

Versus

The Role-Playing Game

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Introduction

First off, I'd like to thank you for trying a new game and choosing this one. The table-top role-playing game community is one with many veteran players who know what they like. One of the role-playing game's best features is its infinite replayability. But that means players often stick to what they know, and are reluctant to relearn the basics in order to try a new game.

This game is a passion project for me, one that I've worked on for a decade and will surely continue to work on for the rest of my life. I love role-playing games, there's no other type of game that can capture that freedom, excitement and creativity. I built the Versus Role-Playing Game to highlight my favorite parts of the medium, make them accessible to everyone, and easy to customize for any group or game. My hope is it can serve as a universal language of sorts for role-players, and it's one I plan to continually support and expand on.

This introduction will cover some role-playing fundamentals for first time players. If that is the case for you, I think you've chosen a great place to start. I've introduced countless players to the hobby through this game, as it is quick to learn, easy to jump into and doesn't punish experimentation. If you're familiar with role-playing games, you most likely won't be confused if you skip this introduction. Although it may offer some insights into my design philosophy that will help you know what to expect from the rest of the book.

The Versus Role-Playing Game is a series of rules and guidelines that allows a group of people to collaboratively (and occasionally competitively) create and explore a shared narrative space. What makes role-playing games come alive is the ability to bounce off other people's ideas, and share in the emotions of the story.

Each player (besides one who will act as the Narrator) will create a single character who will be a protagonist in the narrative. They will invest themselves in that character's story, and immerse themselves in that character's perspective. The most fun (and most challenging) part of playing a character is figuring out "how would they react to that?"

But because this shared space is purely imaginary, everyone will have slightly different pictures and ideas. That is why two things are necessary: A Narrator and a system.

It is the Narrator's role to play all the characters in the world besides the player's characters. They will describe the world, make the imaginary space feel grounded, and create that element of fate that transforms coincidence into story.

The game is played in the form of dialogue, between the players and the Narrator. The players will describe what their characters do and say and the Narrator will describe the outcomes and how the environment reacts.

An example is shown below. This is just one of literally endless situations and scenarios that your game could be about. The game could take place in any place, real or fictional, any time period, and be about any characters from any walk of life. It's just up to what interests the group. This is a random example to illustrate the format of a tabletop role-playing game.

Narrator: "The room is musty and only lit by a few candles. Books and loose pages are scattered across the creaky wooden floor. The furnishings are plain, an unmade bed, and disorganized bookshelf. In one corner stands a bronze statue of a hooded woman; candles and offerings are gathered around its base."

Player: "I'll pick up one of the papers and skim it."

Narrator: "It appears to be a hand-written thesis. It's a messy draft, whole paragraphs have been crossed out."

In this way your group could tell a whole story. It would be fun writing exercise. But because the shared space is purely imaginary, people will inevitably have different ideas about what is likely or possible. That is why an objective system like this one is a crucial component, what changes this from a writing exercise into a game.

Whenever a character tries to do anything that isn't obviously archivable one of the plausible outcomes must be decided upon. Instead of arguing your case and trying to get everyone to agree, or leaving it up to the subjective authority of the Narrator, the system gives every character pre-agreed upon numerical values to use. The Narrator, who is the arbiter for fictional reality, decides exactly how difficult the task is. How heavy the rock is, or how complex the mechanism is, for example. They then translate that difficulty into the numerical scale that all players understand. A "2" rock could be lifted by a child, and a "10" rock by only the strongest adults. Each character has values in a variety of aptitudes. And they will compare their value in the relevant one to the difficulty of the task to determine how successful they are and which outcome occurs.

Narrator: "The subject of the essay is very complex, with a lot of elevated language and jargon. To properly understand it you'll need to roll an Intelligence of 8, but you can add your Occult Knowledge skill if you have one."

Dice are the third and final element that make role-playing games work. If a static number decided everything, the story would be easy to predict. Instead, there is an element of randomness, where you can wager on what is likely, but nothing is set in stone until the dice have been rolled and it has officially happened. This keeps the players and Narrator on their feet, always adapting their plans to the unpredictable outcomes and twists of the story.

A character's Attributes determines which die is rolled and having a relevant Skill applies a bonus to the result. The following chapters will go into more detail on those.

Player: I rolled a 6 Intelligence! And I have a +3 in my Occult Knowledge skill so my total is 9.

Narrator: Nicely done. It appears to be a treatise on the nature of reality itself. The author is either brilliant or delusional, but he claims that we all live in the imagination of a hooded goddess who can be communed with.

By succeeding the player has given their character critical insight. You can already see how the story is shaped by every roll. Sometimes though, the difficulty of the task is not determined by the world but by other character's abilities. In which case you need to compare your roll not against a static number but the other character's roll.

Narrator: While you are reading, I need you to roll an Intelligence and add your Perception.

Player: I rolled a 3 and don't have a Perception skill.

Narrator: Not great, but I rolled a 1. You hear someone trip on the steps outside and curse. A second later you hear keys jingle, it seems as if the resident is back from their errands.

That really is all there is to role-playing games! I mean, there's obviously a lot more in the rest of this book, but if you understand this exchange, everything else can be built on that foundation. And remember, the purpose of all games is to be enjoyed. That is most true for role-playing games where there are no winners or losers. Don't worry about the "right way" to play, as long as the whole table is having fun and creating stories together. Whether you are brand new to the hobby or just adding one more system to your collection I hope you have a great time with the Versus Role-Playing Game!

Character Creation

The following chapters cover the process of creating new characters. These can either be a player's character that they may play for years, or a side-character the Narrator makes for a single scene. The building blocks are the same: Attributes, Skills and Traits.

All players (except the Narrator) must make a character before the game can begin. The Versus Role-Playing Game uses points to balance and customize player characters (as opposed to the class-based systems you may be familiar with). The Narrator will determine a number of points appropriate for the tone of the game. 15 points is a good starting point, but more or less can be agreed upon for a different power level, as long as all players have access to the same amount. 5 could be appropriate for a horror game where the player characters are high school students. And 25 could be used for powerful adventurers with a few quests under their belt already. But I would caution against going outside of that range.

Each player can spend those points however they choose, but it's always good to talk to your Narrator and other players to make sure any of your choices are redundant or in direct opposition of anyone's expectations. You don't want a table full of people with the same backstory and abilities or one character who has no business being anywhere near the narrative everyone else is interested in.

Points are not used after the game begins, and they are not awarded during play. They are just a metric for balancing everyone's characters at the beginning so that players don't feel weaker or less important. You are not obligated to spend all your points if you feel like you've perfectly captured your character with fewer points than you were given, but you won't be able to spend them later if you change your mind.

Attributes

Every character has 4 primary attributes which act as the baseline for their capabilities. Whenever your character tries to do anything challenging, you will roll a die to determine your success at that task. The type of die that is rolled is determined by your character's rank in the relevant attribute.

Agility

Is how coordinated and graceful your character is. How evasive and accurate they are, and how fast they can move. You will roll this anytime you do something physically precise: drive a car, throw a dart, climb a fence, perform surgery.

Strength

Is how strong and tough your character is. How much damage they can endure and what weapons they can use effectively. You will roll this anytime you do something physically demanding, kick down a door, run for miles, resist the effects of a toxin.

Intelligence

Is how much your characters knows and notices. How sound their reasoning is, how keen their senses are, and how much they can master their skills. You will roll this anytime you investigate or research, and when you need to determine if your character has heard of something.

Guile

Is your character's social understanding and impact on others. How persuasive and likable they are and how hard they are to deceive or mislead. You will roll this anytime you try to get a certain outcome from a conversation or social situation.

Each of these attributes are ranked by the type of die you will roll whenever using it. A “d4” is a common notation that means the die has 4 sides (1-4). A d12 has 12 sides (1-12) so the average result is much higher. Additionally, whenever you roll a 1, the attempt is an automatic failure, regardless of any bonuses. So, increasing Attributes not only makes you more versatile, but also less prone to mistakes.

d4	Poor
d6	Average
d8	Above Average
d10	Exceptional
d12	Incredible

A perfectly average person will have a d6 in all their Attributes. Remember everyone in the setting is governed by these Attributes, not just the player characters. But the players have agency over who they want their characters to be and what abilities they have.

Player characters start with a free d6 in all Attributes. But those can be altered by spending the points allotted to each player at the beginning of character creation. It costs 3 points to increase an attribute to a d8, and 3 more to increase it to a d10. To increase an attribute to a nearly super-human d12 (Sherlock Holmes intelligence for example), you not only have to spend another 3 points, but you have to spend 2 additional points on the Trait that unlocks that tier (pg. 34-41).

Alternatively, if your character has an Attribute that is below average, you get 3 points refunded for dropping an attribute down to a d4. When determining your Attribute ranks, make sure to save some of your points for Skills and Traits. But nothing is locked in until the end of character creation, so just jot down your preferred ranks and then you can circle back around and adjust them if needed.

Stats

In addition to being rolled, each attribute has a stat associated with it. This stat can be altered slightly in the Trait section but its base is derived from your character's rank in the corresponding Attribute.

Speed

Your character's Speed is how fast they can run on foot. The outcome of a race would be determined by comparing the Speed of the two characters (modified by an Agility roll to account for accidents). But in a 5-second round a combat, a character's Speed stat is how many 5-foot zones they can cover.

d4	2 Speed
d6	3 Speed
d8	4 Speed
d10	5 Speed
d12	6 Speed

Health

Damage is a numerical way to differentiate between getting punched for 1, and hit by a truck for 8. Whenever you take damage, you lose that much Health. If your Health ever reaches 0 you fall down, incapacitated. You cannot stand without help and it is a struggle to remain conscious (see pg. 138 for more detailed rules on incapacitation). If your Health ever drops to -2, you start to bleed out. At the end of each turn, until you receive medical attention you lose 1 health. If your Health is reduced to -5 your character dies.

d4	2 Health
d6	3 Health
d8	4 Health
d10	5 Health
d12	6 Health

You can recover Health by resting. Once per 24-hours, when you sleep, you can roll a d6. If you roll a 5 or higher, you recover 1 Health. If you did not participate in any strenuous activity such as sprinting, fighting, or putting experience in any physical skills, for the previous 24-hours, add 2 to your roll.

If your wounds were sustained in a dirty environment, they have a 50% chance of being infected. If your wounds become infected, subtract 2 from your roll. Someone with a Medicine skill can spend an hour to clean and treat your wounds and roll Intelligence + Medicine. If they roll a 3 or higher, you add 1 to your next recovery roll. If they roll a 6 or higher, and it is within 12 hours of when the wounds were inflicted, they cannot become infected. If they roll a 9 or higher, any infections are removed and you add 2 to your next recovery roll. You can only be treated once per day but can treat yourself if you are the one with the Medicine skill.

Remember that if you are at or below 0 Health, you are still incapacitated. You cannot travel except in the back of a vehicle. You slip in and out of consciousness and do not gain experience from downtime.

Mastery

Mastery determines how good your character can get at skills. If you have 3 Mastery, you cannot have any skills higher than a +3. A character with only d4 in Intelligence is unlikely to become a master of many things. There are exceptions of course, so this limit doesn't apply to secondary skills and there are a few Traits modify your Mastery.

d4	2 Mastery
d6	3 Mastery
d8	4 Mastery
d10	5 Mastery
d12	6 Mastery

Acquaintances

Having high guile means you are more likely to get along with people and leave a lasting impression. The Acquaintances stat tries to capture the sense that you've led a life of meeting people and making friends. Anyone can have specific contacts that they get from the Traits section. But a high guile person is just more likely to bump into people that they know and remember them fondly. Based on your character's Guile you get a certain number of Acquaintances you can introduce during a game

d4	0 Acquaintances
d6	1 Acquaintances
d8	2 Acquaintances
d10	3 Acquaintances
d12	4 Acquaintances

Acquaintances can be introduced a few different ways. If the players are in an open environment like a city, and want to track down an old friend, they can spend one of their Acquaintances to do so. The player can dictate as little as "an old drinking buddy who lives in town," or as much a fully flushed out character with a name and quirks (just make sure to get your Narrator's approval on it). And make sure to not have new Acquaintances be *too* convenient. If your character has lots of academic friends, it's likely one could be an archeologist. But if you've just learned about Vampires, it's unlikely your friend down the street is a Vampire expert.

The other way to introduce an Acquaintance is when the players meet a new NPC and the Narrator asks if any player wants to spend an Acquaintance to know them, and describe them. The Narrator can do this for a number of reasons. Perhaps, they just don't have a plan for a particular NPC, or wants to make a simple NPC more interesting. Or it can just be a great opportunity to get players involved by creating a little part of the world.

When a player has 0 Acquaintances, they cannot use either of these options, so don't spend them too quickly. If a campaign runs long, all the players may expend their acquaintances. If your table enjoys this mechanic, the Narrator can keep in the game by awarding additional Acquaintances to players. I recommend either granting 1 to each player at the end of every major story arc. Or handing out 1 every session or so to players who went above and beyond while role-playing.

Characteristics

Although technically not Stats, because they are not derived from an Attribute, your character also has three Characteristics. By default, everyone has a d6 in these Characteristics but they can be modified through Traits (pg. 32). The Narrator may ask you to roll one of the three characteristics when you want your character to do something that they find difficult. Normally you just have to roll a 2 or higher, but in certain extreme situations the Narrator may increase the required number.

Discipline is used to do what you should be doing instead of doing what your character wants to do. Discipline is required to resist the needs and desires of the body: Staying up on watch while tired, wading into a disgusting mire or cutting your own palm to make a blood pact, for example.

Courage is used to do what may terrify your character. Venturing into the dark unknown, standing your ground against overwhelming odds or a terrible monster, etc.

And Callous is used to do things that are amoral or cruel. Just because something is wrong or illegal doesn't mean it will require a Callous roll, because you may not have to confront the brutality of your actions. But taking a beggar's loaf of bread, separating a mother and daughter, or luring an innocent person into a trap would.

Skills

Skills represent training and expertise. They make your character much more reliable at certain actions. They are a static bonus that you always add your Attribute roll when attempting a relevant action (with the exception of rolled 1s).

How high your skills can be is determined by your Mastery stat, but just because you *could* have a +4 doesn't mean you need to. Each +1 in a primary skill costs 1 point. Below is a general idea of what level of expertise is represented by a certain number in a skill.

+1	Hobbyist
+2	Apprentice
+3	Professional
+4	Expert
+5	Master
+6	Savant

There are two kinds of skills, primary and secondary, divided by columns on the character sheet. Primary skills are the most helpful and universal of the skills. They cost 1 point for each +1.

Secondary skills are more niche, but they bring flavor to your character and may save your skin in certain situations. You can get +3 for only 1 point. You can also get a +1 in 3 secondary skills for 1 point, or any other combination. Just add up all your secondary skills, divide that number by 3 and round up to the closest whole number to find the point cost for the section.

If you are going to be playing a long campaign it can be a good idea to start with lower skills. It has to fit your character's story. A doctor of 20 years wouldn't have a +1 in Medicine. But since you can passively increase them through play, it can provide a nice feeling of progression, and gives you more points to spend on Traits and Attributes.

Primary Skills

Acrobatics

Is used for balance, jumping, climbing and dodging.

Charm

Is used for making friends and attracting lovers.

Deception

Is used for lying and faking emotion.

Engineering

Is used for fixing or inventing the current technology.

Fighting

Is used for brawling and fighting with melee weapons.

Intuition

Is used for detecting lies and secret motives.

Medicine (Alchemy)

Is used for tending wounds and curing ailments.

Perception

Is used for noticing details in your environment.

Persuasion

Is used for convincing others in a rational argument.

Piloting (Riding)

Is used for controlling the current form of transportation.

Shooting (Archery)

Is used for aiming and operating ranged weapons.

Stealth

Is used for staying out of sight and moving silently.

Streetwise

Is knowing criminal etiquette and the tools of the trade.

Survival

Is used for tracking, trapping and camping in the wilds.

(The skill names in parenthesis are used for the fantasy rule set).

Secondary Skills

Academics	Performances	Crafts
History	(Instrument)	Sewing
Mathematics	Singing	Pottery
Geography	Story Telling	Metalworking
Science	Inspiration	Carpentry
Law	Dancing	Writing
Religion	Juggling	Forgery

There are countless more secondary skills, which can be created by the players to match their characters. If you make an accountant for example, it would be silly for them not to have an Accounting skill. But also, knowledge of any specific place, organization, or person can be a secondary skill. By definition a secondary skill just has to be a niche talent that is not covered by any of the existing primary skills. For example, you couldn't make a secondary skill from a specific weapon class, such as swords because that is covered by Fighting, or a secondary skill in Tracking because that is covered by Survival. If you are interested in a skill specialization, they are addressed in the Traits section

Starting Skills

Every player character starts the game with two free secondary skills to encourage interesting and well-rounded characters. One is a +3 in knowledge of a location. Everyone grew up somewhere, and still knows it like the back of their hand. Where your character is from, or feels most at home should be reflected here. As your character explores and learns they will likely acquire additional location knowledges. They cannot be improved through experience points but should be awarded for exploration by the Narrator. The second is a +3 in a “hobby.” A hobby doesn’t have to be strictly recreational, it can any secondary skill that the character has an interest in.

Using Skills

Skills are not governed by a certain attribute. The Narrator may ask you to use them in any combination, based on your situation. But there are some common pairings, and understanding them will help you make a proficient character.

- Acrobatics, is predominantly Agility, unless you are using Intelligence to plan the best way to scale a surface.
- Charm, Deception and Intuition are all social skills and will almost always be used with Guile. Persuasion as well, unless used with Strength to look intimidating and get someone to back out of a fight.
- Fighting is a rolled with Agility when determining the success of attacks. But Strength is needed as well to truly excel in combat.
- Engineering and Medicine are mostly Intelligence with occasional Agility based execution such as surgery or tinkering with watch gears.
- Perception is always Intelligence, whether you are spotting a tail or investigating a crime scene.
- Piloting and Shooting depend on the hand-eye coordination of Agility.
- Stealth uses Agility for sneaking through the shadows and sleight of hand. Guile can be used for blending into a crowd.
- Streetwise is very versatile. Agility is used for picking locks, Intelligence is used for criminal etiquette and Guile is used for gathering information from strangers and contacts.
- Survival is similarly multifaceted. Agility is used for setting delicate traps, Strength for building shelters and Intelligence for tracking and foraging.

You can find more detailed information about each skill in the Narration chapter (pg. 60).

Improving Skills

During play your characters will develop and grow. Often the most educational moments are when you did something wrong and know what to avoid next time. Whenever you fail a skill roll you may put an experience point (xp) into that skill's box. Unless, the failure was caused by a rolled 1, in which case it was just a fluke or accident which you learn nothing from. When you have more experience points in a skill than your current rank, erase all experience and improve your rank by +1 (unless it would cause you to exceed your Mastery, in which case you do not gain the xp).

To make progress feel gradual, you cannot gain more than 1 xp in a skill during each game session. But you can gain 1 xp in any number of skills that you already have. The objective of the experience system is not to incentivize players to attempt useless things in order to improve. So, the Narrator can deem a task not important enough to provide meaningful insight. It can be rewarding for players to find creative ways to apply their skills, so the Narrator should only do this if they feel the players are deliberately finding distractions or the game's pace is suffering.

The other way to improve skills is during time-skips. Occasionally throughout the story, the players will be able to pass some substantial amount of time "without incident." Of course, if the players have plans, they do not have to, but doing so affords the characters the days, weeks, or months needed to make significant improvements. The Narrator awards an equal amount of xp to each player for them to spend how they choose.

A day	1 xp
A few days	2 xp
A week	3 xp
Two weeks	5 xp
A month	8 xp
Six months	15 xp

Based on where the time-skip takes place, the Narrator may deem it impossible to put experience into certain skills. You can't practice sailing in the desert, or deception in solitary confinement. Alternatively, if the location is conducive to a certain skill, they can grant 50% more experience if training that skill. Training fighting in a dojo, or history in a library for example.

Time-skips are the only way to learn new skills. First, you must find an instructor. This can be any character, player or non-player that has at least a +3 in that skill. But they must be willing to spend the time-skip training you, which prevents them from training their own skills. It takes 2 xp to acquire a +1 in a new skill. But from there it can be improved like any of your other skills.

Improving Attributes

Instead of improving your skills, you can use time-skips to work on your attributes. Weeks of exercise and training could yield a higher rank of Strength, or months in a university might improve your Intelligence die.

If the Narrator deems it reasonable to train an attribute in the location where you're spending the time-skip, you can contribute any xp granted toward it. But everyone has natural limits. And the Narrator may prevent you from going from a d4 to a d10 to maintain realism or balance.

Failing an Attribute roll never contributes xp. Only xp awarded over time-skips can progress this, but it doesn't have to be completed in a single time-skip. You can only improve your attributes by one rank at a time, and it requires the amount of experience listed below. If you want to obtain a d12 you need to get the corresponding Trait first.

d6	5 xp
d8	6 xp
d10	7 xp
d12	8 xp

Time skips also allow you to acquire new Traits. More on that in the next section (pg. 20).

Traits

Traits are a great way to bring depth to your character. They are anything that cannot be numerically represented in the Attribute and Skills section. Perhaps you are rich and can buy your way out of problems, or you have a trusty side kick who will sometimes save your hide. These are tangible assets your character has, and therefore you must spend points on them, but are not your character's own abilities.

Conversely if your character is indebted to some dangerous people, or walks with a limp, you receive points for taking on these extra challenges. Points that you can spend elsewhere to compensate.

During character creation you can take traits more or less freely. But make sure to collaborate with your Narrator to flesh out the details of your traits in-world. It is your choice to take the Indebted trait. But to whom and for what should be agreed upon by you and the Narrator to insure its grounded in the game world and will contribute to the plot.

