

The small mountain town of Wahaida in Harakyr is famed for its desserts. Deeply devoted to Drandlur, it dwells in a wooded valley surrounded by green hills upon which contented klunfa and ponko graze, from whose milk the townsfolk make butter, cheese, and cream. Everyone smiles there in the town, all are happy and content as their livestock. The players may be simply traveling through the mountains, or be trying to find a relative who came to live here and no longer writes or responds to telegrams. They may be trying to find the secret of the surprisingly addictive pastries and cakes that the place exports all over Zir'An. The place has a rotten center underlying its cloying sweetness, a debased cult of Drandlur has operated for hundreds of years out of caverns in the hills, where a living pool of black milk demands blood from its worshippers. In hyper-religious Harakyr, concealing a scandal like this would be a priority for the highest theocratic authority — the players may find themselves facing not just the cultists, but religious forces bent on suppressing the situation.

War

Overt and covert warfare is occurring constantly in a variety of places in Zir'An. This sort of adventure might involve players as a squad or unit of a military

force who are given orders and must fight for territory, material, or some other strategic or tactical purpose. Independent adventurers might find themselves caught up in a skirmish or all-out battle between two forces if they are in the wrong place at the wrong time. This provides a variety of possibilities for adventure. Do they try to escape the battle theater entirely, pick a side and offer their help for mercenary or ideological reasons, or do they play one side against the other to distract the opponents for the players' own reasons?

War, by its very nature, has a high body count. The players may want to make one or two back-up characters to use if their first is killed. The goal of this theme is more about achieving an overall strategic goal in a gritty, action-packed session with lots of combat than about developing a character over many sessions, so beware of dropping even moderately experienced characters into adventures where they face lots of heavily armed troops with automatic weapons, tanks, and artillery fire!

War Hooks

A Breach in the Lines

The border between Ballinor and Drakan has a no-mans-land blasted by explosives, wracked by Rune Magic power, and fortified by great rune-reinforced iron fortresses. The players may be in the trenches, common grunts throwing themselves over the trench walls to capture enough territory to create a beachhead for a push into Drakan. An artillery shell blasts open a hole to ancient catacombs that could provide a vital tactical edge to breach the line, and the players' squad gets the honor of exploring them. It could be Drakani forces already have discovered the catacombs, and are preparing to use them for an assault. There may be other things left by the ancient civilization that are unhappy with being disturbed by armed men and armored vehicles, that do not care which side is which... and the side that learns how to command the ancient machines would have a decided advantage against the other.

Back to the Front

Illestani life is long periods of waiting, punctuated by terror-filled battle. Holding the line against the hoard of Shadekin coming from the Tilearian Empire wears on the body and soul. A high-powered infiltration specialist squad might be charged with investigating the command structure and source of Shadekin, which are said to pour from the hand of Mirkule himself. Another possibility is that a battle-hardened squad is on leave in Edyss, Vallune, or elsewhere, and the poor town is plagued with a surprise visit of Shadekin dropped by air or swimming in from the sea, sent by Mirkule to wreak terror.

Suspended Sentence

The players may be criminals from any land of the Treaty, sentenced to penal military service, a fate commonly known as death by Shadekin. The procedure, after a brief but brutal training, is to drop the unfortunate ones miles into the Tilearian Empire's territory via a single-use Rune Magic flyer, and pardon anyone who makes it back alive. This is also known as a 'Deep Field Assignment.'

Society

Another possibility that relies on wits and subtlety rather than brute force and devastating magic, the lofty realms of the royal, the rich, the famous, and their sycophants, parasites, and hangers-on can be a riot to play. In this sort of game, reputation and face are paramount, though each particular court or society places different values on truth and appearances. Edyss and Vallune are generally forgiving of eccentricities, though corruption and abuse of power is frowned upon by the police and by the people. Cyroon and Bhuket, on the other hand, are viper's nests of betrayal, assassination, and corruption — it's almost expected. Furthermore, the populace seems to enjoy seeing the high and mighty brought down by hook or by crook.

NPCs are of paramount importance in this kind of theme, as their goals, status, and methods of main-



taining their power are the true challenges to the players' actions. Furthermore, players should be constantly reminded that any use of weapons or magical force will swiftly be neutralized by the bodyguards and police who protect the upper crust. Authoritarian countries commonly require an immediate death sentence to anyone who uses or attempts to use lethal physical or magical force on a government functionary or nobility, while more liberal ones still have draconian laws that allow the use of extreme measures to ensure the safety of common and royal folk.

Society Hooks

The Rose of Vallunei

One of the Seven Princes has died and his only remaining blood relative is a 13-year-old girl named Rose. Now she must represent her people in Vallunei City, and though she is well educated and a natural leader, she is innocent of the ways of the world and vulnerable to those who would manipulate her. The players can become involved in her perilous journey to court (the enemies of Rose's father would like to see the bloodline wiped out). They might play functionaries and guests at court that take an interest in the innocent Rose and try to protect her... or use her to their own ends. One of the players might take the role of Rose herself and the others that of protectors from her homeland.


Honor Amongst Thieves

Cyroon is a nest of vipers competing for the favor of the biggest snake of them all, the Fane Cyroon. Assassination and betrayal are as common in the government bureaucracy as they are in gang turf wars. The players might start out as a small neighborhood gang surviving on the streets of Cyroonol, protecting their territory and trying to get noticed by the Thieves' Guild. Alternately, they could be posing as a gang in order to study the Cyrooni



Heroes receiving the Key to Vallunei City





culture under the auspices of an Edysian research project — deep undercover. A traveling Cyrooni noble or bhurger has a regular turnover of bodyguards, and commonly hires those from outside Cyroon; a foreigner, even one who might be a spy, is almost always more trustworthy than a fellow Cyrooni in the court of Cyroon.

The Code of Arsinor

Ilanu Voss used to uphold the Code of Arsinor, a bulwark of civilization in the savage lands of the South. Now more concerned with industrial might and colonial powers, the Knights of Arsinor are a dying breed amongst the new entrepreneurs and economists. The players may be an idealistic group of diplomats and their Knight of Arsinor guards attached to the lanu Vossian Diplomatic Service, charged with maintaining the profitable relationships abroad for the Royal Government. Really they are pawns in a plan of the business interests to discredit the King and spark the powder keg that is Arrivonne all at once by stumbling on information that connects Arrivonnean Elder Council members with the L.A.O. Do they betray their country and do the right thing in the spirit of the Code, making powerful enemies in the colonial command? Or do they uphold the letter of the Code of Arsinor and bring the wrath of the L.A.O. and other Arrivonnean revolutionaries on themselves?

These tones and genres of play can be mixed and matched from game session to game session to provide variety and keep players guessing. Use them as starting points for campaigns that deliver a variety of challenges and stories to the gaming group.

Game Session

The Hand of Fate has a few general activities he can present the players with during a game session. By mixing these according to the narrative flow, the players' preferences, and the plot and story ideas of the

Hand of Fate, an interactive story is told where everyone participates and, hopefully, has a great adventure.

Starting before the game, the Hand of Fate imagines a skeleton of a situation and some events that occur over time. During the game session he weaves a story around this framework in response to the players' actions. Because the players all have different personalities and their characters have slightly different perspectives, there's no telling what they're going to do. The improvisation required of the HoF during a session is both the biggest challenge and the biggest pleasure of the job — even with the most careful planning things happen that you can't anticipate. That's where the fun is.

Even so, there are some guidelines, tools, and narrative tricks that are useful in the heat of gaming.

- **Dice:** *The Secret of Zir'An* uses only 10-sided dice, and you'll probably want at least 5–10 for yourself. Use them to roll for NPC attacks, defenses, and skill checks simultaneously, especially for lesser enemies. Another trick is to turn the d10 to the NPCs' Speed bid and place it where you are keeping track of their Vitality and base rolls, then roll it when their turn comes around (use two if they're bidding more than 10).
- **Passing Notes:** Secret communication can be a hassle but makes for great fun if used sensibly by the HoF and the players. Decide before the session if you want to allow free note passing between players, from players to HoF and vice versa, or restrict it to only HoF-to-player note passing. Notes are good for giving the results of secret skill checks or bits of information that a player character would know or realize that they might or might not share with the rest of the group.
- **Maps:** Map handouts are discussed in Preparation, above, but during combat in a game an invaluable tactical tool can be a wet-erase mat with pre-drawn squares or hexes. Using dice or miniatures, the step-by-step exploration or the movement in a fight and the environmental elements

available to the players can be visually represented. This can be both a strength and a weakness, however, since it takes time to draw on the mat and the players' imaginations are sometimes limited by the spare battle-mat surface. A good rule-of-thumb is to use a mat only if you think you're going to spend longer than 4 turns in combat or turn-to-turn exploration.

Balancing attention between your players as individuals and as a group usually happens naturally. Ensuring that this balance occurs can be helped by giving each player a concrete reason to be associating with the others and ensuring they are motivated to pursue the adventure. Some players will oblige and make up their own reasons, and you should support this by incorporating their role-playing ideas into events, what NPCs the group encounters, and places they go. Don't let them go too far however — try to modify their ideas slightly so they are more manageable for you and give the player something unexpected at the same time.

Example: *Chrys is inspired by her favorite anime and decides that she wants her Tilandri character to be a long-lost princess of Casseonae. The Hand of Fate thinks this might be problematic (he imagines her trying to lord it over any Drakani or Tilandri she meets) and counters with the following suggestion: her character has a birthmark that indeed identifies her as a noble of Casseonae. Unfortunately, only a few know the meaning of this mark, and on top of that it's on the bottom of her foot. The HoF chuckles, imagining the character struggling with her boots to verify her authority to a gaggle of Drakani royalty...*

Taking players aside before the session begins, and spending 5–10 minutes getting an idea for how the players think their characters are feeling and what their characters currently want can pay off during the adventure. Use this time to tell the players something their characters realize, know, have been dreaming about, etc. that will start them thinking about the current session's events. Ask them how their characters feel about some of the others in the group, and then use this info to motivate others when you take them aside (“you notice so-and-so has been giving your character the evil eye lately...”). You might also remind them what they owe to their Connections or if they have not been taking advantage of a positive Valdreyr or playing a negative


Valdreyr correctly.

Moreover, giving players tasks of their own (finding a relative, retrieving an object, learning a secret) that lasts from session to session can be very fulfilling for them and for the group; it sometimes becomes the seed that a character's personality crystallizes around. Connections are an excellent way to assign these tasks and goals. Keep track of these tasks in your notes and during the session try to give each player a chance to get a little further along in her task, especially if she is shy or a beginner.

Pacing

As the Hand of Fate, you have much control over what players have the opportunity to do. Balancing all the possible things that could occur in a game is a function of pacing. In good movies, the protagonists aren't always in the middle of a firefight, nor do they engage only in careful exploration of an environment. The action is mixed up liberally to provide variety. During a game session, players generally want to have their characters engage in the following activities at least once if not more:

- **Combat:** a good fight allows the players to use their carefully constructed stats and skills along with their prized weapons and magic to overcome an obstacle. One or two combats is the norm, but because the game session is slowed down to a turn-by-turn speed, combat can quickly use up all the gaming session time if it's the only thing that happens.
- **Exploration:** Travel and careful searching are the heart of adventure. This is the default activity of adventurers, and requires the HoF to give imaginative descriptions that evoke the places the characters go in the minds of the players. It is an opportunity to use the unique settings of *The Secret of Zir'An* to their best effect.
- **Investigation:** Encountering puzzles, murder mysteries, or unexplained anomalies drives the minds of the players the way combat drives the stats and skills of the characters. Try to have one major investiga-



tive task with many scattered clues that leads to another (a stolen item, a kidnapping, a murder, a mysterious cult, a zeppelin crashed in a remote land) that drives the overall plot of the adventure from scene to scene and one or two good short-term puzzles (an ancient script or pictogram, a numerical lock, a magical area with a physical logic puzzle) that keep the players thinking on macro and micro scales.

- **NPC interaction:** The core of role-playing is when players interact with people in the rest of the world, played by the Hand of Fate. NPC interaction can represent the most pivotal moments in the adventure (confronting the villain at last, interrogating a captured enemy, convincing a patron to sponsor the party, seducing important information out of a noble) that the players remember the most vividly. Make sure to have the plot hinge on an NPC interaction at least once a session. There should also be many opportunities to interact with secondary characters, ally, neutral and enemy alike, to keep the world living in the imagination of the players, to provide comic moments, or to convey information about an event, place, or thing in the adventure. The NPCs are the mouthpieces of the Hand of Fate, so, if you can, use them instead of directly telling the players something at every opportunity.

- **Inter-Player Debate:** One of the most satisfying things for the Hand of Fate is when she has set up the game session well enough that, when she takes a break or looks at her notes, the players continue to debate about what is happening and what they will do next with no urging at all. This means your game is going well and the players are thoroughly enjoying themselves. You can help this process along by setting up players with marginally different goals or information independent of each other through 1-on-1 conferences, a quick private note, or an NPC's attitude and speech.

You don't want the players at each others throats (or do you?), but you can make sure they have reasons to talk to each other in-character. Another emergent phenomenon happens when the players have a break before a big confrontation or task, and they have a chance to plan their actions together. Make sure you give the players this chance to plan, and listen to what they come up with... you just might want to alter what the NPCs are doing "behind the scenes" or even change the situation they're facing based on the players' assumptions!

Constructing your Zir'An Campaign

The true heart of playing in the world of Zir'An is in campaign play. Adventurers have the capacity to be something greater than the scurrilous rogues who plunder lost tombs and battle horrific creatures. They save villages from rampaging monsters. They foil plots to kill kings. They save lives. Characters played over the course of a campaign will have some kind of impact on the world, regardless of what RPG you're playing. That is part of the nature of campaigns, designing a world that reacts to the actions of the characters. The magnitude of the campaign doesn't really matter. Whether the campaign is relatively contained, such as one centered on the plots and scheming of a royal court, to the mega-grandiose style of campaign where the characters are literally saving the world from some monumental threat, the characters are meant to change, affect and leave their imprint upon the campaign world.

Campaign play in *The Secret of Zir'An* is built around the idea that adventurers exist solely to play important roles in the history of the campaign world. The setting and background give numerous narrative devices to drive this theme forward.



Fate

The question could be asked, “who are these adventurers exactly and why do they do what they do?” Why do adventurers risk their lives, why do they brave parasite-infested swamps to explore some forgotten temple ripe with the undead? Why? It’s simple, because the *players* think it’s fun. But what about the characters? Players can come up with any number of interesting and insightful motives for their character to be an Adventurer. Perhaps they’re following in the footsteps of an adventuring relative. Perhaps they were thrust into the adventuring life because of a pivotal event in their past. Or maybe they’re just looking for a little excitement, some fame, and maybe some wealth too. But SoZ underscores the *individual* motivations to include an overarching theme of Fate.

There has to be a reason adventurers can have such monumental impacts on the campaign world. How could a motley band of multi-national risk-takers (as one could describe a typical adventuring party) acquire such power and influence? Are they bureaucrats who wield power with a pen? No. Are they politicians and nobles who spend every waking hour consolidating power? No. Then why is it that a bunch of monster-slaying, magic-wielding, treasure-hunting thrill-seekers always tend to be the ones who fight back the invading demon horde, deactivate the doomsday device, or secretly thwart a plot to start an international war? In Zir’An, the answer is Fate.

The Zir’An campaign is meant to encapsulate the moment in history where the characters are playing their most important part in Fate’s plan. Character creation itself reinforces this notion by giving each character an extensive back-story, a life they’ve lived before they began play, before they were Chosen. The theme of Fate in SoZ dictates that the Characters will either be directly involved with or help set into motion events that become turning points in the history of the campaign world. Fate chose them, and this is their time. So the HoF, in constructing the central plot of the campaign, must consider what effect the characters will have on the history of the campaign world. What role will they have in these events?

The theme of Fate can play a greater or lesser role in the campaign. The characters could be simply caught up in the flow of world events, reacting and making

plans as situations arise. Or the campaign could heavily push the theme of Fate, where the characters are strongly motivated by a sense of destiny. Almost from the beginning they know what their goal is, what quest Fate has set for them. The world of Zir’An is on the cusp of major change, and it may be the quest of the characters to hasten this change along. This leads us into our next theme.

Change

Change is always going to be a part of any fantasy campaign. The world changes, the characters change, for better or for worse. Since Fate is about change, the Chosen are the agents of Change. If the player characters have no effect on the campaign world, why bother playing at all? The Zir’An campaign revolves around change, and as the Chosen, the player characters are either there to drive that change, or prevent it. Ostensibly the player characters are fighting to ensure the change is a positive one. Changes could be minor or major, caused or prevented by the characters. The following are some simple examples of each.

Minor/Caused

- The characters assist a defecting Dominion minister, getting him to the Treaty and freedom. The information he holds will be very useful to the Treaty Nations.
- The characters expose the true depth of the Bhuketi slaver presence in Vallunei, sparking the nation’s heightening of measures to root out the Hidden Paths of Gold and drive the slavers from their land.

Minor/Prevented

- The characters prevent an LAO renegade from assassinating an Arivonnean official with lanu Vossan leanings. Had they not, lanu Voss and its allies in the Arivonnean government would have been forced to finally move on the LAO as a whole.
- The characters prevent an Anazoulo tribe from using the ancient Rune Magic they’ve discovered to dominate the other Anazoulo tribes and

even the Hantsu cities as well.

Major/Caused

- Through information gathered or actions taken, the characters have sparked Illestan's decision to finally launch the final assault upon the Tilerian Empire. They accompany the millions of Illestani into the heart of Mirkule's realm.
- Through long campaigning, the characters were instrumental in Bhuket's popular uprising, toppling Lhar and freeing the people.

Major/Prevented


- The characters foil the Violet Circle's attempts to recover the terrible Wheel of Anti-Life within Darkfall. This perilous Runecraft weapon could have snuffed the lives of millions were it under their control.
- Through great adversity, the characters disable a large Mirkule Cult cell operating in Vallunei. Were they unable to stop them, the Treaty could have been greatly weakened, prompting a full invasion by the Tilerian Empire.

But the outcome, and the characters' role in it, shouldn't be a fixed one. No players, regardless of the Hand of Fate's storytelling ability, likes to feel that they've been manipulated toward a predetermined ending. Perhaps the best way for the HoF to keep the outcome open-ended and determined strongly by the actions of the players and their characters, is to have in mind what kind of change would occur were the characters *not* to intervene. And remember that failure is still a possibility; the characters may in fact be unable to force or prevent the coming change. In a storytelling sense, Fate ensures the characters are at a certain place at a certain time, to experience certain events, but what the characters *do* in these situations is entirely up to them. The change that occurs may be something the HoF didn't predict. This unpredictability is what makes role-playing a campaign so much fun.

Discovering The Secrets of Zir'An

A large part of role-playing is the act of discovery. Learning something new about the world, or having a previous notion overturned by new evidence is, for the players, part of the fun of adventuring. In *The Secret of Zir'An*, this is driven forward with the concept of secret histories. The power of history to shape cultures was a powerful influence in the creation of the Zir'An setting, and underlying this is the idea that the secret events in a world's past continue to influence the present, and that their revelation falls to the hands of Fate's Chosen. Many open questions remain in the Zir'An setting, and they were meant to be, so as to allow prospective Hands of Fate to fill in the blanks themselves as they craft their campaigns. In coming up with the answers to these questions, the HoF can create his own historical tapestry that can map out the possible future of his campaign world and the course the characters may end up taking. In future supplements and editions of SoZ, two secrets of the world of Zir'An will be revealed. Those two essential truths about the world are not hinted at in the examples below. Everything else is fodder for the imagination of the HoF.

What makes a world's secret history so powerful is that in addition to shaping cultures, as known history does, secret histories are like ticking time bombs, landmines in the path towards the future. Secret histories can hide monumental threats. As an example, let's say that there is a sinister, hidden cause behind the Endwar. Something other than the common perception of it being a trade war that turned ugly. Let's also say that this sinister secret cause of the Endwar could potentially resurface to spark a new Endwar. How then could anyone in the modern era recognize the danger in time to stop it? Not all secret histories are potential disasters. Some are merely important truths about the world, its people, and its creators. Revealing them may ultimately cause more harm than good, as they can shatter belief systems, or create confusion at the very least. But secrets beg to be known, and the Chosen are the ones in the right place, at the right time, with the proper



motivation to learn of, if not reveal, these secrets.

But what exactly are the open questions referred to above? And how can they influence the creation of an individual Hand of Fate's campaign world? To start, the HoF should consider the following questions about the world of Zir'An:

Why did the Seven Gods depart and where did they go?

and did they even leave at all?

What exactly are the Fane and what is the source of their power?

and could a new age of the Fane dawn again?

Where did the Ushonu go?

and will they return?

What was the true cause of the Endwar?

and did the Society of Merkulian have a hand in it?

What lies within Thallysia and why are none but the Zhalanti allowed to enter?

and to what purpose are their wanderings in the lands of the laner?

Where has Kah gone since he departed after the formation of the Treaty of Valluneï?

and why is he the only benevolent Fane of record?

Is Mirkule motivated by more than mere malevolence to conquer the known lands?

and what exactly does he have in store?

Why have the Shadowmages appeared in this Epoch, and none before it?

and is there a link between them and the Fane?

Considering the answers, and how they can all fit together, helps to set the table for the campaign world's future, outlining possible threats the characters may have to confront and avenues of exploration and

adventure. The HoF, in creating the campaign setting, needn't come up with answers for all the above questions. Some could have very simple, even publicly accepted answers. But when thinking about the above mysteries of Zir'An, an important next step is to ask:

- Who knows these secrets and why are they motivated to keep them hidden?
- How can these secrets be discovered/revealed?
- What possible dangers exist so long as these facts remain hidden?
- What effect would the revelation of these secrets have upon the world?

The answers to these questions form the basis for adventuring: the conspiracies underlying normal society, the antagonists ready to take advantage of their knowledge, the groups or individuals who will go to great lengths to keep these facts hidden, and the overall impact the characters will have on the campaign world if and when they brave the dangers of the unknown to root these secrets out.

Treasure and Rewards

Balancing the rewards given to the players is an important task. Give out too little money, equipment, magic and resources and your players will feel like their characters are underpowered and will be unhappy. On the other hand, too much booty leads to a vicious circle of increasing absurdity as the Hand of Fate tries to appease the player's appetites for more. The Secret of Zir'An is meant to make the characters central historical figures, so they should receive rewards accordingly, but they should burn through them just as fast. Several things should be kept in mind as you prepare the game session:

- Keep the players a little hungry at all times—make sure they see the NPCs around them using better equipment, having more money to flaunt, wearing finer attire, driving better vehicles, and so on.

Suggested Treasure and Rewards Scale per Session

Average

CCP+EXP	Reward per session
1–50	20 Flat value per character + 1 Common item
50–100	100 Flat value per character + 2 Common or 1 Uncommon items
100–125	200 Flat value per character + 1 Uncommon or 1 Rare item, possibly 1 primitive vehicle
125–150	400 Flat value per character + 2 Uncommon and 1 Rare items, 1 Item of Power, possibly 1 primitive vehicle
150–175	800 Flat value per character + 2 Rare items or 1 Very Rare item, 1 Item of Power, 1 primitive vehicle
175–200	1,600 Flat value per character + 2 Very Rare items, 1 Item of Power, possibly 1 ground vehicle
200–250	3,200 Flat value per character + 2 Very Rare items, 1 Item of Power, 1 ground vehicle
250–300	6,400 Flat value per character + 3 Very Rare items, 2 Items of Power, 1 ground, air or sea vehicle
300+	15,000 Flat value per character + 4 Very Rare items, 2 Items of Power, 1 ground, air or sea vehicle

These suggested rewards can also be utilized to determine the significant possessions of an NPC (see NPCs, below). Simply find the NPC's Character Creation Point value on the chart and assign him resources and items accordingly.

- Periodically visit a disaster that taxes their resources to the limit. This should be well motivated in the story. Reward the players intangibly with prestige or the feeling of a job or kindness well done.
- Give them everything they want, at a price. Allow them to get into the debt of others, allowing things like taking a loan for some much-needed, really big guns or specialized equipment, or having to barter for vital information or a plane ticket home are great opportunities for role-playing, and leave loose strings that can be called up later to complicate things.
- Any cash or treasure over 1,000 Flats value should have someone else looking for it. Huge bags of money, gold, glowing items of power, or other valuables get noticed by the criminal element in a city, town, or on the road almost immediately. These types will be glad to take it off the players' hands by hook or by crook. Unless they save cash or valuables in highly

secure places like a bank or vault or use a particular item constantly, treasure should be gone in two to three game sessions.

Towns and Cities

Adventurers will find themselves coming and going from cities over the course of their careers for a variety of reasons. Often they depend on a town or city nearby an adventuring site for resupplying their ammunition and food, and resting between battles. Some set up houses or businesses they use as a base of operation. Towns and cities can also provide a setting for an adventure in and of themselves, especially if it is one in the Society narrative. The Hand of Fate may be hard pressed to come up with every detail of a city setting on the fly, so these rules are presented to ease this task.

The general terms that describe a settlement in The Secret of Zir'An are as follows:

- **Location:** country, territory size, percentage by area type (agrarian, commercial, civic, industrial, institutional, palatial, residential, slum)
- **Population:** residents, percentage by race (laner, Dolon-orri, Zhalanti, Neolli, Gogacha)
- **Economy:** coinage used, total value, maximum value, maximum rarity
- **Magic/Technology Rating:** 1–10/1–10
- **Authority:** government type, number of armed sheriff/police/militia and their standard equipment
- **Significant NPCs:** name, role (CCP value)
- **Significant Sites:** famous monuments, important businesses, unique natural feature, etc.
- **Dangerous Elements:** criminal, cult, or rebel organizations, monsters or undead

Location is measured in a diameter that generally defines the borders of the town in yards and miles. The area of a settlement is generally described as percentages of a type of zone:

- **Agrarian:** farming fields and livestock pastures, plus barns, ranches, and farmer's markets.
- **Commercial:** business district, open market, storefront shops, bars and restaurants, mercantile, grocery and general stores, trade guild offices, professional offices for law, Rune Magic, and alienist consultation.
- **Civic:** roads, bridges, public parks, stadiums, and fields, guard posts and barracks, training grounds, government buildings, jails and prisons, railways, airports.
- **Industrial:** warehouses, slaughterhouses, manufacturing, artisan production, bakeries, machinists, docks, port authority, air and sea ship construction, vehicle construction and mechanics.
- **Palatial:** residences and monuments for a ruler and his court, including palaces, court buildings, royal gardens

and conservatories, estates and villas.

- **Religious:** cathedrals, temples, churches, shrines, glades and monuments, catacombs, tombs and cemeteries.
- **Residential:** apartments, houses, villas, huts, lodges, and other dwellings.
- **Slum:** run-down and poor areas that include shantytowns, war-ravaged districts, lean-tos, homeless camps, etc.

Population describes permanent residents and their racial makeup as a percentage.

Economy indicates the prevalent coinage used in the town (for types of money see Resources). The total value is the combined value of everything in the town in Flats, measuring the relative richness of the place. The maximum value limits what the player characters can spend on a single item in the town or city, thereby excluding items that may be pricier than the limit regardless of their availability (resellers in the town simply can't afford the item in the first place). Maximum rarity indicates the highest rarity of items that can be acquired there, rated at Common, Uncommon, Rare, or Very Rare (items of lesser rarity are available too). The maximum value and maximum rarity limits also restrict what the players' Contacts can provide them in the town.

Magic/Technology Rating describes the relative presence and commonality of Rune Magic and technological items and practitioners. Low magic ratings indicate a dearth of anyone who knows how to perform Rune Magic, and a lack of Rune Magic enhanced items, buildings, vehicles, etc. High magic ratings indicate that most everyone knows some Lesser Rune Magic charms and/or has a few Rune Magic Talismans or Glyphs and uses them every day, and that there is a well-developed Rune Magic education system and enhanced items, vehicles, and buildings are common and constantly maintained by Runemage artisans. A low Technology rating shows that the place has limited civic infrastructure providing things like literacy, printing, libraries, running water, sewage, public lighting, gas and electricity, and lacks the ability to manufacture complex machines, weapons, and vehicles. A high Technology rating indicates the opposite, and usually means the place has a powerful center of learning that conducts

research in the newly discovered sciences. If both are low, the place is unusually backward, perhaps because of isolation or oppression by a local ruler. If both are high then the place is likely to be a center of civilization renowned for its harmonious marriage of Rune Magic and technology.

Authority lists any organizing element that keeps the place from falling apart. Government types could be a council of elders, a secret triad of judges, a single dictator, or a vast bureaucracy that administrates every detail of citizen's lives. The ruling authority usually has a force of armed people that imposes the law, so this is described by how many and what their standard weapon and armor are (If players choose to fight with this force the HoF might use the Mook Mob rules in the Allies and Villains section).

Significant NPCs lists the NPCs most likely to be encountered by the player characters, either due to the fact that they have something the players want, or that their plans will most likely be opposed by the player's actions. These would include the most powerful NPCs in the town, and those who hold power there.

Significant Sites lists prominent or interesting locations that would be well known to those within and nearby the town. These are the places the players will seek out when they get to the town or city, and should be detailed enough to provide a good scene for role-playing or a fight.

Dangerous Elements lists forces at work in the location that are likely to conflict with the players, up to and including manipulating or eliminating them to further their plans. Mindless hazards like monsters or the undead might also be listed for the Hand of Fate to use as a quick combat or investigative aside.

Sample Towns and Cities

Allu do Ray

A small seaside city that is a vacation spot for Talutian lovers and newlyweds because of its scenic beaches and popular resort.

Location: East coast of Talus, 5 miles, 35% agrarian, 5% commercial, 10% civic, 10% palatial, 30% residential, 10% slum

Population: 10,000, 90% laner, 9% Dolonorri, 1% Zhalanti

Economy: Talutian Sataros (2 per 1 Flat), Total Value: 3,000,000 Sataros, Maximum Value: 2,000 Sataros, Uncommon.

Magic/Technology: 4/2

Authority: Dukedom, 200 knights & men-at-arms, spear and leather hauberk

Significant NPCs: Duke Alejandro do Ray (Ruling noble, 100 CCP), Dona Terese (most successful livestock rancher, 50 CCP), Christobal Or (Resort developer, 50 CCP), Papa Chali do Kah (Church of Kah potentate, 50 CCP), Velusa Tora (vacationing assassin, 150 CCP)

Significant Sites: Rose Beach (named for its fine pink sand), The Rock of Passion (rock formation off Rose Beach resembling embracing couple), do Ray Estate (magnificent marble homestead and private wooded grounds), Hotel do Or (large hotel, resort, and casino in the center of town).

Dangerous Elements: the Duke's son, Perri do Rey, has a taste for brutality and the constant abuse he and his companions inflict on the peasants is reaching the boiling point—strangers who challenge his authority should beware, but might be hired to assassinate him by the locals behind the Duke's back. At certain times of the year, the undertow at Rose Beach becomes severe, and unlucky swimmers can be in danger of being sucked down and smashed on the Rock of Passion.

Loahg

A small Neolli settlement in Mikesh near the border of the Tilerian Empire.

Location: Mikesh, 500 feet, 50% agrarian, 40% residential, 10% slum

Population: 53, 10% laner, 90% Neolli

Economy: Mikeshi Rositus (100 per 1 Flat), 500 Rositus, 50 Rositus, Common.

Magic/Technology: 2/1.

Authority: Elder individual, 8 Neolli warriors, Mikeshi throwing-axe, no armor.

Significant NPCs: Luggalk (Neolli Priestess elder, 150CCP), Favreau Loutard (Edyssian anthropologist, 100CCP)

Significant Sites: Sinking Face (an ancient carving that lists into the swamp depicting a giant face).

Dangerous Elements: The Neolli are constantly fighting off Shadekin that wander from the Tilerian border.

Misthaven

(also called Greystore's Bay)

A tiny port hamlet in a natural sheltered bay on the south eastern coast Gallios. The craggy coastline features many hidden coves and dense clumps of local vegetation along the various escarpments and arroyos. The township is spread thinly along the coastline and is called Greystore's Bay by locals as the area was once a haven for pirates preying on lanu Vossan shipping. Some say it still is.

Location: Gallios, Sea Level – 1500 feet. 15% Agrarian, 10% Commercial, 20% Civic, 15% Industrial, 5% Religious, 35% Residential.

Population: 208, 99% laner, 0.5% Dolonorri, 0.5% Gogachi.

Economy: Galliosi Anses, 2500 Anses, 150 Anses. Common.

Magic/Technology: 3/3

Authority: Town Triumvirate Council. 20 Volunteer Militia, unarmed and Tosh, no armor.

Significant NPCs: Gaerek Fahberizzi

(Shipbuilder and Former Pirate, 150ccps), Doonu Imanidan (Omaru Priest and Councilman, 100ccps), Krush Nok (Gogachi Pit Fighter 100ccps) Significant Sites: A nameless natural cathedral pierced with Omaru carvings used for study and practice by the locals. Misthaven itself is a natural bay which is unusually foggy even on hot days.

Dangerous Elements: Frequent "re-provisioning" stops by lanu Voss patrols in the dead of night. The tidepools and reefs breed many dangerous natural creatures, from Sea Scarabs to Flechette Fish.

Tradewind Port

The third largest city in the Merchant Isles, famous for its free trade and the availability of almost everything for sale from the far corners of Zir'An.

Location: Merchant Isles, 3 miles (entire island), 35% commercial, 5% civic, 25% industrial, 2% palatial, 23% residential, 10% slum.