The one exception is taking two traits from the same category. This is often fine, but requires sign off from the Narrator to ensure you aren't taking redundant traits that add no real additional challenges, just to net points. For example, being Wanted and Exiled from the same place. Or Exiled from every place where the game doesn't take place. It's a cheap trick and goes against the spirit of the game.

After character creation, you can still gain and lose traits. This can be done one of two ways: through narrative circumstances or experience granted by time-skips. Narrative circumstances are made at the Narrator's discretion. Paying off your bounty could absolve you of your Wanted trait. Or after an epic confrontation with your fear, they may be able to lose your Paranoia trait.

The second way is by spending time-skips making a conscious effort toward gaining or losing a trait.

Acquiring Traits

When you are awarded experience points (xp) during a time-skip, you can choose to spend them on a trait instead of skills or attributes.

First, the Narrator must approve a trait as acquirable. You can master a new fighting style and get a combat focused trait or skill specialization. Or you can go from city to city making your own network of contacts for the Connections trait. But some traits like Ambidextrous and Attractive are innate and cannot be acquired after character creation. Some may be able to be self-taught, and some may require you to seek out a trainer in order to obtain them (like a new skill). The Narrator is responsible for determining these on a case-by-case basis.

But if you meet all the requirements, you can contribute any xp granted during a time-skip toward it. Once you have xp equal to twice the point cost you can add the trait to your character sheet. This doesn't have to be completed in a single time-skip. And while working toward a trait, the Narrator may award xp toward that trait. For example, if you are working on Evasive and escape a tough fight unscathed.

Wealth and Resources traits cannot be earned this way, they represent what you have at the start of the game. Instead, if people want to spend a time-skip making money, they can earn it using a trade skill, performing, being a tutor, etc. The amount made varies dramatically on the opportunities of the location. But in an average city, I allow players to spend 1 xp, roll what skill they want to use and gain silver equal to the result x10.

It can also be possible to lose negative traits this way. For example, spending 4 xp to break a Bad Habit. But the Narrator should only allow this under certain circumstances as flaws can be the most interesting and defining parts of a character. I recommend not letting larger traits be lost this way. Losing Fugitive should only be accomplished through dramatic story development, such a quest reward or paying a great sum for your bounty, not just passively working toward it behind the scenes.

Wealth & Resources

Depending on the setting of the game the Narrator will choose an amount of money to be the default starting resources (200 silver pieces is recommended for a fantasy campaign). It can be spent during character creation for any starting gear that the Narrator deems easily purchasable, and any leftover is liquid wealth that the character has access to at the start of the game.

10

Rich

*You are defined by your wealth. Money is no object to you unless it is a huge investment or business venture. You start with x50 starting resources and a huge property (such as a duchy). **Warning:** This trait can cripple a Narrator's ability to motivate an impoverished group of characters so should only be taken with the Narrator's approval.*

5

Wealthy

You are very well off, starting with x10 starting resources. You also get a property and a weekly income of $1/2$ starting resources to maintain your lifestyle.

3

Affluent

You are doing well for yourself financially. You start with x5 starting resources and weekly income of $1/4$ starting resources.

2

Business

You own an establishment, that if not neglected provides a weekly income of $1/2$ starting resources.

2	Benefactor	<i>You are doted on by a wealthy character such as a parent, spouse, or patron. You start with up to x5 starting resources, and have potential access to more if you persuade them to approve of any expenses, but you cannot sell anything as it isn't yours.</i>
1	Prosperous	<i>You either just came into some money or have been saving for a while. Start with x2 starting resources.</i>
1	Workshop	<i>You have a location that grants a +2 Engineering or Medicine (or other crafting secondary skill).</i>
1	Archive	<i>You have a location that grants a +3 when researching.</i>
-1	Indebted	<i>You owe x5 starting resources to an institution or person.</i>
-1	Destitute	<i>All you have is the clothes on your back. No items, weapons or spending money.</i>
-2	In the Hole	<i>You owe x10 starting resources to an institution or person who will resort to violence if not paid back.</i>
-3	Indentured	<i>You have taken a religious oath, or signed a legal contract to own no possessions. All wealth you accumulate must be handed over to a specific person or institution.</i>

Reputation & Warrants

5 Celebrated

You have celebrity status. You are a beloved public figure with the admiration of all but no official authority. This trait starts with a regional limitation, but can be expanded through great deeds. Anyone in that region would be honored to come to your aid or give you what they can as a gift.

3 Prestigious

You have the status to order around anyone who doesn't also have this trait. You have a major and recognizable status within your region, such as being a medieval noble.

1 Popular

You have no actual authority over people, but a very positive reputation that makes people eager to help you and grants social sway in some circles.

-1 Exiled

You are no longer welcome in a region of the world. They are not actively seeking you but there is a chance you could cross paths with their agents, and ever returning to that place would be very dangerous.

-1 Besmirched

You have a negative reputation that follows you. Mocked for some reason that has taken all credibility from you and makes people less inclined to trust you.

-2 Wanted

You are wanted by a faction in the world. It may be by a country for crimes you committed, or by an organization for their own reasons. But the faction must be powerful enough to send agents after you.

-4 Fugitive

You are the most sought-after criminal by the authorities of the region where the game takes place. You are the target of a large-scale man hunt. The average citizen will recognize your face and report the sighting so even the simplest public interaction can be a threat. Fugitives should run into life threatening situations nearly every session (even the first). Even if you pay your bounty of x20 starting resources you may not be free to go.

Warning: This trait can seriously distract from a campaign with a focused narrative so should only be taken with the Narrator's approval.

Contacts & Connections

10

Leader

You have a large number of contacts or servants who are under your command. This can either be a loyal court around you, or spy network spread in every corner of the world, but they serve and admire you.

Warning: *A leader character may find themselves in positions where not putting themselves at risk, and therefore excluding themselves from sessions, is the smartest plan. So only take this trait if you accept this and have the Narrator's approval.*

5

Mentor

You have a single character (10 points more than you) who sees training you as their duty. They will protect you until your progress is complete in their eyes.

4

Organization

You are part of an organization which supports your ventures. This could be a company that you work for, or a gang that you are a part of. Normally it will grant you access to specific resources, and a few characters who work with you. They are not under your control but will assist you if persuaded and can be depended on if you complete the occasional task for them.

3 Sidekick

You have a companion (5 points less than you) who will stick by your side no matter what and may even trade their life for yours if treated properly.

2 Animal Companion

You have a pet who is trusty and intelligent. This must be a fairly common tamable animal.

2 Connected

You are part of a network of characters who keep each other informed on certain topics, and can come to each other's aid in ways that do not put themselves at risk.

1 Favor

There is a character in a position of power who owes you a one-time favor. You do not control this character but you may persuade them to help you. Once they do, which should be a considerable contribution, you lose this trait.

-1 Enemy

There is a character present in your day-to-day life who wants to see you fail, and will go out of their way to interfere with you out of spite alone.

-3 Archenemy

You have a very powerful character who will stop at nothing until you have been destroyed. They will use lethal force against you.

Quirks & Conditions

-1 Sentimental

You have a strong emotional attachment to an object that you value nearly as much as your own life. Whenever you do not have it, you are devastated or distracted, take a -1 to all rolls.

-1 Greedy

If you see an opportunity to become wealthy, you have to roll a Discipline of 4 to not take it.

-1 Honest

You refuse to tell lies or mislead people unless lives depend on it. You may be asked to roll a Callous to lie if the stakes aren't high enough. Halve your total when you try to lie.

-1 Phobia

You have a crippling fear which you cannot overcome unless you roll a Courage of 6 or higher. This can be fear of anything, such as spiders, fire, dogs, doctors, being poisoned. But if it is something universal, that is much harder to avoid like agoraphobia, fear of water, storms, or being followed this trait is worth -2 points instead.

-1 Narcoleptic

Groggy and tired you get a -1 to all rolls during daylight hours, but no penalty after the sun sets.

-1 Compulsive	<i>You have something you do compulsively all the time. This could be organizing things or double-checking locks, or anything else. If you have an opportunity to do so, but don't want to you must roll a Discipline of 5 or higher in order to resist your compulsion.</i>
-1 Flirtatious	<i>If you are speaking with someone you are attracted to, you must roll a Discipline of 5 or higher in order to not flirt with them.</i>
-1 Kleptomaniac	<i>You feel the urge to steal anything that isn't nailed down. If you see something that you think you can get away with you must roll a Discipline of 4 or higher in order to not try.</i>
-1 Habit	<i>You have one thing that you constantly do out of force of habit. Such as smoking cigarettes, or gambling. If you go a day without doing your habit you become irritated and get -1 to all rolls until you do. If this habit is debilitating in some way, either a drug that reduces your Attributes while on it, or an incredibly risky behavior this trait is worth -2 points instead.</i>

-2

Addicted

You have a severe dependency on something. If you go even a single day without it you get a -1 to all rolls and become agitated. If you see an opportunity to get it you have to roll a Discipline of 5 to not take it. Although cigarettes are technically addictive, someone who always smokes them would have a Habit, not an addiction, as their motivation isn't derived from it.

-2

Short Tempered

You are irritable and easily annoyed by things. It's up to you what sets you off, laziness, disobedience, delays, etc. But whenever you are exposed to that thing you must roll a Discipline of 5 to not fly into a rage, often doing or saying things you later regret.

-2

Honorable

You have to do what you think is right, no matter the consequences, even if it means giving your life to maintain your integrity. You cannot cheat, steal, hurt innocents or betray anyone.

-2

Pacifist

You refuse to hurt others in anyway unless you are in an extreme situation where your life is threatened. This doesn't mean that as soon as a fight breaks out you can join in. You can only react to immediate danger and act to save yourself or others.

-2

Insane

Once per day, when the Narrator requests, you must roll Discipline of 5, if you fail they may describe any unbelievable situation that fits with your previous delusions, and your character must react to it as if it were real.

-2

Night Terrors

Every night is a psychological ordeal. Each time you sleep roll a Courage of 4, if you fail you are sleep deprived and get -1 to all rolls the next day.

-2

Oathbound

You would give your life to uphold a solemn vow you have made to another character. This oath cannot simply be your own character's objective. It should be contradictory to their own goals or severely limit the way in which you can achieve them, such as a master swordsman who has taken an oath to never use a sword again.

-2 Protective

You would give your life for someone you swore to protect. It must be vulnerable player character, a non-player character of the Narrator's choice or a character you create with the Narrator's approval.

-2 Obsessed

You are consumed by a single goal. You may have to roll Discipline of 5 to pull yourself away and do anything besides pursue this goal. If anyone tries to get in your way, or is found out to be hindering you, you get physically violent against them.

-3 Psychopathic

If someone is alone or vulnerable around you, you must roll a Discipline of 2 or greater to resist the urge to kill them. You never have to roll Callous.

Warning: This trait may cause your character to kill innocent characters that are important to the plot, or even other player's characters. It should only be taken with the approval of everyone at the table.

-5 Pious

You have sworn yourself to a righteous life. You would sooner die than lie, steal, cheat or hurt anyone. You cannot take this trait if you have the Honest, Honorable or Pacifist traits.

Characteristics

3 Iron-Willed

You are a purely rational being, in control of every action. The Narrator can never make you roll a Discipline, Courage or Callous. If you need to from a trait or spell, roll a d10.

1 Disciplined

You are trained at putting aside impulses and desires for what you know you need to do. The Narrator can never make you roll Discipline. If you need to from a trait or spell, roll a d8.

1 Brave

You can always control yourself in the face of fear. The Narrator can never make you roll Courage. If you need to from a trait or spell, roll a d8.

1 Cold Hearted

You have been desensitized to the cruelty of the world. The Narrator can never make you roll Callous. If you need to from a trait or spell, roll a d8.

0 Show Off

You are constantly trying impress others, doing dangerous or reckless things. While around someone you want to impress the Narrator can never make you roll Courage. But if an opportunity presents itself you must roll a Discipline of 5 to not try.

0	Reckless	<p><i>The Narrator can never make you roll a Courage. But you must roll a Discipline of 4 or greater to not charge into battle at any chance you get.</i></p>
-1	Bloodthirsty	<p><i>The Narrator can never make you roll for Courage or Callous. If there is any easy way to start a fight you must roll Discipline of 4 or greater to not start one.</i></p>
-1	Lazy	<p><i>You cannot resist the urge to sneak in a rest at any chance you get and cut corners to save work on even vitally important projects. Whenever you roll Discipline, you roll a d4 instead of a d6. And the Narrator may ask you to roll Discipline more often.</i></p>
-1	Cowardly	<p><i>Whenever the situation becomes a little scary you are the first to flee. Whenever you roll Courage, you roll a d4 instead of a d6. And the Narrator may ask you to roll Courage more often.</i></p>
-1	Sensitive	<p><i>You could never bring yourself to do anything cruel. Whenever you roll Callous you roll a d4 instead of a d6. And the Narrator may ask you to roll Callous more often.</i></p>

Agility Focused

2	Graceful	<i>Required to take a d12 in Agility. You cannot take this trait if you have Hulking, Genius or Magnetic.</i>
2	Contortionist	<i>You get a +5 to Agility when testing flexibility.</i>
2	Ambidextrous	<i>You do not halve your agility rolls when using your non-dominant hand.</i>
2	Quick Reflexes	<i>You roll a higher die of agility when reacting fist to something and roll a higher die for Initiative.</i>
2	Evasive	<i>You roll a higher die of Agility when using Acrobatics to dodge.</i>
1	Swift	<i>Increase your Speed stat by 1. You roll a higher die of Agility when using it to run.</i>
1	Pilot/Rider's Bond	<i>You roll a higher die of Agility when using Piloting with a specific vehicle (or horse). This is not a type of vehicle; it is a single one you have a bond with.</i>
1	Limber Up	<i>Once per day you can stretch and roll an Intelligence + Acrobatics of 7. If you succeed, you roll a higher die of Agility for the next hour.</i>

-1 Can't Swim

You never learned how to swim. As soon as you find yourself in water you struggle to remain on the surface and cannot move in any direction. Roll a strength to see how many rounds you can hold your breath.

-1 Shakes

You roll a lower die of Agility when doing anything with your hands that requires fine motor skills. Writing, lock-picking, shooting, etc.

-1 Lock Joint

Each morning when you awake, roll a d6, if you get a 2 or lower, your back and joints lock up and you roll a lower die of Agility for that day. You can't take this trait if you have a d4 Agility.

-1 One-Handed

You only have one hand. You can only hold one thing and can't use two handed weapons. If the hand you lost is your dominant hand this trait is worth -3.

-2 Limp

Your speed is reduced to 1. You halve any agility roll involving your legs.

-5 Can't Walk

You cannot stand, walk, jump, climb or dodge. You cannot move unless you are in a setting with wheel chairs, which have a speed of 2.

Strength Focused

2

Hulking

Required to take a d12 in Strength. You cannot take this trait if you have Graceful, Genius or Magnetic.

2

Tough

Increase your Health stat by 1. You roll a higher die of Strength when resisting pain and interrogation or remaining conscious while incapacitated.

2

Endurance

You roll a higher die of Strength when determining your stamina and fatigue. You do not take a -1 to all rolls until you've been awake for 2 days, instead of 1.

2

Rage

When you are furious or wounded, you roll a higher die of strength and deal an additional damage with Melee attacks. You cannot simply choose to be furious; you must be in a situation worthy of such outrage.

2

Armor Conditioned

You have a higher die of Strength with calculating what Heft of armor you can wear.

1

Resilient

You roll a higher die of Strength when resisting poison and disease.

1	Lifter	<i>You roll a higher die of Strength when using it to lift, push or pull.</i>
1	Intimidating	<i>You roll a higher die of Strength when using it with Persuasion.</i>
-1	Feeble	<i>Decrease your Health stat by 1.</i>
-1	Elderly	<i>You are on the border of infirmity. You cannot have more than a d4 in Agility or Strength.</i>
-1	Ravenous	<i>You have to eat... constantly. You eat twice as many rations as a normal person. If you go a day without gorging yourself you roll a lower die of Strength. Cannot take if you have d4 Strength.</i>

Intelligence Focused

2	Genius	<i>Required to take a d12 in Intelligence. You cannot take this trait if you have Graceful, Hulking or Magnetic.</i>
2	Talented	<i>Increase your Mastery stat by 1.</i>
2	Trained	<i>Increase your Mastery stat by 2 for a single skill.</i>

2	Expertise	<i>Choose one skill you have at least a +4 in. You can re-roll the first 1 each time you use that skill.</i>
2	Dark Vision	<i>You do not halve your Perception total when trying to see in to darkness.</i>
2	Educated	<i>You get +3 to History, Mathematics, Geography Science, Law, Religion. And any other secondary skill that would be considered academic in the game's setting.</i>
2	Quick Study	<i>You can gain 2 experience points in each skill every session instead of 1.</i>
2	Perfect Memory	<i>You never have to roll to recall information you once knew and can remember places you've been with incredible detail. You can't get lost and can transcribe a map of a place after visiting it once.</i>
2	Translator	<i>You know up to 4 languages instead of 1.</i>
1	Bilingual	<i>You know an additional language.</i>
1	Deductive	<i>You roll a higher die of Intelligence when using it for raw deduction.</i>

		<i>Once per day, you can reflect on an experience you had that day which granted xp. Roll an Intelligence + (the skill that you used), if you get a 7 or higher you gain an additional xp in that skill.</i>
1	Reflective	
1	Handy	<i>You roll a higher die of Intelligence when attempting to repair something.</i>
1	Keen Sense	<i>Choose one sense besides sight, you roll a higher die of Intelligence when using it for Perception rolls.</i>
-1	Nearsighted/ Farsighted	<i>You halve your Perception and Intuition rolls when the target is either further or closer than ten feet away from you. If you are in a setting where glasses are available, you may ignore this trait while wearing them.</i>
-1	Hard of Hearing	<i>Halve your Perception rolls to listen or hear. When you speak it cannot be at a whisper and must be audible to all other characters within 15-feet.</i>
-1	Illiterate	<i>You cannot read or write in any languages.</i>

-1	Naïve	<i>You roll a lower die of intelligence when trying to know about anything you consider amoral. You get -2 to all Streetwise rolls.</i>
-2	Outsider	<i>You are from a distant place. Even some mundane things are foreign to you. You do not know basic etiquette. You halve your Intelligence total when trying to know anything about where the game takes place.</i>
-2	Juvenile	<i>You are adolescent or younger. You cannot have more than a d6 in Strength. Your Mastery is reduced to 2. After a year in-game you lose this trait and increase your Strength by 1 rank. You cannot take this if you only have a Mastery of 2.</i>
-2	Deaf	<i>You cannot hear. You cannot attempt any auditory perception rolls.</i>
-2	Mute	<i>You cannot speak. All your dialogue must be written or signed if you have Sign Language secondary skill.</i>
-5	Blind	<i>You cannot see. You cannot attempt any visual Perception rolls. You halve the total of all your attacks.</i>

Guile Focused

		<i>Required to take a d12 in Guile. You cannot take this trait if you have Graceful, Hulkling or Genius.</i>
2	Magnetic	<i>You use your Intelligence instead of your Guile die when rolling Intuition.</i>
2	Practiced Facade	<i>You have lived a specific lie so long you almost believe it yourself. When you roll a Deception concerning the chosen topic, roll twice and use the higher result.</i>
1	Attractive	<i>You roll a higher die in guile when charming characters that are attracted to your gender.</i>
1	Natural Leader	<i>You roll a higher die in guile when interacting with characters who you have authority over.</i>
1	Booming	<i>You roll a higher die in guile when addressing a large crowd of people.</i>
1	Comedian	<i>You roll a higher die in guile when charming characters that you have made laugh.</i>
1	Performer	<i>You roll a higher die in guile when putting on a staged performance.</i>

1**Barterer**

You roll a higher die in guile when negotiating a commercial exchange. This must be a trade of currency, goods or services.

1**Inscrutable**

You are hard to read and don't display how you are feeling. You roll a higher die of guile for Deception when not speaking.

-1**Disfigured**

You roll a lower die in guile when charming characters that are attracted to your gender. Cannot take this if you have d4 Guile.

-1**Petulant**

You are not accustomed to being denied what you want. When rolling Persuasion for something you want, you roll a lower die of Guile and come off as intitled. Cannot take this if you have d4 Guile.

-1**Surly**

You never attempt humor and are rather unlikable. Whenever you meet a new person, they start with a lower disposition toward you and must be charmed up to a default stance.

-2**Sycophant**

You come off as a flatterer to those in positions of power. Whenever you are speaking to someone with authority over you, you must roll a Charm and roll a lower die of Guile for it.

Combat Focused Traits

These are traits that interact directly with the additional Combat rules (pg. 126). Only take these traits if your table has agreed to use those rules.

2 Brawler

You do not suffer the -3 penalty to attacking while grounded. And your unarmed attacks deal an additional damage against grounded targets.

2 Cleaving Strikes

When one of your melee attacks incapacitates the target, you may continue the swing, making a free basic attack against another target within range. You can continue this process as long as your attacks incapacitates.

2 Sworn Sword

You can parry ranged attacks with a Katana. You must have at least +3 in the Katana Exotic Weapon skill.

2 Whirlwind Tactics

Once per round, when you successfully dodge and move one space you can try to move into an occupied space. Make a free unarmed attack against that target and if you succeed, push them one space away from you in addition to any other damage or effects of the attack itself.

1 Phalanx Tactics

You can equip a one-handed shield and a Spear at the same time.

2	Quick Draw	<i>You can equip weapons from a sheathe or holster (not from your inventory) as a free action.</i>
2	War of Attrition	<i>Each time the same target misses you, you get a cumulative +1 when attacking them. Reset this number if you are hit or if you change targets.</i>
2	Assassin's Tactics	<i>If you're the instigator and have surprise, you get +2 to Critical Attacks. They are silent and deal 3 additional damage instead of 2.</i>
2	Open Palm Technique	<i>If both your hands are unarmed you can Parry with your Fighting skill.</i>
2	Practiced Parry	<i>You get +1 Parry with a single weapon type (long sword or armored gauntlet for example).</i>
1	Practiced Footwork	<i>If you moved exactly 1 space on your turn you get +1 to either your melee attacks or defenses for the rest of the round.</i>
1	Defender	<i>If you have a shield, you may use your action protecting an adjacent ally. For the rest of the round, if they are attacked, they may have you roll a defensive total for them with your shield.</i>
1	Bruiser	<i>Your unarmed attacks deal 2 non-lethal damage instead of 1.</i>

1	Devastating Blows	<i>After you successfully hit with a Power Attack, you and the defender roll Strength. If you win, they are grounded.</i>
1	Practiced Draw	<i>Equipping a bow allows you to take reload as a free action.</i>
1	Disarming Parry	<i>Once per round, when you successfully Parry with an Armored Gauntlet, Duelist Rapier or Duelist Dagger the attacker and you roll Strength. If you win, they are disarmed.</i>
1	Grounding Block	<i>Once per round, when you successfully Block a melee attack with a shield the attacker and you roll Strength. If you win, they are grounded.</i>
1	Tripping Dodge	<i>Once per round, when you successfully Dodge a melee attack by 4 or more, the attacker is grounded.</i>
1	Stunning Riposte	<i>A successful Riposte interrupts their attack and ends their turn immediately.</i>
1	Ruthless Tactics	<i>You get +1 to Maiming Attacks, and +1 against targets who have a reduced attribute.</i>
1	Disarming Tactics	<i>You get +2 to Disarming Attacks if using a Duelist Dagger or Duelist Rapier.</i>

1 Rush Tactics

If you (or your mount) move at least 3 spaces in a straight line before a Power Attack or Tackle action, add +3 to the roll.

1 Analytical Tactics

As an action, you can roll an Intelligence + Perception on a character who attacked this round. If you get a 5 or higher, you get +1 against them.

1 Reckless Tactics

You may make a Power Attack with no -3 penalty. If you do, until your next turn, you get a -2 to all defense rolls you make.

1 Acrobatic Recovery

On your turn, you can Stand as a free action if you roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 5.

1 Walking Stick

You get a +3 to Deception when convincing others that you need a Staff to support yourself.

-1 Flourish

You have a very showy fighting style. You get -3 to the first round of Initiative.

-1 Nonlethal Oath

You refuse to take any action that would deal lethal damage.

-2 Scorn Armor

You have sworn to never wear armor. You either hate the physical restrictions or are from a culture that shuns it. You need at least a +2 Fighting to take this trait.

Magically Focused Traits

These are traits that interact directly with the Magic system (pg. 150). Only take these traits if your table has agreed to use it.

3	Necropolis Mind	<i>You create a hive mind with all your reanimations, allowing you send telepathic commands from any distance and see through their eyes. Requires at least a +5 in Necromancy.</i>
2	Hex Weaver	<i>You get a +2 to casting all Curse spells, and can curse targets that you don't have eye contact with if you know their name and have a hair, blood or flesh sample. If you do have such a sample, you can spend 1 day, and destroy it to create a Curse Reliquary. Curses stored in reliquaries aren't dispelled when you recast that same curse. Requires at least a +3 in Necromancy.</i>
2	Ancient Ancestry	<i>Required to take a d12 in Magic. You cannot take this trait if you have Hulking, Graceful, Genius or Magnetic.</i>
2	Illusionist	<i>You get a +3 Arcana when casting the Flicker, Illusion and Mirage spells.</i>
2	Ice Shaper	<i>You get a +5 Hydromancy when casting the Icicle spell, and a +2 when throwing one.</i>
2	Ritualist	<i>You get an additional +2 when using a Ritual casting time.</i>

2	Green Hand	<i>You get a +3 Geomancy when casting Tendril, Entangle, Branch Whip, Grasping Branches, Unnatural Grown and Awaken the Trees. Requires at least a +3 in Agriculture.</i>
2	Dexterous Mind	<i>You get a +3 when casting Telekinesis. And can roll with your Stealth and Streetwise when picking locks or pockets.</i>
2	Medium	<i>You can put skill points into Necromancy and Divinity. You get a +2 when casting Commune with Spirits, Exorcism and Annihilate Spirit.</i>
2	Elementalist	<i>You can put skill points into Hydromancy, Geomancy, Aeromancy and Pyromancy but no other magic schools.</i>
2	Familiar's Bond	<i>You can put skill points into both Arcana and Animalism. And get an additional +1 in those schools from having a Familiar.</i>
2	Magic Trick	<i>You get a free d6 Magic attribute. Choose one spell, you get a +3 when casting that spell but cannot cast any others.</i>
2	Spirit Animal	<i>Choose one Aspect spell, you permanently have it and it doesn't count toward your limit of 1. To take this trait you need at least a +3 in Animalism and to meet the Aspect's requirements.</i>

1 Subtle Caster

You have mastered the art of disguising arcane gestures as conversational and casting without vocal components. You do not get a -3 penalty for secretly casting. But still get a -2 if you are restrained and unable to move your hands at all.

1 Soul Drinker

You can cast Drain Life up to 3 times per day and automatically gain any Essence your target had (up to your limit). Requires a +2 in Necromancy.

1 Entuned with Essence

Increase your Essence stat by 3.

1 Hemomancy

If you have a blade equipped, you can cut yourself as an action, spilling blood and your life's very essence. You do one damage to yourself, and regain 2d8 Essence.

1 Adaptive Casting

When you take this trait choose a single shared spell. You can cast it with either school, and without the requisite of the other.

1 Custom Magic School

You derive your power from a more nuanced school than the core 8. You can create a custom spell list (pg. 155) and a single magic skill for it. But you cannot take skills in any other school.

1 Spell Book Casting

Your casting process is far more methodical than simply reaching out with your will. You can only cast spells that you've learned and written down in a book. You start with 5 spells of your choice (from any schools). And you can spend one day to learn a new one, either from a book or scroll, or a willing instructor who is capable of casting that spell. There is no limit the number of spells you can fit into your tome.

But if you don't have access to your spell book you must rely on the 5 that you have memorized (which you can update every day). You only have one Magic skill that you can use for spells from all schools.

-1 Devout

You believe your magic comes from a connection with a god. It can be a god of the sea, death, or anything else that relates to your chosen school. Choose one magic school, you can cast Commune with Deity with that skill instead of Divinity. But if you do something that angers your god you can lose the ability to cast for 1d4 days.

-2 Unstable Casting

Whenever you roll a 1 while casting, the spell doesn't fail. But it does go off in unpredictable and occasionally harmful ways.

These traits allow characters to write runes. You can see more in-depth rules in the Runes and Wards section on page 131.

5 Rune Carver

Allows you to carve Storage Runes into surfaces and pieces of equipment. They can only hold one specific spell (and only one at a time) but anyone can use them. Requires the Runic Mastery trait to take.

2 Runic Mastery

Allows you to write conditions and exceptions into your Triggered Runes, and Full Wards (which can absorb any number of spells). You can fill runes that are too small to stand inside, and therefore write them as small as the writing remains legible. Requires the Rune Scribe trait to take.

2 Rune Marked

You have a runic tattoo somewhere on your body. When you take this trait, chose one spell which the rune was designed to hold. Only you know how to trigger this spell which you can do as an action without rolling. Once used, it must be refilled by someone who is both capable of casting that spell and has the Runic Mastery trait before it can be used again.

1 Rune Scribe

You can write Triggered Runes and Wards and protect a place against Scrying.

These traits allow characters to start with Magical Conduits. You can see more in-depth rules in the Conduit section on page 135. Creating a Conduit is a fun adventure and an important part of any mage's progression. So, I caution players against starting with any of these traits (besides Channeler and Wizard's Sanctuary).

5

Wizard's Sanctuary

You have a building or place you have infused with your power. You have a Sanctuary, that grants a +4 to a certain school while inside. The location is too secluded or too private to generate passive income.

4

Familiar's Bond

You have bonded a Familiar. The animal must be no larger than a dog but is intelligent. While within 10-feet it can talk to you telepathically and grants a +3 to a certain school. You -2 to that school when it is not around.

3

Totem Bearer

You have a weapon that is a vestige of your power. You get +2 to a certain school while holding it, but -2 when it is not in your possession.

2

Caster's Charm

You have a trinket or article of clothing that gives you a +1 to a certain school while worn. But -1 to that same school when not.

1

Channeler

You start with a Totem that applies to all schools. But when you do not have your totem, you are not a penalty, you are completely incapable of casting.

Origin Traits

If using the World of Nell setting (pg. 270), these traits bring some flavor to your character based what region they are from. They are completely optional, even if other players are taking an Origin Trait does not mean you have to. But you do not get points refunded for not taking one. You can only take one Origin Trait and it must be from the place where you have your +3 Location Knowledge secondary skill.

o **Son of Calister**

Every young man in the Capital learned at least the basics of dueling. You get +2 Fighting when using a Rapier, this cannot exceed your Mastery. Gender roles are stronger in the Capital than anywhere else, but men and women alike are expected to act with dignity, you get +3 Etiquette (secondary).

o **Daughter of Calister**

Growing up so close to the heart of the Empire has instilled impeccable manners in you. You get +1 Intuition (primary) and +3 Etiquette (secondary).

o **Brugahne**

You, like everyone from Brugah, grew up around horses. You get +2 to Riding (primary), but this cannot exceed your Mastery.

o **From the Golden Flats**

You grew up surrounded by priests of the Order, and have benefitted from their charity. You start with x2 Starting Resources (unless you have another Wealth & Resources trait), and have +3 Knowledge of the Order (secondary).

o Mearithian

You can speak both Vale Tongue and New Zytharian (the language of The Endless sands), so you are Bilingual (pg. 38). It is rare for a child to grow to adolescence without a sting from a scorpion or a bite from a gulch snake. People from the city have built up a resistance to toxins over the generations, and have the Resilient trait (pg. 36).

o From Olgate

Magic is not only protected, but encouraged in Olgate. Even if you don't use it, you'll have more exposure to it than most. You get +3 Arcane Knowledge (secondary) and +1 Alchemy (primary) from the folk remedies of the Green Vale.

o Valen' Cian

Education in Valen' Cia is impeccable, providing a world-class foundation to even the working class. You get the Educated trait (pg. 38).

o From North Watch

Sailing is a way of life in North Watch, required to even get across town quickly. You have +3 in Sailing (secondary). You are also conditioned to the cold. You never have to roll Discipline because of it and can ignore the first time that you are Chilled by a spell. You regain this single-use resistance by warming up.

There are distant locations outside of the Civil Kingdoms that your character could be from. Just be sure to check with your Narrator first before taking one of these traits as they may require special accommodation to fit you into the story, or some elaboration on their part about the place of your origin. Based on where the campaign takes place, how long your character has been there, and how well traveled they are, you may be required to take the Outsider trait (pg. 40) if you choose one of these Origins. That should be discussed by you and your Narrator on a case-by-case bases. But you do get the 2 point for taking on the challenges of the Outsider trait.

o **From Hillrund**

You are from a distant and rugged land where strength is valued above all else. You get a free d8 in Strength. But you are also Besmirched (pg. 24) as people from the Civil Kingdoms are less likely to trust a tribesman. You can speak both Common and Gol Speech (the language of Hillrund), so you are Bilingual (pg. 38). But Gol Speech is purely spoken so you are also Illiterate (pg. 39).

o **Black Iron Agent**

If you live in Knox's Landing and work for the Black Iron Company. They own all the housing, all the shops and the diamond mines that keeps the whole town running. Whether you are on a specific mission or just have old ties to the company, you have the Connected trait (pg. 26) and can reach out to your contacts for information or small favors.

o

Visten

You are from the city of Vista, the jewel of the Danerian Free State. A city of free and fair trade on the mouth of a river that flows from the Great Wood. Every Visten knows how to strike a deal, you get the Barterer trait (pg. 42). And are known for their keen eye sight, get +1 Perception that cannot exceed your Mastery.

o

Sworn Sword

You were raised in the monastery fortress of High Aku. It is closer to the Danerian Free State than Brugah (so that must be your +3 Location Knowledge). These warrior-monks practice with slightly curved blades called Katana. Perfectly balanced, they make an imperial long sword feel like a crude cudgel. You get +2 Katana (primary) but that cannot exceed your Mastery.

o

Runefist Monk

You are an acolyte of the Runefist Monks. You have earned your first tattoo and have the “Runemarked” trait (pg. 52).

o

From Hakir’s Crossing

Ah, the arm-pit of the Danerian Free State. A toll post that devolved into a city of ruthless criminals. You don’t grow to adulthood on these shifting streets without your wits about you. You get +1 Streetwise that cannot exceed your Mastery, and +3 Gambling from playing Amet.

o From Masak

Deep in the Endless sands are several cities, Masak the grandest of them all. They have mandatory military service for all citizens. Even if you didn't see combat you get the Disciplined trait (pg. 32), and +3 Tactics (secondary).

o Kiowan

Kiowa-far is built in a region prone to sand storms. Everyone born there has a mystical ability to always know in what direction the city is. You can never get disoriented or lost.

o Obarian

Obar is a strange subterrain city built on the Endless Sand's border with the Southern Mountains. Its citizens have escaped the desert heat by descending into caverns, the low light allows you to see in the dark. Obar is a city of reclusive inventors. You get a +1 Engineering (primary) which cannot exceed your Mastery.

20 Ancient of the Great Wood

You have a d12 in Magic and can use all 8 schools. You are immune to disease and poison. You can see in the dark. Your body naturally regenerates 2 Health every night. And you can be restored to your prime age by visiting the Grove in the center of the Great Wood each life-time.

There are variety of religions and customs across the world of Nell. These are optional traits that you can take, in addition to an Origin trait if you from a certain place.

-1 The Allway

You are a practicing member of the Allway and promised Elden to not eat meat or harm nature. Requires at least a +3 in Olgate.

-1 The Order of Alric

As a practicing member of the Order, you have promised Alric to not practice any magic schools besides Divinity. Requires at least a +3 Golden Flats and at least a d4 in Magic.

-1 Sailor's Superstition

The sailors of North Watch carry a cord with them and habitually tie knots that they think will bring them luck. You get the Habit trait (pg. 28) for tying knots in any rope. Requires at least a +3 in North Watch.

-1 Pact of the Vulture

You have dedicated your life to the scavenger gods of Hillrund. You get the Ravenous trait (pg. 37), but are able to eat raw and rotting meat. Requires at least a +3 Hillrund knowledge.

-1 The Way of Strength

You follow the oldest creed in Hillrund. Testing your skills in battle at every chance you get in order to get more powerful, or die trying. You get the Reckless trait (pg. 32). Requires at least a +3 Hillrund knowledge.

Custom Traits

The list of traits above is not exhaustive. As long as your Narrator is comfortable balancing new traits, or modifying existing ones, and no one at the table feels like they aren't game breaking, custom traits can give your character a unique flair. Here are some formulas to help make simple traits but more complex ones can be designed by you and your Narrator.

1 **Skill Specialization**

You get +2 to a skill but only when a special condition is met, such as Persuasion during trades, or fighting with a specific weapon (an ancestral sword for example). This condition cannot be used to circumvent Mastery limitations.

1/2 **Attribute Specialization**

You roll a higher die in an attribute when a special condition is met. The cost is determined by how rare the condition is. Rolling a higher strength die to resist poison would be only 1 point, but resisting all wounds would be 2.

x **Modified Trait**

Take another trait, but it only affects you under certain circumstances. For example, you have a limp, but only when it rains. Limp normally gives you 3 points, but because of the rarity of the condition it would net you 1 instead.

Narration

The Narrator is a very important part of the game, but that doesn't mean it's not a lot of fun. Players get to be immersed in a truly interactive world. They get to create and invest themselves in a single character. Where the Narrator cannot be invested in any character, as doing so would result in bias. But the Narrator gets to jump between countless different characters, create a whole world of possibilities while subtly guiding the players through it toward a dramatic plot that they've devised. As a natural story-teller, narrating is my favorite part of role-playing games. And the joy of playing a single character can't compare to the laughter, terror and excitement I elicit from the players across the table from me.

Other table-top RPGs have a structure and wealth of content which makes them easier to run. There is still a huge amount of craft that goes into running them well, but there are mechanics built into the game that make them approachable. Classes, although they make characters more archetypal, give players an obvious direction. Leveling up awards players with a feeling of progression even if they are not making headway in the story. And the endless variety of monsters make the Narrator's job of designing challenges easier. But these things are also limiting to the narrative space and what can occupy it.

The Versus Role-Playing Game, in pulling away from those things and increasing the game's possibilities, shifts more of those responsibilities from the system itself onto the players. Player characters need to be driven, with clearly understood motivations. They will still improve numerically, as they practice and acquire skills, but that form of progression is not exiting enough to be the focus of the overall experience. Instead, it's up to the Narrator to award that sense of progress by overcoming challenges and making progress toward their personal goals. And to accommodate non-combative characters, those challenges need to be varied and dynamic. Don't be discouraged though, I think anyone can run a fun and successful game in this system once they understand its differences and nuances.

Description

The most fundamental purpose of the Narrator is to describe the environment in which the player characters find themselves. This could be a room and its social energy, a region and its political climate or anything in between.

You, as the Narrator, are the upmost authority on the reality of the narrative space. But it is your duty to describe it as well as you can so that the players base their actions off of sound information. This does not mean you need to describe, in excruciating detail, the ornate embossing of each spoon and fork. It is much more important to capture the *feeling* of each space, and highlight any key features. Take my example from the introduction.

“The room is musty and only lit by a few candles. Books and loose pages are scattered across the creaky wooden floor. The furnishings are plain, an unmade bed, and disorganized bookshelf. In one corner though, is a bronze statue of a hooded woman; candles and offerings are gathered around its base.”

That description gives enough detail to be grounding, without grinding the game's pace to a halt. Your initial introduction of a place should be just enough to give your players a complete picture. Then, ask them where they would like to investigate further. The game is going to be more engaging the more it goes back and forth between Narrator and players.

You may not even need that much detail if a place is not important to the plot and you don't expect further investigation. If it's just being passed through or serving as a back drop for a side conversation, such as someone seeking out a merchant, you may not even need three sentences.

“The smithy is smokey and loud, with several blacksmiths hard at work. It's hard to hear anyone over the clanging of anvils, but you eventually get one's attention.”

Be careful not to tell the players how they feel about a place, try to rely on objective observation and information that the characters would have access to. If you are not sure how niche information is, or how hard to notice a detail is,

have them roll for it. It can be a fun moment, to enter a place and roll an Intelligence + Perception or Intelligence + (Location Knowledge) for a little extra information about it.

The same is true when introducing a non-player character. Just like places, the level of detail should match the role you expect them to play in the story. If the character will likely only be in for a single scene, then don't exert yourself creating a unique personality and appearance for them. *"It's nearing the end of the day. The blacksmith seems tired and his beard is streaked with soot."* That is more than enough detail for a character who serves the purpose of a single conversation or transaction.

But you want to give side characters a more distinct impression. Is someone is going to accompany the characters for a session or longer, or pop back up from time to time, it is worth giving them a little more character.

"You see a diminutive man well into his thirties. He wears fine purple clothes and a subtle smile. He has soft facial features except for ears which protrude from the sides of his head like exotic mushrooms. He extends his hand, and says, "Rufus Pensworth, eavesdrop by trade."

Also, just like places, players who are interested can investigate further by asking them questions or rolling a Guile + Intuition for a glimpse into the character's subtleties or motivations. Even if a character is not lying or feigning emotion a Guile + Deception is used to protect them from being read too easily. If the player characters succeed, a single line like *"he glances around nervously,"* or *"he seems eager to prove himself,"* is often enough.

Please keep in mind that these are not rules, just guidelines. A balance between brevity and clarity that I have personally found success with. Every Narrator has a different style and every group has different tastes. Some players eat up every drop of detail and lore where others want to rush into the meat of each scene. I respect both poles and finding a balance between the two that matches your players is what makes a truly excellent Narrator.

Difficulty

The second most fundamental function a Narrator serves, is to be a mediator between chance and the players. You are playing “the house” so to speak, you give the players the odds but it is up to them to bet or walk away.

It is important to maintain the integrity of the system. The dice rolls only matter if they cannot be tweaked or recast. That is why I encourage all Narrators to roll their dice out in the open. You are there to set the odds, and should play by the same rules as your players. Dice rolls can be very punishing, even deadly to player characters and you want to ensure they feel like they knew the odds and lost, not like you made something happen.

In the Versus the Role-Playing Game the Narrator must both come up with Attribute + Skill combination and the difficulty of the roll. It can seem daunting at first but when broken down into steps, the whole process can become a momentary decision.

Firstly, chose the relevant attribute. The attributes have been kept very broad to make this distinction as easy as possible. If the task has anything to do with physical precision or grace, it is going to be Agility. If it has anything to do with physical power or endurance: Strength. Intelligence will be rolled when it has to do with information of any kind; knowing anything, noticing anything or applying that knowledge in any way. Guile governs social interactions of all kinds.

Secondly, choose which skill or skills are relevant to the roll. This is something that players should feel free to weigh in on. Advocating for how their skills could be relevant both increases player interaction, and may also change their approach if they want to ensure their skills are being used.

It could be that no skill applies, in the case of lifting something or running which are governed by the raw attribute roll.

Most often it's just one skill, primary skills are broad enough to be exclusionary. Survival for making a fire, Engineering for fixing something, etc.

It could be several. Having heard about a long dead king could be improved by knowledge of history or knowledge of that kingdom. But if someone has multiple applicable skills, they simply choose the highest of them, they can't combine bonuses.

If someone has a skill that is related but not deemed relevant, such as Streetwise when rolling Intuition on a criminal, you can award them a +1 regardless of how high their skill is.