Population: 90,000, 80% laner, 5% Dolonorri, 2% Neolli, 2% Gogacha, 1% Zhalanti

Economy: Edyssian Flats, Total Value: 50 million, Maximum Value: 3 Million, Very Rare

Authority: Trade Guild Council, 1,000 "Salt Dogs" mercenary company, Light Revolver & Shortsword and Breastplate with Chain

Magic/Technology: 7/6

Significant NPCs: Admiral Ansok Steele (chairman of Guild Council, 175 CCPs), General Augost Vlatik (leader of the Salt Dogs, 1500 CCPs), High Mistress Rivula Sees (head of the Runemagic Guild, 200 CCPs), Wi Tang (Shadowmage head of the Slaver Guild, 150 CCPs), Tkass Kes (Kleshti purveyor of information, 150 CCPs), Seargant Olaf Von Kloom (Dolonorri Salt Dogs third-in-command, 75 CCPs) Captian Shira Qeng (pirate/buccaneer captian, 75CCPs), Caula Boog (Cyrooni fence extraordinaire, 50 CCPs), Hin Vri (Zhalanti wanderer, 50 CCPs), Lugnar

(Gogacha gang leader, 50 CCPs), Shandi Twane (street rat guide, 30 CCPs)

Significant Sites: Tradewind Port (vast complex of docks, loading facilities, transports and warehouses that is almost a city in and of itself), The Aerie Hotel (huge resort hotel build into the eastern cliffs of the island), Open Market (hundreds of tiny shops crammed into a city square where nearly anything can be bought). The Castle Ship (an enormous floating structure that houses the Port Authority and the city government). Downwinds (an impacted sprawl housing the poor, destitute and criminal)

Dangerous Elements: The kidnapping of wealthy businessmen and tourists by gangs in based in the Downwinds is a common occurrence, especially since a victim can be sold as a slave if their contacts won't pay up. Money talks louder than anything else in the Guild Council and the corruption of the Salt Dogs is infamous even in Bhuket and Drakan.

Ullonas Valley

A village in lush valley located high in the mountains separating The Kingdom of Vallunei and Ballinor. Ullonas Valley is quaint mountain town with rich farms terraced into the surrounding countryside and spectacular views of the ocean and mountains. Favored by the elite of Valluneian society as a getaway from the usual and mundane, the full time residents Ullonas Valley are accustomed to the sight of celebrities, power players, and personalities of all varieties. They do their utmost to cater to their needs as often as possible (and profitable).

Location: Vallunei, The Yanush Lands. 7800 Feet. 40% Agrarian, 15% Commercial, 5% Civic, 5% Industrial, 20% Palatial, 15% Residential.

Population: 2800, 80% laner, 19.99% Dolonori, 0.1% Zhalanti.

Economy: Valluenian Flats, 1.3 million Flats, 25000 flats, Rare.

Magic/Technology: 7/7

Authority: Regional Magistrate, 15 Deputy Magistrates, V'tlock Enforcer and Police armor.

Significant NPCs: Archemii (Zhalanti Rune Mage, Entertainer, Ranch Owner, 150ccps), Duugan Harmstruth (Dolonori Magistrate and retired Adventurer, 150ccps) Ismina (Tilandri Fortune Teller and Courtesan, 100ccps) Yahn Vilmer (Master Chef/Owner of Bistro Greenleap and Adventurer, 75ccps)

Significant Sites: Greenleap, a moss covered natural spiral staircase twisting 2200 feet up to the peak of Ullonas Grief, highest mountain in the region. Aaonn's Terrace, largest Carpet Spider silk farm in the world. Bistro Greenleap, considered one of the finest restaurants in Vallueni, possibly the world, featuring the most extensive collection of rare wines in eastern Vallunei.

Dangerous Elements: Attempted kidnappings are not uncommon for nobles and wealthy businessmen. Occasionally a Empire of Drakan forces manage to insert a commando team to kidnap and steal.

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Karin Ami reports on a Chosen's experiences in Darkfall.



CHAPTER 2

ENVIRONMENT

Everyday Hazards

Not only do Adventurers have to contend with active threats from evils from both abroad and within, but they must also face travail from the weather, heat, cold, and other natural and unnatural elements. This section presents guidelines for using these elements in your game, and the smart player will try to have their character be prepared to deal with any inclement situation.

Though there are game statistic modifiers presented here, it is up to the Hand of Fate to decide if their game needs all, some, or none of these mechanics. Players may want to insist that the mechanics are there since they will probably hinder their foes as well. As ever, use these rules as guidelines and points of departure to create fun, cinematic, and harrowing situations for your gaming group, the better to make them triumphant when they overcome their hardships.

Weather

The world of Zir'An has climates that range from the arid desert to constant toxic rainstorms. The ravages of previous civilizations have permanently affected the weather in certain places, altering it so that it is unnaturally calm, fiercely savage, or has some unnatural phenomenon like an endless rain of blood, locusts, or other strange effect.

Precipitation

Rain presents hazards both in and out of combat. First, visibility is limited depending on the severity of rain, causing a -1 to all Awareness rolls for light rain, and -3 to all Awareness rolls for heavy rain. Second, any smooth surface will be slippery, imposing a

-2 Speed to anyone trying to move in the area. Third, it will extinguish unprotected flames smaller than a bonfire.

Snow causes the same obstruction (Awareness roll penalty of -1 for light snow & -3 heavy snow), has the same flame-extinguishing property, plus the added problem of exposure, detailed in the section on cold, below.

Fog compounds the visibility problem and also makes it difficult to pinpoint the direction of sounds. Light fog imposes a -2 Awareness roll penalty and limits line-of-sight to 100 feet. Heavy fog imposes a -5 Awareness roll penalty and limits line-of-sight to 5 feet.

Add all visibility penalties together if multiple ones apply to a situation (heavy rain in light fog would impose -5).

Wind

Moderate or high winds can adversely affect movement, combat, and lighting in an area.

Moderate winds (20-50 mph) impose a -5 to ranged attacks and automatically blow out any exposed flame smaller than a bonfire.

High winds (50-100 mph) make ranged attacks impossible, blow out exposed flames smaller than a burning building, and will knock anyone Prone who attempts to move in an area unless they make a Physique + Survival roll verses a difficulty of 1 per 5 mph of wind speed (i.e. 10 difficulty for 50mph, 15 for 75mph, and 20 for 100).

Storms

The open rage of Drandlur is rarely encountered though it is a fearsome day when she works her fury up to rainstorm, thunderstorm, hurricane, blizzard or tornado strength.

- **Rainstorm:** Rainstorms occur when wind speed exceeds 20mph during precipitation, making Awareness checks and ranged attacks impossible, and they extinguish any flame smaller than a forest fire. If wind speeds exceed 50 mph, knockdown chance exists as for High Winds, above.
- **Thunderstorms:** Characterized by rapid lightning strikes, the thunderstorm is a storm with teeth that imposes all the

effects of a rainstorm. While the storm lasts, lightning bolts strike once per minute. Anything made of metal, anyone in metal armor, or any individual or object in an open area may be struck by the bolt if they fail a Difficulty 10 Shadow + Personal + Reaction roll. See Electricity below for the effects of a lightning strike.

- **Blizzard:** High winds combine with snow, sleet, and hail to create blizzards of biting cold. In addition to all rainstorm effects, a blizzard leaves behind 1d10 feet of snow in the area. Also see Cold for effects of exposure, below.
- **Hurricane:** In addition to all effects of a rainstorm, the extremely high winds of a hurricane (100 mph or higher) have a chance to literally pick up individuals, objects, or even buildings and fling them great distances. Individuals without shelter must make a Mass + Athletics roll every minute verses difficulty 10 + 1 per 10 mph of the hurricane to avoid being tossed 1d10 x 10 feet. Falling damage is suffered normally. Hurricanes also present the danger of being hit by objects caught in its fury. Everyone in the area suffers 1 GW per 10 mph of the hurricane every minute they are without shelter.
- **Tornado:** The most violent non-magical weather seen on Zir'An, the twister wreaks massive destruction in the path of its signature funnel cone, typically an area 100 feet to 1,000 feet in diameter. Winds in the cone can reach up to 300 mph, though the funnel itself usually lasts only for a few hours. All the effects of a hurricane apply, but damage to exposed individuals and objects is 1ap2 + 1 damage point per 5 mph every turn. Very rarely, tornados can manifest with 1d10 multiple vortices, each a tornado in its own right.
- **Sandstorms:** Windstorms in deserts or badlands can whip sand into the air, causing blinding storms of particles that get into everything and can bury entire

Weather Generation

Roll 1d10 to determine weather for the day. To adjust for location, subtract -5 (minimum 1) for desert or badlands, add +0 for city, coast, plains, hills or mountains, +5 for ocean, jungle, swamp or bayou.

d10	Result
1	Clear
2	Light rain*
3	Moderate Winds
4	High Winds**
5	Roll on Severe Weather below
6	Heavy Fog
7	Fog
8	Light rain* and fog
9	Heavy rain*
10	Clear
11	Fog
12	Heavy rain* and fog
13	Heavy rain* and moderate winds
14	Moderate Winds
15	Roll on Severe Weather below

*Snow if in Cold climate

**Sandstorm if in desert or badlands

SEVERE WEATHER

Roll 1d10 to generate severe weather.

d10	Result
1-3	Rainstorm**
4-6	Thunderstorm
7-9	Hurricane
10	Tornado

**Blizzard if in Cold climate, Sandstorm if in Desert or Badlands

settlements in hours. A sandstorm prohibits Awareness rolls, ranged attacks, and causes -1 Vitality per minute to anyone without shelter or specialized clothing. High winds (50mph or more) can knock down or sweep away individuals and objects as above. An area is covered in 1d10 feet of sand in the wake of a sandstorm.

Cold

Exposure to cold environments without protection or shelter will soon lead to the death of an individual. In temperatures below 35° Fahrenheit, a character without proper clothing takes 1 GW every 10 minutes, and suffers the Slow handicap. Below 0° F, an unprotected individual starts to suffer from frostbite, taking 1 damage point to each arm and leg location per half-hour in addition to the 1 GW per half-hour. These effects can be avoided for one hour by making a Survival check verses a difficulty of 10 plus 1 per degree below 10° F. Proper clothing and shelter with a source of heat will prevent all this.

Ice forms on wet surfaces in cold weather, from snow, rain, or condensation. An icy surface doubles Speed costs for movement (i.e. 2 Speed for a 5 foot move) and imposes a -5 penalty to all Physique checks.

Heat

In temperatures over 98° Fahrenheit, individuals who exert themselves in combat or exploration can suffer from heatstroke or hyperthermia. Every ten minutes they must make a Physique + Survival roll verses difficulty 10 + 1 per 3 degrees above 98° F or suffer 1 Vitality damage and the Stun handicap. If temperatures are above 110° F, the individual must save every turn or suffer the same damage.

Water

Most individuals with the Athletics skill can swim at the rate of 5' per 2 Speed if the water is calm or slow-moving. Fast-moving water like rapids or violent surf will inflict 1 Vitality damage and suffer the Dizzy Handicap unless they make an Expert 20 difficulty roll with Physique + Athletics every turn. If they fail this roll, they also begin to drown (see Drowning and Suf-

focation).

Without specialized equipment or vehicles, deep water can inflict pressure damage to immersed individuals depending on how deep they go. At 100 feet, depth pressure inflicts 1ap3, +1 damage per 5 feet of depth (i.e. 120 feet=5ap3, 200 feet = 17ap3, 500 feet =50ap3) every minute.

Immersion in cold water is especially dangerous, doing -2 Vitality per minute after the first and inflicting the Slow and Stun handicaps without protective, insulated gear.

Floods occur when, in a short amount of time, precipitation exceeds the amount of moisture the ground can absorb, or water overflows the banks of a stream, river, or lake. Individuals caught in the torrent must make an Advanced Mass + Survival roll to avoid being swept away and taking 2 Vitality damage per turn. Once swept away, they must make an additional Physique + Athletics roll versus difficulty 20 to avoid starting to drown (see Drowning and Suffocation) every turn.

Drowning and Suffocation

Characters can hold their breath in adverse circumstances for a number of turns equal to twice their Physique without making a roll. This duration can be increased by rolling an Advanced 15 difficulty Physique + Personal + Athletics roll. The number of successes above 15 is the additional number of turns the subject may hold their breath.

At the end of the maximum number of turns, the subject starts to drown if in water, suffocate if being choked or in an airless environment, or smother if being buried or immersed in solid matter. At this point the subject suffers from the Weak Handicap, and each turn thereafter loses 5 Vitality. If they do not get air they die at the loss of their last Vitality points.

Modifiers

- Suffocation from smoke inhalation (a building fire or bomb) inflicts the Dizzy handicap as well
- Very hot water (boiling) halves the maximum number of turns the sub-

ject may hold his breath and inflicts an additional 5 Vitality per turn

- Very cold water or snow (below freezing) reduces the damage from drowning, smothering, or suffocation to 3 Vitality per turn
- Being buried alive inflicts the Insane Handicap on the turn the subject can no longer hold his breath

Destroying Things

Every inanimate object has a Structure rating that describes how much damage it can take and how tough it is, as follows: [structure points]av[armor value]. Attacks that do not penetrate an object's Structure Armor Value do no damage to the object. An object with delicate components is rendered inoperable (gears smashed, glass shattered, etc.) after taking half its structure points in damage. A building collapses once it takes three-quarters of its structure points in damage.

SAMPLE OBJECTS

Drinking Glass	2av1
Glass Window	4av1
Large Diamond	6av5
Pocket watch	6av2
Portable Camera	8av1
Leather sack	10av2
Hand pistol	12av2
Wooden door	15av2
Hardwood Table	20av2
Metal door	40av3
Mud Hut	50av1
Stone Wall	80av2
Bronze Statue	100av3
Autovehicle	150av2
Large Tree	200av2
Heavy Tank	400av4
Wooden Bridge	500av2
Iron Battleship	1,800av3
Stone Turret	2,000av3
Concrete Bunker	4,000av4
Draken Door	10,000av5

Vehicles

Fighting while in or on vehicles, be they mounts, motorized cabs, iron-clad warships, or behemoth dirigibles, adds an additional layer of danger to combat. Instead of just facing off against an opponent, the players must contend with the cover a vehicle offers, what happens to it when it takes damage, how fast it moves, and many other factors. Keeping combat with vehicles simple and fast is key, and these rules should help you maintain the pace of the combat.

Climbing on the exterior of a vehicle moving below 20 mph is a Basic 15 difficulty Athletics, and climbing on one above 20 mph is an Advanced difficulty 15 Athletics roll. Falling off a vehicle results in normal height Falling damage, +1 damage point per 5 mph.

Combat Around and Inside Vehicles

Attacking A Vehicle

An attacker's roll is opposed by the rider, driver, or pilot's Acuity + Personal + Vehicle Skill when attempting to hit a vehicle with any sort of attack. Hit locations for vehicles are rolled on a d10 as follows:

d10	Result
1	Rider/Driver/Pilot
2	Passenger
3-7	Body/Exterior
8-9	Wheel/Propeller/Track
10	Vital Mechanism

An attack that hits occupants in or on the vehicle delivers half damage to the vehicle's Structure and half damage to the occupant within, if any. Any hit to the wheels or propellers of a vehicle causes Structure damage normally but automatically provokes a difficulty 15 Advanced ride, drive, or pilot roll to keep the vehicle from crashing. This rule result does not apply to tracked vehicles or seagoing vessels. A hit to a Vital Mechanism doubles the damage taken by the vehicle (after armor is considered) and provokes a difficulty 20 Expert control roll to keep the vehicle from crashing or sinking.

Fighting Inside Vehicles

If two passengers are fighting inside a vehicle with a cramped compartment or limited space, each takes -5 to their defense rolls and gains +5 to their attack rolls.

Fighting On Top Of Vehicles

Two opponents on top of a moving vehicle must spend 2 speed and make Athletics rolls every round to maintain their footing with the following difficulties:

- Under 15 mph: 10
- 15-30 mph: 15
- 30-60 mph: 20
- 60-100 mph: 25
- 100 mph or higher: +1 difficulty for every +5mph

If either combatant fails his roll, they fall prone on top of the vehicle and must roll another Athletics test at the same difficulty to keep from falling off the surface. If they fail, they fall off the vehicle, taking damage from the fall height and the vehicle speed.

Hitting Occupants Inside Vehicles

An attacker who can see a target that is within a stationary vehicle (through a window or in partial cover) may attack the target at -5 to his roll with a HtH attack if he has a weapon that will reach, or with a ranged weapon attack. A successful roll means damage is done first to the transparent part of the vehicle (if any), and the rest is taken by the target. Targets within a moving vehicle impose a -10 penalty on an attacker's roll. Attackers with Elite Finesse Level in their weapon skill ignore both these penalties.

Fighting From Within Vehicles

Being inside or on a stationary vehicle and using a ranged weapon imposes no penalties to hit. If the vehicle is in motion, however, the attacker suffers -1 to hit per 5mph difference in velocity they have with their target. Those with Elite Finesse Level in their weapon skill ignore this penalty.

Example: *Juan Olivios de Plata takes aim out the back of the zeppelin's cargo bay, spending 8 speed to aim and gain a +4 to hit. Waiting patiently, he prepares to fire when the Drakani attack fighter makes its next run. As it comes into*

view, he takes a shot at the pilot with a Drakani assault rifle. Juan's HoF decides that the zeppelin is traveling at around 50mph and the fighter is making its run at 80mph. The difference in speeds is 30mph, and thus Juan suffers a -6 to hit the plane and its occupant.

Heavy weaponry is often mounted on a vehicle, or incorporated as a weapon system in a tank, fighter, battleship or bomber. Attacking with these weapons requires the Ranged Weapon: Fixed for skillful use of vehicular weapon systems, otherwise follow the customary rules for making Unskilled Skill Test (q.v.), but because such weapons are so heavy and require extensive training to use, unskilled skill tests with such weapons incur an automatic -5 penalty.



A pilot from Arivonne.

Vehicle Types

Each category of vehicle has specific rules that apply to it.

The Mount/Dismount or Enter/Exit rating indicates the time required to exit and enter the vehicle.

The Cover rating describes which occupants' hit locations are covered when inside the vehicle.

Collision Damage indicates how much damage is inflicted when the vehicle hits something.

Damage Consequences describes what happens when a vehicle takes damage.

Vehicles take half the damage they inflict in a collision unless specifically designed for ramming.

Primitive: horses, apolai, 2-wheeled carts, rickshaw, bicycle

A primitive mode of transport offers cheap and reliable but slow and unprotected travel.

Mount/Dismount: 1 Speed

Cover: When mounted or sitting in a cart or rickshaw, the rider has no effective cover from ranged attacks.

Collision Damage: 1ap1 +1 damage per mph

Damage Consequences: Animal mounts may run or throw rider when hit (Advanced difficulty 15 Ride skill to prevent), while other types of primitive vehicles become inoperable and crash after taking half their Structure in damage. The driver and any passenger take 1ap1 per

Groundcraft: 4-wheeled carts, horse- or apolai-drawn coach, sled, 2-wheeled autovehicle, 4-8 wheeled autovehicle, track autovehicle, steam engine on rails

More expensive and elaborate technology and Rune Magic allow these vehicle types to go faster and farther at greater speeds than primitive transport. Horses and Apolai require the Ride skill specific to them for anything more than simple riding.

Enter/Exit: 4 Speed

Cover: Total cover for passengers, All but head and 1 arm for driver (no cover for cart and coach)

Collision Damage: 2ap1 +2 damage per mph (2ap3 +2 per mph if vehicle built to ram)

Damage Consequences: A ground vehicle will go out of control if damaged below more than half its Structure each time it is hit, including the attack that

drops it below the half Structure threshold. An out-of-control vehicle requires an Expert 20 difficulty Drive or Ride roll to regain control and/or bring the vehicle to a stop. Vehicles damaged more than + their Structure crash as their wheels, tracks or rails are too damaged to move any longer. Passengers and the driver suffer 1ap1 damage +1 DP for every 2 mph of speed before the crash unless the driver makes a 20 difficulty Expert Drive or Ride roll. A vehicle with a fuel tank that is reduced to + damage must roll a d10, if a 1 results the fuel explodes, causing a 5d10ap3 damage to all in a 10-foot radius. Note that some vehicles may have multiple fuel tanks, all of which will explode for the above damage.

Seacraft: rafts, canoes, oar-using dinghys, sail-using wood boat & ships, steam and rune powered wood or iron ships

These vehicles see widespread use on rivers, lakes, and oceans. Some can be as large as a small town. Provides great load-bearing capability in exchange for speed. Larger seagoing vessels are very expensive to build and maintain. Athletics is used to maneuver and operate manual craft. Other craft require

Enter/Exit: 2 Speed to jump from exterior into water, 4 Speed to exit to exterior deck

Cover: Legs and abdomen cover when on exterior deck versus attacks from sea surface, other ships, or land, but no cover versus attacks originating from above. Total cover if within interior or below decks.

Collision Damage: 2ap1 +2 damage per mph (2ap3 +2 per mph if vehicle built to ram)

Damage Consequences: Seacraft will begin sinking after taking half their Structure in damage, taking 1 round per remaining structure point to completely slip under the surface. Further damage will decrease the time it takes to sink. At + damage the sea craft engine, if any, ceases to function. Bailing manually or with pumps reduces the sinking rate to 2 rounds per remaining structure point. Anyone inside a ship after it sinks completely will start to drown (see Suffocation and Drowning) unless they escape with an Athletics roll with a difficulty based on the size of the craft (larger craft create a suction as they sink):

- Less than 20 Structure: Basic difficulty 10
- 20–100 Structure: Advanced Difficulty 15
- 100–1,000 Structure: Expert Difficulty 20
- 1,000–10,000 Structure: Elite Difficulty 25
- 10,000 or more Structure: Impossible Difficulty 30

Aircraft: Glidewings, lighter-than-air dirigibles, 1–3 prop wooden airplanes, 2–6 prop metal airships, 2-prop gyrocopters

Though new, there are many types of aircraft that ply the skies to transport passengers and goods. There are also aircraft that are purely for warfare. Most aircraft are equipped with parachutes in case of an emergency, allowing the lucky to fall to the ground uninjured with a successful Athletics of Expert difficulty 20. If they fail the roll, they take 3d10 damage, half to each leg. If the jumper fails their roll with a 1, the chute fails to open and the character takes falling damage for the full decent.

Enter/Exit: 4 Speed to enter a plane on the ground. To jump from a plane in the air takes 4 speed to open the door or hatch and 2 speed to jump with an Advanced Athletics roll of difficulty 15 (failure means the jumper is hit by the plane and takes collision damage, below).

Cover: Full cover for pilots and passengers inside cabin. Cover for legs, abdomen, and torso for airplanes with an open cockpit.

Collision Damage: Aircraft take full damage inflicted to a target from any collision unless the craft is designed for ramming. 2ap2 +2 per mph of speed. Ram-equipped aircraft (usually dirigibles) inflict 2ap3+2 per mph of speed, taking damage equal to that inflicted only if the ramming attack fails to do half of the target's Vitality or Structure.

Damage Consequences: Aircraft go out of control and after taking + of their Structure in damage. A pilot can make an Expert difficulty 20 Pilot roll to regain control of the craft. If he fails, the plane starts to crash. An aircraft always starts to crash after taking + of its Structure in damage. Anyone inside an aircraft when it crashes takes falling damage as normal unless the pilot makes an Expert 20 difficulty Pilot roll to ditch, in which case all take 3d10ap1 damage to three random

locations. If a pilot successfully ditches into a body of water, passengers take only 2d10ap1 to two locations. An aircraft with a fuel tank that is reduced to + damage must roll a d10; if a 1 results the fuel explodes causing a 5d10ap3 damage to all in a 10-foot radius.

Conventional Explosives

Explosions cause damage based on the size and power of their blast, and the shrapnel from whatever their container was. Extended damage may result from different kinds of substances that continue to burn or explode. Damage from the following sizes and kinds of explosives can be combined to describe most explosives Adventurers might encounter.

Full damage for an explosion is taken at a distance in feet equal to the damage points of the explosion size.

Size

- 5ap1** (firework rocket)
- 15ap1** (grenade)
- 30ap1** (distillate tank)
- 50ap1** (mining charge)
- 100ap1** (Aircraft-dropped bomb)
- 200ap1** (fuel transport tank)
- 300ap1** (hydrogen dirigible)

Kind

- Naphtha:** Burns for 3 additional turns at +150%, +100% and +50% damage.
- Oil:** Burns for 1 additional turn at +100% damage
- Phosphorous:** +1 ap, burns for 2 additional turns at +150% and +100% damage.
- Magnesium:** anyone within 10 feet of explosion suffers the Blinded Handicap
- Sticky:** Transfers to anyone who touches burning individual

Container Shrapnel

- Cloth:** +0 ap (fireworks, oil-filled skin)
- Wood:** +1 ap (barrel, shipping box)
- Metal:** +2 ap (grenade case, oilcan, distillate tank, aircraft-dropped bomb)
- Spiked:** +1 ap (nails or shot mixed with explosive, specially designed container)

Electricity

Conventional electrical power has been around in the experimental stage for five years, and power augmented by Rune Magic for thirty to forty years before that. The main danger faced by those exposed to electricity is usually when fighting in or around power-generating equipment or power lines in inclement weather. Insulated rubber gloves, boots, and flooring will protect from most electrical discharges, but conductive equipment like metal armor and weapons can compound the damage suffered by an electrocuted subject.

Anyone taking damage from an electrical phenomenon of over 15 Vitality points suffers the Dazed handicap.

Damage

- 3ap1:** hand dynamo output per turn
- 8ap1:** portable rune-light output per turn
- 20ap2:** vehicle rune-battery output per turn
- 50ap3:** common electricity glyph output per turn
- 80ap3:** wind-power dynamo output per turn
- 100ap4:** Hydroelectric station generator output
- 250ap5:** Natural lightning bolt

Modifiers

- Insulated clothing or environment:** -20av5 damage verses electricity
- Metal weapon:** -2 av verses electricity
- Metal armor:** -4 av verses electricity

Burning

Fires can present a major hazard to adventurers and everyday folk alike. Burning objects tend to ignite other objects around them unless precautions are taken, and roaring fires can result from a simple spilled oil lamp.

Fire Sizes

- 1ap1:** Candle
- 5ap1:** Pitch Torch
- 10ap1:** Small campfire
- 15ap2:** Home-made incendi-

ary bomb (molotov cocktail)

25ap2: Bonfire

40ap1: Burning house (plus suffocation)

80ap1: Burning building (plus suffocation)

120ap2: Refinery fire (plus suffocation and explosions)

200ap1: Forest fire (plus suffocation)

Objects Catching Fire

If an object suffers fire damage for two or more consecutive turns it might catch fire. Objects ignite after taking a certain amount of fire damage, depending on what they are made of. Burning objects continue to burn each turn doing equivalent Fire Size damage to themselves and to everything within 1 foot per 5 Fire Size damage points until all of their Structure Points have burned away. Ignition damage points are as follows:

- **Explosive:** 2 damage (paper, oil, alcohol)
- **Very inflammable:** 10 damage (cloth, dry wood)
- **Moderately inflammable:** 25 damage (leather, wet wood)
- **Nonflammable:** 50 damage (hardwood, ceramics)
- **Inert:** 100 damage (stone, tempered metal)

Individuals Catching Fire

People or creatures might catch fire if they suffer fire damage for two consecutive turns or more. To avoid this, they must spend 2 speed and roll their Reaction + Personal + Athletics + d10 and beat the total Fire damage points they have taken in the last two consecutive turns. If they succeed, they are out of danger as long as they aren't exposed to more fire damage. If they fail the roll, they immediately take Vitality damage equal to the Fire damage points that exceed their roll, plus they ignite and begin to burn.

Burning individuals' clothing, hair, and equipment have caught fire and start to do damage to them. They immediately suffer the Pain handicap. The duration and amount of damage they take depends on what they are wearing, carrying, and so on, that is exposed to the fire. The total damage is taken at the beginning

of each turn and the fire goes out at the end of the last turn. Burning individuals do + damage they are taking to anyone and anything else they are touching. They can continue to try to put out the fire by rolling as above and exceeding the cumulative fire damage they've taken. Each element that applies stacks together for total damage and duration as outlined below:

- **Skin:** 5ap1, +1 turn duration (applies unless totally covered)
- **Long hair/fur:** 8ap1, +1 turn duration
- **Diaphanous clothing:** 12ap2, +2 turns duration (silk or fine clothing)
- **Normal clothing:** 8ap1, +1 turn duration (breastplate, cotton clothing)
- **Leather armor:** 5ap1, +1 turn duration (Cloth armor, Stealth leathers)
- **Metal armor:** 0ap0, -1 turn duration (Plate armor)
- **Fire-resistant suit:** -20ap3, -3 turn duration (Fire suit, bomb squad armor)
- **Inflammables:** burn as equivalent size fire (oil flask, high-proof alcohol)
- **Explosives:** explode as equivalent size explosion (grenade, mining charge)
- **Ammunition:** d10 cartridges go off every turn doing + damage to random location (bullets only)
- **Soaked in inflammable liquid:** 20ap3, +3 turns (covered in oil or distillate fuel)
- **Soaked in nonflammable liquid:** -5ap0, 1 turn duration (dripping wet)
- **Immersed in water:** -10ap1, -3 turn duration (dunked into a river or pool)

Corrosives

Exposure damage per round for natural and scientifically produced acids and bases are rated with potency values as follows:

Corrosive Substances

0ap0: (water)

5ap1: (digestive acid, concentrated bleach)

8ap2: (chemist's acid)

12ap3: (Shadekin's acid)

- 20ap3:** (refinery alkali effluvium)
- 15ap4:** (abomination's alkali)
- 25ap4:** (rune- or shadow-mag-ic enhanced corrosive)
- 20ap5:** (ancient anti-Ylar dissolver)

Corrosive substances damage armor or other protections permanently if their piercing value exceeds the armor value by 1 or more points. Being immersed in a pool or vat of a corrosive substance doubles the damage taken each round.

Falling

Tumbling from great heights is a danger to those without a glidewing or handy Flying Rune. Damage from falling is equal to 1ap1 +1 damage per foot fallen that exceeds the height of the subject, and all subjects immediately suffer the Stunned handicap. Individuals may make Physique + Personal + Athletics +d10 rolls to "roll-out" and halve damage if their roll exceeds the distance fallen in feet. Damage taken is also affected by the surface the subject lands upon:

- **Soft object:** 1/4 damage (pile of garbage, stack of mattresses)
- **Individual or creature:** 1/2 damage (see damage from falling objects below)
- **Soft ground:** 1/2 damage (gravel, mud or grass)
- **Solid ground:** Normal damage (dirt road, wooden floor)
- **Hard ground:** x2 damage (paved road, stone floor)
- **Foliage:** 1/2 damage (trees, brush)
- **Shallow water:** 1/4 damage up to 20 feet, x2 damage above that
- **Deep water:** 1/4 damage up to 40 feet, normal damage above that

Falling Objects

Falling objects and individuals do damage to whatever they land upon in addition to suffering normal falling damage themselves. Hit locations are rolled normally. The target fallen on suffers the Stunned handicap. How much damage inflicted is based on Structure points (for objects) or Mass (for individuals

or creatures). An object inflicts 1ap1, +1 damage point per Structure point, + 1 damage point per 5 feet fallen. Individuals or creatures inflict 1ap1, +1 damage point per Mass, +1 damage point per 5 feet fallen. This damage is modified as follows:

Modifiers

- **Sharp object:** +0ap1 (hard rock or metal debris)
- **Shatterable object:** +10ap1 (glass window or brittle rock)
- **Liquid:** 1/2 damage (large amount of water, fire hose, burst dam)
- **Particulate:** 1/2 damage (grain, powder)
- **Soft body:** 1/4 damage (gelatinous or boneless)
- **Chitin or exoskeleton:** +8ap1
- **Wearing light armor:** +5ap1 (cloth or leather armor)
- **Wearing heavy armor:** +10 ap2 (metal armor)
- **Spiked surface:** +0ap1 (armor spikes or horns)

Chase and Pursuit

Successfully pursuing and catching someone who is trying to escape can be simplified to represent an exciting chase over an extended distance. The first participant to gain an advantage of 15 successes over the other wins the chase; either the pursuer catches the pursued and normal combat time takes over, or the pursued escapes the immediate area. Each chase "turn," the participants add stats and skills to a d10 roll depending on the chase circumstances, as follows:

- **On-Foot Chase, Wilderness:** Speed+Personal+Athletics+d10
- **On-Foot Chase, Outside Urban Area:** Physique+Personal+Athletics+d10
- **On-Foot Chase, Interior Urban Area:** Aquity+Personal+Athletics+d10
- **Vehicle Chase:** Reaction+Personal+Ride/Drive/Pilot Skill+d10



ZUB

The Carosel are not to be trifled with...

During a chase turn, participants can perform one other action while they are chasing or escaping (like attacking with a ranged weapon, hiding, or tossing obstacles in the pursuer's path) by taking a penalty to their Chase contest roll equal to the Speed cost of the action. The participant with the greater Chase Advantage always performs her action first. This action can force the other chase participant to spend speed and use his action to avoid the effects of his opponent's action.

Example: Juan Olivios De Plata is attempting to flee a group of 3 Harakyri Honor Guards after completing his latest assignment. The grounds of the Comstock Estate are heavily wooded and the HoF determines that a Wilderness On-Foot chase ensues. Juan and the Guards make their initial rolls and the chase begins:

Chase Turn 1: Juan rolls 23, Guards roll 17; advantage = Juan 6: Juan makes a break for it and decides to use some of his advantage cut down a tree to delay his pursuers. He spends 4 of his advantage to attack a large tree with his sword and cuts it down, it falls in front of the guards who, the HoF rules, must spend 8 speed for a Climb skill roll to negotiate the fallen tree. Two of the guards fail their climb rolls and drop out of the race. Advantage = Juan 6 - 4 (tree cut) + 8 (guard's skill rolls) = Juan 10.

Chase Turn 2: Juan rolls 16, guards roll 11; advantage = Juan 15: Juan speeds through the undergrowth as the remaining guard glimpses him getting away. Juan escapes, but the guard spends 4 speed to fire his rifle at Juan, who can't use an active defense unless he wants to extend the chase one more round (it would cost him 1 speed, reducing his advantage to 14). The Guard rolls a 20 versus Juan's 14 static defense roll and does a nasty 17av2 damage (including +3 damage for 6 successes). Juan escapes, but is very hurt.