The final step is to choose a difficulty. This can be the most challenging part for a Narrator. As a general rule:

- 1** A trivial task, that requires a fluke to mess up.
- 3** An easy task that could be accomplished by anyone.
- 6** A medium task, a tall order for an unskilled character.
- 9** A hard task which requires skill to even attempt. A nearly impossible challenge, which only a
- 12** character built for that specific skill set could accomplish.

The difficulty could be anywhere within that range and is, for the most part, up to your discretion as the Narrator. You just want to make sure your judgements are consistent with your past calls and your player's expectations.

Sometimes the hard part is deciding when a roll is necessary at all. Climbing a ladder until no pressure should not require an Agility + Acrobatics roll. Whenever you ask for a roll, you need to consider the possibility of 1 being the outcome, and the automatic failure it entails. If a failure wouldn't branch the narrative or add anything interesting to the story, I would consider not requiring it. And if a failure would only seem comical or ridiculous, I would *definitely* not include it.

On the other hand, don't be afraid of making things impossible. If something requires more than a 12, I wouldn't even let someone attempt it. As lifting a bus or deflecting a bullet would just feel unrealistic. Just because a character is the best at something, doesn't mean they can do anything

that involves that skill. This is an especially necessary distinction with Persuasion (but I'll save that for the Persuasion section).

Also, some rolls, although not particularly difficult, are impossible without tools or training. An average person with a Streetwise skill should be far more capable of picking a lock, than a very nimble person with no experience.

Technical skills such as Engineering, Medicine, Streetwise and Survival, require at least a +1 to even attempt. And the best safe-cracker in the world can't get out of a basic cell without a tool of some kind. I'll elaborate more on those in the next section.

Below I outline some guidelines for each attribute and skill. What it is and isn't used for, and what you and your players can expect from different rolls. But remember this is your game when you're running it. My intent for this section is to be advice on how to handle common situations not to be a strict rule-book to be routinely referenced. But use it however you will. As long as everyone at the table agrees that your calls feel fair and consistent, you are succeeding as a Narrator.

Attribute Rolls

When asking for unaltered Attribute rolls it's important to adjust the difficulty scale slightly. Where skill rolls are on a scale from 1-12, Attributes rolls are really on a scale from 1-10. Although a 12 may be possible to the few characters with a d12 in that Attribute, that nearly super human ability is better represented by succeeding on the hardest challenges with a 10, 11 and 12.

Raw Agility is going to be used for executing any task that doesn't have a relevant skill, like running or being flexible. Of course, a character could make a secondary skill for any of these things, but most commonly it is raw agility.

Raw Strength is used for any direct application of force; lifting, pushing, holding.

- 3** Put a 50-pound feed bag on your shoulder
- 6** Carry a fallen comrade off the battlefield.
- 9** Would let you sort through rubble, rolling and dragging stones that weigh several-hundred pounds

Some tasks can be worked on by multiple people.

Busting down a door could only be attempted by one person at a time. But digging a trench in a day could be accomplished by up to 5 people rolling a combined total of 20 strength. A single laborer could never roll the 20 required to do it one day, but may be able to reach 20 after several days of working.

Raw Intelligence can be used for recalling information. This is a great way of reminding your players of information their characters would know.

- 3** Don't forget an important task that the player did.
- 6** Remember the way back from a remote location.
- 9** Recall an irrelevant detail that you didn't have any reason to pay attention to at the time.

If a player is interested in making a character with an excellent or photographic memory, encourage them to take the Perfect Memory trait (pg. 38) as it will be a lot more consistent than rolling for it with a high intelligence.

The second thing raw Intelligence can be used for is deductive reasoning and common sense. Solving whole mysteries should be done by the players, those puzzles can be very fun and shouldn't be spoiled by a high roll. But obvious pieces of them that the players may miss can be given to intelligent characters. It would be unrealistic for Sherlock Holmes not to realize the pattern on one fabric scrap matched another.

Raw Guile is very rarely used because the social skills cover practically all of social interaction.

Acrobatics

Agility + Acrobatics is used for climbing. The surface that is being climbed determines the base-line difficulty.

There are a variety of examples below. A ladder requires no roll. And a sheer stone wall with no handholds is impossible to climb regardless of the roll.

- 1** Climb up a ladder while being chased.
- 3** Climb up a rope.
- 5** Climb a tree with strong branches.
- 6** Vault over a low fence without slowing down.
- 7** Climb a natural rock cliff with ample hand-holds.
- 9** Climb the side of a building with a few hand-holds.
- 10** Run up a sheer 12-foot wall.
- 12** Climb to the top steeple of a cathedral.
- Rain and wet conditions can make climbs harder. Increase the difficulty by 1 or 2 depending on how hard it's raining. If a surface is oiled for some reason, add 4.
- If someone makes it to the top, tossing a rope down should reduce the difficulty to 3 for anyone else.

Intelligence + Acrobatics can be used to plan the way up prior to a climb. Picking the right route can be a life and death difference for some climbs. Just running at the first sheer wall they see is likely to be fruitful. If they have the time and freedom to case a building, even one lap around it can be the difference between a difficulty 10 climb and a difficulty 6. It is up to you to determine the nuances of each climb, they may have different tradeoffs besides difficulty, like visibility or where it leads. But giving the climber a choice between routes will make the scene more engaging.

- 3** Accurately assess if a climb is beyond your abilities.
- 6** Spend an hour and find the easiest way up.
- 9** Spot the easiest route up in a minute.
- 12** Discover hidden hand holds which will grant you a +2 to the Acrobatics used for the climb itself.
- Being familiar with the architectural style can help spot exploitable building conventions. If a character has the relevant location knowledge, you can grant them a +2 to the Intelligence + Acrobatics roll.

Agility + Acrobatics is used for jumping. As a rule of thumb, for each 10 feet someone falls, they take 2 damage (ignoring damage reduction). If someone jumps intentionally, they can halve the damage. And if they roll an Acrobatics + Agility of half the distance fallen, they can negate the damage completely. If someone takes 3 or more damage from falling, they reduce their speed to 2 until they are restored to full Health.

As a general rule, for long jumps, someone can jump feet equal to your Agility + Acrobatics total. If you have a running head start, multiply the total by 2.

- 3** Jump rope without tripping.
- 6** Drop from a second story window unharmed.
- 9** Take a running leap over an 18-foot gap.
- 12** Gracefully dive off a 40-foot cliff into the ocean.
 - If they land on something soft that can cushion the fall decrease the difficulty by 3, and the damage by 1.
 - If they dive into deep water, decrease the difficulty by 5 and the damage by 2.

Charm

Guile + Charm is used for making friends and getting people to see them in a favorable light. Every character expresses their opinion of people differently, but it should always be positive, a reward for rolling a high Charm. Keep in mind that time is crucial for forming the strongest bonds. A single good impression may get them an invitation or a free meal, but form a bond over months with many successful Charm rolls and they might get someone to risk their life for them.

- 3** Bump into someone and not start a fight.
- 6** Make great tips for a night as a waiter.
- 9** Become fast friends with someone over a few weeks.
- 12** Get someone to forgive you for a personal atrocity.
 - If they have a lot in common, such as background, taste, or traits, with whom they are charming, you can grant them a +1, +2 or +3 based on the amount of common ground.

Romance may be something that your group has no interest in portraying, and that should be something that people agree on beforehand. But personally, I think it can be an interesting element of a game, if not normally a particularly large one. It can be a great way of humanizing characters, or getting them invested in someone besides themselves. Just make sure that you, as the Narrator, handle it with tact. Any romance arc you choose to include should be about a relationship between two characters, not the exploits of one. And just because someone makes a charming or attractive character doesn't mean every character has to see them this way. A high charm roll may represent a suave pick-up line, but some characters may find that approach sleazy and rebuff them regardless of how high the roll is. In the same way a d4 Guile character may find love in someone who cherishes their curt or awkward ways. Character and preferences should always be more important than numbers if you want romantic elements to feel human and respectful.

That being said, a character who has built a charm-based character should be rewarded for the points they invested. And a character like James Bond wouldn't be the same without his flirtatious appeal. A charm roll can't change preferences, but if there is already a connection between two characters, a charm skill can determine how quickly the relationship progresses and how intense the feeling become.

Guile + Charm is used for flirting.

- 3** Smile at someone and not come off as a creep.
- 6** Ask someone who has interest in you on a date.
- 9** Reconnect with a youthful fling after years.
- 12** Seduce someone in a single passionate evening.
 - If they have a lot in common, such as background, taste, or traits, with whom they are charming, you can grant them a +1, +2 or +3 based on the amount of common ground.

Deception

Guile + Deception is used for lying and faking emotion. It is always used in direct opposition to someone else's Guile + Intuition. But the likelihood of the lie can drastically affect the difficulty, and that is up to your discretion as the Narrator. Deception is a versatile skill but it cannot let someone do things the other social skills do. Someone cannot convince another that they are likeable without rolling a Charm. And a Deception roll can't change anyone's mind like Persuasion can. A character can be convinced of false information and that might cause them to change their own conclusion but the roll itself can't have any direct effect on their decision.

- 3** Bluff a causal hand of poker.
- 6** Pretend to be moved by a speech at a funeral.
- 9** Give the investigator a false description.
- 12** Convince a judge that you're not guilty.
- If a lie is unbelievable for any number of reasons you can give a penalty to their deception roll. A -1 if it seems too convenient for them. And a -2 if it goes against another person who is trusted more than they are. And if someone has personally witnessed proof to the contrary no deception roll can change their mind.
- Alternatively, providing evidence alongside a Deception roll can grant a bonus, even if the evidence is forged. For example, a scrap of clothing placed on a broken window could grant a +1 to lying about seeing an intruder wearing that color. And having a fresh wound would grant a +2 in saying they were attacked.

Engineering

In modern and futuristic settings, I recommend breaking Engineering into two skills: Mechanics, for working with the actual components of things, such as getting under the hood of a car. And Hacking, for using technology in the way they it was (or wasn't) designed to be interfaced with. In historic settings, where technology doesn't play such an important role, a single Engineering skill is enough.

Anyone with the Engineering skill can roll Intelligence + Engineering to build, repair and invent technology.

- 3** Jump start a dead car battery.
- 6** Replace a crucial computer component.
- 9** Take apart a tracker and determine its origin.
- 12** Build an automated vacuum cleaner from the ground up.
 - If they have specific schematics of what you are working on, that they can freely reference, reduce the difficulty by 3.
 - The above difficulties assume that they have a standard set of tools. If may be impossible to do even simple things with no tools. If they have shoddy or improvised tools increase the difficulty by 2, and if they have a full workshop decrease it by 2.
 - Working with very intricate components, of a watch for example, may require an Agility + Engineering in addition to the normal roll.
 - The difficulties above assume the technology is commonplace in the world and familiar to them. If you choose to include very strange or alien technology in your setting, Engineering doesn't apply to it. In order to understand it and interface with it they'll have to learn an entirely new skill.

If you are playing with the Fantasy rule set included in this book, here are some additional optional Engineering rules. In the World of Nell, incredible devices can be made from fine clockwork and Tazurite. Tazurite is a glowing red stone that is mined deep in the Southern Mountains. When exposed to the air it slowly decays (over months) and releases energy as it does. Engineers have developed ways of harnessing this energy and using it to power their devices.

Anyone with the Engineering skill can roll Intelligence + Engineering to create a schematic. These are not items that can be purchased from a store, they must be invented by a player character or commissioned from an NPC. If there is not an Engineer in the party, but players want access to engineered equipment, they can spend an Acquaintance to introduce an inventor NPC. NPCs should charge twice the component cost to commission and only be able to invent something every few weeks.

Before a player can attempt to make a schematic, they must acquire the required components. Each schematic has a Component cost, which must be spent in a major city where tinkerer's supplies can be found. For simplicities sake, all components can be used interchangeably for all schematics. They are just an item called "Component" which cost 1 silver each. Although they are mostly small gears and parts, carrying more than 200 on your person would be cumbersome. In addition, you may need to secure some special components specific to that schematic. These are not always for sale and can be rewarded for quests or travel by the Narrator.

Once you meet the requirement you can roll. If you hit or exceed the schematic's difficulty all the components are used and you create one of the items. If you fail by 1-4, you waste some of the components, but get a better idea for next time. If you fail by 5 you are hopelessly lost, and waste 50% of the schematic's component cost. Specific components are never consumed by an unsuccessful attempt.

Fail by 1	+4 to next attempt	10% of components spent
Fail by 2	+3 to next attempt	20% of components spent
Fail by 3	+2 to next attempt	25% of components spent
Fail by 4	+1 to next attempt	50% of components spent

To attempt making a schematic you need Tinkerer's Tools. Each attempt takes 1 day at a stationary table. A full Engineering Workshop grants a +2 to any rolls made inside them. Whenever you successfully create a schematic, you also get a diagram of the design. Anyone who has this stack of papers (including you) gets a +3 to re-creating that same schematic. And it only takes 1 hour instead of 1 day. It may be possible to get other inventor's diagrams through collaboration or burglary.

Engineering Schematics

Music Box

A small unadorned box with a crank on one side.

Difficulty: 6

Component Cost: 40 Silver.

Effect: When activated, you set a timer from 10-seconds to 10-minutes. At the end of the timer, it emits a melody or sound that you select at the time of the box's creation. The music box is durable enough to be tossed short distances.

Bear Trap

A wide ring of steel teeth with a pressure plate in the middle.

Difficulty: 6

Component Cost: 75 Silver.

Effect: When activated, you set it up on the ground. Once set, it cannot be moved safely, but can be disarmed by you, or anyone who notices it, with an Agility + Engineering of 3. If you are outside and have 5 minutes, you may roll an Intelligence + Survival to conceal its location. When someone would step onto it, they can roll an Intelligence + Perception to notice and avoid it. If they fail, they take 2 damage and their speed is reduced to 1 until they can be freed. They, or anything adjacent to them can free them (as an action) by rolling a Strength + Engineering of 6.

Spectacles

A pair of specialized lenses with wire frames.

Difficulty: 6

Component Cost: 120 Silver.

Effect: Negates the effects of the Short-sighted/ Far-sighted trait while worn.

Smoke Bomb

A leaden fist-sized ball with a coarse wick.

Difficulty: 6

Component Cost: 35 Silver.

Effect: When activated you can toss this into a location within 15-feet. Or you can roll an Agility + Throwing of 7 to toss it up to 40-feet, but a result of 1 causes it to fumble and land at your feet. Wherever it lands, dense, billowing smoke emanates in a 5-foot cube and expands by 5-feet in all directions at the end of each round. But cannot expand further than 20-feet in any direction. No one can see into or through the cloud and everyone inside it (including you) can't see more than 5-feet away. But an Intelligence + Perception of 6 may be able to give you a glimpse or general sense of what is happening inside the cloud. The smoke remains for 1 minute.

Crossbow Crank

A gear and lever system that gives you leverage when reloading a crossbow.

Difficulty: 7

Component Cost: 150 Silver.

Effect: When attached to a crossbow, it decreases its Heft by 1 die rank and allows you to take the Rapid Shot action.

Wheel Chair

A padded chair with wide wooden wheels on each side.

Difficulty: 7

Component Cost: 170 Silver.

Effect: If you have the Can't Walk trait, you can move with a speed of 2, but not over difficult terrain or upstairs.

Phosphorus Bomb

A polished fist-sized ball with a white wick.

Difficulty: 7

Component Cost: 55 Silver.

Effect: When activated you can toss this into a location within 15-feet. Or you can roll an Agility + Throwing of 7 to toss it up to 40-feet, but a result of 1 causes it to fumble and land at your feet. Wherever it lands, anyone (including you) within 10-feet of it who is looking at it is temporarily blinded until the end of their next turn. They get a -3 to Initiative and halve any attack rolls they make.

Mechanized Blade

A bracer with a concealed, spring-loaded dagger.

Difficulty: 7

Component Cost: 90 Silver.

Effect: While worn, allows you to equip a single stored dagger as a free action.

Grapple Bolt

A barbed crossbow bolt with a length of rope attached.

Difficulty: 8

Component Cost: 45 Silver.

Effect: When fired from a crossbow, it will lodge itself into the environment. The 100-feet of attached rope can easily be climbed by up to 5 people at a time. If fired from a Heavy Crossbow, Grapple Bolts can stick into stone. If you hit someone with the Grapple Bolt, they take 2 damage and can't move further away from you unless they beat your Strength. But if you roll a 1 on the Strength contest you are disarmed.

Extendable Shield

A thin metal buckler with folding sides that can snap out.

Difficulty: 8

Component Cost: 150 Silver.

Effect: This shield has the stats of a Buckler but when you parry a ranged attack, or block any kind of attack, the shield extends granting an additional +2 on top of its parry or block value.

Fire Trap

A pressure plate with several canisters of Dragon Oil affixed around the edges.

Difficulty: 8

Component Cost: 75 Silver, and 1 pot of Dragon Oil worth 50.

Effect: When activated, you set it up on the ground. Once set, it cannot be moved safely, but can be disarmed by you, or anyone who notices it, with an Agility + Engineering of 3. If you are outside and have 5 minutes, you may roll an Intelligence + Survival to conceal its location. When someone would step onto it, they can roll an Intelligence + Perception to notice and avoid it. If they fail, they and everyone adjacent to them takes 1 fire damage becomes smoldering.

Fragmentation Bomb

A black fist-sized ball with a white wick.

Difficulty: 9

Component Cost: 75 Silver.

Effect: When activated you can toss this into a location within 15-feet. Or you can roll an Agility + Throwing of 7 to toss it up to 40-feet, but a result of 1 causes it to fumble and land at your feet. Anyone inside or adjacent to the space where it landed (including you) must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 8 or take 1 damage. If they fail to roll 5 or higher, they take 1 additional damage. And if they roll a 1, they are grounded as well. Anyone can ground themselves, before rolling, to get a +3 to the roll.

Low-light Lenses

Goggles of cut green gemstones.

Difficulty: 9

Component Cost: 170 Silver, and 2 cut gemstones worth 100 each.

Effect: While worn, do not halve your Perception total when trying to see in darkness.

Scope

An extendable tube housing a series of magnifying lenses.

Difficulty: 9

Component Cost: 125 Silver, and 3 magnifying lenses worth 80 each.

Effect: While looking through, you are not at any Perception penalty for up to 500-feet. Allow you to see facial expression as if they were 5-feet away from that distance. If attached to a crossbow, double its range.

Explosive Bolt

A crossbow bolt with a small explosive charge on the end.

Difficulty: 10

Component Cost: 45 Silver.

Effect: Can be shot from any crossbow like a regular bolt, but they cannot be retrieved. It explodes on impact with enough force to break a pad-lock. If you hit someone with one, they take an additional fire damage from the attack (which ignores damage reduction). The target must also roll a Strength of 6 or be pushed back 5-feet. If they roll a 1, they are grounded.

Injection Bolt

A crossbow bolt with a poison well tip.

Difficulty: 10

Component Cost: 100 Silver.

Effect: A specialized bolt that doesn't lose its poison from getting wet or being stored. And poison can be taken out of it to be stored in another vessel.

Parachute Cloak

A long cloak with extendable spines to catch the wind.

Difficulty: 10

Component Cost: 350 Silver.

Effect: While worn, if you would fall a distance greater than 10-feet, you glide instead. You descend 20-feet per round and can glide up to 10-feet in a direction of your choice.

Mechanized Key

A set of lock-picks attached to a clockwork handle.

Difficulty: 10

Component Cost: 475 Silver.

Effect: While equipped, add +5 to any Agility + Streetwise rolls used to open locks (this can exceed your Mastery).

Puzzle Box

A shoe-box sized steel chest adorned with intricate patterns and dozens of levers, buttons and knobs.

Difficulty: 10

Component Cost: 230 Silver.

Effect: This nearly indestructible safe can only be opened by a precise combination of inputs that you specify when you create it. You can open it instantly, and teach the combination to anyone. Someone can spend a day trying to figure out how to open it, but only succeeds with an Intelligence + Codes & Puzzles of 12.

Spring-heel Boots

Leather boots with metal supports on the sides.

Difficulty: 11

Component Cost: 350 Silver.

Effect: While worn, your jump height is increased to 10 vertical feet. You roll a d12 Agility when jumping or falling. Once per round, when you dodge, you can move up to 10-feet instead of 5 and can move vertically.

Tazurite Beacon

A small glowing red stone and paired compass.

Difficulty: 11

Component Cost: 125 Silver, and 1 chunk of Tazurite worth 150.

Effect: The compass has been calibrated to point in the direction of that particular chunk of Tazurite. This works over any distance but gives no indication of how far away it is.

Banshee Trap

A pressure plate with runes engraved around the edge.

Difficulty: 11

Component Cost: 75 Silver, and 1 Banshee Rune worth 175.

Effect: When activated, you set it up on the ground. Once set, it cannot be moved safely. But it can be disarmed by you, or anyone who notices it, with an Agility + Engineering of 3. If you are outside and have 5 minutes, you may roll an Intelligence + Survival to conceal its location. When someone would step onto it, they can roll an Intelligence + Perception to notice and avoid it. If they fail, a deafening wail emanates from the trap. All characters in a 20-foot radius are deafened for 15 seconds. For 3 rounds, anyone who starts their turn within 20-feet of the Banshee Trap must roll Courage of 4 or higher at the start of their turn. If they fail, they cannot move toward an enemy, or attack that turn. If they roll a 1, they are Stunned. Iron-willed characters automatically succeed the Courage roll but are still deafened.

Tazurite Bomb

A wooden barrel of explosives and paired detonator.

Difficulty: 12

Component Cost: 550 Silver, and 1 chunk of Tazurite worth 150.