Chase bonuses and penalties

- **Caltrops:** Dropping spiked objects designed to hurt a pursuer's mobility is a 4 speed action. If the pursuer fails a difficulty 15 Advanced Reaction + Self + Athletics roll they take $d10 \times 2$ damage to leg or wheel locations. Only applicable for foot and ground vehicle chases.

- **Complete darkness:** -4 to roll of any participants who cannot see or who don't have a lightsource.
- **Covering ranged weapon fire from non-chase source (guard tower, flak guns, artillery, etc.):** -4 to roll of whoever is being fired on (note it could be both chase participants!)
- **Daylight:** +2 to pursuer's rolls.
- **Familiar territory or area:** Participant may add his Knowledge: Area Practice score to his roll.
- **Low visibility (fog, dust, sand):** -2 to both participants.
- **Unstable/dangerous area (lava flow, rooftops, cave-in, tornado):** -2 to all participants; if a natural 1 is rolled the participant must use his Chase action to avoid a damaging environmental effect, like a magma explosion, a falling rock, or wind-borne object.

Tracking

Once a chase is over and the chasee gets away, or if a tracker arrives late on the scene, it is still possible to follow a target using the Tracking Wilderness or Tracking Urban skill. The skill description elaborates on what information can be gleaned by use of the skill, but the following environmental modifiers affect the tracking attempt. The Hand of Fate should use these modifiers as guidelines to resolve tracking situations.

- **Night or darkness:** -5 unless tracker can see in the dark
- **Dusty surface:** +2 to track roll
- **Muddy surface:** +2 to track roll
- **Hard surface:** -2 to track roll
- **Sparse vegetation:** +1 to track roll
- **Heavy vegetation:** -1 to track roll
- **Raining:** -1 per hour since trail made to track roll
- **Snowing:** +5 if within 10 minutes; -1 per hour since trail made to track roll
- **Smoke:** -1 to track roll
- **Trail crosses water:** -3 to track roll
- **Trail passes through**

crowd: -6 to track roll

Escaping targets can cover their trail if they have the appropriate Tracking skill by rolling that skill against a difficulty of their choice. This can be done only once. If they succeed at Basic, they impose a -1 to their pursuer's roll; at Advanced, a -2; at Expert, a -4; and at Elite, a -8. If they fail at their roll, the pursuer gets a +5 to follow them due to their obvious attempt to conceal their passage.

Alcohol, Drugs & Poisons

Folk in Zir'An use a wide variety of substances for good and ill, ranging from finely distilled cordial liquors to addictive psychotropic to deadly toxins. The effect of a swig of booze, a dose of a drug, or an envenomed blade is determined by the Mass and Physique of the affected subject, and the Potency of the substance. Substances are described below according to their availability, their cost in Flats, how they are administered, the damage they cause over what period of time, any effects they have on the subject's Stats, and their addictiveness.

Using Poisoned Weapons

Applying and employing poison with blades, darts, and other weapons is a dangerous business, almost as dangerous to the user as the target. Without the Lore: Poison skill anyone who tries to attack with a poisoned weapon automatically suffers the poison's effect every turn she uses it as she nicks, cuts, or wipes herself with the poison on the weapon.

An individual with the Lore Poison skill can roll her Acuity + Personal + Lore: Poison + d10 verses difficulty 15 to avoid hurting herself when attacking with a poisoned weapon, and verses difficulty 20 when applying poison to the weapon. Those with Advanced Lore: Poison do not need to roll when attacking, and those with Expert Lore: Poison do not need to roll when applying. An application of poison is effective for 1 hour for most poisons and venoms. If kept in a scabbard or airtight case, the poison application can remain effective for up to a day until it is exposed to air again.

Availability and Cost

Alcohol is widely available for sale throughout Zir'An, and many lands and provinces specialize in the brewing or distilling of specialty beers, wines, liquors, and spirits. The greater the potency and effects of the substance, the rarer it is and the more it costs.

Drugs and poisons are illegal in most countries, though a thriving black market serves the needs of addicts and assassins in countries who look down on such things. A licensing office that tracks who has what in more-organized countries usually controls chemical substances that have other uses in industry or business. Other places have no limits on what can be bought and sold, as long as the right bribes reach the right pockets. Covert trade wars occur as illicit drugs are dumped into a rival country's population, creating both a profitable black market and a chaotic social problem for the host country's authorities.

Potency

An individual can willingly ingest substances and enjoy their effects — in this case no resistance rolls are made and the subject applies the effects as they occur in the substance's description. Secondary and tertiary effects can be resisted as described below.

Individuals who are involuntarily affected (through an attack or affected by a drug or poison) roll their Mass + Physique + Personal + d10 to resist the substance's Potency. If they fail, they suffer the initial effect of the substance. Drugs and poisons may have secondary or tertiary effects that are resisted in the same way when enough time has passed for them to activate. If the individual rolls higher than the Potency of the substance, he may ignore that effect. If he fails to roll higher than the Potency of the substance, he suffers whatever effect is described.

Administration

- **Imbibed:** the substance takes effect after being eaten or drunk. A grapple attack can be followed by a 4 Speed pouring attack action to force liquid down the throat of a target.
- **Inhaled:** after breathing the smoke, powder or gas in the nose and/or mouth the substance takes effect. A subject

can hold his breath if not surprised and avoid this attack's effects until he must breathe again or he exits the area of effect. A surprised subject automatically breathes in the substance.

- **Injected:** direct contact with the subject's blood (via weapon cut or needle) activates the substance. A successful attack with a poisoned weapon that does at least 1 Lethal Wound in damage allows the substance to start its effects on the target.
- **Skin Contact:** touching the substance to bare skin is enough to suffer its effects. An attack that hits a location with exposed flesh allows the substance to start its effect.

Onset and Effect

Each substance has its effects noted according to onset time and damage points inflicted (if any), Stat adjustment, and special effects. Primary, secondary, tertiary, and further effects are separated by semicolons. If an individual successfully resists the onset of an effect, the remaining effects do not occur.

Addictiveness

Some substances are addictive and cause an individual to crave more of the stuff due to physical effects, psychological effects, or both. Addictive substances are divided into ones that require satiation weekly, daily, or hourly. Penalties for not satisfying the addiction are listed according to how many doses have been missed. All effects last for the entire hour, week, or day, and addicts may roll against the substance's Potency at the midpoint of the effect period (30 minutes after the effect for an hourly need, 15 hours after the effect for a daily need, or 105 hours after the effect for a weekly need) to recover from these missed-dose effects. If they survive through each effect period they have kicked their habit.

Alcohol Blood of Valkan

This exceedingly rare and fiery grain alcohol brew is made by the Mamba Brolos of the Fire Reaches to reward good workers... and to prepare those who are to be sacrificed to the magma.

Availability: Very Rare

Cost: 1,000 (shot), 8,000 (bottle)
Potency: 40
Administration: Imbibed
Onset/Effect: 1 turn/-5 Knowledge, -5 Personal, -5 Social for 6 hours per shot drunk; 1 minute/Blind, Weak and Dizzy Handicaps for 1 hour per shot drunk; Death if more shots drunk than Mass in 6 hours.
Addictiveness: none

Schvarzes Bronzbran

Ballinor is famed for this metallic golden lager beer that enhances the hearty meals of the Ballinoreans, fortifying their constitutions for the slow war with the Empire of Drakan.

Availability: Uncommon
Cost: 15 (maas or 2.5 pints), 200 (keg)
Potency: 15
Administration: Imbibed
Onset/Effect: 1 minute/+1 Vitality per pint drunk; Slow and Dizzy Handicaps for 2 hours if more pints drunk than Mass in 12 hours.
Addictiveness: none

Talusian Red Wine

Though available in many vintages, the standard Talusian red is always above average in terms of enhancing the passionate qualities of the drinker.

Availability: Rare
Cost: 30 (glass), 100 (bottle)
Potency: 15
Administration: Imbibed
Onset/Effect: 1 minute/-1 Knowledge, +1 Social for 1 hour per glass drunk; nausea if more glasses drunk than Mass in 6 hours
Addictiveness: none

Drugs

Bhoonta Weed

Smoked for its mild euphoric effect that facilitates reverie but makes it difficult to express oneself in words, Bhoonta is common amongst learned folk across Edyss.

Availability: Uncommon

Cost: 60 (bag), 750 (block)
Potency: 10
Administration: Inhaled
Onset/Effect: 1 turn/+1 Knowledge, -2 Personal, for 1 hour; 1 hour/Stun handicap for 1 hour
Addictiveness: Required Weekly satiation. Penalties: 1st week/Slow Handicap for the week; 2nd week/Slow and Confusion Handicaps for the week; 3rd week/ Slow, Confused, and Enraged Handicaps for the week.

Jabbash

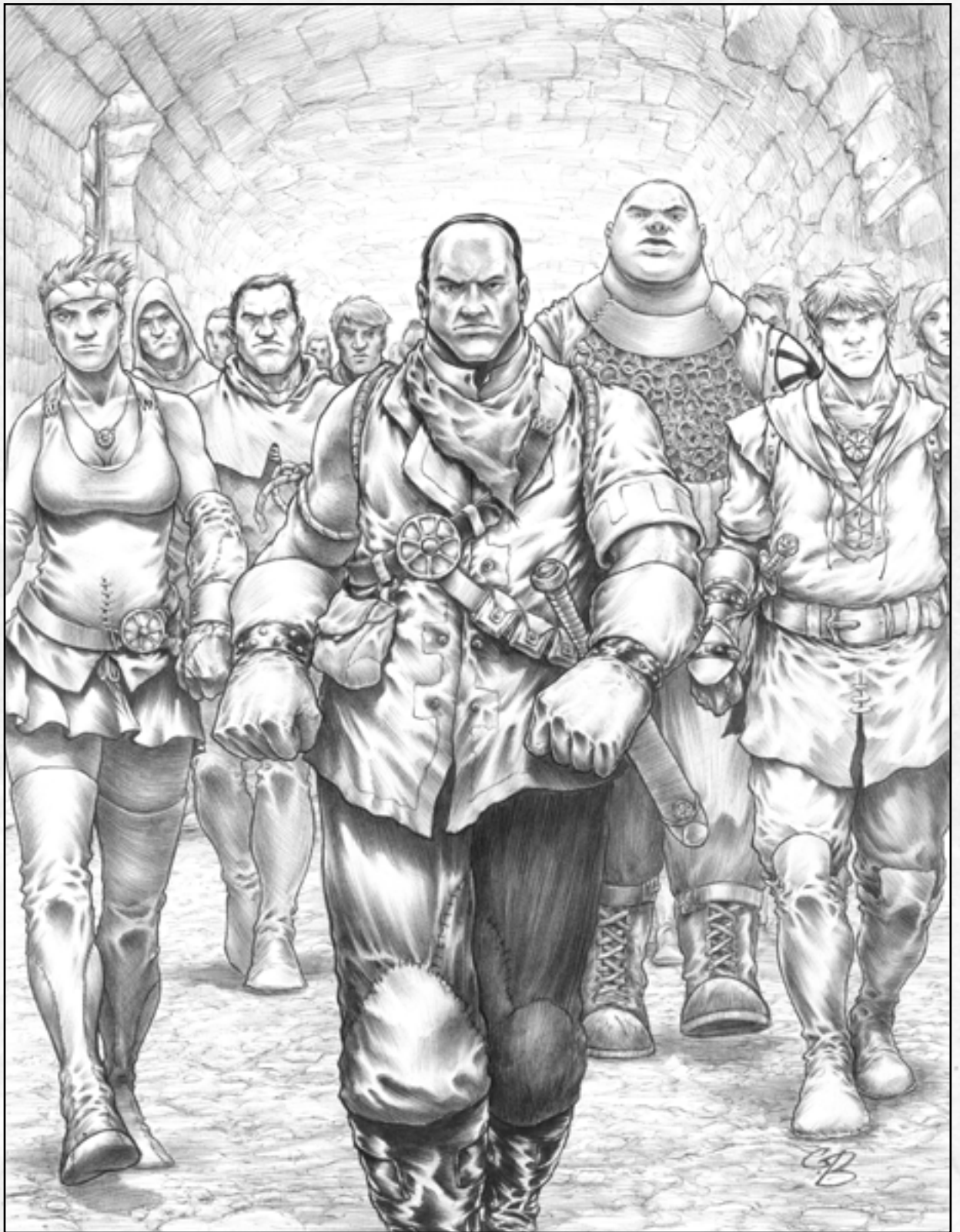
This opiate is used by dilettantes and addicts in the Western Lands to induce a dreamlike hallucination state, but originates in the poppy fields of Bhuket.

Availability: Rare
Cost: 300 (pipe dose)
Potency: 30
Administration: Inhaled
Onset/Effect: 1 turn/Slow Handicap for 1 hour per pipe dose; 1 hour/Dizzy and Slow Handicap for 6 hours.
Addictiveness: Requires Daily satiation. Penalties: 1st day/-5 Knowledge and Personal rolls for the day; 2nd day/-5 Knowledge and Personal rolls, Confused Handicap for the day; 3rd day/-10 Vitality, Insane handicap for day; 4th day/-20 Vitality, Insane handicap for the day.

Tchakka Sticks

These rolled leaf sticks are smoked throughout Zir'An by folk in every walk of life. Most habitual users deny their addiction, but some outspoken social reformists label Tchakka Sticks an exploitative, disgusting product that is the equivalent of slow suicide for its users.

Availability: Common
Cost: 1 (stick dose), 15 (roll of 20)
Potency: 15
Administration: Inhaled
Onset/Effect: 1 minute/+1 Social, -1 Personal for 10 minutes per stick smoked
Addictiveness: Requires Daily satiation. Penalties: 1st to 7th day/-1



Strength in numbers is a watchword of the Carosel criminal underground.



CHAPTER 3

CONSPIRACIES

“Those who hold power are conspicuous by their deeds. Those who make power are known only by their absence.” — The Canticle

Allies and Villains


These major characters can usually be divided into groups that oppose the players (villains), help the players (allies), and are indifferent to the players (background extras). Each has a role in an adventure session, and it should be possible for NPCs to switch roles based on what the players do. The old sayings “keeping friends close and enemies closer,” “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” and “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” apply here in most every situation. Switching important NPCs back and fourth between these categories can make them multidimensional and realistic. Perhaps the players have been fighting a long-time villain and they all end up marooned on a dangerous island and must make an uneasy truce to survive.

Allies

Allies are major NPCs who are helping the players because their goals seem to be parallel to their own. Connections are the main source of allies for players,

but they should always understand they never get something for nothing. Remember that Contacts give players access to resources and equipment, but they are not necessarily going to just give their help for free. Usually they will want cash, favors, or trade, or the equipment might be a loaner that they want returned in the same condition, or paid for if damaged or destroyed.

Allies always has an express motive for helping the PCs that define their relationship. These motivations can be as simple as the fact they are good people who try to help everyone or their ideology promotes charity or mentorship. Or they may have a familial reason to ally with the PCs; blood is thicker than gold, especially among the Dolonorri. Noble allies may help the PCs because they are fighting for a cause or a government. Less savory elements may help the PCs out of self-interest, using them in their plots and schemes with the players’ knowledge or not. Ulterior motives (reasons the ally is helping the player that they withhold from them) are a ripe source for



adventure complications.

It is up to the Hand of Fate to decide how much help the players can get out of their allies before they wear out their welcome. The best way to do this is to ensure the players reap what they sow. If they continually ask for ammunition and weaponry from their military contacts, they might inadvertently cause a shortage that allows an enemy to break through lines or

seize a tactical resource, destroying their contact's ability to supply. Allies that feel abused by the players can become potent annoyances or even full-fledged villains if players take too much without giving back. As a rule of thumb, players should get no more than 1,000 Flats worth of equipment or resources from an ally without having to immediately do them a favor or give them some remuneration.

Ally Motivation Examples

Express Motives

- The ally is a friend from misadventures in the past and helps out when she can.
- The PC joined the ally's organization and gets membership privileges in exchange for dues or making his expertise available.
- The ally is a family member who wants the PC to succeed in the world
- The ally wants to know more about a subject and requires the PC to regularly report on his experiences
- Religious reasons (PC is on a holy quest, a pilgrimage, or extended ritual) require the NPC to support the player's activities.
- Professional courtesy between peers allows the PC to ask favors of the NPC that will be repaid later.
- The NPC operates a broker business that loans resources out on a trade basis to members or clients and refers them to one another as needed.
- The NPC feels they owe the player a debt and is repaying it.
- The ally is an agent who sees promise or talent in the player and seeks to invest in his development for future shares of his success.
- The NPC has mystic knowledge that the player is Fated and is helping her fulfill her destiny.

Ulterior Motives

- The PC is last of a bloodline, clan, or lineage and must remain alive until a certain event occurs.
- The NPC committed an act in the past against the PC and is helping out of guilt.
- The NPC is using the PCs to weaken a rival.
- The NPCs commit acts that would stain their reputation and are using the PCs as scapegoats to take the blame.
- The ally is in love with the player and is too shy or afraid of rejection to reveal it.
- The NPC is actually the player's parent or grandparent but keeps this from him or her.
- The ally is a recruiter for a secret organization and is testing the PC to see if he is worthy of joining it.
- The player is the only one who can perform a special task or divine hidden information that the ally desires.
- The player knows or possesses something that is a danger to the ally, who wishes to keep track of the player to ensure he does not use it against him.
- The NPC is experimenting with the PC and tracking his reaction to situations and stimuli for a project of her own.

Villains

In *The Secret of Zir'An*, the most challenging opponents faced by the players shouldn't be rampaging, mindless Shadekin monsters, dangerous terrain and inclement weather, or the traps laid by ancient civilizations to protect their secrets. Thinking, acting individuals should present the greatest threat to the players' plans and livelihoods. Though there are monsters aplenty in Zir'An, a thinking, motivated villain is by far a greater and more satisfying challenge to a groups of adventurers. Depending on how intelligent, powerful, and influential these NPCs are, they may require more preparation and effort on the part of the HoF, but this effort will be rewarded by the players' reactions to a recurring, vivid arch-enemy that they strive to avoid and/or defeat.

Give players the chance to encounter their opposition in some way before duking it out; being exposed to their opponents without confronting them enhances the rivalry between the two. The players might intercept a communication over telegraph, listen to a rant on a reconnaissance mission, or simply be taunted by an overconfident villain who wishes to toy with them for awhile before leaving and continuing with nefarious plans.

Villain Power Levels

NPC enemies appear in a few different levels, representing increasing power, complexity, and effort on the HoF's part to create and run them.

- **Mook:** A term borrowed from Hong Kong cinema, these mobs of NPC lackeys are no match for the players even in groups (see the Mook Mob optional rule sidebar).
- **Encounter:** An NPC who presents a one-time challenge to the PCs, like a guard, cultist, or mage. Powerful enough to have his own abbreviated stats but not smart enough to run when he's losing, he doesn't have much personality and, if reduced to zero General Wounds, is considered dead. He has a Character Creation Point value of 50–75.
- **Superior:** A villain of greater guile, like the lieutenant of a Drakani tank corps or a

minor agent of the Carosel, who may last through a few encounters with the PCs. He may even temporarily defeat them. These villains always work for a greater enemy, though usually they are not happy with their lot in life, and may even be turned to the players' side of things with the right role-playing! Superior villains generally have one Item of Power and a group of Mooks and Encounter-level NPCs they command, with a Character creation point value of 100–150.

- **Campaign-class:** These villains are truly powerful, even to the point of being Fane or members of the dreaded Ungold. They are generally responsible for a lot of trouble in the player characters' lives, and defeating one is the climax of a series of game sessions. They generally possess at least one Elite level skill, two or three Items of Power, and the resources to command a few Superior- and many Encounter-level enemies against the players. CCP values of 200 and up are appropriate to these villains.

Optional Rule: Mook Mobs

To run a mob of Mooks, run the group as one NPC while describing it to the players as if the group was several individuals.

- A Mook mob has a combined Vitality rating equal to the number of Mooks in the mob.
- It also has a Reaction and Speed Stat equal to its Vitality Points.
- A mob also has a Melee or Unarmed skill and damage rating, based on the weapon every member carries or the degree of their Unarmed training.
- Finally, the mob has an Armor rating based on the standard armor all in the group wear.

When fighting the player characters, they attack as a group, and if they succeed they do their base damage plus any successes if they rolled over their difficulty. Damaging a mob of Mooks is conducted the same as attacking an individual, except there are no hit locations and for each Vitality Point done, the player takes out an individual Mook, reducing the mob's effectiveness by 1 Reaction and 1 Speed for every Wound Point delivered. When all the Mook's Vitality Points are gone, the battlefield is littered with bodies, or the bruised and battered Mooks that can be escaping as fast as they can limp away, dragging their unconscious fellows along with them.

Example

The Twenty Red Hand Gang runs a drug operation out of the small Bhuketi seaside town of Yin Pahao. They dye their right hands red to identify themselves and are famous for their Red Roundhouse fighting technique. Their stats are:

*Vitality 20 (20 members of the Gang)
Reaction 20
Speed 20
Attack: Unarmed Advanced 3
Armor: 4av1 (leather aprons)*

NPC Skill Packages

The following skill packages can be used in the creation of powerful enemies or allies of the player characters. As the Hand of Fate, you can allow players access to these packages and special Valdreyr, but probably only in a Legendary campaign.

To create an NPC go through the standard character creation but with a higher Character Creation Cost to suit the power of the individual. Generate base Stat points with the NPC's origin and Legendary Stat bonus, and to go higher simply pay for the Stats as if the Char-

acter Creation points were experience points. Buy the NPC skill packages below, add standard packages from the Secret of Zir'An Core Book, and define their skills, magic, battle arts, martial arts, and Valdreyr using the rest of the points. Their Connections skills give you an idea of what personal equipment they have. Decide on their personality and goals, and give them the means to come close to achieving them - unless opposed or assisted by the players. Use their lifepath as inspiration for how they might have crossed the players' path in the past. In the end you should have an antagonist or ally ready to drop into a dark alley or Adventurer's Club and help or hinder the Chosen at your whim. Valdreyre listed are gained by purchasing the package.

Builder Foreman

When the Builders come under scrutiny, it is the Foremen who deal with the all-too-curious. They are the secret hands that wield the Builder's power, masters of the Builder mysteries who exist only to perpetuate the influence of the ancient guild and protect its knowledge. All used to be simple construction workers - salt of the earth that the secret society knows are implicitly trustworthy and single-minded in their enforcement of the Builder code. They can travel instantly from city to city by mysterious paths, using the magic of Builder structures' secret passages. Adept at vanishing people or information that may threaten their masters, Foremen are so innocuous as to make them almost impossible to identify, even by their victims.

Cost: 45

Years Spent: 10

Aptitude: 3

Language: 2 (Rare)

Skills: 14

Rune Magic Paths: Initiate. Devotee. Scholar

(K) Area Knowledge: Choose x4. Area Knowledge: Zir'An. Lore: Builders. Mechanics. Runemagic x3. Science: Engineering. Tracking: Urban.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: choose. Occupation: Construction. Ranged: choose. Security x2. Stealth. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Builders x4. Intimidation. Intuit.

Valdreyr: Initiated Builder (+3)

The first degree of Builder rank grants +10 to any

Social roll with other Builders.

Valdreyr: Journeyman Builder (+3)

The second degree of Builder rank grants knowledge of the secret ways in Builder structures. With a successful Intelligence + Knowledge + Lore: Builders test verses Advanced 15 Difficulty the Foreman may travel from any spot to any other in a Builder structure. Each additional person taken with the Foreman increases the difficulty by +1.

Valdreyr: Master Builder (+6)

The third degree of Builder rank grants the following abilities:

Increases to +20 the bonus to any Social roll with other Builders.

Allows instant travel between any city that has an intact Builder structure with a Lore: Builders test verses Elite 25 difficulty. Each additional person taken with the Foreman increases the difficulty by +1.

Carosel Nemesis Avenger

Tales of the Carosel's Nemesis Avengers are the kind of stories that criminals scare their children to sleep at night with. Reputed to be a creation of Lord Night himself, these agents perform their duties only on welsers, cheats, and squealers who directly offend the Carosel. They assassinate those that choose to double-cross the Carosel, taking great care to make an example of the unfortunates' death that will discourage other associates and organizations - among thieves in the Carosel's employ the Nemesis Avengers enforce honor. It is said they complete their task even if slain - they rise again as an animated corpse or phantom until it has fulfilled its murderous mission.

Cost: 40

Years Spent: 6

Aptitude: 2

Language: 1 (common)

Skills: 16

(K) Area Knowledge: Zir'An. Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: Poison. Lore: Criminal. Tracking: Urban. Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: choose x4. Security. Stealth x2. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Carosel x2. Connections: Crimi-

nal. Intimidation. Intuit.

Valdreyr: Finish the Job (+10)

The Nemesis Avenger becomes a Risen Dead if they are slain but their body is not dismembered or destroyed. If the Risen Dead form is destroyed or the body is reduced to ash or small pieces, they become a Phantom and continue to pursue their target with the bodies of others. Once the job is complete they expire permanently if in undead form.

Edyssian Alienist

A new breed of police, the Alienist is a criminologist who applies physical and mental science to the investigation of crime. Primarily found in Edyss (whose criminals tend to be extremely intelligent and elusive), many other Treaty countries have sent their best domestic and military investigators to the Alienist Academy in Libertei City for training in their highly effective techniques. The Alienist is a scientist of crime. She seeks to know the mind of the criminal through their deeds, to become them in order to predict their next move and apprehend them. Rumors of Alienists who delve too deeply into the criminal mind circulate regularly - and at least one case has occurred where an Alienist was driven to a mad spree of murder because of their deep association with their subject. Nevertheless, Alienists are very effective at catching even the most elusive maniac and thus the program continues.

Cost: 37

Years Spent: 6

Aptitude: 4

Language: 2 (Uncommon)

Skills: 15

Rune Magic Paths: Initiate. Devotee. Scholar

(K) Area Knowledge: Choose. Area Knowledge:

Edyss. Healing. Lore: Law. Lore: Crime. Mechanics.

Runemagic. Science: Forensics. Science: Alienism x2.

Tracking: Urban.

(P) Awareness x3. Meditation. Ranged: small.

Security x2. Slight of Hand. Stealth. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Alienists x2. Connections: Law Enforcement x2. Conversation. Intuit x2. Persuasion.

Valdreyr: Profiling (+2)

When pursuing a criminal, the Alienist may add

+1 to all rolls related to their target for every week they successfully profile them, making an Expert 20 difficulty Lore: Alienism test. They may add an additional +1 to their bonus per 5 successes on this roll. An Alienist may take this bonus for only one target at a time, and switching subjects re-sets the bonus back to zero.

Fledgling Fane

Though Kah eliminated most of the Fane from the world a millennium ago, there always exists the chance that they could emerge again. Scholars who study the pattern of Fane emergence have linked it to the appearance of Shadow Magic, but the difference in scale of power between a Fane and a Shadowmage is so great that it is hard to directly compare the two. One thing is sure, only Ianer become Fane. For the individual afflicted (or blessed) with this power, the very fabric of reality is theirs to shape and change. Mortal minds were not meant for this, however, and as the degree and range of their Fane abilities increase their sanity is lost. Added to this inevitable doom are the many individuals and conspiracies in Zir'An who would destroy or manipulate the fledgling Fane for their own purposes. The fledgling Fane's life is often both difficult and short.

It is important for the Hand of Fate to realize the inclusion of a fledgling Fane, as either a character or NPC, radically alters the course of the Secret of Zir'An world and as such should probably become the focus of the campaign. Newly emergent Fane are potential turning points in the world's history, and should be treated with great consideration.

Cost: 100
Years Spent: 1d10
Aptitude: 10
Language: 0
Skills: 5
(K) None.
(P) Shadow Magic x5.
(S) None.

Valdreyr: Fane (+80)

A Fane develops slowly at first, then faster as they lose their grip on sanity and crack open the secrets of the universe with their power. Like Shadowmages, Fane use start with a pool of Animus equal to their Shadow

Stat. Every time they use their power they must make a Meditation Skill Test of a difficulty equal to their maximum Animus or suffer the Insanity Handicap. If they go Temporarily Insane, the Fane adds +1 to their Shadow Stat and Animus pool. The difficulty of recovery from the Handicap becomes their new maximum Animus. Note that the Fane can automatically make their Meditation Skill Test if their Meditation Finesse Level is high enough and they are not Stressed. The Animus pool recovers as normal, at a rate of 1 point per hour.

A Fane can spend their Animus in the following ways, allocating it instantly at the start of every turn:

- Animus can be added one-for-one to any of the Fane's Stats, enhancing the Stat for 1 hour.
- Animus can be turned directly to successes (1 Animus per 1 Success) in the attempt of any skill. The test succeeds no matter what the roll and the Fane may spend the Successes immediately.
- Drain Animus from another Shadowmage in their Line of Sight at a rate of 1 Animus cost per 4 Animus drained.
- Permanently drain Shadow from one target per Turn by touch, adding it to their Animus pool. This costs 1 Animus per 2 Shadow drained. All Meditation Skill Tests use the new pool value if higher than their normal maximum.

Partnerships Venturist

In the halls of power, it is said the Venturists, the special economic agents of Ianu Voss, toast the world with a flute of champaign in one hand while the other drips with the blood of the oppressed. Entirely accurate, the Venturists are both the most brutal and the most subtle of Ianu Vossian diplomats. They are at times lawyers, spies, blackmailers, enforcers, treaty negotiators, businessmen, and assassins. Directed by the Voss Hilsmon, their mission is to spread the influence of Ianu Voss at any cost, though turning a profit for the home country in the end is always encouraged. Fixers make themselves invaluable to their targets by offering support during time of need (usually artificially created by the Fixer himself) and binding the relationship with

legal and illegal methods.

Cost: 50

Years Spent: 6

Aptitude: 2

Language: 2 (Rare)

Skills: 20

(K) Area Knowledge: Choose x2. Area Knowledge: Zir'An. Lore: Law. Lore: Finance.

(P) Athletics. Awareness x2. Occupation: Management. Ranged: choose. Slight of Hand. Stealth. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Ianu Voss x4. Connections: Criminal. Connections: International Finance. Connections: Choose. Intimidate. Intuit x2. Leadership x2. Persuasion x2. Socialize x2. Seduction.

Valdreyr: The Wealth of Ianu Voss (+10)

By virtue of their status as financial oppressors, Ianu Voss provides Venturists with vast monetary and material resources. The venturist automatically gets a Superior Success whenever using an Ianu Voss connection.

Secret Section Seven Agent

These individuals fight on secret front lines for the very souls of the Treaty nations against the Cult of Mirkule. Above conventional law, the "King's Men" as they are known (though they count both female and male Ianer, Zhalanti, Dolonorri and even Gogachi amongst their ranks) have license to root out the corruptive influence wherever they find it. At time they proceed with the greatest subtlety, at others they charge in, guns blazing, covering up the truth in the aftermath. Their training is rigorous and is known to include a program of Runemagic-enhanced accelerated education and imprinting that makes them faster, smarter, and attuned to the foul scent of Shadekin and Mirkule.

Cost: 55

Years Spent: 8

Aptitude: 5

Language: 5 (Rare)

Rune Magic Paths: Initiate. Unorthodox.

Skills: 30

(K) Area Knowledge: Vallunei. Area Knowledge:

choose x2. Healing. Lore: Shadekin. Lore: Cult of Mirkule. Mechanics. Runemagic. Tracking: Urban. Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Disguise. Driving. Meditation. Melee: choose x2. Occupation: Choose. Pilot. Ranged: choose x2. Security. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed x2.

(S) Connections: Vallunei Royalty. Connections: Secret Section Seven x2. Conversation. Intimidation. Intuit. Seduction. Socialize.

Valdreyr: SS7 Training (+15)

The special Secret Section Seven training and enhancement program has imbued the agent with the following abilities:

- The Agent may take a Superior Success on 1 Personal skill test once per day.
- The ability to detect the scent of a Shadekin or priest of Mirkule with a Perception + Knowledge + Lore test against an opposed Disguise roll. A general area can be checked for the past presence of either by beating an Advanced 15 difficulty, +1 per day the source of has been absent.

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Religions & Cults

Draken Watch

The bells and flowers of the Draken Watch are known through out Zir'An. Green-robed brothers and sisters of the Watch dance and sing as they make their way through city streets and down the dark alleys of the world. They sing of devotion and dance of salvation. It is their belief that the Ushonu, the ancient and mythical creatures of yore who abandoned the world soon after the departure of The Seven, will again return. Upon their return these beneficent and mighty creatures will act as saviors and will restore beauty and peace unto the world They will create a paradise upon this world, known as *Taas*, and populate it with their chosen. The wicked and the unenlightened will be destroyed and only the faithful will be given life ever after.

For the members of the Draken Watch, true enlightenment is only attained through devotion to the Ushonu. Through their songs and dances they show a physical manifestation of their faith. Through their promotion of their cult, they show their dedication to its ideals. Hence, their troupes comb city streets and bazaars recruiting initiates to their cause. They are in a constant state of recruitment, seeking to bring new minds into the Watch. They do this with the noblest of goals in heart. The Draken Watch knows that when the Ushonu return they will punish the wicked and the sinful. All those who do not embrace the Ushonu in their hearts will be destroyed. Hence, the Watch seeks to save the lives of all by recruiting them into the cult.

It is believed that this love for one another often extends beyond the metaphysical and into the realm of the flesh. Orgies and other types of debauchery are apparently not only condoned, but also part of their dogma. Oftentimes they invite potential initiates to join them in these festivities and this leads to even greater number of eager young recruits.

Their members are drawn from all walks of life. The sons and daughters of the nobility often join, but you are just as likely to find a former street beggar as you are a former lord in their ranks. Regardless of their individual backgrounds, members surrender all material possessions to the Watch. It is the Watch that feeds

them and provides for them. This often aggravates many wealthy families who lose their children to the Watch. Whole estates and fortunes are given over unto this cult in the name of the Ushonu.

The cult's greatest presence is in the Treaty Nations and the Southern Empires. How they are viewed depends upon the nation. The cult of the Draken Watch is viewed as a simple nuisance in Arivonne, Ba-Dur, Ballinor, Edyss and Illestan. Ianu Voss has had problems lately with large numbers of the younger nobility joining the cult. This has caused many of the powerful families to call for restrictions against the Watch. The cult has had difficulties in the Merchant Isles because their members keep disappearing in droves and are never seen again. They are forbidden to even enter Bhuket, but Draken Watch missionaries have traveled into the mountain kingdom and met with limited success. The brutal suppression of the cultists once the authorities discover their presence, however, has kept their efforts in check. While all of this recruiting activity draws thousands into the Watch each year, the greatest numbers of recruits come from Talus, whose passionate people tend to embrace the Watch with unmatched zeal.

The enormous wealth and huge numbers of recruits the cult has accumulated over the last millenia is beginning to make many extremely wary of this organization. The cult is so widespread and secretive with non-members that any thorough knowledge of it or its inner workings is limited. The most frightening aspect of this is that the leadership of the cult is a mystery. This massive international organization, with deep coffers and tens of thousands of members, continues to carry out instructions from unknown masters. The fact that no one can seem to gain such intimate knowledge without joining the Watch is what causes many people concern. What is it that the Draken Watch has to hide? Many intrepid minds have wondered this and have attempted to infiltrate the group's ranks. Invariably, these individuals disappear completely or reappear months later in far-flung places dancing, ringing finger bells and spewing praise for the Ushonu.

There are now calls from senior government officials in Vallunei for an investigative inquiry into the affairs of the Drakan Watch. Many nations will be watching the investigation unfold within Vallunei.

Draken Watch Cult Member

Your typical Draken Watch cult member is a young Ianer from a privileged background, intelligent and often educated. He follows the orders of the cult leader without question. He is devoted to the cult and will defend it if he feels it is under direct threat.

PHY: 4 MASS: 4
INT: 6 ACU: 2

Reaction: 6 Speed: 4
Perception: 4 Shadow: 4
HTH damage: 2

Knowledge: 3
 Rune Magic: B
 Tracking, Urban: B1
Personal: 1
 Artisan, musical instrument: B2
 Athletics: B2
 Awareness: B
 Meditation: B3
 Melee, short: B2
Unarmed: B1
 Social: 2
 Conversation: B3
 Seduction: B4
 Socialize: B2

Valdreyr
(Valdreyr of Origin)
Bad Luck: -2
Willful: +4

Many pick up a small number of Lesser Runes while a member of the cult. Typical members may know 1 to 5 Lesser Runes, depending upon how long they've been in the cult. If armed, they will carry small curved daggers (4ap2).

Draken Watch Priest

Priests are the leaders of cells, typically numbering anywhere from a dozen to a hundred followers. Charismatic and highly intelligent, the ability to wield

Rune Magic seems to be a common requirement of the Priesthood.

PHY: 5 MASS: 4
INT: 8 ACU: 6

Reaction: 8 Speed: 8
Perception: 7 Shadow: 8
HTH damage: 3

Knowledge: 4
 Lore: the Ushonu: A2
 Rune Magic: A3
Personal: 3
 Athletics: B
 Awareness: A1
 Meditation: A3
 Melee, short: B2
 Stealth: A
 Unarmed: B3
Social: 4
 Conversation: Ex3
 Intuit: A
 Leadership: A3
 Connive: Ex
 Seduction: Ex2
 Socialize: Ex

Valdreyr
(Valdreyr of Origin)
Willful: +4
Runes
 Lesser Runes: 5
 4 Greater Runes from 3 domains (typically Arroy, Lyiss, and Talse)
 4 Greater Runes from 2 Domains (typically Hrond and Talse)

Typical cult leaders will be armed with nothing but a dagger (4ap2), relying upon their Rune Magic to defend themselves or attack interlopers. Where needed, the cult leader will use her Rune Magic ability to tighten her hold upon the cult members. Illusion runes and other runes that affect mental states are commonly employed.



Cult of Mirkule

“Dark father, grant us this night your might for we seek only to serve. By your will I promise blood, through your glory I pledge faith. Give unto us your blessing and with it we shall bring destruction to thine enemies. Praised is the eternal father.”
— Prayer carved into the wall of a deserted temple of the Cult of Mirkule

“Do not look on me with your false eyes... you, who call yourselves righteous! Who are you to judge me? You sit upon your high chairs and dare condemn me? I can only be condemned by my lord and master... and lo it is not condemnation that awaits me! It is salvation! You pitiful weaklings. Don't you realize? Your walls cannot save you... your guns and planes cannot save you. Oh, no... my friends... my countrymen, the dark father has you already... only you are too blind to see. I call you what you are, heretics! Be damned, the dark father take you all!”

— Excerpts from testimony of Former Illestani police commandant Nihls Vandermann as recorded in court transcripts.

In the dark places, squirming with the foulest of intentions, there lies perhaps the greatest threat to all that is good and descent in the world. A shadowy cult dedicated to the propagation of the dreaded Fane Mirkule has infested many of the civilized nations of Zir'An. It exists in the shadows, its members worshipping their dark master as a god.

Mirkule uses his cult to further his evil machinations and it must be assumed that they play a critical role in his attempts at undermining the Treaty Nations. Much of the focus of the cult's efforts revolves around gaining key political, economic, and social positions in the nations of the Treaty. Manipulation, blackmail, murder, and bribery are all employed in these campaigns. Once members have secured such key appointments, they begin to insert more and more of

their brethren within the organization. This continues until the cult has control of these groups. From there, the cult begins to infiltrate affiliated organizations and continues to spread the infection of Mirkule. In this way, the cult is perfectly positioned to carry out the nefarious plots of its dark lord.

Surprisingly, history has shown that most members of the cult begin as average, unremarkable citizens... people from the very nations that Mirkule seeks to subvert. Why would seemingly normal folk from civilized cultures embrace such a vile sect? The answer is as varied as those who serve dread Mirkule. Many believe in a unified vision of the world. Many believe Mirkule is a visionary, whose experiments with Shadekin herald a new era for Mankind with his Shadekin representing the next evolutionary step for Ianer. Still others believe that he is, in fact, a god and seek to serve him in exchange for life eternal.

Whatever their motivations, the followers of Mirkule seek only one thing, to serve their dark lord. And this relationship between lord and servant is simple. They give unto Mirkule absolute loyalty and obedience and he rewards their devotion with special gifts, favors and the promise of life eternal. These gifts can take many forms: the cultist by chance comes into some money; he gets promoted at work over far more qualified coworkers; he gains a minor magic item that allows him to expand his powers. Each of these rewards can be disguised as mere happenstance, yet careful investigation may sometimes reveal what is really going on. The hidden cultists of Mirkule oftentimes seem to the outside world to live charmed lives. They have everything their society covets: wealth, a loving family, and a prominent career. Only later, after they have carried out their diabolical deeds do the authorities recognize the dark taint of the cult. Only after they have killed, ruined, and manipulated do their friends and neighbors shake their heads in disbelief and insist there must be some mistake.

For the most evil and corrupt, dread Mirkules' rewards can be far more twisted. It is known that he grants certain Chosen Shadekin traits. The cultists acquire bizarre appendages, epidermal transformations, terrible mind powers, or even superhuman strength. These marks of Mirkule are always carefully hidden by his faithful in the outside world but displayed proudly

amongst other cultists. Regardless of the type of trait, these evil servants always use their newfound powers in the service of their dark master.

The Cult consists of local cabals ranging from one person to upwards of 20 individuals. The cabal is always led by a High Priest. This High Priest has usually served the cult for many years and is almost always a Runemage or Shadowmage possessing several Shadekin traits. Regional Cabals are overseen by a Prelate who is almost always so altered by his Shadekin mutations that he can no longer disguise his appearance without the aid of magic. Cultists usually have a shrine to Mirkule somewhere in their residence and each cabal has a temple located locally. These temples are both headquarters and places of worship allowing the cabal freedom from prying eyes.

Authorities in Vallunei and Illestan are very aware of this black cult and go to great lengths to seek out this corruption. Much of our knowledge of the Cult of Mirkule, however, comes from the brave investigations of Adventurers in the Treaty nations of Illestan and Vallunei. Operating beyond the bureaucracy and control of the conventional authorities, these Chosen of Fate have scored some of the greatest victories against the cult. Adventurers exposed the corruption of the Valluneian Ministry of Trade in 2997 and the presence of cultists in the Illestani national police force in 3011... if there is any chance of thwarting the cult and its growing power, it rests with these intrepid bands of investigators.

Mirkule Cultist

Cabal members are fanatical and very nearly insane. Though they live behind the facades of normal lives, in their roles as a cult members, they will commit any atrocity, any cold-blooded act of murder if commanded by their High Priest. All maintain a rigorous training program to hone their killing skills.

PHY: 6 MASS: 5
INT: 6 ACU: 6

Reaction: 8 Speed: 8
Perception: 6 Shadow: 6
HTH damage: 3

Knowledge: 3
Tracking, Urban: A2
Personal: 3
Athletics: A
Awareness: A2
Meditation: A
Melee, short: A3
Melee, medium: A
Ranged Weapon, small: B2
Security: A
Stealth: A
Unarmed: A
Social: 1
Intuit: B2
Connive: B5

Valdreyr
(Valdreyr of Origin)
Cussed: +8

Battle Arts (w.Melee: short)
Sacrifice

Mirkule High Priest

The leaders of cells are highly dangerous individuals. Always, the High Priest will either be a Runemage or Shadowmage. Though they use their powers primarily to keep the activities of the Cabal hidden, they are ferocious combatants and not to be taken lightly. All High Priests are either Expert Runemages or Expert Shadowmages.

PHY: 8 MASS: 7
INT: 10 ACU: 8

Reaction: 10 Speed: 10
Perception: 9 Shadow: 9 (12 if a Shadowmage)
HTH damage: 5

Knowledge: 4
Tracking, Urban: Ex
Personal: 4
Athletics: Ex
Awareness: A4
Meditation: Ex

Melee, short: A
Melee, medium: A
Security: Ex
Stealth: Ex
Unarmed: Ex3

Social: 3

Conversation: A
Intuit: A3
Leadership: A4
Connive: A5

Valdreyr

(Valdreyr of Origin)

Shadekin Trait: The trait given is something that remains hidden most of the time. Only detailed medical examination or the application of the rune Rebuke the Unnatural can bring the trait out of hiding. The traits are generally those that augment the bodies of the High Priests, as they rely on their skills in runes or Shadow Magic as their primary weapon. These traits could be an increase in physical strength (+2 Phy +4 Mass), heightened speed (+2 Reaction. +4 Speed), natural body armor (8av3), or powerful claws and fangs (+6 to HTH damage, ap2).

Shadow Magic Cardinals

Ex. Body. Warp

A. Offensive. Mind

B. Shadow Autonomy. Shadow Self.

Rune Magic

5 Lesser Runes

4 Greater Runes from 3 Domains (Talse. Drandlur. Hronl.)

4 Greater Runes from 3 Domains (Lyiss. Drandlur. Va'an.)

Carries 1-4 Talismans.

Battle Arts (w.Unarmed)

Absorb Minor Melee Damage. Second Wind.

Guilds & Merchants

The Builders

Whether it's the titanic cathedral of Thagyr, the World Father in Ballinor, or even the grand celestial palace of Lhar in Bhuket, the Builders have touched any structure of colossal size and beauty. This elder guild is the unquestioned master of engineering and construction, and it is thought that their skill and creations could rival many of the pre-End War societies' finest constructs.

When the ancient people of Edyss sailed across the seas to settle in their current home, they brought with them distinguished guilds of artisans and craftsmen. These guilds had long histories and the members strong bonds of professional pride and brotherhood. They even included mysterious oaths and rituals in their guilds to bind one another to the brotherhood and its ideals. Many of these guilds faded over the last two millennia as the new world offered increased competition and international trade forced them to restructure their organizations. One guild however, has not only managed to survive, it has grown into an entity of tremendous power and mystical ability.

Through shrewd leadership, unmatched construction prowess and hidden Rune Magic, the Builders have thrived over the last thousand years. To the outside world they are a huge union of builders, masons, and engineers. Even a humble laborer may join their ranks. This group, however, is no simple union dedicated merely to building structures. It is a secret society that through its membership wields powerful political, economic and social influence. Only over the last century has the world begun to realize the reach and power of these Builders.

Twenty-four years ago there was a breach of their secret code. A thief working for the Society of Mirkule stole one of their sacred handbooks. These tomes hold many of the Builders secrets, both ritualistic and organizational. Somehow from there, the book wound up in the hands of one of the cartels of the Merchant Isles. They in turn, sold it to the highest bidder, which turned out to be the University of Vallunei.

Two days after the book arrived at the University, the dean of the school was exposed as an embezzler and the college's library collapsed completely. The sacred handbook was never found in the rubble. Much of our loose knowledge comes from stolen glimpses and notes by those who managed to view the book while it still existed. It should be noted that the hotel-casino operated by the cartel that sold the book collapsed the following year claiming many lives, partially crippling the cartel's operation, and costing tens of millions of flats in damage.

According to the once-stolen handbook, the Builders organization is comprised of seven layers of membership. The most junior brothers and sisters occupy the seventh circle, the lowest rung on the hierarchy. Prestige and power rises in the union as members rise up the seven circles. Only a limited number of persons are allowed in the higher echelons. Sitting atop this secret society is the first circle, otherwise known as the Inner Circle. These seven individuals set policy and determine the course of the union.

The Builders' masterful expertise with large construction projects has brought them contracts from Ianu Voss through Cyroon. Throughout history even Fane rulers have admired and demanded their services. This wide-spread experience, combined with access to all levels of society has contributed to the power of the guild. The Builders know all the hidden secrets of the structures they build. Many times they leave concealed entrances and routes known only to them within the sprawling palaces and fortresses they create. Using these secret passageways, they can gain access to even the most private chambers and conversations of the rich and powerful. The Builders have carefully recorded all the knowledge their brothers and sisters have uncovered over the centuries. The tomes and records of this society are filled with the dark lies and dreaded secrets of many influential people.

The abilities of the guild are reputed to be mystical in nature but it is difficult to tell where the skill of the Builders ends and their magical ability begins. As example, through measurement, observation, and calculations, the Builders can discern if there are secret doors and hidden architectural features present in any given structure. This is not magic; rather, it is based upon mathematics and architectural engineering

principles. However, it is rumored that within their guildhalls, they construct portals that link all of these lodges together via a magical transportation network. Yet, if enemies of the guild ever forcibly search these lodges, the searchers never find any trace of magic or magical energies. From the sketchy information gleaned from the sacred handbook, it is known that high-ranking members of the seven circles are Runemages. Apparently they specialize in runes that can be applied to buildings and construction materials and this allows them to fabricate these portals and hide them from prying eyes. One section of the handbook mentioned "the flow of energy with regard to placement of objects" but little more than that survived the books disappearance.

What is known is that the Builders often incorporate secret signs into the decorations and designs of



Lord Architect Utrekkt von Volger, of Ballinor, rumored to rank highly amongst the Builders.

their projects. This carefully ordinary-looking ornamentation is actually a complex means of communication. Any brother or sister of the guild seeing these markings can immediately comprehend the hidden secrets of any chamber where they are inscribed.

Foreman

These agents serve the interests of the Builders and enforce the secrecy of their techniques. Theirs will be the hands that oppose the players if they delve too deeply into Builder business. Alternatively, they may recruit the Chosen for some mysterious mission, facilitating their journey by using the secret paths of the order.

PHY: 9 MASS: 8
INT: 8 ACU: 10

Reaction: 10 Speed: 11
Perception: 10 Shadow: 9
HTH damage: 5

Knowledge: 4

Area Knowledge: Zir'An Ex1
Lore: Builders: Ex3
Runemagic: A3
Tracking: Urban: B

Personal: 4

Athletics: A2
Awareness: Ex2
Melee: Small A2
Meditation: A
Ranged: Small A2
Security: Ex2
Stealth: A3
Unarmed: A3

Social: 5

Intimidation: A3
Intuit: Ex1
Connections: Builders: El2

Valdreyr

(Valdreyr of Race)

(Valdreyr of Origin)

Initiated Builder (+3)

Journeyman Builder (+3)

Master Builder (+6)

Rune Magic

5 Lesser Runes

4 Greater Runes from 1 Domain (Talse.)

4 Greater Runes from 2 Opposed Domains (Lyiss. Va'an.)

Carries 1-10 Talismans.

Battle Arts (w.Unarmed)

Absorb Minor Melee Damage.

Foremen rely on Talismans for offence and defense. They will have two or three Shield, Bulwark and Turn Missile Talismans and normally wear business suits or tuxedos. If pressed, they do have a hold-out light revolver (7ap2) and ceremonial short sword (9ap2), though they are much more likely to use their extraordinary movement powers to confuse and evade if within a Builder structure.

The Partnerships

Since its birth, Ianu Voss has sought tirelessly to expand its influence in the world. In the early postwar years, it did this by invading its neighbors, but with the rise of the Treaty it spreads its influence now through its commercial enterprises. Where military force would inevitably fail, as it did in the Fire Reaches, the Merchant Isles, and old Irimor, the subtle warfare of commerce proved to be even more profitable to Ianu Voss than its Imperialist past ever was. Conquering admirals were eventually replaced by slick entrepreneurs, the stereotypical "robber baron" of Ianu Voss.

There are hundreds of companies in Ianu Voss, chartered by the elite of the nation's Aristocrats, "partnerships" of powerful families. Many of these Partnerships date back hundreds of years, some all the way back to the birth of Ianu Voss itself. In all that time they've been present at the founding of every post-Fane era economy. When the Treaty banned Ianu Vossan merchant interests from entering their markets, the Partnerships sought a more indirect approach; they invested discretely in myriad companies through layers of intermediaries. Vallunei may condemn any who have open trade with the "slave-supporting Ianu Vossan regime," many would be surprised to learn that Ianu Voss already has strong, if not unbreakable, links to many commercial guilds and companies through-



Sir Stammish Cowl, Ianu Vossan Venturist.

out the Treaty Nations. Follow a chain of connected companies, guilds, and other merchant groups, and it may lead directly to the controlling interest of an Ianu Vossan Partnership. With their wealth comes great influence, even in the Treaty Nations. They use their influence to campaign in the Treaty Senate for an easing of trade restrictions against Ianu Voss, and an easing of the Treaty's attitude toward Ianu Voss as a whole. They do this, of course, through paid proxy.

Traveling throughout Zir'An, with the deep resources of their employers at their command, are their agents. These Venturists are given the task of scouting new opportunities for investment, investigating the status of their holdings, and generally operating as mouthpieces for the Partnership. But they are agents in the truest sense of the word. They operate undercover, and never openly acknowledge to any outside parties their position as representatives of a Partnership. And as covert operatives, they perpetrate acts of corporate espionage in Vallunei and Edyss as well. Both Treaty Nations exceed Ianu Voss in some of their technology, and these advancements are highly sought by Ianu Voss. The Treaty Nations are aware of the threat, but have yet to find little concrete evidence of such espionage.

The Partnerships have deep ties with the criminal underworld as well. Though Ianu Voss has laws banning the sale and distribution of narcotics, many Partnerships have investments in Jabbash fields located in the Merchant Isles and Bhuket. They operate slave auctions in the Merchant Isles, transporting people back to Ianu Voss as indentured servants or for sale to buyers in Dharsus and Bhuket. In Vallunei, the Partnerships have chosen to work *with* the Carousel instead of against it, and so far their relationship has been spot-free. But with so many intermediate entities, Treaty authorities have difficulty linking Ianu Voss or its Partnerships to any criminal enterprises in their lands. The proof may be lacking, but they strongly believe the links are there. Investigating the supposed "Partnership Link" connecting Treaty companies to Ianu Vossan money has proved dangerous to those who've delved too deep. As the Partnerships have strong ties to the Carousel and other criminal organizations, they would naturally kill to keep their secret. As it stands, the Treaty expends considerable resources to investigate the influence of the Partnerships in the Treaty Nations.

The Partnerships are truly nothing less than Ianu Voss itself. The aims of the Partnerships are merely part of a larger plan: Ianu Voss' ambition to replace Vallunei as the preeminent superpower.

Venturist

Leading their family into the world to conduct economic conquest, the Venturist is a ruthless robber baron who exploits people and opportunity with equal zeal. Always Ianu Vossian in origin, the Venturist circulates amongst the rich and powerful and employs the criminal and corrupt to achieve her goals. Chosen who cross their path are either manipulated to the Venturist's advantage or disposed of quickly.

PHY: 6 MASS: 6
INT: 12 ACU: 11

Reaction: 10 Speed: 11
Perception: 12 Shadow: 9
HTH damage: 3

Knowledge: 4

Area Knowledge: Zir'An: A
Area Knowledge: Ianu Voss: Ex
Lore: Torture: A1
Tracking: Urban: B

Personal: 3

Athletics: A3
Awareness: A3
Drive B1
Melee: Medium A2
Occupation: Management A2
Pilot B1
Ranged: Small A5
Security: A3

Social: 4

Connections: Partnerships: E11
Connections: Criminals: A
Conversation: A2
Intimidation: A2
Intuit: Ex1
Connive: Ex3
Seduction: Ex4
Socialize: Ex

Valdreyr
(Valdreyr of Race)
Art of the Deal
The Wealth of Ianu Voss (+10)

Battle Arts (w.Ranged)
Familiar with Weapon (-1 Speed to reload, -2 to disarm attempts).

Venturists find physical conflict both depressing and distasteful. They will almost never allow Chosen or anyone else to confront them directly, preferring to leave combat to underlings. If forced, a Venturist proves capable with the Ianu Vossian Fodorta V10 pistol (12ap2) and the Xavai dueling rapier (8ap3). As a precaution against assassins, they do have all of their clothing treated with Turn Missile CC20 and Bulwark CC 25 Glyph runes, giving all locations but the head armored with 12av3 and turning any missile of less than ap3.

Slavers of Bhuket

Bhuketi slavers are known far and wide for their cruelty and their ability to appear from nowhere and ambush the unsuspecting. This ability is the subject of countless tales and nightmares. These tales are well-founded, for you can never be sure you are beyond the clutches of the slavers and their magically hidden slave routes.

What few suspect is that the B'hai Lhar is actually behind the brutal slavery gangs that plague Zir'An. High in the mountains of Bhuket, Lhar's extravagant existence constantly drains his poor, agriculturally challenged nation. The expense is so massive that the entire economy of Bhuket cannot support the foul Fane's appetite. Centuries ago, Lhar's priest-ministers had to devise new means of income to support their lord's desires. The result was state-supported slave and narcotic trafficking.

The B'hai Lhar have built magical roads known as the Hadha Da Toh, or "Hidden Paths of Gold," to aid their massive slavery operation. The Hadha Da Toh crisscross the continent, and through use of simple runes of deception and clever placement, the roads are not visible to the normal eye. These roads are known only to the slavers, who travel to even the most secure nations of Zir'An unseen. Astonishing accounts of

Bhuketi slavers appearing out of nowhere in the middle of Vallunei itself have been told. Then as quickly as the slavers appear, they retreat within a forest or cave and disappear with their captives, completely evading pursuit.

Lhar's priests also oversee production of Jabbashi, a harmless looking pink poppy with a purple stem. When refined and inhaled, this plant produces Jabbash, a powerful hallucinogen and depressant with terrifyingly addictive qualities. Those who smoke Jabbash experience an hour of absolute bliss, an otherworldly joy and harmony unlike anything else. The severe depression, addiction and headaches that accompany continued use of the drug are often of no consequence to the desperate smokers of the poppy.

Bhuketi slavers have a continuing business relationship with the smugglers of the Merchant Isles. The slavers keep the markets of the Merchant Isles well supplied with slaves and Jabbash, and the gold flows to Lhar's coffers.

Bhuketi Slaver

Tough, heartless men, the slavers of Bhuket drive their caravans hundreds, sometimes thousands of miles back to Bhuket. Though they employ mercenaries and other disreputable types to serve as the muscle in their operations, they themselves are able combatants.

PHY: 5 MASS: 6
INT: 4 ACU: 5

Reaction: 6 Speed: 5
Perception: 5 Shadow: 5
HTH damage: 3

Knowledge: 3
 Area Knowledge, Zir'An: A3
 Lore, Locks and bindings: A5
 Rune Magic: B3
 Tracking, Wilderness: A2
Personal: 2
 Athletics: B2
 Awareness: B4
 Melee, short: B2
 Melee, medium: B3
 Melee, long: B1

Riding: B2
Security: B3
Stealth: B4
Survival: B5
Unarmed: B2

Social: 1
 Intimidation: B5
 Intuit: B1
 Leadership: B3

Valdreyr
Robust (+6).
Rune Magic
5 Lesser Runes (Slave Rune being one).

Slavers tend to wield A'tam Pu (9ap2), or special bludgeoning weapons that they use to subdue potential slaves before capture (12ap1, non-lethal damage). Commonly, they are armored in padded leather (10av1) with a +3/1 Bulwark rune enchantment.

B'Hai Lhar Captain

The B'Hai Lhar often accompany the slaver caravans when on more dangerous missions. They protect the caravan and assist with captures.

PHY: 6 MASS: 6
INT: 7 ACU: 5

Reaction: 7 Speed: 6
Perception: 6 Shadow: 6
HTH damage: 3

Knowledge: 3
 Lore: Hadha da Toh Ex3
 Rune Magic: A2
 Tracking, Wilderness: A3
 Tracking, Urban: A2
Personal: 3
 Athletics: A
 Awareness: A
 Meditation: A2
 Melee, Medium: B2
 Riding: A
 Security: A4
 Stealth: A3
 Survival: A

Unarmed: B2
Social: 3
Intimidation: A4
Intuit: A
Connive: A

Valdreyr
Robust (+6).

Rune Magic.
5 Lesser Runes (Slave rune being one).
Unorthodox. 4 Greater runes from 3 Domains (typically Arroy, Talse, and/or Drandlur).
Carries 1-3 Talismans.

Smugglers of the Merchant Isles

It is said that anything can be found in the Merchant Isles for a price. This saying is very true but not because of the vast merchant fleets that find harbor in the isles. Rather, it is due to the powerful smuggler cartels there. These merchant-criminals have built the largest and most profitable black market in all of Zir'An. Their criminal focus is on smuggling, slavery, drug trafficking and other such trade-related sins. The cartels have built the grandest hotels, resorts and casinos in the Isles. Funneling their money into such activities has allowed them to keep expanding their fortunes and their customer base.

Long ago the cartels and the slavers of Bhuket were at odds as each vied with the other for dominance in the slave markets of the south. Guilefully, a collection of cartels approached the Bhuketi and negotiated a mutually beneficial business arrangement. In this arrangement, the Bhuketi slavers find and transport the slaves to the Merchant Isles and the cartels purchase the slaves and sell them in the slave markets. This allows the Bhuketi slavers to move large amounts of slaves quickly without needing to store them, feed them, and try to find customers to sell them to in the markets. The cartels are used to preparing the slaves for sale and have established customers who are always on the look out for cheap labor.

Currently, the smugglers of the Merchant Isles are facing increased pressure from the Carousel. Carousel

cells are active in the Isles and many in the smuggler gangs have been assassinated by the soldiers and agents of Lord Night. Several cartels have called for a war to eliminate the Carousel from the Isles, while others think a more business-like approach would be favorable, such as the one reached with the Bhuketi slavers. It is unclear how the cartels will deal with Lord Night, but the Carousel will face a tough fight if it continues on its present course. The cartels are so ingrained into local society that a war against the cartels is like a war versus the entire Merchant Isles. It is doubtful that even Lord Night would wish to provoke that fight.

Merchant Isles Smuggler

Merchant Isles smugglers are a colorful lot. Rowdy, hard-drinking, violent, and often despicable, they rely on their numbers to swarm over vessels and cow any aboard, preferring the jobs be over quickly without too much fuss. But they don't ever walk away from a fight.

PHY: 6 MASS: 4
INT: 3 ACU: 6

Reaction: 5 Speed: 8
Perception: 5 Shadow: 5
HTH damage: 3

Knowledge: 2
Area Knowledge, Merchant Isles: B5
Tracking, Wilderness: B
Personal: 3
Athletics: A2
Awareness: A
Ranged Weapon, Fixed: B3
Melee, short: B3
Melee, medium: B4
Occupational Skill, Sailor: A3
Ranged Weapon, small: B2
Ranged Weapon, medium: B
Ranged Weapon, fixed: B1
Security: B3
Stealth: B1
Survival: B3
Unarmed: B1
Social: 2
Intimidation: B5

Intuit: B1
Connive: B2
Socialize: B3

Valdreyr
Eyes to the Heavens
Canny: +2

Customarily, smugglers arm themselves with broadswords (8ap2), simple revolvers (7ap2), bolt-action rifles (10ap3), or breech-load shotguns (12ap1). They seldom wear any armor at all, but some may be equipped with Shield Runes.

Criminals & Spies

The Carousel

“Night is our time. The night surrounds, always pressing inward, forcing torches to fight for their light. You fear the night, we embrace it.”
— Carousel Soldier

It is through quick whispers and foreboding looks that people know of the Carousel. For the Carousel is the name of the largest criminal network in the known world and it is best not to speak too loudly of it or its ways. Its tendrils reach into all of the major criminal activities: gambling, prostitution, drug trafficking, extortion, smuggling, kidnapping, murder, and more. It is led by a shadowy, elusive inner circle of Kahlith Zhalanti, who are legendary for their ruthlessness and cunning.

The Carousel was founded over 150 years ago by a Kahlith Zhalanti whose real name is unknown, but who has come to be known as Lord Night. Lord Night gathered a group Kahlith Zhalanti, known for their amoral and dark ways, and set about building a criminal organization that soon became a force in the underworld of Vallunei.

As the power of the group grew, Lord Night brought non-Zhalanti into the organization, created a

six-spoked wheel of daggers as a symbol, and adopted the name “Carousel.” Sixty years ago, rival underworld gangs outside of Vallunei began to realize the Carousel was expanding beyond Vallunei’s borders and into their territories. A murderous gang war ensued. After sixteen years, the Carousel emerged victorious. Its power and influence exploded across the continent as it absorbed the operations of its fallen enemies. Since then, the Carousel has slowly grown over the last six decades. It has infiltrated the smugglers of the Merchant Isles, cut deals of cooperation with Bhuketi Slavers and even attempted to penetrate the ranks of the dreaded Violet Circle, although this effort has not met with success. Carousel cells can now be found in almost every nation of Zir’An; it has become an international power.

What sets the Carousel apart from other criminal organizations is the vast international presence and the almost religious zeal its core members show towards crime. For the leadership of the Carousel, crime is like dogma unto them. They seek perfection, devotion, and even faith in their exploits. Part of this ethos is the twisted belief that they are a necessary part of society. If not them, then who? Petty amateurs and cutthroats? The members of the Carousel believe they are the elite of the criminal world, and their underworld society has embraced this pseudo-religious feeling. Members take their profession very seriously and live by an unwritten code. This code of the Carousel is cloaked in mystery but what the outside world does know is that the tenets include oaths of loyalty and secrecy to the organization.

One of the strengths of this syndicate is the decentralized nature of its organization. The gangs or ‘cells’ of the Carousel are given great autonomy and operate with their own power structures and territories. Only when Lord Night sends an emissary to either collect his tribute or carry a message do the gangs interact with the higher leadership. The Carousel has loose rules and operations, but there is some organization that can be applied to the whole group. It is known that members called soldiers are the thugs and muscle of the organization. Agents are the infiltrators and money handlers. Soldiers and agents are grouped into cells to carry out their criminal activities. Serios are the lieutenants who run individual cells. All of the cells of a city are commanded by a Zahlka. Zahlkas are virtual lords of their territory, and answer only to Lord Night or his inner

circle.

Of the original Zhalanti gang numbers, investigators guess that only perhaps a dozen remain alive. But, these dozen are capable of terrifying feats. Usually, if there is a traitor within the Carousel that commits a high crime against the organization, one of these Zhalanti is dispatched to deal with the perpetrator. Their executions are legendary because of the brutality and savage pain the victim suffers before death.

Lord Night continues to be the heart of the organization. A warrior-Runemage of remarkable power, Lord Night is the unchallenged master of the Carousel. He has become an almost mystical figure but for those who betray the Carousel he is all too real. The cunning of the Carousel on a strategic scale must be attributed to his deft leadership. His goals and plans for the organization are known only to him, and the Carousel is his machine to command, as he likes.

Carousel Soldier

These criminals serve as the backbone of the Carousel. They collect debts, run scams, break legs, and further the overall criminal plans of the organization.

PHY: 5 MASS: 6
INT: 4 ACU: 5

Reaction: 7 Speed: 6
Perception: 5 Shadow: 5
HTH damage: 5

Knowledge: 1
 Tracking, Urban: B2
Personal: 3
 Athletics: A
 Awareness: A3
 Melee, short: A2
 Melee, medium: B2
 Ranged Weapon, small: B3
 Security: A3
 Slight of Hand: A2
 Stealth: A1
 Unarmed: B4
Social: 3
 Intimidation; A4
 Intuit: A

Connive: A2
Socialize: B2

Valdreyr
(Valdreyr of Origin)

Battle Arts (with Melee: short)
Trick Strike

Carousel soldiers tend to rely on firearms, favoring V'tloc Guardians (9ap2), when dealing with threats, but they do enjoy a good knife fight, with the Illestani Tailek (4ap3) being their favored bladed weapon.

Carousel Agent

Agents are highly trained, the upper echelon of Carousel soldiers. Because they rely on stealth and disguise, they tend to avoid a fight if possible, in order to avoid capture. But if forced, they are well equipped to defend themselves.