Effect: The hefty explosive charge has been paired to a Tazurite button. This allows it to be detonated remotely from a distance of up to 250-feet. The bomb can be disconnected from the detonator in a few seconds with an Intelligence + Engineering roll of 9. But a failure causes the charge to explode immediately. When the charge does explode (from a triggered detonation or failed disarming) it has the force to tear through stone walls. Anyone within 10-feet takes 3 fire damage (which ignores damage reduction), in addition to 2d4 damage from being thrown 15-feet away from the explosion. Everyone outside of this range, but still within 20-feet must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 8 or take 1d4 damage from debris. If they roll a 1, they are grounded and smoldering as well. Anyone can ground themselves, before rolling, to get a +3 to the roll.

Tazurite Powder

An explosive red powder, that provides the power behind firearms.

Difficulty: 11

Component Cost: 60 Silver, 1 chunk of Tazurite worth 150.

Effect: When you create this, you can add 8 Firearm Charges to your inventory.

Tazurite Scuttler

A crab-like mechanical creature with paired controller.

Difficulty: 12

Component Cost: 400 Silver, and 1 chunk of Tazurite worth 150.

Effect: This 8 legged “Scuttler” is about a foot tall and 2-feet across. It has a speed of 5 and can move across difficult terrain, and up flights of stairs. Its two front-most legs are capable of holding and using objects and applying d6 Strength. If given a Mechanized Key or d4 Heft weapon, it can use them with a d6 Agility. It can only act if the character with its paired controller uses their action to move it.

Dragon's Maw

A metal nozzle with attached wine-skin of dragon

Difficulty: 12

Component Cost: 450 Silver.

Effect: This is a two-handed weapon with d4 heft and +0 Parry. While equipped, you can use your action and consume 1 pot of Dragon Oil (worth 50 silver) to shoot out a bout of flame. All characters in a cone 15-feet wide and 10-feet long must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 5 or take 1 fire damage (ignoring damage reduction) and become smoldering. If any targets have a shield equipped or are behind cover, they are immune to this effect.

Firearm

A metal barrel and polished wooden handle.

Difficulty: 12

Component Cost: 650 Silver.

Effect: You manage to reverse engineer the new Firearms that are available on the market. When you create this, add a Flintlock or Blunderbuss to your inventory.

Fighting

Fighting is used to resolve any physical altercation. Agility or Strength can be rolled with it based on personal style; are they a twirling blade-master or hulking grappler? There is no difficulty chart because it is always rolled in opposition to the opponent.

When someone is attacked, they can choose to run away with Agility + Acrobatics and avoid the fight completely, or fight back with a Fighting roll of their own. Compare the two fighting rolls: If it's a tie, the two clashed, but parried or disengaged harmlessly without anyone gaining the upper hand. If someone wins by 1 or 2, they earn an advantage, such as tripping their opponent, leaping to the high ground or any other flavor the player wants to sprinkle in. It gives them a +3 in the next clash, which will help them push their advantage. If someone wins by 3 or 4, they score a hit, dealing 1 damage with a punch, 2 with a weapon or 3 for a heavy weapon (which requires a d10 strength to use). And if someone wins by 5 or more, it is a devastating blow. They can either disarm them or deal double damage.

A fight continues until someone agrees to stop fighting, runs away with a successful Acrobatics, or is incapacitated. If reduced to 0 Health by an unarmed combatant or non-lethal weapon they are knocked unconscious. If it's by an armed combatant, the attacker has a choice to either render them incapacitated, bleeding out and if left untreated, dead. Or "hold the weapon to their neck." A common narrative trope that allows characters to negotiate with the defeated instead of killing them. No roll is required to follow through with the attack if the discussion sours.

Please note that this has been intentionally left a very simple, narrative system for groups that want fights to be treated like any other skill contest. If your table is interested in more detailed combats, you can find optional expanded rules in the Combat chapter (pg. 127).

Intuition

Guile + Intuition is always used in opposition to another character's Guile + Deception so there is no difficulty chart. You should never prompt a player to roll Intuition, because doing so would hint that whomever they're talking has something to hide. But it can be good to remind them, between conversations to routinely use Intuition. Even if someone is being honest a good Intuition can grant insight into their motivations and quirks.

Any character when talking to another, may roll a Guile + Intuition. Even if they are not lying the defending character must roll a Guile + Deception to determine how transparent they are acting. If the defending player wins by 2 or less, they simply reveal no information. If the defending player wins by 3 or more, then they can present whatever subtle information for the other character to see, innocence, arrogance, concern, etc. If the defending player loses by 2 or less, they give a hint of how they're feeling. If the defending player loses by 3 or more, they reveal a clearer picture of their true intention.

High intuition doesn't turn you into a human lie-detector. Even if you beat someone's deception by 3 or more, you can't always be positive if they are being dishonest. They won't be able to hide the fact they are nervous when they shouldn't have any reason to be. But whether they are nervous of you finding them out, or something else entirely is up to your judgement.

The only time you cannot roll an Intuition is when you already have in a conversation and no new information has come to light. You cannot grill someone by asking them the same question over and over and hoping that they slip up. Doing so would make conversations repetitive and unrealistic. The result of an Intuition roll represents the participants read of each other for a whole conversation unless the topic of discussion radically changes.

- If they know the character they are conversing with very well, you may grant them a bonus to the Intuition roll. +1 for long term friends, +2 for lovers and close family.

Medicine

In modern and futuristic settings, I recommend breaking Medicine into two skills: Medicine for practicing medicine of course. And Science for knowing and using chemistry. In historic settings, where science is far less developed a single Alchemy skill is enough.

Intelligence + Medicine is used for diagnosing aliments and treating wounds.

- 3** Sanitize a shallow cut.
- 6** Perform CPR.
- 9** Stabilize someone who was incapacitated by a gunshot.
- 12** Perform non-lethal open-heart surgery.
 - If they have a text book of conditions and aliments, and hours of time to reference it, reduce the difficulty of diagnoses rolls by 3.
 - The above difficulties assume that they have a standard set of medical supplies. Not comprehensive enough to treat all diseases, but enough to clean, and close wounds. If they have shoddy or improvised tools increase the difficulty by 2, and if they access to a medical facility like a hospital decrease it by 2.
 - Doing some surgeries, invasive ones or ones near major arteries may require an Agility + Medicine in addition to the normal roll.

In combat you can consume a Medical Kit (and your action) to roll Intelligence + Medicine. You can only use this on a character who is incapacitated and hasn't gained Health this way in the last 24-hours. You can choose any one option lower than your roll's total.

- 3** You stop the blood flow for now. They do not lose a Health at the end of their next turn.
- 6** You stabilize them. They no longer lose Health at the end of each turn.
- 9** Splint their leg and somehow get them back on their feet. They regain 1 Health for the next hour.
- 12** Miraculously they regain 2 Health for the next hour.

If you are playing with the Fantasy rule set included in this book, here are some additional optional Alchemy rules. In the World of Nell, the combination of rare ingredients is capable of creating incredible things. Although the effects of these potions can seem super-natural, they are not magical, just a result of strange flora and millennia of study.

Anyone with the Alchemy skill can roll Intelligence + Alchemy to combine ingredients. When a player does so, they must remove the required ingredients from their inventory before knowing the roll's result. If they hit or exceed the potion's difficulty the potion is made exactly how it should be. If they fail by 1-4, they still create the potion, but when it is used the Narrator rolls a % die to see if it has any side effects. If they fail by 5 or more the ingredients are wasted and nothing usable is gained from them.

Adequate	Fail by 1	30% of side effect
Passable	Fail by 2	50% of side effect
Questionable	Fail by 3	70% of side effect
Flawed	Fail by 4	90% of side effect

Side effects can be found at the bottom of each potion's description. They can be as benign as shortening the duration or lessening the effects, or severe consequences. The Narrator may choose or randomly determine one.

Mixing a potion takes around 1 hour and you must have a stationary fire source. Working at an Alchemy Lab grants you a +2.

Ingredients can be purchased from herbalists and alchemists. Their inventory and prices are up the Narrator. A village medicine woman will likely only have basic herbs or things that grow in the region. Where the Herborium in Olgate has access to every reagent known to the profession.

You may also forage for ingredients. You have the opportunity to do so once every day that you travel through a region, as herbs along road ways are often picked first. Or four times a day (roughly once every two hours) you spend in a place specifically foraging. Roll Intelligence + Survival and check the reagent list. If you are looking for a particular ingredient, and don't reach the required number the

Narrator can give you a different reagent that you did roll high enough to find. Or if you surpass the foraging difficulty by 4, you may be able to find an ingredient outside of its region.

Alchemy Ingredients

Ingredient Name	Foraging Region and Difficulty	Cost
Garlic	Only Purchasable	3
Pauper's First Seeds	Brugah: 5	4
Apothecary Solution	Only Purchasable	5
Torian Leaves	The Greenvale: 5	5
Night Shade	Any Forest: 5	6
Phaedres' Tuber	Freshwater: 5	6
Amiteria Spores	Any Swamp: 6	7
Firefly Thorax	Any Summer Night: 3	7
Black Pine Sap	Poacher's Wood: 5	7
Gappa Vine	The Lowlens: 6	8
Scorpion Stinger	Endless Sands: 6	9
Arbalest Puffball	Golden Flats: 6	9
Northern Sprit	Purchasable in North Watch	10
Warp Root	Any Swamp: 7	12
Wolf Gland	A Dead Wolf: 7	13
Sea Cucumber Spine	Saltwater: 7	14
Mange's Bloom	The Greenvale: 7	14
Swift Thorn	Around Red Wood 7	15
Metholated Extract	Only Purchasable	15
Whispering Hemlock	The Ravaged Lands 8	16
Wolfsbane	Around the Loch 8	17
Hornwort	Hillrund: 9	19
Blue Dalga Bud	The Silver Peaks: 9	20
Kino	Southern Mountains: 10	32
Silk Worm Larva	Danerian Free State: 11	48
Azbanon's Orchid	The Greatwood: 12	80
Winter Diamond	Purchasable in Knox Landing	115
Shadow Leaf	Forhelst: 12	220
Monstrous Stinger/	A dead poisonous	350
Venom Gland	monster: x	

Potions can also be purchased pre-brewed. Below each of the following recipes is an average cost. All potions for sale are assumed to be flawless, but you may be slipped an Adequate to Questionable one if you're not careful.

Alchemy Recipes

Common Poison

A dust-grey liquid that can be poured into a drink.

Difficulty: 6

Ingredients: Nightshade, Amitera Spores, Metholated Extract.

Effects: You must roll a Strength of 5 every 10 minutes or take one damage. If you fail a roll, you feel a sharp pain in your stomach. If you are reduced to 0 Health this way you fall unconscious and start frothing at the mouth.

Duration: 1 hour.

Potential Side Effects: Reduce the duration to 30 minutes. Reduce the Strength required to 3.

Cost: 35

Anti-venom

A milky white potion with a floral scent.

Difficulty: 6

Ingredients: Phaedres' Tuber, Torian Leaves, Apothecary Solution.

Effects: Negates all effects from potions and poisons in your system. Does not protect you if any poisons are reintroduced to you.

Duration: Instant.

Potential Side Effects: This has no effect. These only effects a single potion/poison. Prevents you from gaining the effects of potions of 1d4 days.

Cost: 25

Meyer's Balm

A think, soothing balm that can be applied to burns.

Difficulty: 6

Ingredients: Pauper's First Seeds, Gappa Vine, Black Pine Sap.

Effects: When you rest and would gain Health, you regain all Health lost from Fire damage.

Duration: 8 hours.

Potential Side Effects: Your fingers go numb, you roll a d4 Agility on fine motor skills. You only regain +1 Health.

Cost: 40

Regenerative Tincture*A faint green syrup that smells of licorice.*

Difficulty: 7

Ingredients: Torian Leaves, Pauper's First Seed, Apothecary Solution.

Effects: When you rest and would gain 1 Health, you regain 2 instead.

Duration: 8 hours.

Potential Side Effects: You cannot be awoken for 8 hours, even if shoved and slapped. You are groggy and get a -1 to all Intelligence rolls for the following day.

Cost: 35

Contact Poison*A sticky grey-purple ointment.*

Difficulty: 7

Ingredients: Scorpion Stinger, Nightshade, Black Pine Sap.

Effects: As an action, Contact Poison can be applied to any bladed weapon, arrow or bolt. If it sheathed, or gets wet, the poison is removed. The next time someone takes at least one damage from the weapon the poison is removed and they are affected. At the end of each of their turns, they must roll a Strength of 5 or take one damage.

Duration: 3 rounds.

Potential Side Effects: Adrenaline kicks in granting them a +2 to Initiative. The duration is shorted to 1 round. The Strength required to resist it is lowered to 2.

Cost: 45

Feral Decoction*A foul smelling, red-brown concoction.*

Difficulty: 7

Ingredients: Wolf Gland, Firefly Thorax, Northern Spirit.

Effects: You do not halve your Perception total when trying to see in to darkness. You get +5 Perception when using it for smell or hearing.

Duration: 4 hours.

Potential Side Effects: Reduce the duration to 1 hour.

Reduce the Perception bonus to +1. Gain the Ravenous trait for 1d4 days.

Cost: 55

Potion of Water Breathing

A deep blue mixture with a salty smell.

Difficulty: 8

Ingredients: Sea Cucumber Spines, Arbalest Puffball, Metholated Extract.

Effects: Allows you to breathe underwater.

Duration: 10 minutes.

Potential Side Effects: Reduce the duration to 5 minutes.

Any marine predators are drawn to your scent.

Cost: 50

Drops of Insight

Perfectly clear liquid that can be dropped in the eyes.

Difficulty: 8

Ingredients: Warp Root, Firefly Thorax, Apothecary Solution.

Effects: Grants you the effects of Seer's Sight. 10 seconds is enough time to roll Perception on 2 auras.

Duration: 10 seconds.

Potential Side Effects: Gain the Blind trait for 1d20 minutes. This has no effect.

Cost: 45

Liquid Courage

A golden-amber potion that glows faintly.

Difficulty: 8

Ingredients: Arbalest Puffball, Swift Thorn, Northern Spirit.

Effects: You gain the Brave trait. Increase your maximum Health by 1.

Duration: 10 minutes.

Potential Side Effects: You gain the Reckless trait instead. You do not get the Health increase.

Cost: 65

Sleeping Draught

A churning violet potion with a soothing aroma.

Difficulty: 8

Ingredients: Nightshade, Sea Cucumber Spine, Apothecary Solution.

Effects: Anyone who drinks this must roll a Discipline of 5 to remain conscious. If they fail, they lean against the wall, sit down, whatever they can do to quickly get comfortable, and fall into a deep slumber for the duration.

Duration: 4 hours.

Potential Side Effects: Reduce the to 1 hour. They halve all Perception rolls for 1 hour after waking. Reduce the Discipline required to 3.

Cost: 80

Wizard's Essential

A strange liquid that appears different colors in the light.

Difficulty: 9

Ingredients: Mange's Bloom, Warp Root, Metholated Extract.

Effects: You regain 1d6 Essence at the start of each of your turns. Has no effect if it has been consumed in the last 12-hours.

Duration: 3 rounds.

Potential Side Effects: Reduce the duration to 1 round. You gain the Unstable Casting trait for 1d6 hours.

Cost: 60

Exquisite Poison

A fine black powder that can be sprinkled into a drink.

Difficulty: 9

Ingredients: Blue Dalga Bud, Wolfsbane, Amiteria Spores.

Effects: You must roll a Strength of 6 every 10 seconds or take one damage. If you fail a roll, you feel a sharp pain in your stomach. If you are reduced to 0 Health this way you fall unconscious and start frothing at the mouth.

Duration: 1 minute.

Potential Side Effects: Reduce the duration to 30 seconds. Reduce the Strength required to 4.

Cost: 65

Veil-thinner Tonic

A ghastly grey fluid with dust floating in it.

Difficulty: 9

Ingredients: Whispering Hemlock, Mange's Bloom, Apothecary Solution.

Effects: Allows you to see any Sprits and cast Commune with Spirits at will with no roll.

Duration: 30 minutes.

Potential Side Effects: Gain the Deaf trait for 1d6 hours (can still hear Spirits and the Telepathy spell). You gain a Phobia of Sprits for 1d8 days.

Cost: 50

Liquid Spurs

An orange liquid with a layer of foam.

Difficulty: 10

Ingredients: Swift Thorn, Hornwort, Metholated Extract.

Effects: You feel energized. Increase your Speed by 2 and you get a +3 to all Initiative rolls.

Duration: 1 minute (12 rounds).

Potential Side Effects: Reduce the Initiative bonus to +1.

You get no speed bonus. Reduce the duration to 3 rounds.

You cannot sleep a wink the next night, you will suffer -1 to all rolls the next day.

Cost: 75

Winter's Tears

A light blue phial that is cold to the touch.

Difficulty: 10

Ingredients: Winter Diamonds, Phaedres' Tuber, Northern Spirit.

Effects: You are warmed from the inside and immune to cold. You can walk through a blizzard unaffected and are immune to the Chilled condition. You roll an additional d4 when casting Freeze, Icicle, Freezing Touch, Wall of Ice and Blizzard, which can surpass your Mastery.

Duration: 4 hours.

Potential Side Effects: Reduce the duration to 2 hours. You do not get any spell-casting benefit. You take 1 damage from freezing. You are Chilled for the duration.

(Rarely Available) Cost: 140

Flame's Pardon

A deep red potion that is warm to the touch.

Difficulty: 10

Ingredients: Gappa Vine, Winter Diamond, Firefly Thorax.

Effects: You are immune to fire damage and the smoldering condition. You roll an additional d4 when casting any Pyromancy spell.

Duration: 1 minute.

Potential Side Effects: You take 1 fire damage. You do not get any spell-casting benefit. Reduce the duration to 30 seconds.

(Rarely Available) Cost: 150

Saint's Resolve

A golden potion that smells of incense.

Difficulty: 11

Ingredients: Kino, Pauper's First Seeds, Apothecary Solution.

Effects: You gain the Iron-Willed trait but cannot bring yourself to lie for the duration. You do not suffer -1 for exhaustion.

Duration: 1 hour.

Potential Side Effects: You gain the Honest trait for 1d4 months.

Cost: 80

Monster Repellant

A deep red paste with a pungent aroma.

Difficulty: 11

Ingredients: Wolfsbane, Garlic, Black Pine Sap

Effects: A monster is defined as any dangerous creature that is less commonplace than a bear. If this is spread on a door, they are less likely to attack that place (but can still if they absolutely need to). If spread on a person, Monsters get -1 to all attacks against them due to slight hesitation. This can be spread on a bladed weapon or arrow like Contact Poison. If spread on a weapon, the next time it deals damage, is sheathed, or gets wet the poison is removed. If it was removed by doing damage to a Monster, they take one additional damage and must roll a Strength of 10 or be Stunned.

Duration: 1 day or until removed.

Potential Side Effects: Reduce the duration to 4 hours. It doesn't have a chance to Stun.

(Rarely Available) Cost: 75

Orchid Extract

A few drops of silver liquid that seems to glow faintly.

Difficulty: 11

Ingredients: Azbanon's Orchid, Torian Leaves, Apothecary Solution.

Effects: You are instantly set to 0 health (whether you were higher or lower than 0). You enter a deep, unwalkable sleep, where your body pours its energy into natural healing. When you awake, you find yourself fully healed.

Duration: 1d6 days.

Potential Side Effects: You remain asleep for an additional 1d12 days. You permanently lose a die rank in Intelligence. You forget everything but your name. You permanently gain 1 maximum Health.

Cost: 120

Bestial Strength

A vicious orange potion with a potent musk.

Difficulty: 12

Ingredients: Hornwort, Wolf Gland, Northern Spirit.

Effects: You gain the Rage trait. You are incapacitated at -2 Health instead of 0 (but are still killed at -5).

Duration: 5 minutes.

Potential Side Effects: You enter an uncontrollable rage, attacking anyone in sight. The duration only lasts 1 minute. You permanently grow thick course hair over your body.

(Rarely Available) Cost: 135

Silk's Embrace

A perfectly clear but slightly stringy fluid.

Difficulty: 12

Ingredients: Silk Worm Larva, Blue Dalga Bud, Kino.

Effects: This can affect people through ingestion or can be applied on a bladed weapon or arrow like Contact Poison.

If the weapon is sheathed, or gets wet, the poison is removed. The next time someone takes at least one damage from the weapon the poison is removed, and they are affected. When someone is affected, they must roll a Strength of 5 at the beginning of every turn. If they fail 3 times, they are paralyzed completely for the 1 hour.

Duration: 5 rounds.

Potential Side Effects: Your lungs stop working, leading to suffocation if Anti-venom is not administered. Only half your body is affected, halve your Speed and gain the One-Handed trait for 1 hour. The paralysis only lasts 10 minutes. The duration is reduced to 3 rounds.

(Rarely Available) Cost: 160

Shadow Leaf Elixir

A swirling semi-transparent dark-purple liquid.

Difficulty: 12

Ingredients: Shadow Leaf, Blue Dalga Bud, Metholated Extract.

Effects: You and all worn possessions on your person become completely invisible. Things you are holding are still visible. You can still be heard moving at full speed but roll Stealth with a +5. And if don't move more than 10-feet per turn or come within 10-feet of someone you don't have to roll at all. If someone knew your location when you disappeared, they can still make attacks against you for one round but halve their total against you. Consider all targets of your attacks Surprised.

Duration: 30 seconds.

Potential Side Effects: The duration is only 10 seconds.

(Rarely Available) Cost: 330

Monster Venom

A noxious green ooze extracted straight from a monster.

Difficulty: None. This poison isn't brewed. But extracting it is a delicate process and the number of doses it yields is half your Intelligence + Alchemy roll.

Ingredients: Monstrous Stinger or Monster Venom Gland.

Effects: Monster Venom can be applied to any bladed weapon, arrow or bolt. If it sheathed, or gets wet, the poison is removed. The next time someone takes at least one damage from the weapon the poison is removed and they are affected. At the end of each of their turns, they must roll a Strength of 8 or lose one health.