PHY: 8 MASS: 5
INT: 7 ACU: 7

Reaction: 10 Speed: 9
Perception: 9 Shadow: 7
HTH damage: 4

Knowledge: 3
 Tracking, Urban: A2
Personal: 4
 Athletics: Ex2
 Awareness: A
 Disguise: Ex3
 Melee, short: Ex2
 Melee, medium: A2
 Ranged Weapon, small: B3
 Ranged Weapon, medium: B
 Security: Ex3
 Slight of Hand: A1
 Stealth: Ex2
 Unarmed: Ex2
Social: 3
 Conversation: A2
 Intuit: A2
 Connive: A5
 Seduction: A

Socialize: B2

Valdreyr
(Valdreyr of Origin)
Willful: +4
Canny: +2

Battle Arts (with Unarmed)
Ignore Pain
Nerve Attack


Agents will settle on using their Unarmed skills to defend themselves, though they are skilled in any number of small and medium melee and ranged weapons.

The L.A.O.

Arivonne has long been the home of resistance and opposition movements to the presence of Ianu Voss in their country. Regardless of the fact that reunification efforts are still being spearheaded by some of Arivonne's leading politicians, the majority of public sentiment is against it. Ianu Voss has continually tried to sway the hearts and minds of the Arivonnean people through its propaganda and even through the threat of military action to force reunification. But opposing every action of the Ianu Vossans is the L.A.O.

The most active of all the resistance organizations, the L.A.O., the *Soldiers of Arivonnean Liberty*, got its start three centuries ago during a particularly turbulent period in Arivonnean/Ianu Vossan relations. The Galliosi had been vanquished. For several decades, it seemed as though Ianu Voss had achieved its aims, and absorption into their nation seemed inevitable. Inevitable, that is, until the trial of Seddin Vaedall. Seddin was a former Arivonnean captain in the air corps, who had long-standing outspoken objection to the presence of Ianu Voss in his country. His opinions were likely the chief contributing factor to his dismissal from the air corps. In his post-career days, he gave lectures and organized peaceful demonstrations through the Delru Arivonnis, earning him the unfavorable attention of Ianu Voss and its well-paid cronies in the Arivonnean government. So successful was he in reviving public sentiment against Ianu Voss, that plans were made to remove him from the public eye, permanently. But assassinating the popular public figure would have raised





too many questions.

In 2716, the largest demonstration organized by the Delru Arivonnis turned ugly, when what began as a peaceful march turned into a riot. Demonstrators clashed with police and Ianu Vossan honor guard, who stood watch over their consulates, some of the main targets in the riots. In the chaos, four people died, three of whom were Ianu Vossan consulate guards and the Ianu Vossan consulate general, who had confronted the crowd in an attempt to ease tensions. The picture of the peace-making consulate general being torn down by an angry mob inflamed the Ianu Vossans and their Arivonnean allies, and when it came time to punish those responsible, Seddin was made the sole target. What incited the Arivonnean people so greatly was Seddin's transport back to Ianu Voss for trial, an act deemed highly suspect. In his trial, Seddin was barely given the opportunity to speak while Ianu Vossan prosecutors painted him and his organization as violent seditionists. Over the course of the trial, a secret organization began a propaganda campaign against the trial and Ianu Voss as a whole. Dubbing itself the L.A.O., it issued statements to the newspapers in Arivonne, Ianu Voss, Vallunei, and Edyss, decrying Ianu Vossan abuses and the injustice perpetrated against Seddin and the other Delru Arivonnis members who were included in the criminal charges. As the trial reached its conclusion, the L.A.O. heightened the threatening tone of its statements while remaining completely hidden. When Seddin was charged and sentenced to forty years in a Ianu Vossan work camp, the L.A.O. threatened action against all Ianu Vossan interests in Arivonne. For eight years, while Seddin and his "co-conspirators" labored in the work camp, the L.A.O. remained a secret organization that did nothing more than issue threatening statements to the media, demanding the release of all Arivonneans in Ianu Vossan custody and an end to Ianu Voss' attempts to annex its country. When Seddin was killed in the work camp, the L.A.O. claimed that he had been assassinated and vowed revenge.

From that day, the L.A.O. has been a painful thorn in the side of Ianu Voss. Its first act after Seddin's death was to set fire to the warehouses of Ianu Vossan merchant groups inside Arivonne. This coordinated act of arson was carried out on a large scale, striking Ianu Vossan merchant holdings in over

a dozen places throughout the country. The members of the L.A.O. were so adept at covering their tracks, no one was ever charged for the crime. The L.A.O. never hesitated to take responsibility for its acts of sabotage, always delivering statements to that effect the following day. Even now, centuries later, Ianu Vossan commercial holdings and operations in Arivonne have been its primary targets. L.A.O. members have raided Ianu Vossan caravans; they've sunk Ianu Vossan ships at dock; they've stolen and/or destroyed countless Ianu Vossan vehicles and other materiel. In all the centuries it has been active, not a single core member of the L.A.O. has been captured alive. Collaborators and supporters have been taken, but their knowledge of the L.A.O.'s true leadership is kept purposely from them. It is believed that the core membership of the L.A.O. is drawn primarily from the Arivonnean Air Corps and other branches of their military, where anti-Ianu Vossan sentiment is strongest. It also explains the great precision and training that would be needed to carry out its daring acts of sabotage.

There has been a change in the methods of the L.A.O. in recent years. Though Ianu Vossans have died in more than a few of the L.A.O.'s raids, it has never been the direct aim of the L.A.O. to kill anyone. It's never taken hostages for ransom or targeted Ianu Vossans for assassination. But in the last three years, several L.A.O. raids have led to a handful of deaths. Most notably was the attack on a Ianu Vossan air convoy by supposed L.A.O. fighter planes over the Sea of Anjur. Out of eight airships, only two survived to limp back to Ianu Vossan air fields. The others, and most of their crews, crashed and sank to the bottom of the Anjur. The public outcry against these acts has not been as loud as it was in past years, and as Ianu Voss tightens its hold on Arivonne, it is expected that the attacks will only increase in ferocity.

Unlike the Galliosi rebels of four centuries ago, the L.A.O. has acquired wide, if unspoken, popular support, particularly among Arivonne's youngest generation. The Arivonnean government naturally condemns the actions of the L.A.O., and makes a great showing in its attempts to crack down (so far unsuccessfully) on the highly secretive organization. Arivonne's other resistance organizations, the Seddi Kovar and Delru Arivonnis, are together with the government in

their condemnation of the L.A.O.'s extreme tactics, but many believe that there is a great deal of overlap in the membership of these groups. Only a widespread, yet unseen, support network has managed to keep the membership of the L.A.O. a secret, and the location of their hidden bases a mystery. The belief that many of the L.A.O. are or were members of Arivonne's elite air corps comes from the accounts of their dogfights against Ianu Vossan pilots, of whom only a handful have ever come close to matching the pilots of the L.A.O. The signature yellow and black planes of the L.A.O. have become the bane of Ianu Vossan airships throughout the south. Ianu Voss' loss to the pilots of the L.A.O. is the primary reason driving their stepped-up the training programs in its own air corps.

L.A.O. Saboteur

Adept at piloting nearly any aircraft and expert at demolitions and security, the L.A.O. Saboteur is a secret hero to the Arivonnean people. Chosen may find it difficult to decide which side of liberation they support in the face a Saboteur who thinks nothing of sacrificing the lives of innocents to make a statement of political terror as the vise of Ianu Voss tightens on Arivonne.

PHY: 10 MASS: 6
INT: 9 ACU: 12

Reaction: 11 Speed: 16
Perception: 11 Shadow: 9
HTH damage: 4

Knowledge: 3

Area Knowledge: Zir'An: A
Area Knowledge: Arivonne: Ex
Mechanics: A
Science: Aeronautics
Science: Explosives: A3

Personal: 4

Athletics: A2
Awareness: Ex2
Drive: A1
Melee: Short B2
Melee: Long A2
Occupation: Miner A
Pilot: El4

Ranged: Medium A3

Ranged: Heavy A3

Ranged: Fixed Ex2

Stealth: A4

Security: Ex2

Survival: B3

Social: 4

Connections: L.A.O.: El1

Connections: Arivonne: El1

Intimidation: Ex4

Intuit: A2

Valdreyr

(Valdreyr of Race)

Weather Sense

Military Rank: L.A.O. Officer (+5)

Luck (+4)

Battle Arts (w.Ranged: Fixed)

Manufacture Ammunition.

Armed with the traditional Arivonnean weapons, the LaMakao Carbine (14ap2 or 15ap1 + 10ap1 10' radius incendiary rounds) and Eshuka (13ap2), the L.A.O. Saboteur is primed for battle. They become even more deadly when piloting an aircraft, however, as most are triple-aces or better, and well experienced in sinking Ianu Vossan battleships and blowing up airfields. They commonly wear light leather armored flightsuits (8av1 all locations). All usually have some sort of explosives with which to complete their mission, from grenades to pack charges to wing-mounted bombs.

ჟუხევეუჩჟუჩ ზბთხზეუ თრ ჟუჰეჟუ
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 ანე ნეხბ თრ მ ჟბთბბუხ მჩხჩჟე
 მჩხბბ მშბბბე ანე მუჰეჰმბე თრ ანე
 მბბ ბეუბეჰბ თრ ანე ჟეჰჟუბეჰბ. ანე
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Tzerte Viazhe, “The Violet Circle”

None are more feared in all of Zir’An than the dreaded members of this cabal. Based upon the ancient beliefs and rituals of a long dead cult, these Shadowmages are reviled throughout the world for their cruelty and maliciousness.

Originally this order was founded by the few survivors of the fall of the Society of Merkulian. According to the Tzerte Viazhe lore, their founders were survivors from the Society of Merkulian who managed to escape the destruction of Dark Fall. They fled as far as the modern day Dominion of Drakan and built a temple to store all their dark knowledge. The Temple of Aldarix stood as a great library of evil dedicated to destruction, pain, and suffering. These refugees from the Society of Merkulian did not survive the dark winters however, and they disappeared from all records and history some time before the winters end. Thousands of years later, runemages from the Kingdom of Casseonae unearthed the Temple of Aldarix and eventually unlocked its diabolical secrets. These first dark wizards established the Tzerte Viazhe cabal and kept it hidden from the good and noble peoples of Casseonae. During the rise of General [name excised], the Violet Circle saw an opportunity to use the General to seize control of the empire and then manipulate him as their puppet. Unfortunately for the cabal, the general was to become the Voivodh, and once in power, he had no use for their scheming ways.

After the Voivodh seized control of the Dominion, he led a great purge of his enemies and his one-time allies to solidify his hold on power. He left no one alive who was capable of threatening his rule.

The Voivodh ruthlessly hunted down the Violet Circle and slaughtered them and then sealed the temple of Aldarix within its mountain, fusing rock with the hillside. Once again, the evil magics of the Violet Circle faded from history.

But the Voivodh would eventually resurrect to the Tzerte Viazhe. Toward the end of the War of the Fane, the savior Kah engaged the Voivodh in battle on two separate occasions, first in Vallunei and then in Ballinor. Kah defeated the Voivodh and rolled back his legions. The Voivodh, shaken by these two defeats, retreated into the Dominion. These stinging failures

would not soon be forgotten by the Voivodh. He realized that his power alone was not enough to stop Kah. The Voivodh turned to a familiar ancient evil to forge a powerful weapon that he could wield against his nemesis. He reconstructed the temple of Aldarix and personally rebuilt the Tzerte Viazhe. Now the Tzerte Viazhe serve him as the ambassadors, inquisitors, advisors and secret police of the Dominion. They act unquestioned within the Dominion, so great is the fear of their cruelty, power, and raw malevolence.

The Voivodh has created a legion of powerful wizards that at the appointed hour will turn the tide in his final battle with Kah. With his plans however, came a curse. Once he unleashed the power of this dark magic, those it touched became consumed with the need to gain more and more power. The people who are predisposed to this foul behavior are by their very nature, evil. Hence, they have their own ambition, plans, and agenda. The Tzerte Viazhe have been a stunning success, as they are truly a power upon the world stage but they are also the greatest threat to the Voivodh’s rule. Four different times throughout their history they have attempted to overthrow their master. Each time the Voivodh has prevailed yet he must stand ever vigilant.

Members of the Violet Circle are concerned only with power. The powerful magic they learn as runemages or shadowmages is not enough. They seek even greater power and they do this by creating and harnessing negative energy. They create this negative energy through horrific acts of evil. There are reports of mass murders, torture and even the sacrifice of their own families to fuel their dark power. The negative energy created by their vicious acts feeds the magical power that they can command. One can always tell a member of the Violet Circle by the ring-like mark of burst blood vessels that adorns his brow. This ring develops as a byproduct of channeling of such vast amounts of negative energy.

Their organization is highly organized with many layers of bureaucracy and is rife with political conflict. Constant infighting and assassination diverts much of the Tzerte Viazhes’ energies, and this is exactly as the Voivodh wishes it. If the entire Violet Circle ever truly stood united against its master, it would be a fight that would be worthy of a Fane.

Tzerte Viazhe Dark Magi

All Tzerte Viazhe are shadowmages, most of whom also possess the knowledge of Rune Magic, making them truly frightful opponents. Coupled with their sheer delight in inflicting suffering, one should avoid the Violet Circle at all costs. It is feared that a number of Tzerte Viazhe magi are active in the Treaty Nations. Because they require secrecy to continue operating in the Nations of the Treaty, they would ruthlessly hunt down any who had discovered their presence.

PHY: 5 MASS: 5
INT: 10 ACU: 8

Reaction: 8 Speed: 8
Perception: 9 Shadow: 10
HTH damage: 3

Knowledge: 4
 Lore, Torture: Ex2
 Rune Magic: A2
 Science, Poisons: A1

Personal: 4
 Athletics: B2
 Awareness: A
 Meditation: Ex4
 Melee, short: B2
 Shadow Magic: Ex3
 Stealth: A2

Social: 3
 Intimidation: A5
 Intuit: A3
 Connive: A2

Valdreyr
Life of Agony

Rune Magic
5 Lesser Runes
Scholar. 4 Greater Runes from 2 Domains (typically Arroy and Va'an, or Talse and Paran).

Shadow Magic Cardinals
Ex. Offensive. Phantasm
A. Defensive. Movement
B. Body. Shadow Autonomy

Tzerte Viazhe always rely on their magical talents to defend themselves. They are often in the possession of Talismans of Va'an, to protect themselves from Rune Magic, or Items of Power, such as Shadow Prisms or Anima Devices (*q.v.*)

Kagda Dovra

The Kagda Dovra began as the ambassadorial arm of the Kingdom of Cyroon, and to this day they act as King Cyroon's diplomats and foreign ambassadors. Yet in addition to their diplomatic role, they have also been given a much more important mission. They serve as their King's sole trade ministry, negotiating contracts and establishing trade agreements with foreign lands.

However, the Kagda Dovra has another role different from either of its two public ones. They are King Cyroon's spies. The King is under constant pressure by his keeper and ally, dread Mirkule, to provide knowledge of the goings-on in the Treaty Nations. Cyroon is charged with intelligence gathering for the empire and serves as the eyes and ears of the Tilerian Hegemony.

Long ago, the thief guilds of Cyroon were able to infiltrate the nations of the Treaty, establishing smuggling, racketeering, and loan-sharking operations in the heart of Vallunei and Illestan. These thief guilds paid tribute to King Cyroon in the form of information, and in exchange he would allow their guilds to operate out of Cyroon unmolested. Over the last four decades, however, the thief guilds of Cyroon have been challenged and driven out of business by the shadowy Carousel. King Cyroon has had to shift his focus, and has built his Kagda Dovra into a potent intelligence force.

Under their official guise, the royal emissaries of the Kagda Dovra travel across Vallenei, Ballinor, and Illestan, constantly discussing trade and contracts with the leaders of these lands. Part of the Kagda Dovra's strategy is to never sign a long-term contract. This would limit their ability to move freely across the Treaty Nations as a whole. So, instead, they quibble and negotiate over yearly contracts, and make things generally drawn out so as to prolong the amount of time they must stay within their host countries. This is frustrating to the nations who deal with them, for they know quite well that the Kagda Dovra are spies as well as trade officials.

If it is common knowledge that the Kagda Dovra



is collection of spies, then why are they even tolerated by civilized lands? The answer is simple: fuel. The advanced nations of the Treaty require kluuzhe to power their engines of technology. The distillate of Edyss is far too expensive for large industry and Cyroon for all its bleakness and wasteland has the deepest deposits of kluuzhe known. The Treaty nations, with the exception of Edyss, are dependant upon Cyroon for this fuel. This concerns many within the leadership of the Treaty. For some time now, the governments of these nations have sought an alternative to King Cyroon and his spies, but for now, they must deal with the never ceasing negotiations, arguments, and spies.

Even more troubling than this dependence is that fact that many nation-states within Vallunei have now begun to negotiate their own separate trading agreements with the Kagda Dovra. Nation-states such as The Seven Princes and The Glories cite their need to

ensure their provinces get a fair share of kluuzhe rather than having it doled out by the national government in Vallunei proper. The rulers of the nation-states, in their campaign for more autonomy, have struck increasingly interesting deals with the Kagda Dovra. Oftentimes they have secured shipments of kluuzhe well below the going market price. The central government of Vallunei can only guess how the provinces secured such prices from the shrewd negotiators of the Kagda Dovra. Perhaps it was more than money that traded hands, for the Kagda Dovra values information above all else.

Members of the Kagda Dovra are recruited from the thief guilds that still exist in Cyroon. Only the finest charlatans, cutthroats and manipulators make it within the Kagda Dovra's ranks. It is said that in order to be recruited into the Kagda Dovra, each member must have personally killed with their bare hands at least one intelligent being. King Cyroon himself



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enforces this stipulation claiming that only through this act can he truly believe someone has the viciousness to serve in the Kagda Dovra.

Kagda Dovra Spy

The spies of the Kagda Dovra excel at blending in and collecting information, which they pass along to their superiors. They rely on their own stealthy abilities and a network of connections who supply them with information. Though they deal primarily with information, they also are required to carry out any assassinations the Kagda Dovra might need.

PHY: 5 MASS: 4
INT: 7 ACU: 8

Reaction: 7 Speed: 9
Perception: 8 Shadow: 6
HTH damage: 5

Knowledge: 3
Rune Magic: A
Tracking, Urban: A3

Personal: 3
Athletics: A
Awareness: A
Disguise: A4
Melee, short: A2
Melee, medium: A2
Ranged Weapon, small: B3
Security: A5
Slight of Hand: A4
Stealth: A3
Unarmed: B2

Social: 4
Intuit: Ex2
Connive: Ex3
Socialize: Ex3

Valdreyr
Burglar's Nose

Battle Arts (with Melee: medium)
Trick Strike

Rune Magic
5 Lesser Runes

Unorthodox. 4 Greater Runes from 3 Domains (typically Arroy, Hrond, or Paran).

Kagda Dovra spies prefer firearms to a straight up fight. They do possess Rune Magic, but favor Domains that allow them to disguise themselves or escape from danger quickly.

Secret Section 7

Vallunei's Interior Ministry is in charge of investigating all threats to the Kingdom, and is directed from the Prime Chancellory in Vallunei City. But lying deep within the halls of the Interior Ministry is the unspoken, unheralded Section 7. Section 7 is solely dedicated to eradicating the Cult of Mirkule in Vallunei. It had its birth in 1960, when the presence of the Cult was first detected. A plot to assassinate then King Artuan VIII was revealed and foiled by the King's guardians. A close advisor was found to have been a devoted disciple of their greatest enemy, as were a score of others who worked within the offices of the King. This alarming revelation was kept from public knowledge, as was the creation of the agency whose never-ending job it would be to root out the Cult wherever it may hide. It would answer to the King and thenceforth be referred to as the "King's Men." With the backing of the King and the resources of the Interior Ministry to fall back on, the agents of Section 7 have been given great leniency when it comes to their investigations. With the support of the Interior Ministry, the agents of Section 7 operate alongside the Kingdom's security services whenever the Cult is suspected to be involved. It is their responsibility to not only terminate any cult activity within Vallunei, they are also to keep knowledge of the Cult's presence from the public. The King and the Interior Ministry know the panic that could result were the complete details of the Cult's presence in Vallunei to become public knowledge. The public is aware that there is a Cult of Mirkule operating in their country, but they are unaware of the full breadth of its influence. The existence of Section 7 and its mission must also remain a secret, for to acknowledge Section 7 is to acknowledge that the Cult of Mirkule is a threat to Vallunei.

What distinguishes Section 7 from any other government agency is its relations with the Chosen. The original guardians who protected King Artuan VIII were not merely bodyguards or soldiers of the Kingdom, they were Adventurers, Chosen, who had tracked the Cult's presence to the Kingdom Proper. That event, and their protection of the King, started the long-standing relationship between the Artuan Kings and the Chosen. Section 7 has long been the agency that draws most heavily from this resource, enlisting the aid of spe-

cial Chosen individuals in their plans against the Cult. But the heads of Section 7 are very careful about which Chosen they enlist in the fight. Adventurers can often act in unpredictable ways, directed as they are by larger concerns as the Chosen of Fate, and so only those who demonstrate a dedication to the protection of Vallunei and the elimination of Mirkule's threat find their place in Section 7.

As it is Section 7's job to seek out the Cult wherever it may lie, the agents of Section 7 often find their operations outside of Vallunei entirely. Under the purview of the Interior Ministry, Section 7 has no official mandate to operate outside of Vallunei's borders. To circumvent this, Section 7 will call upon its sizeable roster of Chosen agents, many of whom are not even Valluneian in origin. These Chosen have greater freedom to act outside of Vallunei, all the while following the directives of Section 7. Their agents have tracked cult leaders to the Merchant Isles, eliminated cells in Edyss and Ballinor, and broken up Cult operations throughout Vallunei. But the menace continues to grow. It is estimated that there are over a hundred cells operating within Vallunei alone, and that their membership can reach up into the very halls of government power (as evidenced by the discovery in 2997 of the Cult's presence within the Ministry of Transportation). It is feared that if the secessionist movement growing in the Inabi States and other Nation States of Vallunei comes to pass, the Cult of Mirkule will have an easier time penetrating the Kingdom and striking the very heart of the Treaty.



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SS7 Agent

Trained to root out the Cult of Mirkule in the Treaty Nations and beyond, the King's Man is Vallunei's best of the best. Each keeps their true mission and identity a secret, though they might reveal it to those they are in need of help from. Each actively pursues Chosen in a variety of overt and covert ways in order to recruit them in the fight against Mirkule. The rest of their time is spent investigating cult activities and leading raids. Note that all of the King's Men are not necessarily male - many female agents exist as well.

PHY: 13 MASS: 8
INT: 10 ACU: 13

Reaction: 12 Speed: 18
Perception: 13 Shadow: 14
HTH damage: 4

Knowledge: 3

Area Knowledge: Zir'An: Ex2
Area Knowledge: Vallunei: Ex2
Healing: A
Runemagic: Ex3
Science: Explosives: A
Tracking: Urban: Ex3
Tracking: Wilderness: A

Personal: 5

Athletics: Ex2
Awareness: Ex4
Disguise A2
Drive: A1
Meditation A
Melee: Short A2
Melee: Medium Ex2
Pilot: A1
Ranged: Small: Ex3
Ranged: Medium: Ex3
Ranged: Heavy: B3
Ranged: Fixed: B1
Security: Ex3
Slight of Hand Ex
Stealth: Ex4
Survival: A2
Unarmed: Ex4

Social: 4

Connections: SS7: E11
Connections: Vallunei Military: E11
Intimidation: A4
Intuit: E12
Connive Ex3
Socialize Ex1
Seduction Ex4

Valdreyr
(Valdreyr of Race)
Cosmopolitan
Military Rank: SS7 Agent (+10)
SS7 Training (+15)

Runemagic
5 Lesser Runes
4 Greater Runes from 1 Domain (Arroy).
4 Greater Runes from 1 Domain (Drandlur).
Carries 1-10 Talismans.

Battle Arts (w.Unarmed)
Ignore Pain (+3). Trick Strike (+3). Blind Fighting (+6). Nerve Attack (+6). Second Wind (+6).

SS7 Agents are known to be weapons as just themselves dripping wet naked, though their skills with gun, sword, and Runemagic back up their unarmed skill to devastating effect. If in social situations, they usually possess Talismans that can be activated for protection (Bulwark, Turn Missile, Shield, etc.). If loaded for bear on a Cult raid, they commonly wield the Unst Ploddar machinegun (12ap3) or the rare Merkulian Blade Dagger (4ap0 direct Shadow damage), and are armored in Vallunei Police gear (14av2 all locations, 20av3 head). Many Agents are loaned Items of Power for specific missions - with enough lead time (3 to 7 days) they can bring extremely powerful resources to bear on a problem.



Iliana reaches for the elusive Perfect Polygon.



CHAPTER 4

MAGIC

Runecraft

Runes are very delicate and more often than not, short lived. For the short-term, runes are created, perform their desired function, and then fade away, but in many cases Runemages will wish to create runes of lasting power. A rune specifically crafted for longevity can be made to last years, even centuries, when scribed with a Stylus. But as stated earlier, runes are very delicate, quick to be disrupted and their energy dispersed. At its essence, a rune is nothing more than a web of energy willed into being by the Runemage, as ephemeral as a smoke dragon, but when a rune is crafted as a physical object it gains permanence and durability. This is called Runecraft or Artisan Runemagery, or to some scholars of Rune Magic, it is known as the Fifth Form.


Similar to the process a Runemage undergoes to create her Stylus, objects of Runecraft gain power from the focused will and creative energies of the Runemage. Laypersons often confuse Talismans or Fetishes with Runecrafts. While Talismans are physical objects that are endowed with a rune, they require no artistic skill to craft and are often objects that were previously acquired before being enchanted, and as such did not have the Runemage's creative powers aiding their construction. Objects of Runecraft, however, require the combining of two skills, that of a Runemage and that of an Artisan, to fashion of object of lasting power. Natu-

rally, Runecrafts require a long period of time before they are completed, and once begun the Runemage must not stop until finished, lest it lose its power altogether. This degree of personal investment only adds to the power of the rune.

Runecraft Systems

Creating an item of Runecraft is similar to creating a rune in one of the Four Forms. The player decides what Artisan skill they are putting toward the attempt, and it must be an Artisan skill that can be applied toward the creation of an object or piece of art. Singing and Performing are included in the Artisan skills, but such talents as Engraver, Goldsmith, Blacksmith, or Sculptor are more applicable.

When starting on their Runecrafting, the Runemage must gather the appropriate materials, the cost of which depends solely on the whim of the Runemage, and has no relevance to the end result. Once the Creation Time is completed, the player first makes her Artisan skill test. Creating a piece of Runecraft is an Expert (20) Artisan skill test. If successful, she has successfully created a physical representation of the desired rune. Being successful



grants the Runemage a +5 CV bonus to her subsequent Runemagic roll. If her Artisan Skill Test results in a Superior Success, the CV bonus is +10. If she fails her Artisan Skill Test, the creation is flawed and will not hold the Ylar of the Rune. After succeeding with her Artisan skill test, she makes the standard Rune Magic skill test, treating the result as though she were casting the rune as normal. If she succeeds in her Rune Magic skill test, she has successfully imbued the object with the power of the desired rune.

There are two types of Runecraft, those that resemble Talismans and those that resemble Glyphs. Runecraft Talismans are simply Rune-enchanted objects created entirely by the Runemage. Runecraft Glyphs are large runes that use a physical medium to form the rune, Glyphs made from inlaid mosaic tiles for example. The rules governing these two Forms, in regards to the dimensions of Zone effects, number of Instantaneous uses, etc., are identical to their standard Forms. The main distinctions are these:

- Runecraft Talismans take 3 days of unbroken work to complete. The Runemage must not scribe any other runes during this time or the connection to the Runecraft object is broken and must begin again. Once done, the following 3 days must be spent in recuperation, during which time no new runes may be cast, even if desired.
- Runecraft Glyphs take a number of days to create equal to the number of hours a standard Glyph would take to create. Because of the heavy toll such an endeavor would have upon a Runemage, seldom do they do so without help or magical aid. Once completed, they must spend a week recuperating and cannot cast any runes for two weeks.
- The number of uses for Instantaneous runes recharges at a rate of 1 use per day. This can be increased to 2 uses per day for a CC of +5, or 1 use per hour for a CC of +10.
- Runes with the Continuous attribute will remain active unless "turned off" by the creator Runemage.

- Runecraft items are not subject to Blight or Runebreach runes (q.v. Runes of Va'an). Only the physical destruction of Rune crafts will permanently disable them.

LESSER RUNES

These additional Lesser Runes are more specialized and closely held by those that know them than those described in the Secret of Zir'An Core Gamebook. The Hand of Fate is encouraged to use them to motivate Runemagic characters to seek out information and training about these surprising and useful Runes.

Common Guide

Creation Cost: 15, Creation time: 5 minutes, Duration: Five days

Though it takes five minutes to inscribe a Guide rune, any Guide runes the Runemage creates will react to each other by their physical proximity. Objects that bear a Guide rune will grow warmer the closer they are to each other, cooler as their distance grows. To best take advantage of this effect, Guide runes are generally inscribed upon something small, such as a stick, a rock, or a piece of jewelry. Often used by parents to keep track of their children, explorers to safely guide them back to their camp, or farmers to find their stray livestock, the effective range of the Guide rune is 1 mile.

Timekeeper

Creation Cost: 10, Creation Time: 20 Seconds, Duration: Special

This rune finds use in many lands and for many purposes. Its execution is incredibly simple and once created the Runemage sets the rune for a specific amount of time, an hour, a day, even years. When this time has elapsed, the rune explodes in a harmless bang of sparks.

Rare Slave Rune

Creation Cost: 20, Creation Time: 1 hour, Duration Permanent

This despicable rune is widely used by the Slavers of Bhuket and the Theocracy of Dharsus. Head harnesses are usually made with slave runes, or some slaves even have slave runes branded or tattooed onto their bodies. The Slave Rune is illegal in all civilized countries, including all of the Treaty Nations. Using one, or even possessing one carries dire penalties in the lands of Vallunei and Edyss. Those under the effect of this rune will follow every command given them by the creator or owner of the rune, even if their mind refuses, their bodies will be compelled to obey. Resistance to this rune often develops after about a year, requiring the reapplication of a new slave rune.

Very Rare Madness

Creation Cost: 25, Casting time: 3 hours, Duration: Special

A rune that is rumored about far more often than it is actually seen; its origin lies in the Dominion with the Tilandri. The process of fashioning the rune is a complicated one and requires the lesser Runemage to inscribe it with her eyes closed lest she suffers its effects. Those who come within sight of the rune will become confused and may exhibit erratic behavior or repressed tendencies, sometimes violently, if they fail an Acuity + Personal + Meditation roll of 20 (afflicted by the Insane Handicap). They will suffer this for as long as they remain in sight of the rune, but once out of sight, the madness will fade in a number of minutes. The rune itself lasts for one day and then vanish.

Vision

Creation Cost: 20, Casting time: 1 hour, Duration: 1 day

This complex rune allows its creator to see whatever the rune happens to be facing. For this reason people have placed them on jewelry or the walls of buildings, incorporated into paintings, etc., the possible applications are endless. There is no restriction to the range that separates Runemage from their vision rune. A Runemage may employ only one Vision rune at a time, however.

Greater Runes

Those who study Runemagic can call up an infinite variety of effects. The following are more powers that can be the object of a player's quest for knowledge and training or a tool that a villain might confound the players with.

Arroy Phase Shift (target, continuous)

Matter and energy are merely two sides of the same coin, and through Arroy's domain these similar but opposing states can be inverted. Targets of this rune are shifted from a material to an insubstantial state, they appear translucent and can pass through physical obstacles without hindrance. In this state they can see, but cannot hear, touch, or experience the physical world. They make no sound and cannot speak. The physical world no longer supports their form, so walking or running provide no motion at all. Shifted individuals must use their wills to project their insubstantial form through the world and in a very real sense can "fly," rising through the air without restriction. Though runes still function in this form, the Runemage cannot successfully scribe new runes when in this state. The only exception to this are Elite Runemages, who have long since abandoned the need to physically craft runes, doing so exclusively with and within their minds.

Inanimate objects can also be recipients of this rune. Phase Shift Charms, Wards, and Talismans can make insubstantial anything man-sized or smaller. Phase Shift Glyphs can render insubstantial anything that can fit inside of its barriers. Such objects will be semi-opaque and rest immovably at their last position unless acted upon by a shifted individual.

CC Primary Effect

15 Transformation of material to immaterial state as listed above. In combat situations, the shifted individual uses the Finesse Level of their Rune Magic skill in lieu of Athletics to determine how far they can move in 1 Count.

Drandlur

Call Swarm (zone, continuous)

The Domain of Drandlur grants Runemage's control over the lesser creatures of her menagerie. In particular is the ability to summon and direct swarms of insects, even small flying creatures like birds. The swarm is called from the surrounding area and so will be composed of creatures native to the area. Some Runemages find this rune useful in ridding an area of flying pests. Others use it to harass their enemies.

The Runemage can control a summoned swarm, directing it at any targets within the rune's Zone, and on their Turn may move the swarm to a new target or area. Once targets have been selected, the swarm will stay with them without the constant direction of the Runemage. A Runemage could choose not to affect teammates who happen to be in the rune's Zone. The swarm will persist for the duration of the rune. Swarms can be dispersed with smoke or fire. Mundane fire and smoke, like those from a torch, or campfire will reduce the CC of the Primary Effect by 10. If the CC of such runes as the Fire Sign exceeds that of the Call Swarm, the swarm is dispersed.

Environment plays an important part in determining the overall density of the swarm. Lush areas will contain far greater populations of insects than high mountains.

Location	CV mod.
In the air (aboard an airship)	-15
Deserts/Wastelands	-10
Mountainous/high altitude/open seas	-5
Plains/tundra/grasslands	None
Forests/cities	+5
Dense jungle/swamps/marshes	+10

CC	Primary Effect
10	Small swarm. The cloud is sparse and proves to be mostly an annoyance. Targets affected suffer a -2 to all die rolls while affected with the swarm.

15 Large swarm. The buzzing swarm proves to be a powerful distraction; sight is difficult, as is concentration. Targets suffer a -4 to all die rolls and lose 2 points of Speed from distraction. Affected targets also lose their free movement for the Combat Round.