Duration: 5 rounds.

Potential Side Effects: None.

(Rarely Available) Cost: 95

“Potions can be dangerous, even lethal if not concocted correctly. But they pale in comparison to the volatile and irreversible nature of infusions” -Procter Addicus

Infusions are alchemy's dark secret. The teachers of the Herborium systematically hide their existence from their students and the outside world. Potions have a duration and wear off as soon as it has been metabolized. Infusions can alter your physiology permanently, if you survive the injection. The only non-player character capable of reliably producing them in Procter Black-tongue and that is only after many lifetimes of research and some gruesome trial and error. He uses them as rewards for his loyal followers. Each one takes a step further from your humanity until you are left as he is, a monster who cannot show his face to the sun.

It is possible player characters may be able to create infusions if they discover Procter Black-tongue's journal or some ancient formulae. In order to administer them they need a specialized syringe kit. That requires an Intelligence + Engineering of 10 and 600 silver in Components. If you use this kit while creating an Infusion, it will preserve the ingredients if you fail. But the day it takes to make them will still be wasted.

Infusions don't have possible side effects like potions, they have guaranteed trade-offs. They are permanent and must be taken in the order shown below.

Infusion of Immunity

A syringe of liquid silver.

Difficulty: 13

Ingredients: Winter Diamond, Silver Stake, Apothecary Solution.

Effects: You never need to sleep. You are completely immune to poison, disease and cold.

Duration: Indefinite.

Guaranteed Side Effects: Touching silver with your bare skin causes extreme pain. If struck with a silver weapon you take an additional damage.

Infusion of Dusk

A syringe of deep purple.

Difficulty: 13

Ingredients: Nightshade, Firefly Thorax, Blue Dalga Bud.

Effects: You can see perfectly in the dark. You get +3

Perception to all your senses which can exceed your mastery.

Duration: Indefinite.

Guaranteed Side Effects: You cannot go out in the sun.

Every round you spend in direct sunlight you take one damage.

Infusion of Blood

A syringe of blood red liquid.

Difficulty: 13

Ingredients: Azbanon's Orchid, Torian Leaves, Human Blood.

Effects: At the beginning of your turn if you are not at full health, you restore 2 Health. You can restore up to 6 health this way until you must drink human blood to replenish your abilities.

Duration: Indefinite.

Guaranteed Side Effects: You must drink human blood to survive. If you go a day without it, you get a -1 to all rolls. If you go a week without it, you die.

Infusion of Cruelty

A syringe of maroon.

Difficulty: 13

Ingredients: Wolf Gland, A Child's Heart (Fresh), Black Pine Sap.

Effects: You increase your Strength to a d12.

Duration: Indefinite.

Guaranteed Side Effects: You get the Callous trait. You find your emotions fading, until you struggle to care about anyone but yourself. You see humans as livestock and cannot build meaningful relationships with them anymore.

Infusion of the Bat

A syringe of pure black.

Difficulty: 13

Ingredients: Whispering Hemlock, Pale Horse Hair, Bat Sample, Metholated Extract.

Effects: You increase your Agility to a d12. Your fingers become webbed and a membrane connects your arms. You can glide down from heights.

Duration: Indefinite.

Guaranteed Side Effects: Your body loses all its hair and your nose twists up into a snout. You get the Disfigured trait.

Infusion of Lies

A syringe of deep green.

Difficulty: 13

Ingredients: The Face of a Beautiful Person, Shadow Leaf, Gappa Vine.

Effects: You can morph your body to look like someone else. The process takes just a few seconds, but the states of transformation are obvious as skin stretches and bones reknit. When you try to do this, roll a d8. If you do not roll higher than the number of times you've activated this ability in the last 24 hours, it doesn't work and you cannot try again for 1 hour. While transformed you can no longer glide, but all other abilities and weaknesses remain. You cannot maintain a state of disguise for longer than 24 hours. And must spend at least 8 hours of each day in your natural form.

Duration: Indefinite.

Infusion of Domination

A syringe of lavender.

Difficulty: 13

Ingredients: Tears of a Loved One, Kino, Apothecary Solution.

Effects: Your gaze becomes hypnotic. You can cast Mind Control at will with no roll. You become immune to the effects of Mind Control.

Duration: Indefinite.

Perception

Intelligence + Perception is both used in direct opposition to another character's Agility/Guile + Stealth, and used for noticing details in your environments with any of the senses.

- 3** Realize your coffee is on the roof of your car.
- 6** Catch a whiff of perfume in a crowd of people.
- 9** Spot a hooded assassin waiting in the shadows.
- 12** Find a loose hair that was missed by the crime-scene investigators.

- Darkness is very difficult to see into. Halve your total Perception when looking more than 15 feet into darkness.
- While sleeping you can only roll for hearing, and halve your total Perception roll.
- If distracted, or not alert, roll with a -3.
- I will note a common grey area that people have gotten confused by is the difference between Guile + Perception and Guile + Intuition. It seems like the Perception skill would help in noticing someone's tell. In most real-life cases, observant people have both skills. But the distinction can be very important. Perception may let you notice the subtle movements of someone's face, but it's Intuition that reverse engineers those into a picture of their impulses and emotions. For simplicity's sake, I never have people roll Guile + Perception, just use Intuition instead, its purpose is to be the social awareness skill, and makes the skills more fairly balanced.
- The same is true with using Intelligence + Perception to track. When investigating a scene, you can find footprints but you need to roll Survival to follow them quickly and over more distance than 30 feet. This is to give survivalists and investigators a unique feel, and to help balance the skills.

Persuasion

It is very important that a high persuasion is not confused with mind control. Before you ask a player to roll a Persuasion make sure all persuaded parties have a clear and ensured incentive. If the argument isn't built on a solid foundation of mutual benefit a Persuasion roll can't be made and they can just say "no." What a persuasive person excels at is talking others into accepting advantageous tradeoffs.

Guile + Persuasion is used for convincing others of things through reason and logic.

- 3** Convince your friends to try a new restaurant.
- 6** Get a traffic cop to let you off with a warning.
- 9** Convince a rival gang to work together for one job.
- 12** Draft up a peace treaty and end a decade long war.
 - When a player is making a Persuasion, consider how much they are trusted by the target. You can grant up to a +2 for someone who is often looked to for advice. And can subtract up to -2 for someone who is suspicious of your true intentions or the nature of the exchange. If a deal is too good to be true, they may think they're being swindled and say no.
 - You, as the Narrator, should also award players for making good arguments. If they come up with an innovative angle, you can award a +1 for that. Or if they present it in a particularly persuasive way, award a +1 or +2 for that as well. This helps conversations feel alive and encourages role-play, instead of someone just relying on their stats.
 - If the character doesn't fully intend on keeping their side of the bargain a Guile + Deception will be required in addition.

Strength + Persuasion is used for intimidating people. This can only be used to dissuade someone from fighting or threaten someone with physical violence.

- 3 Get the school bully to stop taking your lunch money.
- 6 Stare down and bounce an unruly bar patron.
- 9 Stand up to a gang and have them choose an easier mark.
- 12 Have a charging squadron slow down and think twice about engaging you.

- No matter how physically intimidating someone is, if the defending character has a group backing them up it can be very difficult. If someone has one friend with them, add 2 to the difficulty. If someone has a group with them, add 4. If someone is part of an army, or has the police close at hand intimidation is practically impossible.
- As an action, you can shout insults, or bang on your shield, attempting to scare your enemies. When used in combat, I determine a difficulty based on the enemy's conviction and morale: from 4 for unenthused mercenaries to 10 for bloodthirsty barbarians. If the player surpasses the difficulty, their enemies don't just run away like under the effects of a spell. It's up to you as the Narrator to come up with their reaction based on the situation and the severity of the roll. What they do is based on their personalities, priorities and tactics. Most commonly, they attack the player instead of anyone else, but they may regroup instead of pushing forward or hesitate and skip a turn. One of my favorite ways to reward intimidation is to stop the fighting long enough for a dialogue to be started. Effectively convincing them another avenue may be better for everyone. If they perceive themselves as losing, they may break and run or surrender. And if they perceive themselves as winning the fight, I halve the intimidation total, making it almost impossible.

Piloting

This skill is going to cover whatever the most universal mode of transportation is in the game setting. This could be horses, cars or spaceships. For a modern setting for example, Piloting would be called Driving and would be applicable when operating a car, secondary forms of piloting, such as sailing or flying airplanes would be secondary skills. For a medieval setting, it would be called Riding and would be used to ride horses.

Agility + Piloting is used for operating a vehicle with precision and efficiency. Getting some place quickly or performing a vehicular stunt.

- 3** Parallel park without scraping another car.
- 6** Get across town in a timely matter.
- 9** Swerve between cars on the highway.
- 12** Land a backflip on a motorcycle.

- The quality of the vehicle can affect its handling and the difficulty of maneuvering it. If its old and poorly maintained or just a clunky design, you can add +1 to +3 to the difficulty of any roll that involves precision. It's obviously harder to weave through traffic in an old pick-up than a finely tuned sports car.

Guile + Piloting (or Riding most often) is used for calming down a living mount. If your horse gets spooked, you'll need to roll this to regain control over its movement. You can also roll this to get it to respond to verbal commands and whistles.

- 3** Get your horse to lift its hoof so you can clean it.
- 6** Call your horse from across the paddock.
- 9** Calm your horse down after it stepped on a snake.
- 12** Tell your horse to wait somewhere for your whistle.
- If the mount is well bonded with the character making the roll, you can give them a +1 to +5 for the level of trust. And if the mount is their Animal Companion (pg. 26) it will always act loyal, brave and keenly intelligent.

Shooting

This skill is going to cover whatever ranged weapons are common in your setting. For modern settings that would be firearms, and for a medieval setting, it would be bow and crossbows (being called Archery).

Agility + Shooting is used for hitting things with accuracy and consistency.

3 Shoot a bow without smacking your wrist.

6 Hit a bottle from 20-feet.

9 Shoot someone from the window of a moving car.

12 Hit someone in the head from 100-feet.

- If the target is behind cover, this can increase the difficulty of the shot, or make it impossible. If they just have an arm or leg sticking out, someone can still try to hit that body part but the difficulty is increased by +4. If they are just using partial cover such as a tree, increase the difficulty by +2 and they can still be hit center mass.
- If the character rolling wants to hit a specific area, they can declare so before making a shot. Increase the difficulty by +3 if they are trying to hit an arm or leg, +4 for a hand, or held object, and +5 for the head.
- Sometimes weapons will jam, and an Intelligence + Shooting will need to be rolled to return it to working condition.
- Some weapons like pump action shotguns, or great bows require a certain amount of strength to use. Instead of bogging down the game with strength rolls, just make it based on their strength rank. Don't let a d4 strength character operate and discharge a pump-action shotgun with ease. And anyone weaker than a d8 strength is unlikely to be able to pull back a great bow.

Stealth

Stealth is used whenever a character is doing something that they don't want to be noticed. Everyone around them then rolls an Intelligence + Perception and compares the total.

Agility + Stealth is used for moving silently and staying out of sight. It is also used for sleight of hand, whether that is lifting a key card off someone or sliding something off the table.

- 3** Win a friendly game of spoons.
- 6** Get out of your bedroom without anyone hearing.
- 9** Sneak past a group of bandits talking around a fire.
- 12** Bump into someone and lift their key ring.
 - If someone can stay in the darkness, anyone who rolls Perception against them (from 15 feet or more away) will halve their total.
 - If a character tries to walk right by someone in broad daylight there's no stealth roll that could save them from being obviously seen.

Guile + Stealth is used blending into crowd and tailing people through populated areas. Everyone around them who is watching for a tail or trying to stay alert then rolls an Intelligence + Perception and compares the total.

- 3** Unuspiciously sit on a park bench.
- 6** Follow someone around a packed mall.
- 9** Not seem out of place at a wedding you weren't invited to.
- 12** Trail someone's car down country roads.
 - How crowded the environment is what determines the difficulty of the Stealth roll. If the area is thinly populated add +3 to the difficulty. And if it's abandoned an Agility + Stealth may be required instead.
 - If you are wearing similar clothes to everyone around you at +3 to your roll. If you are wearing something conspicuous like a clown costume, subtract 3 from it.

Streetwise

Streetwise is used with a variety of attributes for a variety of purposes. It is a versatile skill that represents a general criminal know-how and city smarts.

Guile + Streetwise is used for collecting information. Given a few hours around any city or town you can learn the word on the street. Gossip, rumors and recent news.

- 3** Learn the prince is getting married.
- 6** Learn which streets to avoid if you want to stay safe.
- 9** Hear that a local noble is in need of an assassin.
- 12** Get introduced to the best fence in town.

- Bribes can get people to be a lot more cooperative. Spending some money greasing palms can (but not always) award a +1 to +3 to the total.
- This is best used when settling into a new place, looking for work or asking about something specific. Since the information you get are rumors or overheard snippets you can't ask follow up questions. If you want more in-depth information, it's better to role-play a conversation with a Contact or Acquaintance whose part of the criminal underworld of that area.

Agility + Streetwise is used for picking locks.

- 3** Open a cheap diary lock.
- 6** Open a basic padlock on a shed door.
- 9** Open an average home front door's lock.
- 12** Open a castle cell door.
- The above difficulties assume that they have a standard set of thieves' tools. It is impossible to open even simple locks with no tools. If they have shoddy or improvised lockpick increase the difficulty by 2, and if they have a full safecracker's workshop decrease it by 2.

Survival

The Survival skill represents outdoorsmanship and comfort in the wilderness. It can be used to build shelters and start fires in order to camp out. But these are normally trivial rolls which don't need their own table.

Intelligence + Survival is used for tracking and foraging.

- 3** Follow tire tracks down a muddy road.
- 6** Find some red berries in the woods.
- 9** Get a decent idea of the boot that made a print.
- 12** Follow day old deer tracks across a stream.
 - The above difficulties assume that the tracks are fresh. Each day that the tracks age, increase the difficulty by +1, or +3 if it rained that day.
 - If they are willing to move half as fast, a talented tracker can do their best to cover their tracks. Roll an Intelligence + Survival and add a third their total to the difficulty of anyone following them.

Agility + Survival is used for setting traps, whether to kill small game or injure pursuers. If they have the supplies (trip wires, etc.) a character with survival can spend a half an hour setting and camouflaging a trap.

The trap stays armed for a few days and the first person who passes through the area must roll an Intelligence + Perception equal or greater than the total rolled to create the trap in order to spot it. If they don't, they must roll an Agility + Acrobatics to avoid it equal to the type of trap it is.

A spring-loaded knife only does 1 damage but requires an Agility + Acrobatics of 8 to avoid. A heavy swinging rock deals 3 damage but requires a 5 to avoid. If they have a day, they can make either lethal or non-lethal pit trap. It requires a 7 to avoid and either does 2 lethal or non-lethal damage. The target is trapped until they roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 10.

Narrative

The final and most complex role of the Narrator is to guide the players toward and through a compelling narrative. This is not an easy thing to teach and takes practice but I hope that I can offer some insight in this chapter.

Every game is different, based on the system, the players and their styles. But I believe every game falls somewhere on a gradient between sandbox games and railroad games. Sandbox games focus on player driven stories, open worlds and freedom of choice. Railroad games focus on Narrator driven stories, specific set pieces, and give the players little to no ways to “derail” the plot. Both of these styles have their strengths and weaknesses. Sandboxes give the players a lot of agency but can feel meandering and rarely lead to satisfying conclusion. Railroads lead players through well-paced stories and deliver them at an exciting climax, but don’t let the players change that trajectory of the game in meaningful ways.

I think the best games exist somewhere between these two extremes, but closer to sandbox than railroad. Although railroad games may offer a well plotted story, with exciting twists and turns, it does not capitalize on table-top role-playing games greatest asset: its open-ended interaction. When a player suggests something that didn’t occur to you (which will definitely happen), embrace the change. Even if it avoids, or circumvents a section of the story you have prepared. They aren’t taking a short cut, or cheating, they are being creative and innovative and you should reward them for it. The most exciting moments I’ve experienced in table top gaming are when a single player’s decision, or roll of the dice has changed the story forever.

This is just my opinion, and every table has their own preferences. My preference is for a sandbox foundation, that lets players explore freely, and feel a part of a living world. But prevents them from wandering aimlessly by crafting a compelling story based around the player character’s pasts and motivations, which offers them open ended situations and meaningful choices.

It sounds like a tall order but I believe that anyone can learn how to do it consistently, and have fun doing it. You just need to understand the building blocks and fill in the blanks with your own creativity. The Versus Role-Playing Game was built to facilitate this kind of story-telling and never gets in the way of the narrative you are creating together with your group.

Planning & Improvisation

You cannot plan for every possible choice and outcome. Trying to will be a waste of your time, and can actually make your game worse. If you are constantly referencing your notes for every detail and trying to bring the players back to your script you are constraining your game's possibilities.

Table-top players have a wonderful habit of doing unexpected things. And your 200-page campaign plan can (and will) be "derailed" by their choices. But remember "derailing" shouldn't have a negative connotation. They are not here to listen to *your* story. You all are here to create a story together. So that's why I see unexpected player actions as an irreplaceable element, essential to any great role-playing game.

But you also don't want to be under prepared, your players are giving you hours of their time and you should respect that investment. There's nothing inherently wrong with 100% improvised games if everyone is having fun, but they are very challenging. I've had some success doing this, but only for the first session of a campaign when I am adapting completely to the characters the players just created. My best work has been with the help of a little planning. Prep helps the pace keep moving, you don't want to be stopping every few minutes to come up with a name. It also helps your world feel real, interesting and most importantly, full of possibilities for the players.

I've found that being prepared for a session has much less to do with how much you plan than *how* you plan. Instead of trying to anticipate your player's actions and plan chronologically, like you would outline a novel, plan situations. Know the details of an open-ended problem

before the session starts and then let the players determine the outcome during the game.

When preparing for a game I just focus on the very next session. Although only a few paragraphs of my narration are scripted, I have a solid picture of what I'll likely need to describe. I have the names and defining details of the character I plan to introduce. You can pre-write descriptions if it makes you feel more comfortable, but I enjoy coming up with them on the fly and being able to tailor them to the questions my players ask. I'll say that I have 70% of the very next session planned, you never have 100% planned because of chance and your player's choices.

And the type of prep really varies on what's happening in the campaign. If the session feels empty, I'll introduce a new character, or bring back a recurring character, offer a hook or two, or complicate their plans.

If they are arriving at a new place, I'll have a short description prepared to introduce it. I'll also have a list of opportunities there for them to explore and some characters who I know will be around.

If they are most likely going to be in a fight, I'll draw up a map and jot down the combatant's stats. It makes the contest a lot fairer if the participants stats are determined before the fight starts.

If they are trying to solve a problem, I'll make sure it's not impossible but won't try and plan for every possible contingency. When a player catches you off guard, and it absolutely will happen, don't rush and do something you'll regret. It's totally ok to just say, "That's super interesting. I didn't expect that at all! Why doesn't everyone grab a drink, run to the bathroom, whatever, and we can start back up in 5 minutes."

I've been running games for over a decade and this still occasionally happens to me, there's nothing to be embarrassed about. Sometimes your brain just gets overloaded by possibilities, or trying to compute the probabilities of something, and you need a few minutes to ground yourself. Normally five minutes is enough time to sketch out an idea of a space you didn't expect explored, or really put yourself in the shoes of a character and mull over a

decision. And your players will be happy to take a breather, maybe even a little pleased with themselves for making you really think.

Although I keep my concrete planning to just a session in advance, I'll have a general idea for a few sessions after that, and even a vague picture of the whole campaign. Although everything is always subject to change, it's a good idea to have a destination in mind, so you can foreshadow and set things up. That way, whether things go the way you are predicting or not, it's more likely to feel satisfying and earned.

For example, I planned a grand campaign about an illegitimate prince starting a civil war for the throne. So, from the early sessions, although the players wouldn't meet them for a long time, I named dropped some major players in the story who I anticipated to be great villains. About eight months in, the party decided to align themselves with those characters. The prep still made those characters feel grounded in the world, even if they were playing the opposite role that I had planned. I hope that example illustrates how you can be narratively malleable without throwing all long-term planning out the window.

With all this narrative theory it can be easy to forget that the point of any game is just to have fun. I think a common mistake is Narrators envisioning this huge story, and then struggling to fill it with interesting content. It's much better to build from the ground up. And the building blocks of any great campaign are fun individual sessions.

Start off just focusing on running fun sessions, which is a lot easier than you think. First you have to hook your players, give them a reason to care how the story unfolds. Secondly, you challenge their characters in interesting ways which allow them to be creative and solve problems. It's as simple as that. Let's start by talking about compelling hooks, reasons for your players to get invested.

Hooks

You want *at least* one thing in every session to grab your player's attention. Something really intriguing or exciting that gets them invested and curious about what will happen next. There is a saying about literature that your first sentence should hook the reader. Luckily you have a little more time to play with in role-playing games, but the spirit of the rule rings true.

A hook is simply a reason for your players to get involved (and excited). Without a successful hook your players are likely to wander past the situation you've planned. Good role-players won't get involved in the first opportunity you present just because they're curious. They will need a reason that motivates their character. Which is why understanding your player characters is important. There is a section on the character sheet for players to write down their character aspirations and apprehensions. Don't be afraid of outright asking what a character wants, or is afraid of and using that as part of your hook. Just make sure it's something the whole party can get behind.

I think almost all compelling hooks can be broken down into three categories. The first is the simplest type of hook: Offers. What the players wants is offered in exchange for accomplishing something. This includes any kind of paying job, where they are motivated by the compensation. Or it could be a quest for something that the whole group agrees would be good to have, this could be great wealth, a physical object, the favor of a powerful person, or even insight into a mystery. This motivation is fairly universal, but doesn't work on characters who are already content or don't care about possessions, prestige, understanding, etc.