20 Expert Dense swarm. Sight is nearly impossible and all ranged attacks against affected targets are considered surprise attacks. Characters cannot perform any non-combat skills while caught in the swarm, these includes the use of Rune Magic (but not Shadow Magic or Elite Runemages), and suffer a -6 to all combat rolls.

25 Elite Choking swarm. As above, but the swarm can inflict choking damage on the target/s. Each Combat Round, the target/s lose 1 Vitality, ignoring armor. This does not cause Lethal Wound loss, but characters reduced to zero Vitality have suffocated to death.

CC	Secondary Effect
+5	Biting Insects. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). Increase the damage from a choking swarm by 1 GWS (increases with each +5 added to CC).
+10	Venomous Swarm. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). The CC of the rune's Primary Effect is translated as a Poison Potency.
+10	Parasite Swarm. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). The CC of the rune's Primary Effect is translated as a Disease Potency.

Call Wild Creatures (target, continuous)

The allure of Drandlur's power calls the creatures of the wild to it, and the Runemage skilled in her Domain can duplicate this allure. The rune calls to it all natural creatures (not Shadekin), which move toward the rune at their normal movement rate for the duration of the rune. The Runemage is not granted any special control over the creatures that heed the call.

The Runemage may choose to silence the call before the rune's duration has ceased.

Once the creatures arrive at the rune's location, they will wait, wander, or otherwise occupy their time. The law of the wild still rules however, and any carnivores called may choose to devour any prey (animal or adventurer) that they find in the area. Animals may be driven from the area, but will eventually return while the rune is still in effect.

The arrival of the first creature will take at least 1 minute (or 1 combat round). In the first 5 minutes, and for every 5 minutes of the rune's effect, roll below to see what size of creature and how many appear. Naturally, only creatures native to the area are going to appear.

Roll	Result
1-3	none appear
4-6	1d10 small creatures (rats, cats, birds, small reptiles)
7-8	1d10/2 medium creatures (typical forest quadrupeds, large birds of prey)
9	1d10/5 large creatures (bears, large quadrupeds)
10	1 extremely large creature

CC	Primary Effect
10	The call does not extend far. The second time a 01-35 "none appear" roll is made, no more creatures will appear, though those that have will remain for the rune's duration.
15	The call extends far, more than a thousand feet from the rune. The Runemage gains a +10 to the above % roll, but on the third 01-35 "none appear" roll, no more creatures will appear, though those that have will remain for the rune's duration.
20 Expert	The call can be felt far and wide, perhaps for a mile or more from the rune. The Runemage gains a +15 to the above % roll, but on the fourth 01-35 "none appear" roll, no more creatures will appear, though those that have will remain for the rune's duration.

25 Elite The call extends very far and is very strong. The Runemage gains a +15 to the above % roll, but creatures will continue to appear regardless of how many "none appear" rolls are made.

Green Mastery (target, continuous)

Through the power of this rune, the Runemage is truly projecting the aura of the Nature Goddess. This rune allows the Runemage temporary mastery of all plant life. Plants will move at the direction of the Runemage, ensnaring or attacking foes, forming bridges or easing the Runemage's path through dense growth. While under the effect of this rune, the Runemage can move through dense growth at their normal movement rate. They will automatically succeed with any attempts to climb trees, as the branches move to lift the Runemage up and through their boughs. Legends tell of a Drandlurite Runemage who patrolled her forest by walking atop the forest canopy, capable of covering miles in mere minutes.

More powerful still is the ability to grant plants a will of their own, though at the command of the Runemage. Animated plant life can entangle or attack foes. The effectiveness of this depends greatly upon the density of the surrounding plant life. On the Runemage's Turn, they can direct plant life to attack or entangle a single foe in their LoS for 2 Speed. They can direct plant life to engage as many foes on their Turn provided they have enough Speed to do so. The attack roll to do this is the Runemage's Reaction+Rune Magic+1d10. If they fail their defense roll (either blocking or dodging), they suffer attack damage or are entangled, at the Runemage's direction. Attacks made through the use of Green Mastery may take advantage of Universal Combat Effects, to increase damage, target a location, etc. The Lost Garrison, a border fort dating back to the Reconstruction, has lain unclaimed in western Val-lunei since that time because of the dense forest that surrounds it. A forest that actively keeps all trespassers out, sometimes even forcibly evicting the overly curious. It is believed that a massive Green Mastery glyph lies at the center of this, perhaps under the direction of some intelligence determined to keep the Lost Garrison, lost.

Plant Density

Sparse

Entangle: make 1 Advanced athletics skill test, using Mass instead of Physique, each Combat Round to escape.

Attack: none

Open (plains, grasslands, etc)

Entangle: make 1 Expert athletics skill test, using Mass instead of Physique, each Combat Round to escape.

Attack: 10ap1 of whipping, constricting damage.

Forest

Entangle: make 2 Expert athletics skill tests, using Mass instead of Physique, 1 test each Combat Round, to escape.

Attack: 15ap2 of tree whomping damage.

Dense Forest/Jungle

Entangle: make 2 Expert athletics skill tests, using Mass instead of Physique, 1 test each Combat Round, to escape.

Attack: 20ap2 of tree whomping damage.

CC	Primary Effect
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15	Plant control powers as listed above.
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CC	Secondary Effect
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+1	Increase the damaging effects by 1 point per point of additional CV.
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+5	Tree Walk. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). The character can move through densely forested areas at double the normal rate, aided along by the surrounding plant life.
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Transform (target, continuous)

Through the use of this wondrous rune, living beings can be drastically altered to assume the shape of any known creature. Affected targets assume the shape and physical abilities of the creature whose form they

adopt. Movement rate, armor, physical attacks, Vitality, Lethal Wounds, skills and the stats of Physique, Mass, Speed, Reaction, and Perception change to that of the adopted form. This includes any inherent limitations of the animal. The Runemage retains their mental stats (Intelligence, Acuity, and Shadow) and their own skills and Aptitude scores. If the form adopted is non-humanoid, they cannot use any Social skills. Alternatively, the transform rune could be used to simply alter their physical appearance, changing their facial features, height and weight.

More alarming to some is this rune's use against an unwilling target. Folklore is filled with tales of unwitting individuals who are transformed into animals as punishment. If the target is willing, the transformation rune works immediately and without hindrance, but those who wish to resist the rune's effects do so if their Shadow stat is higher than that of the Runemage.

CC	Primary Effect
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15	Recipient can transform into any animal that possesses a Mass within 2 points of the character's Mass stat.
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20 Expert	Recipient can transform into any animal that possesses a Mass between half or twice the Mass of the character's Mass stat.
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25 Elite	Recipient can transform into any animal with a Mass between 1 and 20.
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CC	Secondary Effect
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+10	Multiform. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). Recipient can transform into different animals for the duration of the rune.
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Hrond Deathlight (zone, continuous)

A cold blue glow radiates from this eerily shifting rune, a glow that suffuses its entire area of effect regardless of any intervening objects, for it is the light of the spiritual plane spilling into the realm of the physical. It permits sight throughout this area in cases of darkness, and is not affected by a Banish Light rune, but its true

purpose is to illuminate all spirits and other invisible creatures within the rune's Zone. Characters hidden by the Unseen rune or the Shadow Magic spell Trick the Eye are revealed by this ghostly light.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Illumination effects described above.

Lyiss **Sight the Strands (target, continuous)**

Crisscrossing the world are the threads of fate, each strand representing a single living soul. Each and every person is bound to every other through the web of fate. Their actions, or inaction, will bring about change, rippling through the web to affect the lives of many. If it were to be giving shape and form, the web would appear as a chaotic tangle of silver strands, winding their way through every corner of the world, meeting and entangling, until they eventually come to their end. This powerful force is invisible and intangible and in a very real sense doesn't even exist, but its presence can be felt, measured, and even seen.

Lyissan Runemages value this rune above most others, for it allows them to make visible something that is so fragile and yet so strong it binds the lives of everyone together. Those who are under the affect of this rune are given the ability to see the strands of fate. The world is cast in a silver sheen, lit by the cold light of the strands. Everywhere they look, they, marking the paths of the living, will crisscross the world. People are caught in a deep mesh of threads, those whose actions and choices affect many being the most thickly woven. Those whose lives are connected would be seen to have closely intertwined strands. A Runemage under the influence of this rune would see the deep connection between two lovers, or the bonds of duty between a guardian and his charge. Interrelations between people that are invisible on the surface would be immediately apparent to Runemages using this rune.

The Chosen are especially visible when viewed under this rune. Their forms will be thickly shrouded in the cold glow of Fate's web. Those they have never met, and probably never will, will have their strands

woven into that of the Chosen. The leader committing his nation to war, the adventurer stopping a nefarious plot, an assassin ending a life, their actions will come to alter the lives of many. Among the common throng, the Chosen shine like beacons to Runemages who happen to be sighting the strands. Of more value to some Runemages is this rune's ability to reveal those who may someday become Chosen. Individuals who will someday play an important part in Fate's plan will be seen to "gather" other strands. If in the right place at the right time, an observant Runemage would be able to see a future Chosen pull the strands of other souls into orbit around their own.

Many Runemages become overwhelmed by what they see the first time they sight the strands. Insanely complex and beguiling in its otherworldly beauty, it takes years for many Runemages to fully comprehend what they are seeing. But to those who learn the subtle variations inherent to the threads, much can be learned about the person they are observing. Everything that has happened in the person's life leaves its mark for the Runemage to read. Given time to study a person's thread a Runemage would be able to discern important, but generalized facts about the person they are studying. Someone who is motivated by a desire to avenge their family's murder, and is on a quest to bring the murderer to justice would be seen by the observing Runemage as someone who had suffered a great loss, is powerfully motivated by revenge, and that their current path is devoted to that. All generalized impressions, but wholly true. It customarily takes ten minutes of observation to glean these facts, and requires an Advanced (15) Intuit skill test.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Sight the Strands ability as listed above.

Track the Strands (target, continuous)

The intangible threads of Fate have no true signifier of who they belong to. One looks like any other and so even with Sight the Strands, there is no real way for a Runemage to distinguish between the thread of a close friend or that of an enemy. But when under

the influence of this rune, the Runemage is given the power to perceive the minute differences that identify one strand from another. The most useful benefit this power grants is the ability to unerringly track someone by following her unique thread. Wherever one travels, their thread marks the path, and unlike footprints it will not fade in time. Given enough time, a Runemage could backtrack along a person's thread and see where they had been. Moving forward, the Runemage would even be able to see where the person is going to be, though because the future is not fixed and subject to change, may not be their true future path.

Using this rune in conjunction with Sight the Strands, the Runemage can gain insights into the subject's past. Following their strand to a particular location and studying it with Sight the Strands, the Runemage would get a generalized impression of what happened to the subject at that particular location. Following the strand of an individual back to a small cottage, the Runemage might learn that a terrible, life-altering event happened to them there, an event that started them on their current path.

Naturally, the Runemage must observe the person in question to identify their strand, but using this rune alone allows them to differentiate the strands of different people, but if the Runemage possesses a personal article belonging to the person in question, they need not actually see the subject to distinguish their strand from those of other people.

CC Primary Effect

15 Track the Chosen ability as listed above.

Talse **Blisswrack (target, continuous)**

Talse is a god of Peace, and so has few offensive magics under his Domain. But Talsean Runemage do have ways to defend themselves. Talse's dominion over the mind allows those who master his runes to open the mind in ways that cause a target to lose themselves in a rush of uncontrolled thought. Victims of this rune become caught in an onrush of memories, emotions, and sensations they cannot handle all at once and so find it impossible to do nearly anything. They become

the victims of a form of temporary insanity and on their Turn they will act in a random manner, as directed by the table below. Victims may attempt to get their thoughts under control, making on their Turn an Expert (20) Meditation skill test. Each successful attempt reduces the CV of the Blisswrack rune by 5. Once the CV has dropped below 15, the rune is dispelled. The Wellmind rune will also dispel the effects of Blisswrack if its CV surpasses the CV of the Blisswrack rune.

Random Act Chart (1d10)

- 1 Moment of clarity. The victim may act normally this Round.
- 2 Character spends this Round wandering in a random direction (Runemage moves their character for them).
- 3 Character attacks the nearest target (friend or foe).
- 4 Character spends this Round performing a random skill on a real or imagined target (attempts to Seduce an imagined person, unlock a door that isn't there, etc)
- 5 The Character spends this Round staring blankly off into space and will not react in any way to the outside world.
- 6 If the character is a Runemage or Shadowmage, they will cast one random rune or spell, targeting the nearest person, friend or foe. If the victim is neither, they will attack the nearest target.
- 7 The character flees in terror, spending this Round using all available Speed on movement away from the scene.
- 8 Character attacks the nearest target (friend or foe).
- 9 Character spends this Round wandering in a random direction (Runemage moves their character for them).
- 10 Character attacks themselves, doing base weapon damage to a randomly rolled location.

CC Primary Effect

15 Confusion effects as listed above.

CC Secondary Effect

+2 Ennervate. Every 2 points of CV the Runemage wishes to invest can be converted directly into 1 point of Vitality damage. This is non-lethal damage and represents the mental exhaustion caused by Blisswrack.

+5 Marionette. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). The Runemage can exert some small measure of control over the apparently random acts the victim of this rune performs. By purchasing this Secondary effect, the Runemage can swing the random act die roll one point in either direction. If the victim rolls a 4 for their random act that Round, the Runemage can shift that to a 3 (character attacks nearest target), or a 5 (character stares off blankly into space).

Braintrap (target, continuous)

Through the use of this rune, the Runemage can draw the consciousness of a target into the rune, depriving the body of a driving mind. For the duration of the Rune, the Runemage will have the still thinking mind under their control, contained within the rune. The Runemage can communicate with the mind within the rune, though it may naturally be reluctant to offer anything more than curses and threats of violence once it is released. The Runemage may target this mind with such runes as Beguile or Truethought in order to get better responses, gaining a +5 CV bonus in such attempts. If the rune is dispelled or destroyed, the trapped mind is automatically returned to its host body, regardless of the distances that separate it. Trapped minds cannot perform any actions, but if the trapped mind happens to be an Elite Runemage they may still cast runes. Trapped Shadowmages are an even more dangerous prospect, as this bodiless existence is familiar to some of them. Trapped Shadowmages who possess the Mind Cardinal can use those spells while trapped. The spells of the Shadow Autonomy Cardinal are also of use to a trapped Shadowmage, whose Shadow is still encapsulated in their body. With the right spell, they

could let their Shadow loose and still control it though their mind is still trapped.

If the trapped mind possesses a Shadow of 6 or greater, they may attempt to free themselves. Each 1 Combat Round, Minute, or Hour (depending upon what factor of time the rune's Form uses), the trapped mind may make an Expert (20) Meditation skill test. A successful skill test reduces the CV of the rune by 5 (10 for a Superior Success). Once the Rune's CV has dropped to 0, the mind is immediately returned to its body.

CC Primary Effect

15 Mind trapping effects as listed above.

Va'an
Infuse (target,
continuous)

The Infuse rune is meant to target a single, inanimate object. Targeted objects will become saturated with the Ylar, and begin to glow with a pale, opalescent light. The Ylar exists in all things, everywhere, permeating the land and all who dwell upon it, but infused objects are literally engorged with its raw energy. Runemages often Infuse an object they intend to turn into a talisman or as a preparation for Runecraft. Objects that have been Infused with the Ylar can serve a number of purposes:

- Recharge an expended glyph or talisman.
- Talismanic and Runecraft objects Infused with the Ylar before their creation will have an inherent +10 CV bonus.
- In places where the Ylar will not flow, such as in the zone of a Tax rune, an Infused object will provide a Runemage with a one-use charge to empower a rune they wish to scribe.
- Provide a one-time +5 CV bonus to any rune under normal circumstances.

An infused object will store the Infused energy for a short period of time; equal to the duration of the Infuse rune (based on what Form was used).



Shadowmagic

Though the powers of Shadowmagic can be used to help those in need or in the service of a good cause, all too often the temptation of the shadow leads even those with the best intentions to commit heinous acts. Below the Hand of Fate will find additional Cardinals that can be used to surprise and terrify players familiar with the 'common' abilities of their Shadowmage enemies and allies.

Acquiring these Cardinals is possible. A player who desires to learn must find a tutor or codex that describes the exercises and practice necessary to develop these new powers. What price they would pay, either in terms of monetary or psychic cost, is up to the Hand of Fate. The origin of the knowledge determines what sort of actions a Shadowmage must take – a codex from the vaults of Vandalusa would require ascetic contemplation and a vow of chastity, silence, or nonviolence while a Tzerte Viazhe mentor would probably require the student seek out relatives and dine on their living flesh.

Cardinals

Warp

Basic

Warp the Elements special/15/special/-

All Shadowmages learn how to summon forth raw magical energy from their shadows and mold it into specific effects. With this Cardinal the Shadowmage is learns how to tap this energy to affect the basic four elements: fire, earth, water, and air. The Shadowmage can affect the substance of these elements, extinguishing or breaking them down, reinforcing their structure or increasing their substance.

System: The speed cost of the spell depends upon what element they wish to affect; some elements are more difficult to master and resist attempts to alter them, while others seem naturally suited to manipulation. Speed cost for maintaining control over the elements are as follows: Fire 4, Water 6, Air 8, Earth 10.

A fire's blaze can be extinguished or its power intensified. For 2 successes a square meter of flame can be extinguished. This area can be doubled for every 2 successes. A fire can be made to also burn twice as fast and twice as hot for 4 successes, adding 50% to its base

damage.

Water can be evaporated or created spontaneously from thin air through the Shadowmage's power. One cubic meter of water can be evaporated or frozen solid for 10 successes, this volume doubled for every 4 successes after that. For 8 successes, the Shadowmage can call forth water from underground sources through anything but solid bedrock, creating small pools upon the ground.

For 4 successes, the Shadowmage can create a bubble of temperature controlled fresh air around them that will remain even if the Shadowmage is submerged in water. It will remain around the caster for 1 minute for every 1 success spent for duration, allowing them to breathe freely.

Rock and dirt from fertile earth to the hardest stone can be slowly broken down to powder, made malleable as clay, or have its durability strengthened. One cubic meter of stone or earth may be so affected for 20 successes, this area doubled for every 4 successes.

Since the successes needed to pull off these various effects is rather high, the Shadowmage should expect to spend a certain amount of time building up their successes through repeated attempts. Weakening a thick stone prison wall enough for the Shadowmage to push their way through may take hours of continued effort.

Advanced

Malleable Matter 8/15/special/1

With a whim, the Shadowmage can make solid matter move and alter its shape. Some almost interpret it as the Mage instilling their ego upon the objects themselves, giving them the will to act and move. Objects can float through the air, or contort their shapes. A table could be made to dance, a door to twist off of its hinges.

System: When under this spell, physical matter up to the strength of raw iron will take on the flexibility of soft wax, moving under the Shadowmage's control. The Shadowmage can affect up to 8 Structure of inanimate matter (anything without a soul), this amount doubled for every 4 successes. Multiple objects can be manipulated, as long as their combined weight does not exceed the mage's capabilities. Physical matter under the Shadowmage's control can be moved a number

of meters equal to the Shadowmage's Shadow/3, every combat turn. To initiate the spell, the Shadowmage must touch the matter to be affected, but once complete the range of the spell is line of sight and lasts so long as the Shadowmage remains concentrated on the task, performing no other strenuous actions (attacking or casting other Shadow Magic spells for example). Normally when the spell ceases its effect, the objects return to their original shape and solidity, but for 6 successes, the objects will maintain whatever shape the Shadowmage contorts them into even after the spell ends.

Expert

Transmutation 10/20/15 minutes/2

Transmutation allows the Shadowmage to alter the substance of physical matter, changing its composition and structure as well as defining its new shape. Its mass, density, and appearance are all under the Shadowmage's control. Such transmuted matter will return to its original position and state when the spell ceases.

System: By touching the matter to be affected, the Shadowmage can significantly alter it. A heavy iron door could be turned into water vapor, a lead slug into gold, even water could be rendered into a solid. The Shadowmage can affect 8 Structure or Vitality of physical matter, which can be doubled for 1 success. How great a transmutation the Shadowmage wishes to exert is based on the number of successes they devote to the task. Without spending any successes, affected matter can be made to change its composition, changing its substance into any other related substance: iron to lead, oak to balsa wood, etc. For 4 successes, the Shadowmage can change the shape of the matter affected, while not changing its mass. For 6 successes, matter can be made to have its physical structure greatly altered, becoming something wholly different from what it was before. 8 successes allow the Shadowmage to actually create constructs of solid matter, virtually from thin air. And for 10 successes, the Shadowmage can turn anything in to anything else conceivable. The duration of this effect can be doubled for 2 successes. The process of transformation happens within a few heartbeats and once changed, requires no further effort by the Shadowmage to stay in its altered form until the

spell's duration ceases.

Elite

Void Mastery 8/20/permanent/special

Void Mastery is the true expression of the Shadowmage's mastery over physical matter. At this stage, the Shadowmage not only has complete control over physical matter, but also forces such as inertia and velocity. The Elite Master of Shadow can change any matter into any other matter with a glance, in whatever shape they desire. They can rob the motion from an object or individual by making them more dense or negate their weight entirely by severing the connection to physicality. Even more terrible, these effects can propagate beyond the first target of the Master, spreading like an infection from object to person to object.

System: The shadowmage can perform all the functions described under Transmutation, above, except that the changes in shape and composition are permanent, the Shadowmage can affect 50 Structure or Vitality to start (doubled for 1 success) and the Shadowmage need only have the target in line of sight. Moving objects can have their motion instantly set to zero, causing anyone or anything in or on a vehicle to suffer as if it crashed at the speed it was just moving. Alternately, an object can be made inertia- and weightless, causing it to take on the velocity of anything it touches (this is particularly useful for the targets of projectiles like arrows and bullets). Also, the caster may choose to assign a pool of Animus to the effect that causes the effect to "jump" from object to object. The initial cost is 1 Animus for the first object or person, continuing with a cost of 1 Animus from this pool per "jump." Where each jump goes is at the whim of the caster unless it is out of their line of sight, in which case the smallest objects are affected first. The initial Shadowmagic roll is used to affect the next object or individual. Note that even slight changes in the material composition of a living creature will automatically slay it - though many of the wickedest Shadowmages ensure their victims remain alive to "enjoy" their permanent new forms.

Polyform

Basic

Doppelganger 8/15/permanent/1

By twisting their own shadow into a desired shape, the Shadowmage can look like any other person. Skin color and body shape up to ¼ to four times the Mass of the Shadowmage may be duplicated. This likeness is cosmetic only, and unless the Shadowmage has the Disguise skill they may not effectively imitate their subject's voice, gait, and mannerisms. Also, the Shadowmage may only reproduce what they have seen in person - a doppelganger from a photograph produces an eerie effect, with the front and face of the person seemingly real while the back is an unsettling mishmash of flesh, bone, and hair. The change is permanent (until the power is used again) and some Shadowmages have been known to forget what their original look was and slip into madness trying to recapture the face they were born with.

System: With a Shadowmagic roll the Shadowmage changes their body and face to look like another. For every 2 Successes they can reduce or expand their Mass by 50%. Note that this change affects Vitality, Lethal Wounds and Speed, but not Shadow.

Advanced

Mimic 16/20/permanent/2

The Shadowmage may take the form of any natural creature (excluding undead and Shadekin) using this Spell. Study of the form is required, a process that takes 10 minutes of uninterrupted concentration, performed on a living or dead example of the new form.

System: Like Doppelganger above, every 2 successes allows the caster to increase or decrease their Mass by 50%. If the creature has more or less Mass than the Shadowmage can reach with through successes, the spell fails. The mage gains all the creature's physical attacks, movement abilities and physical Stats (Physique, Mass, Speed, Vitality and Lethal Wounds) but retain their mental Stats. They do not have access any special Finesse Effects the form may have.

Expert

Transmogrify 1(minute)/25/permanent/4

This spell allows the Shadowmage to change into any natural or unnatural creature including undead

and Shadekin that they have studied as is necessary for Mimic above.

System: Same as Mimic, above. While changing form, the Shadowmage is treated as a Helpless Defender.

Elite

Gargantua 10(minute)/30/permanent/10

The Elite Shadomage is able to take on the form of a gigantic 30-foot-tall monstrosity by expanding their physicality with their soul's energy. Fully powerful enough to lay waste to a large town, the Gargantua form is a terror of bloated flesh and bone, vaguely resembling the caster's original form. What is more, the Shadomage may grow larger by consuming living souls, creating a juggernaut of unholy power.

System: The caster is considered a Helpless Defender while they transform into the Gargantua. When finished, they start with the following statistics:

Phy: 20 Speed: Same as caster

Mass: 20 Reaction: 20

Int: Same as caster Perception: Same as caster

Acu: Same as caster

Shadow: Same as caster

Base Combat Roll and Finesse Level

Attack. 25+1d10 (Expert).

Defense. 21+1d10 Block. (Advanced).

Attack Speed cost and damage

Slam 6 Speed. 20ap1. the Gargantua may only spend Successes on Knockback Swallow Whole 6 Speed. 10ap3. Can affect anything with 1/2 Gargantua's Mass or less. Victim must make additional Physique + Personal + Athletics check verses Attack roll to avoid being swallowed and incapacitated. They take Swallow Whole damage every round until someone else succeeds at the Physique check to get them free. If they die, 1/10th of their Mass (minimum 1) is added to the Gargantua's Mass, Physique, Reaction, Slam damage and Vitality. Every 4 Mass gained gives them another Lethal

Wound in the Head and Body location.

Armor: 20av2 Blubbery flesh

400 Vitality

Location Lethal Wounds (10 damage points per, 4 successes to target Head)

2-8 Head □□□□

9-20 Body □□□□□□□□

There is no limit to the size a Gargantua can grow, though it tends to get noticed and put down quickly by authorities or Chosen.

Journal of Azmit Hinevalkk (+10)

A tooled leather journal measuring three foot long and wide and four inches thick, this journal has runes worked into the cover that lock it shut via four bolts that extend through the front and back. It is labeled in Drakalian with the title "Azmit Hinevalkkhik – A book of Change." The word "Aruasha" opens the bolts (Azmit's mother's name). Within the volume are detailed instructions on how a Shadowmage may develop the Polyform Cardinal, requiring 2 months of study. After the first hour, the reader automatically suffers the Temporary Insanity Handicap as a result of the unspeakable knowledge within. Assuming they continue to read after recovering, the remainder of the book can be read without incident.

The final pages of the Journal describes Azmit's final act: he transformed into the Gargantua form and ate the town in which he was raised. He describes this horrible act as a gourmet might a 234-course meal, detailing each victim's (many of them family and friends) unique flavor and texture. On the last page is a message that appears only after the player has learned the Cardinal. The Journal reveals that Azmit then transformed himself into the Journal itself, to better spread the

horrible knowledge of his Shadowmagic technique. At this point the Journal may melt away from the hands of its possessor, transform into a Gargantua of quadruple size, or stay just the same as it was found – at the discretion of the Hand of Fate.

Items of Power

These new Items of Power are all campaign-class, that is, a Hand of Fate could base the plot of an entire campaign-length adventure on the discovery, pursuit and protection of any one of these powerful magic items. The number in parenthesis is the objects cost in points of Valdreyr for those players lucky enough to have a HoF let their Chosen have an Item such as these.

The Lost Abbey (+20)

This item hales from Bhuket, and is an important artifact of the Koba religion and the Shree Kat. In appearance it is an intricately carved depiction of multi-floored monastery, with windows, doors, even little monks, all set in a base of tarnished silver, which is itself carved in reliefs of swirling clouds.

This object represents the Abbey of Kao Sen, an abbey that was one of the greatest in Koba history, but also one of the first to be destroyed in Lhar's persecution of the Koba religion. This object was crafted by the survivors of the abbey, and survives to this day under the protection of a special guard of the Shree Kat.

Contained and incorporated into the object are numerous runes, crafted from carven wood and thin sheets of silver, all concealed within. They are what gives it its power, the power to recreate the Abbey and the many lost monks who fell defending it. The primary rune housed in this object is Illusion. When the object is activated, the Illusion rune creates a complete representation of the Abbey. Every room, every nail, every shingle, every pebble in the garden, down to the dust and the smell of old wood and incense. The rune is of Elite level, so the Abbey feels 100% completely real. And for all intents and purposes, it is. The next runes incorporated into the object are Memorium

runes. hundreds of memorium runes are hidden in miniature form all throughout the object, invisible to the naked eye. These runes contain the memories of the monks who lived in the abbey, as well as all information contained in the illusionary scrolls held in the illusionary abbey's library. The illusionary monks one sees in the abbey, who respond to the presence of those visiting the abbey with complete authenticity: they seem to be living, breathing people who can move, talk, act, and engage in long conversations (mostly about Koba and the history of Bhuket) with anyone who cares to interact with them. Lastly, the object contains runes of Inhabit. Some of the departed spirits of the Lost Abbey live in the object. Though they cannot act outside of the object itself, they are the unseen guardians to protect the Lost Abbey against anyone who would misuse it. They patrol the illusionary Abbey's corridors, remaining unseen until they are needed, in which case they appear to be ghostly Screaming Fist warriors whose attacks are lethal, but who are completely invulnerable themselves to attack (so long as the Lost Abbey exists, they cannot be destroyed or dispelled). The Lost Abbey is activated by meditating on the Lost Abbey and chanting some of the Koba prayers associated with it. A person must possess Lore: Koba at Expert to activate it, or be given explicit instructions on the proper ritual. The benefit of the Abbey, besides having a portable building with 74 rooms, four floors, a walled garden, and a Shree Kat practice studio, is that it is a source of training in the skills Athletics, Lore: Koba, Meditation, Unarmed, and Shree Kat martial arts abilities. The monks of the Abbey can train someone up to a limit of Elite in ability (with the normal training lengths and XP expenditures).

Paran's Brood (+10 to +20)

Every culture has in its history magical weapons of great myth and legend. All of these weapons had names, but they were all considered Paran's Brood. In legends of the past, Paran would occasionally take mortal lovers, and later give birth to a weapon, the result of their union. Often the weapon is adorned with a permanent Weapon Rune from Paran's Domain, a rune that affects every blow made by the weapon. All

of Paran's Brood, however, have a purpose and a place in Fate's plan. To possess one is not merely to possess a mighty weapon, it is to become a part of destiny, for the brood all have a destiny. All they need is a hand to wield them so that it may be fulfilled.

Pearl Vestments (+14)

These magically imbued pieces of armor come in the form of a cape and suit of mail made of small scales. The armor appears to be made of a pearlescent substance while the cape is a black so dark that it seems to absorb light. The Vestments are believed to be of Zhalanti make, yet are not made to fit a Zhalanti body. Legend states that the Vestments were a gift to an Ianer who was associated with the First Born in some way.

The Vestments serve a dual purpose. The cape protects the wearer's shadow. The cape adds a shadow pool of 20 points which suffers damage first, before the wearer's shadow characteristic is touched. The cape also conceals the wearer's shadow from detection. Shadekin who can sense and track a target by its shadow will not be able to perceive the wearer, and Shadowmages cannot Scent the Shadow of the wearer.

The mail portions of the vestments protect the arms, abdomen, chest and head (with its mail coif) for 15av5.

The Perfect Polygon (+15)

A Zhalanti-created device, this orb of clear crystal serves as a portable teleportation gate. When charged, the Perfect Polygon shifts from one polyhedral shape to the next. It is activated by thought, forming a circular gate of energy through which the user is transported to the location envisioned. Once used, the Polygon reverts to its inactive spherical state. It will remain in this inactive state for a number of days, weeks, even months; it is impossible to predict when it will regain its charge. Sometimes the Perfect Polygon will activate suddenly and without warning, transporting its bearer to an seemingly random location. In these cases there often seems to be a purpose to the Polygon's unbidden teleportations.

While it was in the possession of the University d'Yissen, it was discovered that the Perfect Polygon is in some ways intelligent, self-aware with emotions and physical sensation. The professors also theorized that the Perfect Polygon could travel through time. Even though there are a number of Polygons that exist in the world, they are increasingly rare. Some scholars posit that if the Polygon can travel through time, these multiple Polygons in our time might actually be temporal doppelgangers of a single Perfect Polygon.

Two of Paran's Brood Rhokok, The Fist of Paran (+13)

It was said that the famous Illestani criminal, Oskar the Red, returned from a death sentence deep in the Tilerian Empire smashing through ranks of Shadekin with the Fist. How he acquired it he never revealed, but the Fist was lost along with Oskar in a transport aircraft crash over the Duchy of Barren Moor. This massive maul has a base damage of 30ap3 and requires a mass of at least 10 to wield. Any opponent struck by the Fist suffers the Stunned handicap and is knocked into the air 2d10 feet vertically and 2d10 feet horizontally. They suffer normal damage from the fall. Any worn armor they possess is reduced in effectiveness by -10av1 by the crushing power of the Fist every hit.

The Prodigal (+20)

Mentioned in the Canticle as the spawn of a Fane and Paran, this weapon is known to have an intelligence of its own, including an agenda to return every living thing to its mother through chaos and bloodshed. It seems to have varying shapes and powers, but historians track the Prodigal's appearance through the sudden eruption of mass murder and hideous slaughter. Most recently it is thought to have appeared as a stiletto in the hands of a child in Cyroon, and King Cyroon himself investigated the matter after an entire refinery city and all the Kluuzhe buried beneath it went up in a catastrophic explosion. The Prodigal's whereabouts are currently unknown.



The Ringwheel (+10)

This ancient device takes the form of six interlocking rings of silver. The device has no weight and will float steadily in midair unless acted upon by an outside force. It is extremely cold to the touch, and unless placed in some handy container (which will eventually be coated with frost), cannot be handled long without harming exposed flesh. What the Ringwheel actually does is absorb the Ylar. It acts as both a Tax and Blight rune, with a radius of fifteen feet. As magic becomes present to the Ringwheel, it slowly begins to spin. The first Combat Round, it acts as a 15 CV Blight and Tax rune. The second Round, as it starts to spin faster, it acts as a 20 CV Blight and Tax rune. On the third Round, spinning in a blur, it acts as a 25 CV Blight and Tax rune. After the third Round, it will stop spinning, unless more magic enters into its 15-foot radius, at which point the Ringwheel starts to spin anew.