Which leads up to the second type of hook: Threats. Something threatens what the characters care about. This could be a someone who they care for needing help, or a conflict that threatens the player's home, reputation, etc. This hook can be very effective at spurring the characters into action and can have a great sense of urgency. Just be cautious not to make the players feel like they have no choice. Hooks like "You must do exactly, X, Y and then Z or

your family will die” feel cheap and linear unless the players have multiple possible solutions, maybe playing along to buy for time while working secretly to locate and free the hostages. This principal is why I am not a fan of the “you must go on this quest to prevent the end of the world” trope, but some tables enjoy that flavor of grand fantasy and I’m sure it can be done in an open-ended way.

But just because you give your players a lead doesn’t mean they have to follow it. And it doesn’t make them “bad players” for not going along with your plans. It just means that the motivation you chose wasn’t as important to them as you thought. I should clarify, if a single player continuously cannot be motivated by any offer or threat, it’s possible they made an apathetic character, and should probably make a new one or add some intrinsic motivations so that they can engage in the story in a meaningful way.

But if the whole group is treating every hook you give them like distractions, it just means they have their own agenda. The best thing to do with a group like this is let them drive the story and see where they go and what they do. It will reveal their true motivations, and allows you to use the third hook type: Complication. Something gets in the way of what the players are trying to accomplish, whether they are trying to build an underworld empire, or negotiate a truce between two free city-states, or just make the world a better place. Your job as the Narrator becomes creating a believable complication that is challenging but can be overcome with the right strategy (and maybe a little luck). This is a really natural hook type, but does require highly self-motivated players that want to change the world, or accomplish something because of their own values.

I am a fan of all three of these hook types and a given campaign should employ all of them. But for the first hook I prefer the “bounty board” method. I present the players with a handful of offers, each with their own risks and rewards. It grounds the players right away in that feeling of true choice and can spark a fun discussion of weighing the pros and cons of each option. Don’t let the title fool you, these don’t have to be simple jobs and bounties with monetary payouts (although that can be fun). Perhaps the players are tasked by

the queen to recruit allies for an upcoming war and they have to choose which nation they'll travel to, weighing the opinions of those rulers with how many troops they would contribute if swayed.

But the “bounty board” approach is not the only option. It’s ok if coming up with several different hooks sound intimidating. You may have one particularly great plot you are excited about. If that’s the case, you should be upfront about this *before* your players make their characters. More about this in the next section.

Character Creation & Development

A common misconception is that it’s the Narrator’s job to herd the party together like so many stray cats. A player can’t just make an evil necromancer, and say “ok, now it’s your job to fit me into the story.” This is a collaborative game, and character creation should be the most collaborative part of it. Try to cultivate a “writer’s room” mentality at your table. If everyone is open to suggestions, and builds their characters on and around each other’s ideas the game will start on a solid narrative foundation.

There are lots of things you can do during character creation to help your game start off in a compelling way and ensure any hook you have pre-planned will engage the player characters.

Instead of trying to coerce characters with all sorts of motivations into your hook, you can just say to your players, “you can make any character you want, as long as they have a reason to go looking for a dragon’s horde.” This isn’t as much a restriction on player creativity as it is a prompt, that ensures that the player characters have a reason to be a part of the same story.

If you don’t want to give anything away about your planned story, or don’t have a specific story but want a certain theme for your game, you can ask all your players to make characters who live in the same village, work for the same guild, share the same religion, etc. Just try to strike a balance of giving them enough room to make a wide variety

of characters and express themselves, and enough direction to ensure their character fits into the story.

Even if you don't have a specific story in mind, games will be a lot stronger if players know each other. A party with interesting dynamics will always be more engaging than a group of strangers, tossed together by circumstance. During character creation, encourage your players to work together with at least one other player and come up with how they know each other. This could be any kind of relationship, old friends, rivals, relatives, lovers. As long as they know each other it will tie the party together in meaningful ways for the rest of your game.

The Versus Role-Playing Game allows characters to be quite powerful, even from the first session (depending on the starting point total). If a character specialized into just one thing, they can be close to the best at it. As the Narrator, don't try and hold them back, instead play into it, make them feel amazing at that thing. The balance of the point system ensures that if they are amazing at one thing, they must have real short comings in other areas.

If someone makes a circus strongman, don't challenge them with a rock that even they can't lift. Challenge them with a social encounter, or a sneaky infiltration. Challenging them in different ways will make them feel like a well-rounded character and make them lean on the other players at the table for help. And then, when the party needs something lifted, and the spot light is on the strongman, cheer them on and hope they succeed.

The relationship between the Narrator and the players shouldn't be antagonistic. You are not the "bad guy" tripping the players up and waiting for them to fail. Neither should you be their biggest fan, giving them tasks perfectly catered to what they excel at and showering them with rewards. The best Narrators are fair judges. You are there to uphold the realism of the world, while highlighting its most exciting or interesting facets for your players.

This dynamic is vital when dealing with character development. You don't want to provide an easy path to any destination the player has in mind. If someone mentions they want to join the circus and then a traveling circus rolls into town the very next day, that opportunity feels contrived.

But it's essential that you leave the way a character will develop up to the player. It is *their* character, they choose who they are, how they feel and what they do. As the Narrator you will be presenting options for that character, but it's vital that you leave the final decision up to the player. Whether they accept the change or reject it, every decision the player makes helps to cement their character's identity.

There are many different ways to provide opportunities for change. You can present a decision between two things, both good, or both bad. What they choose will help define their character. You can introduce a character or group and see if they get along with them. Have fun pushing those boundaries, and find the line that the character isn't willing to cross. That reveals who the character truly is.

Another great method to coax out character development is to shoulder them with a responsibility, curse or ailment that has some potential upside. Perhaps they are possessed by a powerful spirit that will help them if appeased, or they contract a mysterious disease with some unexpected powers. Whether they embrace the changes or search for a remedy will be up to the player, but either way, the character develops.

Character Retirement & Death

But regardless of what opportunities you present, it is possible that a player will no longer be interested in their character. If this happens and a player just wants to play a different character there's a few things you can do. First, have a private, meta conversation with them to ensure that there are no possible futures for their current character that excites them. If a character is just in a slump, don't have that character killed off or put to rest, instead find out what it is that player is missing and try to provide it for them (within

reason). But if they are simply done with that character start to talk about some retirement plans.

Retirement is a way for a character to exit the story without suffering some grizzly fate. They don't have to settle down on a farm, retirement is just a term I use to describe exiting the story on their own terms. They could get an important mission elsewhere, or meet someone and choose to go with them instead. They still exist in the world, and you can reference them, or occasionally give the players rumors about what they are up to now.

I think the best time for a character to retire is when a certain mile stone is met. This is a rare opportunity for a happy ending in stories that are often hard and dangerous. And it should be treated that way, as a reward for a job well done. Maybe the character completes their main goal, and can rest on their laurels for a bit. Alternatively, after something goes terribly wrong, it could make the character reevaluate their life path and choose to leave the story.

How far away retirement is, and how difficult it is to achieve is up to your discretion as the Narrator. Try and make the transition feel meaningful and earned, but *never* force your players to play a character they don't want to. If a player really wants to play a new character don't make them suicide their old one just to move on, give them a dignified exit. And focus their final session on that character, what they accomplished and how they will be remembered. It can be a really meaningful moment.

It's time we address the other way characters can leave the game: Death. This is something that you should discuss with your players, and make sure everyone has the same expectations. Some groups are reluctant to include permanent death in their games, and losing a character you are really attached to it not most people's definition of "fun." But because the real threat of character death makes the game so much more tense and engaging, I would *strongly* encourage you include it.

I sometimes equate role-playing games to narrative gambling. Your players are wagering the livelihood, and even life, of their fictional characters to accomplish things they want. And if the consequences aren't real, neither are the

accomplishments. If one of your players is worried, they can *only* enjoy the game through one character's perspective, they are likely greatly underestimating their capacity and range as a role-player. In Versus, death is an opportunity to try something new.

And just because death is a real possibility, doesn't mean it should ever be unavoidable. Never *try* to kill your players. If a player is incapacitated in combat, it would be strange for an NPC to use their turn killing them instead of focusing on the threats who are still on their feet. And then if the party wins the fight, they can be saved with medical attention. There are exceptions to this, if there is a feud between those two characters, or the NPC is a monster who is motivated by hunger. But when the party is likely going to fight something that doesn't take prisoners, a monster or particularly ruthless faction, I warn the players. They can hear rumors of the atrocities the faction is responsible for, or find human remains scattered around the creature's lair. This way the players know to run if things start to go badly. And the fight will feel even more intense.

If the party loses a fight, there are many consequences that are much more interesting than a total-party kill. I make most factions capture the player characters, and try to get information or a ransom from them. This doesn't mean the players are safe, they can easily die in captivity if they don't cooperate, and often they must lose something precious to ensure their survival. But it just leads to more interesting choices and opportunities for character development than death.

Death is not only possible though combat. Failing a skill roll can result in death. Leaping a chasm hundreds of feet deep will obviously result in death. Let your players know that those are the odds before they roll though. And if they fail, you may let another player try and save them with a roll of their own. If a player ignores the obvious warning signs and tries something really hard. Don't give them special treatment because they are a player. If it was possible for a group of adventures to kill the king, someone would have by now. And giving them any lenience undermines the legitimacy of your world.

Side Characters

One of my favorite parts of Narration is introducing and role-playing side characters. They play a huge role in the story. The player characters are obviously the main characters, it is *their* story. But every good story needs strong supporting characters, and you will create dozens if not hundreds of non-player characters over the course of a campaign.

Because of this, I like to keep a list of all the characters I've introduced. It really helps keep track of names and not miss an opportunity to bring back a returning character. A great opportunity to make your world feel alive is when the players return to a place. They can reunite with old characters and see how that place has changed since the last time they were there.

You can start making supporting characters as early as character creation. Even if none of your players take any Contacts & Connections traits, they should still have a few people that they know. Work with each player and create a side character or two that feels like it fits with their backstory. They could be family, old friends, business partners, ex-lovers, etc. Just make sure those relationships aren't inherently assets. If someone has a best friend who follows them everywhere, that's called a Side Kick (pg. 26) and they need to pay the points for it.

I don't bother making a whole character sheet for each side-character, unless they are going to be an important antagonist or a crucial non-player character that travels with the party for a few sessions. Normally all I need is a name. But if they are going to be rolling, I will quickly note an attribute or two like "Agility d10, Guile d4" and assume the rest are average.

You can give them as many skills as you like but one to three is often enough to make them feel like they have a specialization. In addition to their primary skills, I like to list their secondary location knowledge. It really helps me keep track of what they would be familiar with.

It's totally optional, but choosing one trait can bring a lot of depth to the character. Whether it be a personality trait

like Brave or Short-Tempered, or an ability modifier like Limp or Near-Sighted.

I think every side character needs a Key Descriptor. This can be a physical feature, a nearly constant disposition, or an incessant habit. Bringing it up while narrating them will make them feel consistent and memorable. Your players may not remember the name of every shop keep, but they will remember the one who is constantly chewing on sunflower seeds.

I strive to make all of my side-characters interesting, but that doesn't mean they all have to be super deep and conflicted. Funny, annoying, and iconic characters are often just as memorable. Or maybe they have a strange job, past, or personal philosophy. Any of these things will make a character interesting without spending the whole game session diving into their psyche.

The last thing I like to keep track of is their core motivation. Characters are much easier to role-play consistently when you know what their goals are and how far they are willing to go to achieve them. Characters are more believable and interesting if do what they are doing for their own reasons, not simply to get a reaction from the player characters or play a certain role in the story. That way they have the potential to be an ally or a villain based on what the players learn about them and how they feel about those things.

One of the most memorable moments in a whole campaign was when the players decided to side with a character that I had expected to be the main antagonist. Although I expected the party to fight her, I didn't force the relationship. There was enough grey area in her motivation that they saw her reasoning and joined her cause. It pivoted the entire trajectory of the campaign based on the player's decisions. That is why I think all villains should have a goal that has more nuance than the ending the world. If that is their aim, you are taking away the player's choice of how to feel about that character. You *have* to stop them.

Here's an example of a side character and how I would write them in my notes:

Rufus Pensworth

Guile d10

Deception +3, Stealth +2, Golden Flats +3.

Excellent Hearing: +4 Perception when listening.

Key Descriptor: Large ears that stick out.

Core Motivation: Impressing his employer and staying safe.

This is the same format I use when a player spends an Acquaintance. It only takes a minute to go down the list and let them fill it in (within reason of course).

Pacing

A one-shot is a story that is encapsulated in a single game session. It can be a good way to introduce a few friends to this game, or the role-playing hobby as a whole. Because your decisions won't matter next session (there is no next session), it can encourage experimentation in character creation and during play. And if everyone enjoys their characters and the story, it is easy to continue a one-shot into a campaign.

But one-shots do pose their own challenges. It takes a lot of skill to fit a satisfying narrative into just a few hours. Like short stories, every scene needs to matter, and contribute to the whole. Campaigns, like novels, give you the time to develop ideas more slowly. Adjusting things based on how the story twists and turns.

I feel like a common pitfall for people who are new to running games is planning a grand story. It's a natural instinct to want to create an epic fantasy. But I don't think those stories can be made from the top down. They have to be built from the ground up on a foundation of fun gameplay. A campaign will only last long enough to reach that epic scope if each session is independently fun.

Start small. Make a single village feel alive and rich before biting off a whole continent. Just focus on providing effective hooks, interesting characters and meaningful choices for your players. If you prioritize making each

session fun for you and your players, the campaign will eventually grow to those grand proportions that you might aspire to.

I try and make every session feel like a one-shot by giving it a narrative arc. A hook at the beginning, a new challenge in the middle and concluding it with a satisfying ending or exciting twist. If you've ever enjoyed a dramatic TV show you can understand the strengths of episodic story telling. A campaign isn't just one long story, it's a series of short stories with the same cast of characters.

There's a lot of insight that can be gleaned from television pacing. Cliff-hangers are an effective way to generate excitement for the next session. Whether this is a reveal, or a fight that is about to start. It gets your players excited for the next session, and they can spend all week thinking about what they want to do.

Also, I break my campaigns into season-like arcs that contain many sessions (or episodes). Their length can change arc to arc but mine are normally between 6 and 12 weekly sessions. Each arc has its own themes and story that is resolved by the end. During one arc I don't try to plan the next arc at all. The end of each arc is followed by a session of down-time, where the player characters rest, improve and decide where to go next.

Developing a character, and increasing their capabilities can be a very satisfying part of playing an RPG. Which is why it's a great idea to have semi-regular down time for your player characters. Having a few days, to a few weeks, between intense life or death moments both helps your narrative feel genuine, and rewarding.

It may sound like a tall order, but don't be discouraged. You will have bad sessions, maybe something didn't make sense or you missed some key opportunity. That's ok, it's expected. Just keep working on your craft. You can always get better, which, I think, is one of the things that makes running games so rewarding. And you will get better. You will become more confidant in your improvisation and more comfortable role-playing characters. I sincerely wish you the best of luck, and hope you grow to enjoy narrating versus as much as I do.

Player Versus Player

Despite the name, there isn't an inherent link between player versus player (PvP) and the Versus, Role-Playing Game. But in the same way that I advocate potential player death I also advocate for some forms of PvP.

I believe people have a distorted view of what PvP is. It isn't a simple dichotomy where either the players must be a party of close friends who would never separate or betray one another, or they are at each other's throats and it will rapidly devolve into a gladiatorial fight to the death. The inclusion of PvP just means it is acceptable for the player characters to value their own goals more than each other. Which, I think, is simply realistic.

If that doesn't sound fun to you, there is nothing wrong with making a band-of-brothers type party. But if that's the dynamic you want to role-play make sure your characters have strong bonds before the game even starts. I think it's a little silly for a group of strangers to meet in a tavern and then two weeks later be willing to risk their lives for each other.

I break PvP into two types: secret information and open conflict. Secrets are just things that the whole party doesn't know. This can be sensitive parts of someone's backstory, or an alternative objective that someone has for travelling together.

You can handle secrets in two ways: hidden or meta. The meta-approach is where all the players at the table know everything but play their characters like they don't. This can be the best approach for a table that really wants to be inclusive or doesn't enjoy the suspense of hidden-information games. The drawbacks of this approach are that it can be hard to keep track of which conversations your character was personally apart of, and there are no dramatic reveals when a long-time secret finally comes to light.

The hidden approach is whenever a player has a private conversation with an NPC or other PC, they role-play that scene with only those players present. This is preferable if your table prioritizes immersion, and can add some suspense to your game.

Neither of these approaches is the best one 100% of the time. It's your job as the narrator to determine when each should be used. If one PC is having a heartfelt moment with an NPC that flushes out their characters, you want the whole table to be able to appreciate that, even if their characters aren't present. But a PC should be able to have a private conversation with another PC without everyone else overhearing.

If a player character is lying or hiding information from the other player characters, *never* ask them to roll a Deception. It defeats the whole purpose. But when secrets are involved, players may roll Intuition on each other. Regardless if they are lying or not, they must roll a Deception to determine how easy to read they are. If a player is being honest, and wants to prove that, they cannot simply opt out of rolling a Deception. I am a proponent of open rolls, except for PC Deception rolls. The defender's results should be hidden so that the other players at the table cannot meta-game. The defender may seem innocent because they are, or because they surpassed the Intuition by 3 or more and are feigning innocence... you never know for certain.

This is technically a PvP interaction, but not the outright conflict most people imagine when they hear of PvP. If your table wants to include hidden information but make fights off-limits, that is ok. But I encourage every table to consider including it as a possibility. The best role-players I know treat NPCs and other PCs with no bias. Having a moral code that allows you to kill NPCs, but not even steal from PCs feels like a form of meta-gaming. Additionally, it can lead to the most exciting, cinematic scenes. A rare moment where everyone knows it is out of the Narrator's hands.

If you plan of allowing PvP to occur, here are a few tips to make sure it is implemented in a fun, fair and respectful way.

Firstly, don't make characters that are destined to hate each other. PvP should only be the result of the player characters changing. Either developing in a way the party doesn't like, being caught up and influenced with an unsavory NPC, or doing something unpredictable because of fear, greed or some other emotion. Friends disagree, argue

and even fight. Censoring all those realistic interactions so that your fictional characters always get along feels like a cheap way out to me.

In my experience, most instances of PvP don't result in death or even the party splitting. They are just a heated dispute where a few dice are cast. But the reason for the dispute is settled and the story moves forward.

If a player character does end up killing another, they need to have a rock-solid reason why their character would do that. If you feel like a player is attacking other player's character for no reason, that is grounds to remove that *player* (not character) from your group.

More often than death, open conflicts will result in unreconcilable differences between the characters where they can no longer work together. Unless there is some super imposing outside factor that forces them to stick together, they will go their separate ways. At the end of the day, we are telling a story that follows a group. I am open to splitting the party for a few sessions to see how things work out, but if I don't see a way of them rejoining the party, it's up to the players to decide which side the game will be following. Most commonly, the minority leave and make new characters that align themselves better with the majority. But nothing says the game can't follow the minority.

The game follows whichever party the players choose, all the other player characters I treat similarly to a character retirement. I will talk with that player about what they expect their character would do after leaving the party, and then they become an NPC in the world. The party may cross paths with them again, they may even be a recurring villain, but they remain an NPC.

Lastly, whenever PvP is involved, it is the most important time to be respectful to your other players. If you are not mature enough to distance the player's actions from their character, or respect the time and care your friend has put into their character you probably shouldn't be playing in a game with PvP. Player characters fighting should be the dramatic result of conflicting motivations, it's not an opportunity to compare builds, gloat or put your friends down.

Homebrew

Homebrewing is the process of making up rules, that aren't found in the rulebook for use at your table. It is a generally accepted practice in most role-playing games, but explicitly encouraged in Versus. The core rules were kept intentionally simple so that they would be easy to modify. As long as everyone at your table agrees that the rule is fair, and fun, you can include the rule. But I have a few tips for creating your own rules.

The best time to introduce homebrewed rules is the before a campaign starts. It gives your players the time they need to build around it. That way if a player wants a high Sanity, for example, they can invest the point to get it. You can introduce homebrewed rules when your players discover something new. Just be careful of punishing decisions that they made before they knew the rules.

Here's an example: you're going to be playing a game that deals with cosmic horrors which are beyond human comprehension, and you think it would drive the flavor of the setting home to have a sanity mechanic. So, you give everyone a fifth stat: Sanity.

You could derive that fifth stat any number of ways, but try to keep things simple! Versus was designed to keep everything running in the background, letting you and your players focus on the story. Instead of coming up with some formula, I would just make Sanity half your Intelligence die, just like Health is half your Strength. It's easier to calculate, and uses a metric that is already familiar to your players. They already understand how much 1 damage is, whether it is physical or psychological.

Another easy way to keep a rule simple is to avoid exceptions. Every exception that you have to check for is just another step to making sure you are playing with it correctly.

Lastly, never be afraid to adjust. Almost nothing in game design is ever perfect the first time. You only know what feels right by under or overshooting it once or twice. If something feels irrelevant, or too punishing, don't be afraid to talk to your players and tweak it. But I would do this at the start of a session, and almost never in the middle of one.

Setting

The core of the Versus Role-Playing Game is not tied to any one genre or setting. I have played successful games about modern espionage, space exploration, a zombie apocalypse and many others. As long as the whole table is interested in the setting, and agrees on its particular details it should work perfectly fine. But even in a genre like Cyberpunk there can be a lot of variation. You don't want one character to be a scientist on the cusp of creating an android, and another show up with a 10-year-old robot butler, it would be inconsistent and detract from the first character's concept. Setting is something that should be discussed during character creation, or even before. The final say on the particulars of the setting must fall to the Narrator as they may know things that will be relevant to the plot or the secrets of the world. But like all things in Versus, setting should be a collaborative effort. It will ensure that the game world is an interesting place that all players want to explore.