The Spheres of Zhung Jien (+20)

The artifacts known as the Spheres of Zhung Jien can only be found among a small order of Koba monks. Created centuries ago by master artisans and Runemages, the fist-sized intricately rune-engraved jade spheres were given to a rare few Koba Shree Kat warriors, selected for special duties of missions. The process of their creation has been long lost, and only ten are known to still exist. They all serve as weapons and foci for meditative rituals.

The first power of the Spheres is their ability to alter their size. At their smallest, they are 6" diameter spheres, but can swell upon command to six feet in diameter. This happens in an instant and requires no speed cost during combat, though it can only be made to change its size on the character's turn. The Spheres can change their size, but not their mass. No matter how large they are, they still weigh roughly six pounds.

The second power of the Spheres is their ability to fly. When thrown, the Spheres can strike multiple targets, moving along a path directed by the Sphere's owner. When the sphere is at its largest, the owner can ride the Sphere as it flies. In its largest size, the Spheres can hold up to 20 Mass in passengers.

Possessing the Spheres is not enough to know

their use. Successfully harnessing their powers requires the purchase of the skill Lore: Sphere of Zhung Jien. Only a select number of Koba Vedics can supply the initial training in this knowledge. But as the character's Finesse Level in Lore: Sphere of Zhung Jien increases, she unlocks the true potential of the Spheres.

Basic: The Spheres can be thrown as a weapon in its smallest size, striking any targets within the character's LoS with no range penalty. There is no Attack roll penalty for the first target, but each additional target causes a compounding -3 penalty. Once it misses, it ceases attacking and returns to the character's hand. The Spheres do 10ap1. In their largest size, they can be used as transport, with movement speeds equal to a 10 CV Flight rune.

Advanced: When thrown, the Sphere can assume its larger proportions and so reduce the compounding penalty for striking multiple targets to -1 for each additional after the first. Once it misses, it ceases attacking and returns to the character's hand. The Sphere now does 10ap2 in damage when thrown. Its flight capabilities are equal to a 15 CV Flight rune.

Expert: The Sphere now radiates one of the four primal energies: cold, electricity, heat, or light. Which energy it manifests differs from Sphere to Sphere. The Sphere can be used as a Charm as if cast by an Expert Runemage, manifesting Frost Brand, Fire Sign, Lightning Strike, or Sun Flare. The CV of the Charm is based upon the character's Lore skill test, acting as though it were the character's Rune Magic skill. The Sphere can perform this action once per day. The Sphere's flight abilities are equal to a 20 CV Flight rune.

Elite: The Sphere no longer needs the character's direct control to power it. The Sphere can fly and attack independently, depart and return with a thought and can now shrink to the size of a marble. It is a 10ap4 weapon when thrown, and has the flight abilities of a 25 CV Flight rune. In combat, the Sphere attacks once on the character's turn, using the character's normal Ranged: Medium attack roll.

Sweet Looana (+9)

A child's doll, perhaps 13 inches tall, made of rags and stuffed with yarn, two haphazard buttons for eyes with a faded, stained dress.

Rumored to have been created by a barren and jealous Tilandri Matron, Sweet Looana has the potential to be a terrible tool of revenge. If searched for, a small lump of black, sooty rock can be found in the dolls' torso where a heart would be. Anyone who claims the ebon heart of Sweet Looana can wield her abilities. By alighting her heart as if it were incense and inhaling the smoke, the user can animate and act through Sweet Looana as if her body was their own as long as the incense burns. Sweet Looana has a Physique of 2 and a Mass of 1, all other stats are as the users. The incense will burn for 1 minute for each point of Shadow the user expends. While not particularly effective in physical combat, Sweet Looana can be used to spy and filch small items. Although she has no ability to manipulate fine objects, she CAN be used as a conduit to cast Rune Magic (she acts as a stylus) or shadow Magic through. The user appears unconscious when using Sweet Looana and cannot be awoken without causing physical harm. Sweet Looana has 3 Lethal Wounds for combat purposes and takes double damage from fire. Once Sweet Looana's heart is consumed, she falls lifeless and her stitching comes undone.

The Verband Chain (+16)

This seven-foot-long chain of blue-green metal is made of small links. The origin of the chain is unknown, though theories range from ancient Andirios to the Seven Gods themselves. Only one chain is known to have been created; yet the purported length of the hundred-foot-plus chain was shattered by a great force into a score of smaller segments. The Verband Chain was made to restrain those ensnared by it. Anyone bound by the Verband Chain will not only find himself unable to move, but his mind will be similarly restrained and his powers nullified. It is thought the Verband Chain was created by the Seven Gods to restrain the Ushonu, so it is possible that even a Fane would be unable to escape from its links. The trouble, of course, is getting the it around a Fane in the first place.



Viktor just can't seem to stay out of trouble.



CHAPTER 5

ANTAGONISTS

“The light of civilization now flickers darkly, and in the night the things outside howl for its death.”

— Introduction to The History of Histories, by Artaud Tevali

Name

Names given are those that fit the common definition of the creature in question. Different cultures have different names for most creatures found in Zir’An.

Classification

These Vandalusan terms connote the species and phylum of the creature in question.

Habitat

Where the creature may be encountered and notes on regional variations.

Physical Description & Behavior

Self explanatory.

Stats

The stat ranges given are for a typical adult of the species.

Aptitude/Skills

While most creatures lack the intelligence to acquire the skills common to adventurers, they do possess some rudimentary skills. Athletics determines the creature’s ability to leap or chase or avoid being hit.

Valdryer

Some creatures will possess unique Valdryer.

Move

The creature’s movement rate (distance moved for 1 Speed) and the amount of distance it can cover in 1 initiative Count. If the creature possesses more than one mode of movement (flight, swimming, leaping, etc.), its distances and Speed costs are listed separately.

Special Abilities

If the creature possesses special senses, magical abilities, or special combat finesse effects, they will be listed here.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Commonly, creatures of an animal intelligence will respond in rote fashion, offering up fixed Initiative Bids from their speed, depending upon whether they are in an aggressive or defensive posture. Aggressive creatures are those that are actively attacking the characters, making their fixed bid and attacking on their turn. If wounded, magically frightened, or otherwise dissuaded, they're in a defensive posture and will generally use any remaining Speed to flee and only attack if cornered, in which case their defensive posture is still used to the last.

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

The creature's combat roll is listed here, along with its respective Finesse Level and defense modes (either Dodge or Block) available. Creatures with an Intelligence of 3 or less can only use Universal Combat Finesse Effects, as they lack the intelligence to carry out any sort of planned attack. Creatures with an Intelligence of 3 or less cannot use any Special Defensive Finesse Effects, but may spend Speed to increase a defense roll.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

The damage, ap value and speed costs of the creature's attacks are listed here.

Armor

The defense value and armor value are listed here.

Health

Complete with each listing is the creature's appropriate hit location chart, Vitality and Lethal Wounds.

Dangerous Beasts

Fleshette Fish (Drandictylus Arkamus)

Habitat

Found most notably in the shallow portions of the Sea of Anjur, particularly around the Merchant Isles and the coastal regions of Ba-Dur.

Physical Description & Behavior

These inedible bony fish share the characteristics of both fish and crustaceans, possessing a fish-like body with a row of small yet strong chitinous legs extending along its underside. Its wide mouth is filled with needle-like teeth, and along its back are over a dozen envenomed spines that it uses to fend off predators.

The Fleshette Fish gets its name from its ability to fire its spines to a range of 10 feet accurately, the poison in the spines being a powerful hallucinogen. The venom is unscrupulously used as both a poison by assassins and a recreational drug by the foolish (continued use destroys the brain's cells which leads to paralysis, insanity, then death). The drug is known as *kabdhu* in Ba-Dur, *o-teh'lam* in Bhuket, and *souda/shiver/dab* everywhere else). The spines take about 2 weeks to regrow.

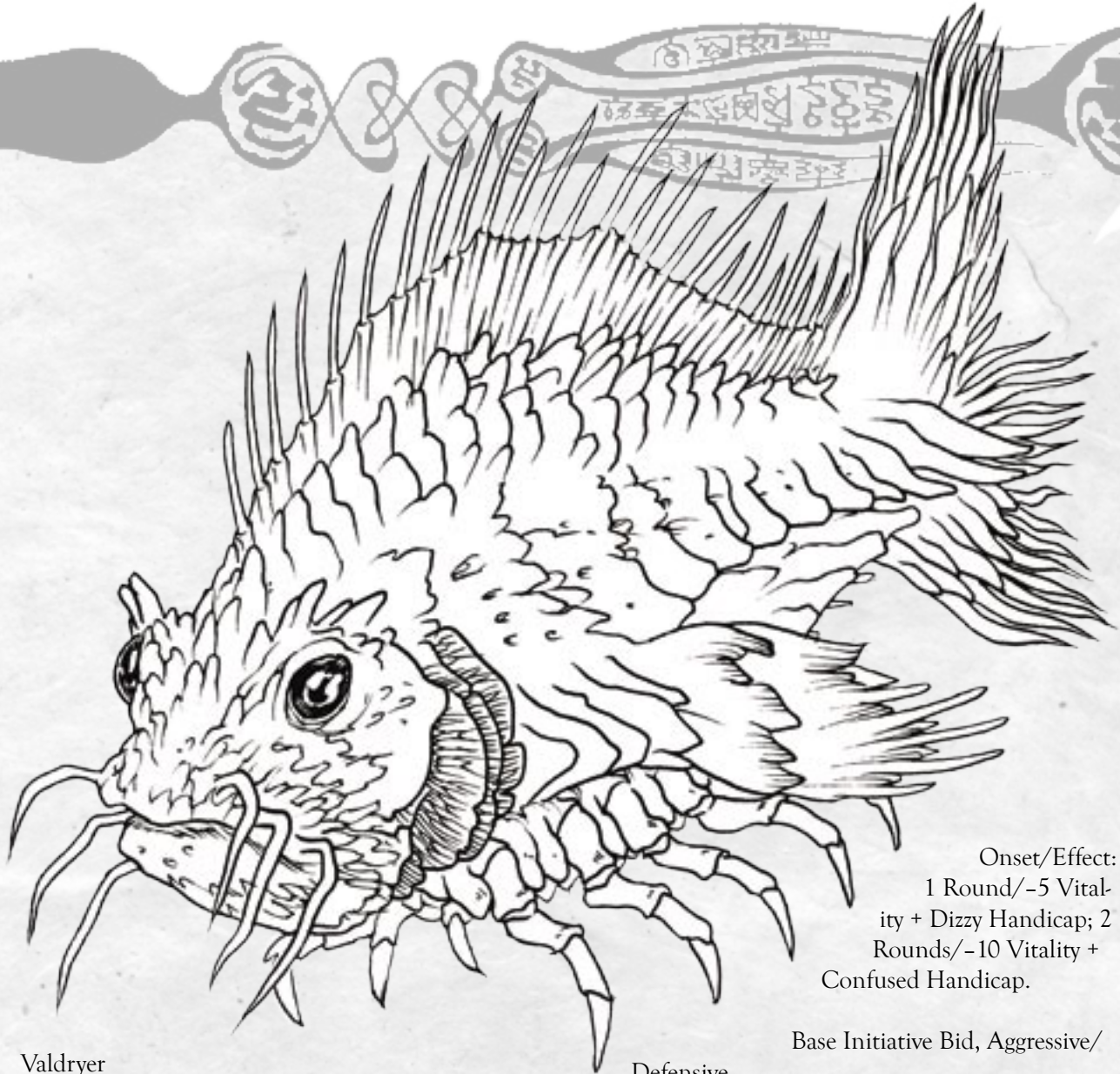
The fish's skin is tough with bony scales that can change colors to match its surroundings, remaining hidden and protected while it feeds on small fish in the reefs, shallows, and tide pools. Most flechette fish grow to 1.5 feet in length at maturity, while some 6ft. – 18ft. monsters have been recorded.

Stats

Phy: 1	Spd: 12
Mass: 1	React: 10
Int: 1	Per: 2
Acu: 1	Sha: 2

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 1
Athletics: B3
Stealth: B5
Social: 1



Valdryer
None.

Move

Free move: 5 feet
Swim: 1 Speed = 5 feet.
Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

When the Fleschette Fish is in its natural habitat, those who get within 5' must make a contested Awareness VS. Stealth skill test. If failed, the character does not notice the creature, and will be subject to a Surprise Attack by a launch of one of its spines. If they noticed the Fleschette Fish, they can back away before it fires its spines.

Poison spines:
Potency: 18

Defensive

Aggressive: 10

Defensive: 6

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 10+1d10 (Basic)

Defense: 10+1d10. Dodge.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Bite: 6 Speed. 3ap2

Poison Spine: 1ap3+poison.

Armor

Scales: 2av2

Health

7 Vitality. 1 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

1-10 Body (4LW).

Onset/Effect:
1 Round/-5 Vitality + Dizzy Handicap; 2
Rounds/-10 Vitality +
Confused Handicap.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/

Ponko (*Dranovinus Rudssas*)

Habitat

This creature is the most common herd animal in all of Zir'An, found and used in nearly every land.

Physical Description & Behavior

Measuring five to seven feet at the shoulder, and nine to twelve feet from nose to rump, Ponkos are large, stocky quadruped herd animals common in most Zir'Ani nations. Their upper and lower lips bifurcate to form four, very dexterous lobes. They use these to pull up grasses and overturn small rocks for insects. Their appearance differs from breed to breed. Bhuket and Ballinor are known for their woolly ponkos. Arivonne's ponko sport long-haired pelts, while the pygmy breeds in Edyss bear two tails. In the wilds of Klesht, however, there exists a breed of ponko called the *Akounk* that has a carnivorous appetite. It is known to charge in ambush, trampling and goring its victim. Ponkos provide meat, milk, fur, and hide.

Stats

Phy: 5 Spd: 4
Mass: 16 React: 4
Int: 1 Per: 2
Acu: 3 Sha: 3

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 1
Social: 1

Valdryer

None.

Move

Free Move: 5 feet
Move: 10 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

None.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 0

Defensive: 2

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 7+1d10 (Basic)

Defense: 3+1d10. Dodge

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Male Horn Gore: 4 Speed. 10ap2

Armor

Hide: 5av1

Health

72 Vitality. 8 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2-3 Head (2LW). 4-5 Left Foreleg (3LW). 6-7

Right Foreleg (3LW). 8-16 Body (6LW). 17-18 Left

Hindleg (3LW). 19-20 Right Hindleg (3LW).



Akounk

(Dranovinus Cannibal)

Stats

Phy: 8 Spd: 8
Mass: 14 React: 8
Int: 2 Per: 4
Acu: 5 Sha: 5

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 3
Tracking: Wilderness: A5
Personal: 3
Athletics: A3
Awareness: A2
Stealth: A2
Social: 1

Valdryer

None.

Move

Free move: 10 feet

Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move
15 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

Horn Toss: By scoring 6 successes
when using their Horn Gore attack,
they can hit their target with the
Knockback combat finesse effect
(*q.v.*).

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 4

Defensive: 6

Base Combat Roll &
Finesse Level

Attack: 11+1d10

(Basic)

Defense: 7+1d10.

Dodge

Attack Damage &
Speed Cost

Male Horn Gore: 3
Speed. 14ap2

Bite: 3 Speed. 6ap2

Trample: 4 Speed. 20ap1

Armor

Hide: 7av1

Health

70 Vitality. 7 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2-3 Head (3LW). 4-5 Left Foreleg (4LW). 6-7
Right Foreleg (4LW). 8-16 Body(7LW). 17-18 Left
Hindleg (4LW). 19-20 Right Hindleg (4LW).



Fe'shoud aZar

AKA Kihazeen Mah'dah,
"White Orchid Viper"
(Dranepis Termis)

Habitat

The White Orchid Viper (also known as the Kihazeen Mah'Dah or "Enchantress of the Oasis") is found only in the dense foliage that grows in the verges of the Ba-Duran oases, along the banks of the Ry-Kara river, and in the Biasra Valley. They hunt along the waterline, often blending in with the orchids that grow along the banks.

Physical Description & Behavior

This native species of Ba'Duran viper is stunningly beautiful with white opalescent scales. Measuring 6 feet long, it gets its name from the petal-like hood it uses both as camouflage and a warning display. Unless provoked, they rarely strike anything they know they can't eat; preferring small rodents they can ambush and quickly subdue with powerful neurotoxin. The snake has been hunted to near extinction by Bhuketi traders, who harvest the snake's organs to create a variety of perfumes, aphrodisiacs, and medicines. The white orchid viper is now protected by a joint program comprised of the "Zir'Ani Foundation of Natural Studies & Preservation" and the faithful *Sahli Fe'shoud* "Sisters of the White Orchid," a female sect of the Ben Sha'oud who revere the viper as their totem.

Stats

Phy: 4 Spd: 6
Mass: 4 React: 6
Int: 1 Per: 6
Acu: 5 Sha: 3

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 4
Stealth: Ex4
Social: 1

Valdryer

Lightning Quick: +6 to Initiative Bid.

Move

Free move: 5 feet

Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 5 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

Poison bite:

Potency: 25

Onset/Effect: 1 Round/Stun Handicap; 2 Rounds/-10 Vitality. 3 Rounds/-15 Vitality

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 2

Defensive: 6

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 10+1d10 (Basic)

Defense: 10+1d10. Dodge.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Bite: 2 Speed. 2ap2+poison

Armor

Scales: 1av2

Health

18 Vitality. 2 Damage Point per Lethal Wound.

2-20 Body (6LW).





Amber-Web Spider (Dranarkdin Horvi)

Habitat

Amber-Web spiders dwell in cool, dark places, oftentimes dry caves. The Monoliths of Cerulan in Vallunei are known to house large concentrations of Amber-Web Spiders, a source of constant danger to crystal hunters.

Physical Description & Behavior

This spider, the size of a large housecat, derives its name, predictably, from the color of its gossamer webs. Instead of making a web to catch prey, it creates tripwires and dangling threads that alert the spider when prey is within dropping or springing distance. Once something edible walks unknowingly through one of its web triggers, it either drops or springs on its prey, holds tight, and sinks its fangs into the flesh. Its venom causes cardiac arrest and death of the victim within seconds.

The spider's carapace is transparent, showing internal organs, and its eyes are mustard-yellow. Some prey it eats, other it uses as host for its young who devour it once they emerge from an egg implanted in the victim's abdomen.

Stats

Phy: 3 Spd: 13
Mass: 1 React: 8
Int: 1 Per: 6
Acu: 4 Sha: 5

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 4
Athletics: Ex4
Stealth: Ex4
Social: 1

Valdryer

None.

Move

Free move: 5 feet

Move: 10 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.

Climb: On any surface.

Leap: As normal for Expert Athletics.

Special Abilities

Ambush: It requires an Advanced (15) Awareness skill test to spot the dangling threads of the Amber-Web Spider. Those who don't must make a contested Stealth vs Awareness skill test and suffer as normal Ambush rules.

Poison Bite: Potency – 20; Onset/Effect – 1; Round/10ap5 to location touched; 2 Rounds/10ap5 to location touched

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 10

Defensive: 5

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 13+1d10 (Basic)

Defense: 17+1d10. Dodge.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Bite: 3 Speed. 2ap3 + poison.

Armor

Chitin: 5av1

Health

7 Vitality. 1 Damage Point per Lethal Wound.

2–20 Body (4LW)

Chimadi

(Dranvepptani Bakteus)

Habitat

These large carnivorous amphibians are found along the northwestern coasts of Edyss, Neoll, and Mikesh.

Physical Description & Behavior

The Chimadi are blunt-snouted reptilian quadrupeds that measure an impressive 30 to 40 feet from nose to tail. Their thick scaly hide has made them a target of game hunters for centuries. But the Chimadi's ferocity and surprising intelligence has managed to keep the hunter population in check. The Chimadi are undoubtedly the top of the food chain in the territories they claim, and prey upon all creatures that pass into their hunting grounds. One aspect of the Chimadi that has captured the imaginations of people throughout much of the world is its uncanny habit of holding grudges and exacting vengeance. Chimadi have been known to track down those who have wronged them (by injuring it or one of its offspring), traveling hundreds of miles in search of vengeance. Tales out of northern Edyss are rife with such scenarios. It is an ambush hunter, lying in wait, often just beneath the water's surface, until a suitable prey comes along. It is fearless, and has been known to ambush entire adventurer parties who have stumbled into its reach.

Chimadi are solitary, keeping precisely marked territories. Their general prey are the swamp variety of Ponko (*Pon'quille du Ovontes*), but the Chimadi will not hesitate to make a meal of a wayward Ianer or Neolli.

Stats

Phy: 8 Spd: 13
Mass: 24 React: 12
Int: 4 Per: 6
Acu: 8 Sha: 14

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 3
Tracking: Wilderness. A5
Personal: 4
Athletics: Ex4
Awareness: A3
Stealth: Ex4
Social: 1

Valdryer

None.

Move

Free move: 10 feet

Move: 10 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 20 feet in 1 Count.

Swim: 10 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 30 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

Chimadi are surprisingly intelligent combatants and many use Special Combat Finesse Effects of Edged weapons for its bite, and Blunt weapons for its tail slap.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive
Any Value.

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 16+1d10 (Expert)

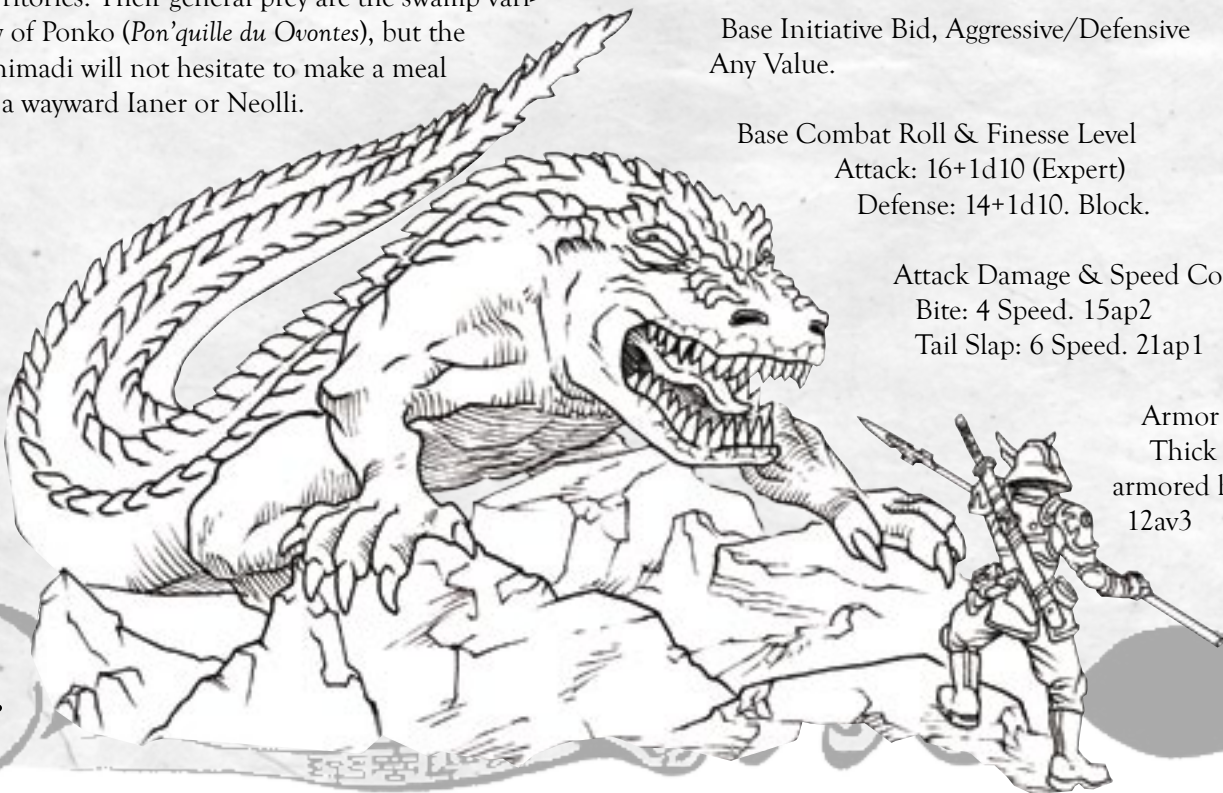
Defense: 14+1d10. Block.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Bite: 4 Speed. 15ap2

Tail Slap: 6 Speed. 21ap1

Armor
Thick
armored hide:
12av3



Health

108 Vitality. 12 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.
2-3 Head (3LW). 4-5 Left Foreleg (4LW) 6-7
Right Foreleg (4LW). 8-12 Body. (6LW). 13-14 Left
Hindleg (4LW). 15-16 Right Hindleg (4LW). 17-20
Tail (5LW).

Emperor Pig

(Dranparsine Oserrin)

Habitat

Emperor Pigs favor the inland mountains of Ballinor and parts of eastern Vallunei. They travel in herds as large as twenty males and females, roaming across hundreds of miles from the rocky valleys at the higher elevations, to the densely forested slopes on the range's borders.

Physical Description & Behavior

Emperor Pigs are as large as, or a little larger than, your average Ponko. Their hulking bodies are covered in a lumpy, mottled gray hide that is tough enough to stop a dagger blade. From their jaws curve great tusks – toothy sabers that have gutted many Ballinorian hunters. Emperor Pigs are predictably territorial, especially during the month of Epistide, which is their mating season. If encountered at a distance, an Emperor Pig will make a great show of its strength, hopping to scare off the trespassing adventurers. But the Emperor Pig's eyesight is very poor, and a surprise close encounter can send it into an immediate instinctive response to attack. Most deaths from Emperor Pig attack have resulted from wayward travelers stumbling upon a pack of grazing Emperor Pigs.

The Emperor Pig has been a central figure in Ballinorian folklore since the founding of their nation. Emperor Pigs were a menace to the early settlers, and hunting the dangerous beasts became a national sport. Hunting of the Emperor Pig has dropped significantly, mostly due to the fact that fewer Emperor Pigs remain than when the settlers first arrived. Most prefer to avoid the Emperor Pigs that

remain, but some big-game hunters still hunt them in order to mount those great tusks upon their wall.

Stats

Phy: 6 Spd: 7
Mass: 24 React: 6
Int: 1 Per: 2
Acu: 3 Sha: 5

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 3
Athletics: A
Social: 1

Valdryer

Poor Eyesight: The Emperor Pig can only see clearly out to around thirty feet. Further away and they can only vaguely see shadow and movement.

Move

Free move: 5 feet



Move: 10 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

Their charge attack can score a Knockback, as per the Special Combat Finesse Effect, if the Emperor Pig scores 6 successes in the attack.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 0

Defensive: 3

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 9+1d10 (Basic)

Defense: 5+1d10. Dodge

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Charge: 2 Speed + normal movement cost. 18ap1, +1 point of Damage for every point of Speed spent in Movement.

Gore: 3 Speed. 14ap2

Trample: 4 Speed. 22ap1. Target must be *prone*.

Armor

Hide: 10av2

Health

96 Vitality. 12 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2-3 Head (2LW). 4-5 Left Foreleg (3LW). 6-7

Right Foreleg (3LW). 8-16 Body (6LW). 17-18 Left

Hindleg (3LW). 19-20 Right Hindleg (3LW).

Imisu

(*Dranrekensis Ventivani*)

Habitat

The Imisu are swamp hunters most commonly found in Mikesh and Neoll, but some are known to haunt the swamps of Northern Edyss and Cyroon.

Physical Description & Behavior

The Imisu are sleek-bodied reptilian predators. Their overall body shape is that of a scaly panther or other large feline, though incredibly lean, with a long, flexible neck and whip-like tail. The Imisu's head is also long and narrow, much like its body, sporting large predator's eyes and a mouth filled with razor-sharp



teeth. To blend in with its surroundings, its scaly hide is a mottled grey-green.

Like many predators of the swamp, the Imisu is an ambush hunter. Capable of remaining perfectly still and camouflaged in the thick undergrowth of the swamp, the Imisu will wait for days for appropriate prey to happen into its area. The Imisu gather in packs of three to a dozen, forming complex networks of burrows in the soft swampland soil, its entrances often just beneath the water's surface.

Stats

Phy: 12 Spd: 10

Mass: 5 React: 10

Int: 2 Per: 8

Acu: 6 Sha: 7

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1

Personal: 3

Athletics: A4

Awareness: A5

Stealth: A5

Social: 1

Valdryer

None.

Move

Free move: 10 feet

Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.

Swim: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 5 feet in 1 Count.

Leap: As normal for Advanced Athletics. +10 feet.

Climb: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 5 feet in 1 Count. Requires Athletics skill test.

Special Abilities

None.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 6

Defensive: 8

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 13+1d10 (Basic)

Defense: 17+1d10. Dodge.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Bite: 2 Speed. 5ap2

Claw: 3 Speed. 9ap2

Armor

Scales: 8av2

Health

33 Vitality. 3 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2-3 Head (5LW). 4-5 Left Foreleg (6LW) 6-7

Right Foreleg (6LW). 8-12 Body. (8LW). 13-14 Left

Hindleg (6LW). 15-16 Right Hindleg (6LW). 17-20

Tail (3LW).

Great Thunderer

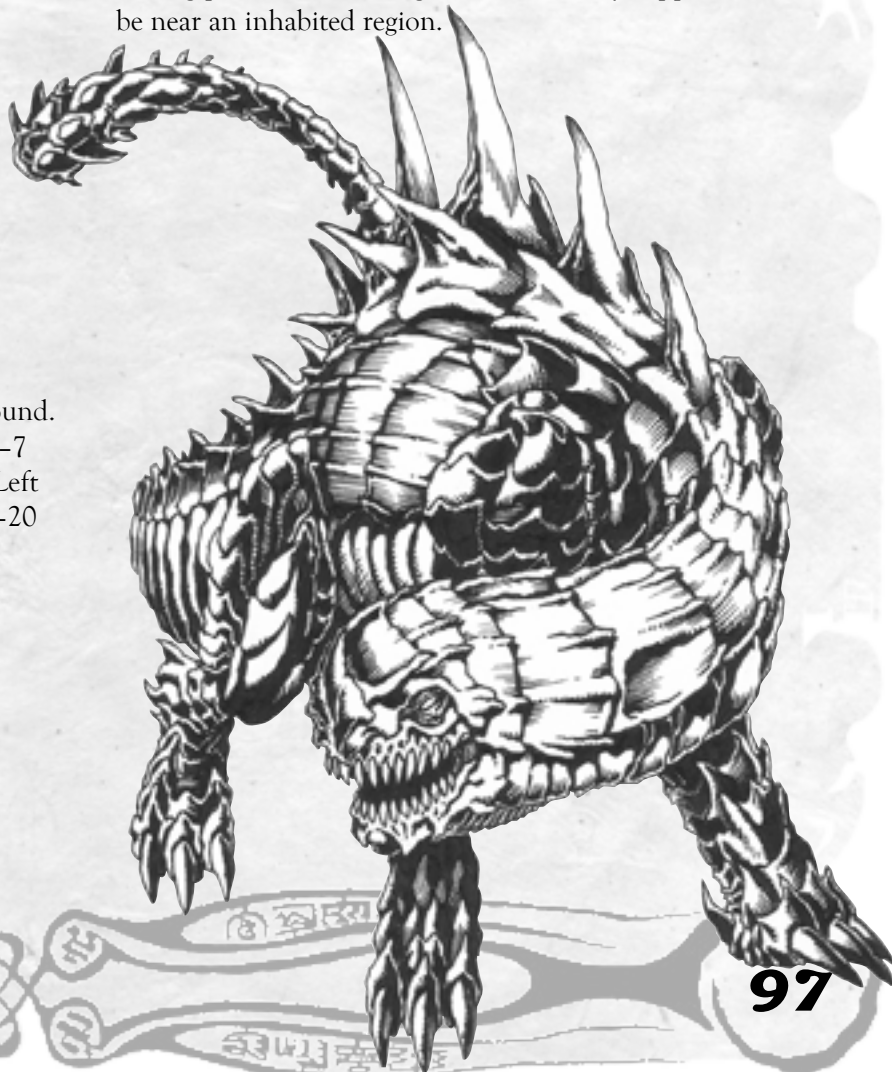
(Dranveptani Gorgagus)

Habitat

Great Thunderers are only ever found in the most remote mountain regions of Dorallia and Klesht.

Physical Description & Behavior

The Great Thunderer is one of the most dangerous and largest predatory animals on land. Also called a Kaeraken, this gigantic quadruped measures 100 to 250 feet from snout to tail. Its head ends with a blunt snout lined with sharp, dagger-like teeth. The body is covered with thick armor plate, strong enough to deflect even high caliber rounds. Its long tail ends with a lethal bony-spiked club. A swing of its tail can pulverize boulders or fell giant trees. Thunderers are extremely hostile, but luckily they are very rare creatures; there are most likely no more than a dozen left. They hibernate for decades, rising from their slumber to feed before sinking down into their hibernation once more. Their waking periods can cause great havoc if they happen to be near an inhabited region.



Stats

Phy: 16 Spd: 8
Mass: 60 React: 6
Int: 2 Per: 3
Acu: 1 Sha: 20

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 1
Social: 1

Valdryer

Huge Size: Because of its large size, the effective range on all ranged weapons is doubled. LoS rules for a creature this size are tripled.

Move

Free move: 15 feet
Move: 25 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 50 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

Terrible Roar: For a Speed Cost of 8, the Great Thunderer can bellow a great roar that can be heard for dozens of miles. Those within a hundred feet of the Great Thunderer suffer the handicap, Deaf. Those within twenty-five feet of the Great Thunderer also suffer the handicap, Stun.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 2
Defensive: 2

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 10+1d10 (Basic)
Defense: 6+1d10. Block.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Bite: 4 Speed. 25ap3

Stomp: 2 Speed. 40ap1
Tail Club: 3 Speed. 23ap1
Trample: 6 speed. 85ap2 (affects a 25 by 100 foot area beneath the Great Thunderer.

Armor

Plated armor: 20av4

Health

390 Vitality. 30 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.
2-3 Head (7LW). 4-5 Left Foreleg (8LW) 6-7 Right Foreleg (8LW). 8-12 Body (10LW). 13-14 Left Hindleg (8LW). 15-16 Right Hindleg (8LW). 17-20 Tail (9LW).

Sea Scarabs

(Drankrekton Tarvi)

Habitat

These aquatic beetles are found in warm southern waters, most notably around the Merchant Isles, the Periphery, and the Theocracy of Dharsus.

Physical Description & Behavior

While they feed primarily on fish and aquatic mammals, they have been known to climb aboard anchored or stranded ships and attack the crew. Their size (their carapace measures 3 to 5 feet across) and powerful mandibles make them dangerous creatures to encounter at night in a storm, which is their preferred time to attack. Sea Scarabs generally come in swarms of two to ten.

Stats

Phy: 5 Spd: 8
Mass: 6 React: 8



Int: 1 Per: 3
Acu: 4 Sha: 4

Aptitude/Skills
Knowledge: 1
Personal: 1
Social: 1

Valdryer
None.

Move

Free move: 5 feet
Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 5 feet in 1

Count.

Swim: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 15 feet in 1

Count.

Special Abilities

None.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 4

Defensive: 6

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 8+1d10 (Basic)

Defense: 8+1d10. Dodge.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Bite: 4 Speed. 7ap2

Claw Pinch: 3 Speed. 12ap1. Can grapple.

Armor

Carapace: 10av2

Health

24 Vitality. 3 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2 Head (2LW). 3-4 Left Pincer (3LW). 5-6 Right

Pincer (LW3). 7 Left Front Leg (3LW). 8 Right Front

Leg (3LW). 9 Left Middle Leg (3LW). 10-17 Body

(5LW). 18 Right Middle Leg (3LW). 19 Left Rear Leg

(3LW). 20 Right Rear Leg (3LW).

Sh'tam

(Dranvupulii Qadisu)

Habitat

This large worm is found only in the deep deserts of Ba-Dur.

Physical Description & Behavior

These large (10 to 25 feet long), bony-plated worm-like creatures are a regular hazard to the Ben Sha'oud, as the Sh'tam is particularly fond of Ponko and horse flesh, though it is not averse to devouring the occasional Ben Sha'oud. From between their bony plates they secrete thick oil that allows them to wriggle through the sand at alarming speeds, while above the sand, they are cumbersome creatures, with only hundreds of small, mostly inadequate, paddle-tipped appendages to bear their incredible weight. Thus, their preferred form of attack is to strike at their targets from below, rising straight up beneath them, knocking them into the air so that they're stunned and incapable of defending themselves when the Sh'tam strikes. Once they have gotten hold of their prey in their mouths (frightful maws lined with thousands of pedipalps and churning teeth) they dash back beneath the sand.

The carapace of the Sh'tam can be made into a form of plate armor worn by revered Ben Sha'oud warriors, while the organs of the Sh'tam (especially the glands that store and secrete the oil it needs for tunneling through the sand), can fetch a high price in the world market for their uses in medicine and mechanics.

Small Sh'tam (10-14 feet)

Stats

Phy: 8 Spd: 6

Mass: 20 React: 12

Int: 1 Per: 10

Acu: 3 Sha: 8

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1

Personal: 3

Awareness: B5

Stealth: A2

Social: 1

Valdryer

Pressure Sense: The Sh'tam can sense the presence of beings walking along the desert floor within 500 feet of the Sh'tam by making an Advanced (15) Awareness skill test. A Superior Success with the skill test will tell it exactly how many and what size the targets are. Sh'tam will always strike the largest targets first, generally beasts of burden and the like.

Move

Free move: None

Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 5 feet in 1 Count.

Burrow: 20 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 20 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

None.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 1

Defensive: 3

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 15+1d10

(Basic)

Defense: 7+1d10.

Block.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Knockdown Ram: 5 Speed.

12ap1. Incurs an automatic Knockback effect, as the Special Combat Finesse Effect (*q.v.*).

Bite: 4 Speed. 15ap3. By scoring 6 successes with a Bite attack, they can grapple and continue dealing biting damage on every turn.

Armor

Bony Carapace: 18av3

Health

110 Vitality. 10 Damage

Points per Lethal Wound.

2-20 Body. (8LW)

Large Sh'tam (15-20 feet)

Stats

Phy: 10 Spd: 6

Mass: 24 React: 14

Int: 1 Per: 10

Acu: 3 Sha: 8

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1

Personal: 3

Awareness: B5

Stealth: A3

Social: 1



Valdryer

Pressure Sense: The Sh'tam can sense the presence of beings walking along the desert floor within 500 feet of the Sh'tam by making an Advanced (15) Awareness skill test. A Superior Success with the skill test will tell it exactly how many and what size the targets are. Sh'tam will always strike the largest targets first, generally beasts of burden and the like.

Move

Free move: None

Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 5 feet in 1 Count.

Burrow: 25 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 25 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

None.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 1

Defensive: 3

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 17+1d10 (Basic)

Defense: 5+1d10. Block.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Knockdown Ram: 5 Speed. 18ap1. Incurs an automatic Knockback effect, as the Special Combat Finesse Effect (*q.v.*).

Bite: 4 Speed. 20ap3. By scoring 6 successes with a Bite attack, they can grapple and continue dealing biting damage on every turn.

Armor

Bony Carapace: 24av3

Health

156 Vitality. 12 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2-20 Body. (10LW)

Snow Fangs

Bliesvar in Ballinor

Tza-shao in Bhuket

Bazhdahi in Drakan (Dranmamol Kulpanus)

Habitat

Snow Fangs prefer high mountains where snow covers the ground most of the year. They are commonly found in Ballinor, but regional breeds can also be found in Bhuket and the Dominion of Drakan.

Physical Description & Behavior

Resembling a large dogs with shaggy white or bone-yellow fur, their black-skinned muzzles bristle with double rows of sharp fangs. Fast runners, their fur allows them to lie in wait in the snow for their prey before springing on them, clamping their jaws on the back of their victims' necks and crushing the vertebrae with one savage chomp. They hunt in packs as large as twelve and prove to be a deadly menace to both people and animal herds (Ponko, Shabi, etc.). Snow Fang pelts are valuable commodities in many lands, fetching as much as 2,000 Flats for a finely preserved pelt.

Stats

Phy: 8 Spd: 12

Mass: 6 React: 10

Int: 2 Per: 8

Acu: 8 Sha: 6

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 4

Tracking: Wilderness: Ex3

Personal: 3

Athletics: A5

Awareness: A5

Stealth: A5

Social: 3



Valdryer

They possess keen hearing and sense of smell, able to track prey from tens of miles.

Move

Free move: 5 feet

Move: 10 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 20 feet in 1 Count.

Leap: As normal for Advanced Athletics. +5 feet.

Special Abilities

None.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 6

Defensive: 9

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 16+1d10 (Basic)

Defense: 15+1d10. Dodge.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Bite: 3 Speed. 10ap2.

Armor

Fur Coat: 6av1

Health

24 Vitality. 3 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2-3 Head (3LW). 4-5 Left Foreleg (4LW). 6-7

Right Foreleg (4LW). 8-10 Upper Torso (5). 11-14 Abdomen (4LW). 15-17 Left Hindleg (4LW). 18-20 Right Hindleg (4LW).

Targ

(Drandannus Targensis)

Habitat

The Targ species is a highly adaptable creature, and variants of the species can be encountered in many different lands in many different environments: Cave Targs in Ballinor and Dorallia; Desert Targs in Ba-Dur; Mountain Targs in Vallunei and Bhuket.

Physical Description & Behavior

The Targ has been a prominent figure in the

folklore of many cultures since before the Endwar. In appearance they are eight to twelve-foot tall humanoid, their entire bodies covered in thick, matted fur. Though their coloration differs from species to species, generally to match their environment, they all share the same broad-shouldered, heavily muscled frame, the broad, flat faces, and the deep-set eyes. Cave Targs tend to be shorter, with prominent brows and dark brown fur. In Ba-Dur, the "Old Men of the Desert" have longer hands, with longer fingers and talons, and grow a coat of pale dun-colored fur. The Mountain Targs, famous for their elusive nature, are tall and lanky, with grey fur.

Targs are often encountered in mated pairs. Generally speaking, Targs tend to leave most people alone, unless they're being directly threatened. But in times when a mated pair is raising its young, Targs can respond violently to any intrusion into their territory. When feeling threatened, especially when they feel their young are in danger, the Targ will strike fast, making a great show of force to intimidate the intruder and compel them to flee. If the Targ cannot chase the intruders away, it will attack ferociously until the threat has ceased, along with the intruder's life. But Targs are quite intelligent and for the most part avoid contact with other intelligent races. Many stories tell, though, of strange encounters with Targs. One story tells of a traveler lost in the deep mountains, who falls and injures himself. The tale goes on to describe how the traveler was rescued and nursed back to health by a Targ. But every century will also have its Targ horror stories, of sundered bodies, smashed by huge fists and rent by powerful claws.

Stats

Phy: 10 Spd: 6

Mass: 16 React: 8

Int: 4 Per: 5

Acu: 6 Sha: 8

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 3

Lore: Herbalism. B5

Lore: Naturalism. B5

Tracking: Wilderness. A3

Personal: 3

Athletics: A4
Awareness: A2
Stealth: A2
Social: 3

Valdryer
Keen Hearing.
Night Vision: 150-feet.

Move
Free move: 5 feet
Move: 10 feet for 1 Speed.
Can move 20 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities
Because of their intelligence, they may use Special Combat Finesse Effects.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive
Any value.

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level
Attack: 13+1d10 (Basic)
Defense: 9+1d10.
Dodge.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost
Claw: 2 Speed. 12ap2
Can Grapple

Armor
Thick fur coat: 8av1

Health
80 Vitality. 8 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.
2 Head (5LW). 4-5 Left Arm (6LW). 6-7 Right Arm (6LW). 8-10 Chest (8LW). 11-14 Abdomen (6LW). 15-17 Left Leg (7LW). 18-20 Right Leg (7LW).





Undead

Restless Spirits and the Living Dead

In a world of divine beings, tyrannical demi-gods, monsters, and magic, supernatural events are a universally accepted fact of life. The world of Zir'An is a very spiritual place as well. Souls possess great power, as can be evidenced in Shadow Magic, and if bent by a powerful will can be used to accomplish nearly anything. Even to cheat death. The undead, from Hollow Ones to your typical lost spirit, often arise from some powerful need to avoid death and the horrific uncertainties of the afterlife. They cling to life with such concentrated strength of will that they accomplish that very goal. Unfortunately, all find that what they wanted certainly wasn't what they needed, and the empty half-existence ruins what remains of their minds and souls.

The Spirit Realm

Souls exist in a place that co-exists with the physical world, but is as far from it as two places can be. This is the realm of the spirit. Wherever there is a city, its reflection is found in the spirit realm, down to every building, road sign, or tree. But they are not buildings made of mortar and stone, but of memories. Memories of the living. Because these structures are formed from the mental images of all who've seen them, they are mutable and in constant motion, reshaping themselves to the wills and memories of spirits who inhabit them. A house that has long since been built over and torn down may still exist in the spirit realm, fashioned purely from the lost soul's memory of the place.

The Bodiless


Not all those who die pass completely into the afterlife. Sometimes they leave parts of themselves behind. Often these are powerful memories that left an imprint not only on the soul of the person, but on the place as well. In the majority of these instances, the fragment left behind makes itself known as strange whispers that haunt an old house, or ghostly images seen at the end of shadowy corridors. They are harmless and in essence are little more than a spiritual remainder replaying the same memory on an infinite

loop. They possess an awareness, of a sort, but to them little exists outside of the memory they themselves are. The world of the living is a vague shadow they can barely perceive. But the greater the will, the stronger emotion tied to the memories and the strength of the fear possessed by the person at the moment of their death can leave a greater part of the mind and spirit locked in the world of the living. Cast adrift in the dark reflection of the spirit realm, they wander ceaselessly, lamenting their state of half-existence. They are dully aware of the nightmare they are locked into, but are powerless to escape the shifting reality their minds have created for them. Rarer yet are those souls who have remained wholly trapped in the spirit realm without having passed completely into the afterlife. More powerful than their fragmented counterparts, they are responsible for the more extreme cases of hauntings. Poltergeist activity and body possessions can be attributed to these entities, who have enough awareness to strongly dislike their current state and the power to make their displeasure known.

The Bodiless can be found anywhere living beings have lived for many years. Urban areas that have been settled for several centuries or more will be rife with wandering spirits. Most do simply that, wander, locked in memories of their past life, while others haunt a particular place. But because the runes of Hronnd are adept at cleansing an area of lost souls, haunted sites are easily dealt with once a Hronndim Runemage is called into service.

Fragments

These are the simplest form of Bodiless entities. They are the fragments of old memories, remnants of souls passed. Mindlessly, they relive a specific moment in their lives, generally bound to the actual location where the event occurred. While capable of startling you if you're not expecting it, they are harmless. What memory the Fragment is continually reliving may be a mystery, but through the use of a Commune rune, a Runemage could get a clearer picture of the memory. Fragments aren't capable of communicating directly, or at least out of context of what they're experiencing. Use of the Shadowmage spell: The Dark Threshold, or the use of the Spirit Walk rune could even allow one to experience exactly what the Fragment is experiencing.



Fragments typically have a Shadow stat ranging from 1 to 3. Fragments can be permanently dispelled through the use of the runes Dark Majesty or Censure Spirit. Any Shadow Magic spell that targets the Shadow stat can also temporarily dispel a Fragment for a number of days equal to the number of Shadow points lost from the spell's effects.

Fragments can be dangerous, in a concentrated form. If a place is host to many fragments, and if those fragments are composed of powerful negative emotions, they can conglomerate into an entity of incredible psychic turmoil. Such "Composite Entities" are collectively powerful enough to manifest serious poltergeist activity and other frightening manifestations. Besides hurling objects at the living, though, even these powerful Fragments are relatively harmless, if difficult to dispose of. Their collective numbers grant them a Shadow stat anywhere from 15 to 30. An Elite Dark Majesty rune will cause a composite entity to retreat, but not permanently. Even an Elite Censure Spirit rune will only cause it to temporarily lose 10 points of Shadow. Reducing it to 0 disperses it for a couple days before it coalesces once more. The only way to permanently remove them is to attack them in the Spirit Realm with Shadow Magic spells that target the Shadow. Repeated attacks made while the mage is using either a Spirit Walk rune or the Shadowmage spell: The Dark Threshold, can whittle down the composite entity until it is no more. But such entities can envelop those attacking them within the Spirit Realm. Unless the target's Shadow is greater than the attacking spirits, they will lose 1 point of Shadow every Combat Round (or every minute), as the fragments batter them with their anger, madness, and spite. This is a temporary loss that can be recovered normally.

These dark fragments are only ever found in places where many people suffered terribly, imbuing the area with a flood of painful memories and dark emotions. Battlefields, prisons, extermination camps, and other places of bloodshed and torture can engender the creation of such entities.

Wandering Spirits

Wandering Spirits forever walk the shifting vistas of the Spirit Realm, knowing they have not passed on. Something still binds them to this base-level reality, and that something is invariably tied to a powerful emotion.

Unlike Fragments, they are not locked into acting out a fixed memory, and are capable of wandering through the Spirit Realm by their own free will. Generally, however, they will limit themselves to a particular area, often the one they knew in life. Such areas are familiar and safe, and there they exist invisibly alongside the living all around them.

The mental state of Wandering Spirits deteriorates over time. The longer a soul remains locked in this intermediary state, the more unhinged its personality becomes. Sometimes Wandering Spirits can overcome the tethers that bind them to this limbo and move on. But those that are unable to become increasingly disturbed over the course of decades or centuries. Such mad spirits create all manner of haunting phenomena: poltergeist activity, apparitions, screams in the night. When a wandering spirit, or "lost soul" begins plaguing an area with its presence, Runemages are employed to deal with the problem. Wandering Spirits have a shadow stat of 4-7 and can be compelled to move on with a Dark Majesty rune or potentially dispelled with a Censure Spirit rune. If communicated with through a Commune rune, the players may get an idea of what is keeping the spirit from moving on. When an Inhabit rune is employed, Wandering Spirits are commonly the ones to be drawn into it. They have a strong urge to communicate with the living, but greater is their desire to experience physical existence again.

Phantoms

Phantoms are the most dangerous of all Bodiless entities. Only those who have a powerful and corrupt spirit become Phantoms. Those who lived lives of evil often possess a powerful fear of punishment in the afterlife. When they die, their strength of will binds them to the spirit realm and they become Wandering Spirits. But the strength of their will allows them to do something no Wandering Spirit is capable of: forceful possession of a living being. Phantoms are obsessed with reclaiming physical existence, and so spend most of their time inhabiting an available host body. Once in possession of a physical body, they can indulge every desire denied them in their bodiless state. But in many cultures people are watchful for signs of possession. But the older a Phantom is, the better it is at disguising its behavior and mimicking its host. It is thought that

some Phantoms will invisibly watch a potential host to learn their mannerisms and associates to better blend in once it has taken over.

Most Phantoms want nothing more than to exist in a physical state for as long as they can, relishing in all the sensations it brings, but a rarer variety have truly dark intentions. Those who possessed murderous or other criminal tendencies in life may carry on with them in the next. When they become Phantoms, they possess bodies in order to further indulge their sadistic appetites.

Case of the TeCloyne Murders. Aardus TeCloyne of the Western Provinces was an infamous mass murderer who was caught after he committed his twenty-third killing. He was tried, found guilty, and hanged. Three years later another series of murders carrying TeCloyne's particular pattern brought fear to the Western Provinces once more. Six people died before investigators traced the killings back to Shonda Mikellerkin, found later to be possessed by the Phantom of Aardus TeCloyne.

Phantoms possess a Shadow stat of 8 to 12, and once per Combat Round can attempt to Possess a living being. A contested Shadow vs. Shadow + 1d10 roll is made. If the Phantom wins, it successfully possesses the victim. Those possessed are forced to witness through their senses, but have no control over their bodies. Phantoms with a Shadow of 10 or higher can effectively lock the host's soul away, plunging it in a senseless void. Those who are possessed can attempt to regain control and expel the Phantom if they successfully make an Expert (20) Meditation skill test. If they succeed, they can make a new contested Shadow roll with the Phantom. If they get a Superior Success with their Meditation Skill Test, they gain a +5 to the contested Shadow roll.

Phantoms possess all the skills they had in life, which includes Rune Magic or Shadow Magic. Shadowmage Phantoms are some of the most dangerous spirits to encounter, and are thankfully rare. Phantoms are subject to all the runes that affect spirits such as Dark Majesty, Censure Spirit, and Spirit Trap, as well as Shadow Magic spells that target the Shadow stat.

Animated Corpses

Folklore is rife with stories of the dead rising to plague the living. Oftimes they return to make up for some unfulfilled task or out of a desire for revenge against those that killed them. Other tales tell of nefarious magi who animate the corpses of the dead to perform menial tasks or as fodder against their enemies. Regardless of the intent or means of their creation, animated corpses can be dangerous and difficult to destroy.



Undead Servitors

With a combination of runes, a corpse can be made to walk and follow the commands of the Runemage. First, the corpse should be intact and free of any putrefaction. A preservation rune can keep the corpse free of decay until the rune wears out (a year or longer). By inscribing an Inhabit rune upon the corpse, it can become a vessel for a wandering spirit. The spirit can then animate the corpse under their own power. But to ensure that their Undead Servitor follows their every command, carving a Slave rune into its flesh is the final step in its creation. Now they have an animated corpse that unwaveringly obeys every order given by the Runemage. To increase their overall effectiveness as servants, they can be further augmented with other runes.

All civilized lands have outlawed the creation of Undead Servitors, but they have found their use in the lands of Klesht, The Theocracy of Dharsus, and among the Violet Circle in Drakan.

Average Undead Servant

Stats

Phy 6	Spd 8
Mass 8	React 8
Int 5	Per 4
Acu 5	Sha 7

Aptitude/Skills:

Knowledge: 2
Personal: 3
Social: 0

Valdryer:

Rune Magic Vulnerability

Because the Undead Servant is being held together by a number of different runes, targeting those runes with the runes of Va'an can effectively free the inhabiting spirit and render the corpse inert. All living dead are immune to all Drandlur runes that possess the attribute of Target, and are immune to all the runes of Lyiss.

Move

5-foot Free Move.

Move 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 5 feet in 1 Count.

Special abilities

Because of their intelligence, they may use Special Combat Finesse Effects.

They are immune to all Handicaps.

Because of their undead nature, they must be completely dismembered to be brought down. Even if they are at 0 Vitality, they must have 0 Lethal Wounds left in the Head, Torso *and* Abdomen to be rendered incapable of attack. Although reducing their arms and legs to zero can prove just about as effective.

Base Initiative Bid,

Aggressive/Defensive

Any value.

Base Combat Roll and Finesse Level

Attack. 12+1d10 (Basic).

Defense. 10+1d10. Dodge. (Basic).

12+1d10 Block. (Basic)

Attack damage and Speed cost

Punch. 2 Speed. 4ap1

Or by Melee Weapon. (+2 from HTH damage)

Armor:

6av1. Corpse flesh.

Health

28 Vitality. 4 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2 Head (2). 4-5 Left Arm (3). 6-7 Right Arm (3). 8-10

Chest (5). 11-14 Abdomen (4). 15-17 Left Leg (4). 18-20

Right Leg (4).

The Risen Dead

Cremation is the common practice among many cultures, and the Risen are part of the reason why. A corpse can become reanimated in a number of ways. There have been instances where the fabric separating the material and spirit realms becomes torn, often the result of some Rune Magic experiment going awry. As energy from the spirit plane floods into the material, renegade spirits inhabit and animate anything they can. Corpses offer no resistance and so are the most easily possessed. Other corpses rise from their death to fulfill

some task left undone. They are single-minded in their determination to fulfill their debt and get their final rest. Then there are the mindless Risen Dead; freak occurrences that result in some spark of life being left in the corpse after death. There is nothing left but the basest of desires, such as hunger and survival. They are dangerous in the extreme and are indiscriminating in their prey, attacking all whom cross their path.

Stats

Phy 10 Spd 6
 Mass 5 React 7
 Int 3 Per 4
 Acu 4 Sha 8

Aptitude/Skills:

Knowledge: 2
 Personal: 3
 Social: 0

Valdryer:

Rune Magic Invulnerability

All living dead are immune to all Drandlur runes that possess the attribute of Target, and are immune to all the runes of Lyiss.

Move

5-foot Free Move.

Move 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 5 feet in 1 Count.

Special abilities

Because of their intelligence, they may use Special Combat Finesse Effects.

They are immune to all Handicaps.

Because of their undead nature, they must be completely dismembered to be brought down. Even if they are at 0 Vitality, they must have 0 Lethal Wounds left in the Head, Torso, and the Abdomen to be rendered incapable of attack. Although reducing their arms and legs to zero can prove just about as effective.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive
 Any value.

Base Combat Roll and Finesse Level

Attack. 11+1d10 (Basic).

Defense. 9+1d10. Dodge. (Basic).

11+1d10 Block. (Basic)

Attack damage and Speed cost

Bony Claw. 2 Speed. 6ap2

Bite. Must Grapple first. 3. Speed. 10 ap1

Armor:

6av1. Corpse flesh.

Health

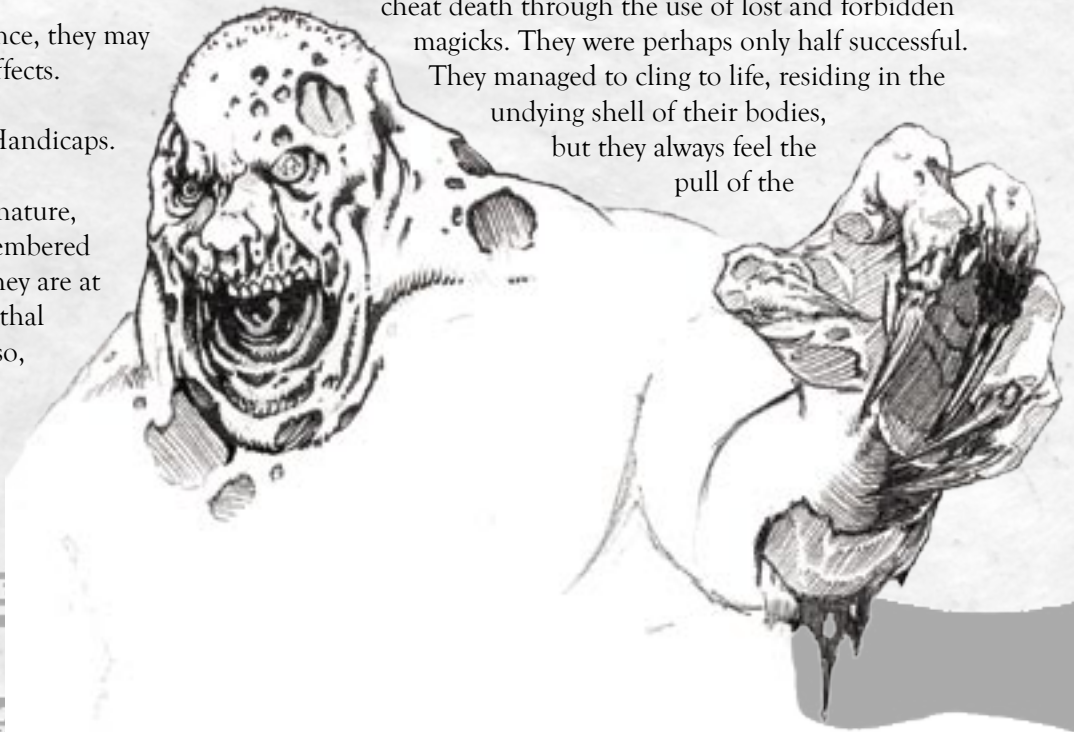
30 Vitality. 3 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2 Head (4LW). 4-5 Left Arm (5LW). 6-7 Right Arm (5LW). 8-10 Chest (7LW). 11-14 Abdomen (6LW). 15-17 Left Leg (6LW). 18-20 Right Leg (6LW).

The Hollow Ones

Legends have long told of a race of shadowy creatures that haunt the cities of the Ianer, feeding off of the life force of innocent mortals to prolong their own unnatural existence. They are able to hide their undead nature and pass unnoticed among the living. These are the Hollow Ones. The common belief is that they were Shadowmages or Runemages who attempted to cheat death through the use of lost and forbidden magicks. They were perhaps only half successful.

They managed to cling to life, residing in the undying shell of their bodies, but they always feel the pull of the



afterlife upon their souls. Their own life force is slowly being leeched into the spirit realm, and so they are in a constant search for fresh souls upon which to feed. With this stolen life force they live for a while longer, but their search never ends.

Hollow Ones feed by directly tapping the life force of a living being. The process can be fatal if taken to its conclusion, but most Hollow Ones have learned to "sip" and so leave their victim little more than fatigued. They fear detection, for long have there been Hrondim Runemages who have taken it upon themselves to hunt and forcibly exorcise into the afterlife all Hollow Ones. But many Hollow Ones have lived for centuries, if not millennia, and they are very skilled at eluding capture. The knowledge they have amassed, particularly in Rune Magic and Shadow Magic, makes them very formidable beings if confronted.

Stats

Phy 14 Spd 18
Mass 6 React 12
Int 12 Per 11
Acu 10 Sha 20

Aptitude/Skills:

Knowledge: 5
Personal: 5
Social: 5

Valdryer:

Rune Magic Invulnerability

All living dead are immune to all Drandlur runes that possess the attribute of Target, and are immune to all the runes of Lyiss.

Hollow Ones lose 1 point of Shadow a day, and must feed to replenish its loss. If they are reduced to 0 Shadow from lack of feeding, they become wizened and very weak, reducing their Physique to 1 and their Mass to 3.

Move

5-foot Free Move.

Move 10 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 20 feet in 1 Count.

Leap: 25 feet.

Special abilities

Because of their intelligence, they may use Special Combat Finesse Effects.

They are immune to all Handicaps.

Hollow Ones regenerate 1 Lethal Wound to every location every hour.

Siphon:

By coming into physical contact with a living being, they can automatically draw 2 points of Shadow into themselves. This is a temporary loss and can be recovered. The drained points of Shadow get added onto the Hollow One's Shadow stat.

Skills:

Hollow Ones will possess two to four Elite level skills in every Aptitude, and a host more at Expert and Advanced. Generally, Hollow ones will possess a Rune Magic or Shadow Magic skill at Elite. Common Domains among the Hollow Ones are Arroy, Hron, Paran, and Va'an. Those with Shadow Magic prefer Shadow Form, Shadow Autonomy, Offensive, and Defensive Cardinals.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive
Any value.

Base Combat Roll and Finesse Level
Attack. 20+1d10 (Unarmed, Melee, or Ranged:
Expert)
Defense. 20+1d10. Dodge. (Athletics: Elite)
20+1d10. Block (Melee or Unarmed: Expert)

Attack damage and Speed cost
Punch. 2 Speed. 5ap1
Or by melee weapon (+3 to damage from HTH)

Armor:
by armor worn.

Health

36 Vitality. 3 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.
2 Head (6LW). 4-5 Left Arm (7LW). 6-7 Right Arm (7LW). 8-10 Chest (9LW). 11-14 Abdomen (8LW). 15-17 Left Leg (8LW). 18-20 Right Leg (8LW).

Index

A

Allies and Villains 39
Ally Motivation Examples 40
Antagonists 87

C

Carousel Agent 58
Carousel Soldier 58
Combat Around and Inside Vehicles 25
Conspiracies 39
Constructing your Zir'An Campaign 11
Conventional Explosives 28
Corrosives 29
Criminals & Spies 57
Cult of Mirkule 48

D

Dangerous Beasts 88
Akounk 91
Amber-Web Spider 93
Chimadi 94
Emperor Pig 95
Fleshette Fish 88
Great Thunderer 97
Imisu 96
Mek Taludi 92
Ponko 90
Sea Scarabs 98
Sh'tam 99
Snow Fangs 101
Targ 102
White Orchid Viper 92
Destroying Things 24
Dice 9
Disease 35
Onset/Effect 35
Potency 35
Treatment 36
Vector 35
Draken Watch 46
Draken Watch Cult Member 47
Draken Watch Priest 47
Drowning and Suffocation 24

Drugs 32

E

Electricity 28

F

Falling 30
Falling Objects 30
Fighting From Within Vehicles 25
Fighting Inside Vehicles 25
Fighting On Top Of Vehicles 25
Fire Sizes 28
Foreman 52

G

Game Session 9
Greater Runes
Blisswrack 76
Braintrap 77
Call Swarm 72
Call Wild Creatures 72
Deathlight 74
Green Mastery 73
Infuse 77
Phase Shift 71
Sight the Strands 75
Track the Strands 75
Guilds & Merchants 50

H

Hitting Occupants Inside Vehicles 25

I

Immaterial 37
Individuals Catching Fire 29
Invisibility 37
Items of Power 82
Journal of Azmit Hinevalkk 81
Pearl Vestments 82
Rhokok, The Fist of Paran 83
The Perfect Polygon 82
The Prodigal 83
The Ringwheel 82
The Spheres of Zhung Jien 83
The Verband Chain 84

K

Kagda Dovra 63
Kagda Dovra Spy 65

L

L.A.O. Saboteur 61
Lesser Runes 70
Guide 70
Madness 71
Slave Rune 70
Timekeeper 70
Vision 71

M

Merchant Isles Smuggler 56
Mirkule 48
Mirkule Cultist 49
Mirkule High Priest 49
Mook Mobs 41

N

Narration 4
Adventure 4
A Breach in the Lines 7
Back to the Front 7
Black Milk from the Hills 6
Honor amongst Thieves 8
Horror 5
Screaming Shadows 5
Society 7
Suspended Sentence 7
The Code of Arsinor 9
The Isle of Four 6
The Jewels of Fire 5
The Power in the Stones 5
The Rose of Vallunei 8
The Watcher in the Fog 6
War 6
NPC Skill Packages 42
Builder Foreman 42
Carosel Nemesis Avenger 43
Edyssian Alienist 43
Fledgling Fane 44
Partnerships Venturist 44
Secret Section Seven Agent 45

O

Objects Catching Fire 29

P

Pacing 10
Paran's Brood
Items of Power 82
Poisons 32
Using Poisoned Weapons

32

Preparation 3

R

Religions & Cults 46
Runecraft 69

S

Sample Objects 24
Shadowmagic 78
Polyform 80
Warp 78
Slavers of Bhuket 54
Smugglers of the Merchant Isles 56
Society of Merkulian 62
Special Situations 37
SS7 Agent 67
SS7 Training
Valdreyr 45

T

Table of Contents 1
The Carousel 57
The Hand of Fate 3
The Spirit Realm 104
Towns and Cities 15
Treasure and Rewards 14
Tzerte Viazhe 62
Tzerte Viazhe Dark Magi 63

U

Undead 104
Animated Corpses 106
Average Undead Servant 107
Fragments 104
Phantoms 105
The Bodiless 104
The Hollow Ones 108
The Risen Dead 107
Undead Servitors 107
Wandering Spirits 105
Ushonu 46

V

Valdreyr
Fane 44
Finish the Job 43
Initiated Builder 42
Journeyman Builder 43
Master Builder 43
Profiling 43
The Wealth of Ianu Voss

45

Vehicles 25
Vehicle Types 26
Aircraft 27
Groundcraft 26
Primitive 26
Seacraft 27
Venturist 54
Voivodh 62

W

Water 23
Weather
Cold 23
Heat 23
Precipitation 21
Storms 22
Wind 22
Weather Generation 23

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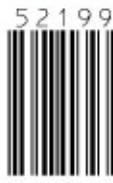


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