The Versus Role-Playing Game is a simple narrative frame work, that can be picked up quickly and customized for any setting. It is a skeleton, that can wear any skin, but the meat of the setting-specific content must be home-made to fit the setting your table has chosen. That is why I dedicated the rest of this book to flushing out a setting.

The medium of table-top role-playing games was born from Tolkien-inspired fantasy. It has expanded so much since, to include hundreds of systems and settings. But when deciding what setting to include, I felt like there was no better place to start than medieval fantasy. No place that feels quite as much like home to table-top role players everywhere.

This setting module (hopefully the first of its kind) comes in three parts. Firstly, there are additional rules that I recommend you use in any medieval game. They are designed to make martial combat more strategic and engaging. Secondly, is a magic system with over one-hundred different spells. Instead of constraining people to certain caster archetypes, there are 8 magic skills which you can take as many or as few of as you want. So, if you want to

create a full-on wizard who can command every element, or a politician with just a splash of illusion magic, it is completely up to you.

Lastly is the World of Nell, which is a fantastical setting that I have played hundreds of hours of Versus in. My goal with Nell was for it to feel familiar to a classical medieval fantasy, but interesting enough to intrigue new players. Hopefully I have struck that balance.

I think of all fantastical settings fall somewhere on a spectrum of magical saturation. Low-fantasy settings stick much closer to the historical precedent with just a few magical elements sprinkled in. High-fantasy settings imagine every city as a melting pot of different fantastical races where enchanted items can be purchased on street corners. The World of Nell falls somewhere in the middle. Most people cannot cast spells, but magic is common-place enough to not inspire complete disbelief in onlookers. Some trivial magic items can be purchased in certain places, but powerful ones are very rare. Although there are one or two other races besides humans, they are a far from classically imagined elves and dwarves. And they are so rare that I do not recommend them being player characters (especially for your group's first game in the setting).

This is just my preference. I feel like fantasy races make characters more archetypal and distracts from the great variety that can be present in human characters. If you want to be a short-bearded character, you can do that by being an interesting human instead of an average dwarf. And if Orcs are invading because "that's how they are" that's a far less interesting motivation than any of the countless excuses that humans have found for war throughout history.

But again, everything in your game is totally up to you and your players! If you want to use this magic system in your own world, or use these maps but create your own histories and cultures; go for it! Whatever you find and use I hope it makes your game more fun. And eventually, I encourage everyone to try creating their own settings. Narration is most enjoyable when you are comfortable in the world, and building it from the ground up is the best way to get there. But until then, enjoy your stay in Nell.

Combat

The following combat rules are recommended for a table that wants some more depth from the fight scenes in their game. If your table has little interests in the nitty-gritty of combat, then a fight can be resolved like any other skill contest with a single roll of Agility or Strength + Fighting, or the system included under the Fighting skill in the Narration chapter (pg. 72). But since characters can be maimed or killed in combat it is understandable to want more control over the risks you take. And if part of a character's identity is tied to their fighting style than those styles should feel and play differently. If that is the case, and your game takes place in a setting where melee combat is the norm, the following rules are for you.

I built this combat system on 2 tenets: Firstly, players should have meaningful decisions on every turn. And what they do should be determined more by their situation and judgement, not their character's specializations. You can specialize in brawling, but if you do, you shouldn't be punished for not brawling every turn.

Secondly, combat should be very dangerous. Players shouldn't engage in it lightly. Don't make the mistake of relying on the system to bail you out if you get in over your head. A few bad rolls can have you making a new character. Often, non-combat solutions are far less risky. But eventually you will end up in life-threatening situation and then being a capable fighter is invaluable.

If you plan on being in combat invest in a defensive strategy. Either wear light armor and avoid attacks with your Acrobatics skill. Use a shield in one hand to protect yourself, or wear the heaviest armor you can and plan on soaking a few hits during the course of a fight.

As long as people know these things about the combat system, and prepare, it shouldn't be too punishing. The brutality of the rules isn't there to make combat less fun. The objective of it is to keep stakes high, which results in the most fun combats. Winning is so much more rewarding when everyone knows that losing was a real possibility.

Turn Order

The pace of a game should change based on what's happening. When the players are exploring a space, brainstorming a plan, or summarizing their activities over a period of time, a popcorn style of play is the most productive. Any player can throw out a question or action when it occurs to them. The players can freely talk among themselves, and there's no need to track the exact sequence of actions that may not interact with each other.

But the pace of the game should slow down and take on a more cinematic tone when the players are engaged in an important conversation or combat. Conversations are most impactful when everything said around the table is said in-game. The players shouldn't be able to have a side bar in the middle of a public discourse (unless Guile + Stealth rolls are made to whisper). The narrator should make sure the conversation doesn't move too fast as that would prevent players from making crucial Intuition rolls which would only take a split second in-game. But a strict turn order is not necessary for conversations because everyone can speak up at practically any time they feel moved to or even interrupt others.

Combat is when the most care must be taken. Not only can be it very chaotic without some additional focus and structure. But also, life and death are at stake so it is very important that players don't feel cheated by others around the table that got to do more simply by speaking more.

Which is why as soon as a fight breaks out, a turn order should be established. Every participant must roll the *lowest* of their Agility and Intelligence die, a value which will be referred to as Initiative. Someone must have both the physical reaction time and the composure to think quickly in high pressure situations to consistently react first to something.

Even non-combatants must roll Initiative. Just being in proximity to a fight, or being able to interact with it in any way, means they must roll Initiative to determine when they get to run away, or watch in horror. For non-player characters who all have the same stats, such as city guards,

or a horde of zombies, a single roll will save you a lot of time. They can all act one after the other, but only hold one place in the Initiative order.

The Initiative rolls are then sorted from highest to lowest. The character with the lower die wins ties. If it is still a tie, the player goes first. And in the case of a tie between players they may choose the order of their turns. The characters take their turns in that order, and when everyone has gone, everyone rolls Initiative again and determines the turn order for next round. Although it takes a little time to roll Initiative each round, it makes combats *much* less predictable, and isn't as punishing for someone rolling one bad initiative.

It isn't always obvious when to transition from the normal flow of the game to a structured turn order. Characters can find themselves in a tense situation, or a standoff, but that alone is not a reason to roll Initiative. Rolling for initiative each round while people spend their turns saying a few sentences of dialog will grind the pace of your game to a halt. So, Initiative is only rolled *after* the first attack has been made (or spell targeting an enemy has been cast).

In many situations it is not clear when combat becomes unavoidable. A single character must choose to throw that first punch. That character, the instigator, gets to take one combat action but cannot move more than 5 feet. Then, once it becomes clear that a fight breaks out, everyone else rolls Initiative to determine the order in which they can react. The instigator is omitted from the first round of combat unless surprise is maintained.

If the target of the instigator's first attack is unaware that combat was eminent, then the instigator gets a few benefits. Surprise is only possible through stealth or betrayal. The target must be completely unaware of the instigator's presence. Maintaining this level of concealment requires at least one Agility + Stealth roll, based on the situation and discretion of the Narrator. Or the target must completely trust the instigator. This is up to the narrator, but may require a Guile + Deception or Callous roll.

If surprise is maintained, two benefits are granted to the instigator. First, their attack is rolled against the target's raw Agility. Caught off guard the defender can't apply any dodge, parry or defensive bonuses. Secondly, they are not omitted from the following round. So, if someone surprise attacks, and then wins Initiative they may (in theory) take two turns in a row.

Surprise should be the privilege of only a single character. As soon as the first attack is made it is obvious to all combatants that they are in the midst of a fight and Initiative is rolled. But in special circumstances like a coordinated ambush or orchestrated betrayal, multiple characters can all surprise attack simultaneously. Each of those characters must make any required Stealth and Deception rolls and a personal failure closes the window of opportunity for everyone. But if the surprise is maintained by all parties a predesignated signal from their environment or given by a single character can allow for multiple surprise attacks. All participants (other than the shot caller) must make a final Guile + Intuition roll of 4 or more to receive the signal in the split-second timing required for such a coordinated maneuver.

There are a few situations where these instigator rules shouldn't be used. In the case of a duel, or anytime the participants know exactly when combat will begin, skip the instigator rules and start with all combatants rolling initiative.

When a character has an opportunity to make a ranged attack, they can instead give an ultimatum. If a character has a crossbow pointed at a potential enemy, they can say "If he reaches for his sword, I'll shoot." This is effectively claiming the position of instigator if certain criteria are met. Keep in mind, that this sort of threat is a commitment. In order to react outside of turn order, the finger must be a hair away from the trigger. So, if the criteria look like they are going to be met, perhaps by that character reaching for something on their belt besides their sword, the archer must react the way they specified and then initiative is then rolled.

If multiple characters with ranged weapons give ultimatums, and those criteria are met simultaneously, those

characters must roll Initiative to see the order in which those ultimatums are resolved. This sounds very nebulous until you imagine a western duel. These are two characters with quick draw and a ranged weapon who have given the ultimatum, “when he starts to draw, I will draw and shoot.” As soon as either of them start to draw, Initiative determines who draws faster, and then that character *must* shoot.

If it is the end of the round and more than one character have still only used the Wait action they must act (or forfeit their turn) in order from lowest Initiative to highest.

Movement & Actions

So now that you have turn order established, what do you do when your turn rolls around? On each of your turns, you can move a number of 5-foot zones up to your Speed stat. If playing with a grid, you can move diagonally. If you are mounted you use your mount’s speed (5-6 for a horse).

You cannot end your movement in an occupied space, unless you are grappling the character in that space, or are smaller than a human. But you can move through other characters if you have their consent. They do not have to declare their intention before you move, and if they do not consent, they get to make a free melee attack (of any kind) against you. If they hit, your movement ends immediately and you are pushed back to the first empty space.

On your turn, before or after you move you can take one action. You cannot take your action in the middle of a move unless you are mounted. An action can be many things: drawing your sword, opening a door, shooting an arrow, casting a spell, mounting a horse, drinking a potion, etc.

In addition to your main action, you can take one free action. Some actions can be taken as free actions because of situations or traits. And some spells can be cast as a free action for small difficulty increase. Some free actions can be taken on other people’s turns because of a specific trigger. You can only take one of these per turn, but it doesn’t use the free action that you get to take on your turn.

There are things you can do on your turn that are not actions at all. If you are not casting a spell (or casting it with a -1 for not speaking the incantation) can say a sentence or two. If you address someone, they don't have to wait until their turn to respond, they can respond immediately. Just don't have a 5-minute strategy meeting that is occurring between two swings of a sword. Your turn is when the spotlight is on you. Feel free to add any flavor to your actions or provide a snap shot into how your character is feeling.

Characters can always take universal combat actions, but they must have a corresponding weapon equipped to take melee or ranged combat actions. Many actions will call for you to make an attack. When you do, you must declare the type of attack and a target within range that you want to hit. Melee weapons can only target adjacent characters (5-feet away). Ranged weapons have a variety of ranges.

If the character being attacked isn't surprised, they get to choose a Defensive Option. The defender knows the type of attack they are being targeted with, but not the result of the dice. Reacting to an attack is not an action, it does not take your turn. But it does get more difficult the more times you do it in a round.

Being outnumbered or surrounded is a dangerous situation. When you are attacked, count the number of different attackers who have also targeted you this round, and you reduce your defensive roll by that many. So, against the first attack, you are unaffected. But against the second attack you roll with a -1, and against the third, -2 and so on. This Cumulative Attacker Penalty applies to everyone except large animals and monsters who are used to being surrounded by smaller opponents.

After the target selects a Defensive Option, they roll any dice that the option calls for. Then the attacker rolls and compares their result. If the attacker's total is higher, the attack lands and the listed effect occurs. Feel free to let the attacking player to add some flavor if they want. If it is a tie, or the defender's total is higher, the attack misses and has no effect. If the attacker rolls a 1, the attack automatically misses, but I prefer to narrate those moments as some distraction or off-chance instead of incompetence.

Defensive Options

When you are attacked you can choose one of the options below.

Dodge

Roll your Agility + Acrobatics to produce your defensive total (don't forget to include any penalties for worn armor). A successful dodge allows you to move one 5-foot zone, but if you do not have an unoccupied zone to move into you halve your total.

Parry

Roll your Agility + an equipped item's Parry value to produce your defensive total. You cannot Parry ranged attacks except with a shield.

Block

If you have a shield equipped, you can forfeit your turn to use your shield's Block value (instead of its Parry value) for all further defenses this round. Ranged attacks do not add to the Cumulative Attacker Penalty (pg. 131) while you are blocking. You can only do this if you have not yet taken an action this turn (except for the Wait action).

Riposte

If you have a weapon equipped with a higher Reach than the weapon you are being attacked with, you can forfeit your turn to make an immediate attack with it. That attack can be any Melee combat action but must target your attacker. After resolving your attack, they can choose to continue with theirs (if able), and you must Dodge or Parry. You can only do this if you have not yet taken an action this turn (except for the Wait action).

Universal Combat Actions

Run

Instead of worrying about anything else you push yourself and all out sprint. Increase your speed by 3 for this turn.

Step

You coordinate with an adjacent ally and swap places with them. You can only use this on a willing character.

Wait

Skip your turn and see how things play out. This allows you to take your turn at any later time as long as it doesn't interrupt another character's turn.

Prepare

Declare a specific action. If you do that action next round add +3 to any required roll. You cannot use this action outside of turn order or for casting spells.

Defend

You prepare to avoid any oncoming attacks. Next round, you get a +3 to all defensive rolls.

Interact

This action is used to interact with anything in your environment, like opening a door or operating a lever. Or you can take an object from your inventory and use it, like drinking a potion, or activating and throwing a gadget.

Equip

Choose any weapons or items in your inventory and equip them, storing or dropping anything you had equipped.

Toss

Throw an object up to 15-feet. If passing it to another character, you and that character must roll an Agility of 3 or more. You can take it out of your inventory if needed.

Mount

You climb on or off a mount. If may take this as a free action if you roll *Agility + Riding* of 4. If you fail you are grounded.

Stand

If you are grounded your speed is reduced to 1, and you get -3 to all defensive rolls and combat actions. You are grounded until you take this action.

Help

You help a grounded adjacent ally to their feet. If you roll a Strength of 3 or more, they lose the Grounded condition.

Trip

When a character tries to move from an adjacent space, into another adjacent space, you can take this action if you have not gone yet this round (except for the Wait action). Roll an *Agility + Acrobatics* and compare your total to your target's *Agility + Acrobatics* or *Strength + Acrobatics*. If you surpass it, they are grounded.

Tackle

You dive into someone's space, grounding yourself. Roll *Strength + Fighting* against the target's *Strength + Fighting* or *Agility + Acrobatics*. If you get the higher result, they are grounded and grappled. Grappled characters cannot move or take any action on their turn except trying to escape the grapple by rolling a *Strength + Fighting* against yours. If they fail 3 times in a row, they are knocked unconscious. You can end the grapple at any time. On your turn while maintaining a grapple, you can only make an unarmed attack against them or roll a *Strength + Fighting* against them to take an equipped or easily removed worn item. But if you fail or miss, they break free.

Melee Combat Actions

Attack

Declare a target within range. Roll Agility + Fighting (or relevant exotic weapon skill). Compare your total to your target's defensive roll. If you surpass it, you deal your weapon's damage to them.

Lunging Attack

Subtract 3 from your attack total in order to increase your weapon's Reach by 2 for this attack.

Power Attack

Subtract 3 from your attack total in order to deal one extra damage on a successful hit. If you are using a d8 or higher Heft weapon, the attack must be dodged. If you are unarmed you can push the target back 5-feet.

Disarming Attack

Subtract 3 from your attack total in order to disarm a held item from the target instead of doing damage. It drops at their feet and must be re-equipped. But if it's the item that they parried with you may send it flying up to 15-feet away.

Maiming Attack

Subtract 3 from your attack total, and reduce its damage to one to aim at the target's arm or leg. If you choose leg, they reduce their Speed to 2, and roll a lower die of Agility while Dodging. If you choose arm, they roll a lower die of Agility while Attacking, Parrying and Blocking.

Avoid Armor

Subtract 4 from your attack total to find a chink in the target's armor and deal regular weapon damage ignoring their damage reduction. You can only make this attack with a bladed weapon.

Critical Attack

Subtract 5 from your attack total to deal 2 extra damage on a successful hit. The defender uses their helmet's damage reduction for critical attacks instead of their armor's.

Dual Attack

Subtract 2 from both attack totals to make two other Melee Combat Actions this turn. You may decide the order of attacks and can make one before and one after you move. But you must make one attack with each hand and halve the total of the one with your non-dominant hand (unless you are ambidextrous or using a shield or unarmed).

Shield Bash

Make a regular attack that deals 1 non-lethal damage. Roll Strength against them, if you win, they are grounded. You can only make this attack with an equipped shield. The non-dominant hand penalty doesn't apply to shields.

Throw Weapon

Roll Agility + Thrown Weapons to throw your weapon up to 15 feet. Subtract 3 from the roll unless the weapon has the Thrown tag. This attack disarms you and cannot do more than 3 damage regardless of weapon damage.

Ranged Combat Actions

Reload

If you have the relevant projectile in your inventory, you reload all equipped ranged weapon(s).

Shoot

Declare a target within range. Roll Agility + Archery (or relevant exotic weapon skill). Ranged attacks can only be dodged or parried/blocked with shields. Compare your total to your target's defensive roll. If you surpass it, you deal your weapon's damage to them.

Aim

Subtract 2 from the attack total to increase your weapon's range by 50% for the next attack. Or Subtract 4 to increase it by 100%. You can take this as a free action.

Rapid Shot

Subtract 3 from your attack total to quickly shoot and take Reload as a free action this turn. You can only take this action if you are using a Short, Long, Recurve or Great Bow (not a crossbow or firearm).

Maiming Shot

Subtract 3 from your attack total, and reduce its damage to one to aim at the target's arm or leg. If you choose leg, they reduce their Speed to 2, and roll a lower die of Agility while Dodging. If you choose arm, they roll a lower die of Agility while Attacking, Parrying and Blocking.

Avoid Armor

Subtract 4 from your attack total to find a chink in the target's armor and deal regular weapon damage ignoring their damage reduction.

Critical Shot

Subtract 5 from your attack total to deal two extra damage on successful hit. The defender uses their helmet's damage reduction for critical attacks instead of their armor's.

Double Shot

Subtract 5 from your attack total to attack twice this turn. They can target two different characters adjacent to each other, or the same character twice. Use the same roll for both attacks. You can only take this action if you are using a Short, Long, Recurve or Great Bow (not a crossbow or firearm). And if the last the time you took the Reload action you declared you were loading two projectiles instead of one.

Conditions Index

A quick reference of conditions that you can be affected by.

Grounded

-3 to all combat actions and defenses. Your Speed is reduced to 1.

Lose by taking the Stand action or being Helped by an adjacent standing ally.

Stunned

Skip your next turn completely. Or, if it is your turn when you are stunned, end it immediately instead.

Lose by ending a turn while Stunned.

Incapacitated

You are grounded, so you get -3 to all combat actions and defenses and your Speed is reduced to 1. You cannot stand on your own, but can move with an ally if they spend their action supporting you (a Strength roll may be required to do so). Each turn, at the end of your turn roll a Strength of 3 + the number of rounds you've been incapacitated. If you fail, you fall unconscious.

Lose by regaining enough Health to be above 0. You can do this through rest, medical attention or healing magic.

Chilled

You are shivering intensely. You roll a lower die of Agility (and therefore your Speed is reduced by 1).

Lose by ending your turn by a fire or in a warm environment (such as a cozy inn or summer day).

Smoldering

You take 1 fire damage at the end of each of your turns.

Lose by taking an Action putting yourself. If you were affected by Immolate or some chemical accelerate, you may be required to ground yourself as well (which you can do as a free action).

Equipment

If you plan on being in combat, choosing your equipment is an important decision. Each weapon has a Heft which is the Strength die required to use it properly. For each die rank the Heft is above your Strength, you roll a lower agility die whenever attacking or parrying with it. And if it is 3 ranks too high, you cannot swing it at all, just drag it with both hands.

The Hands column lists how many hands are required to wield the weapon at the correct heft. You can wield a single two-handed weapon, or two one-handed weapons or shields. You can one-hand a two-handed weapon that is two Heft ranks lower than your Strength. Remember, unless you have the ambidextrous trait, halve all attacks made with your non-dominant hand. But that penalty doesn't apply to parrying, unarmed attacks, or shield bashes.

How much Damage the weapon deals on a successful hit is an important factor. For the most part it scales with Heft, as that is the crucial benefit of being a strong combatant. But there is some trade off with Reach and Parry. Damage values with an asterisk (*) denote they do non-lethal damage. Being reduced to 0 Health by non-lethal damage results in unconsciousness, not incapacitation. And non-lethal damage is healed at 1 per hour instead of 1 per day.

Reach is only used to determine if you can Riposte. But a high reach weapon both gives you the opportunity to and protects you from others. Do not underestimate the usefulness of it.

The Parry value is the static bonus that you can add to your defense roll when parrying. This is invaluable, as no skill can increase your parry total only a handful of traits.

Cost is the final factor to consider. The cost is represented in Imperial Silver Coins (the standard currency of the setting contained in this book). The cost is only absolute during character creation. In-game, prices can fluctuate drastically, based on region, scarcity, quality and the buyer's persuasion roll.

A weapon marked with (Concealable) means it is small enough to hide on your person. Roll Guile or Agility +

Stealth against the searcher's Intelligence + Perception to conceal it, but a thorough search will grant them a +3.

A weapon marked with (Exotic) means the Fighting skill cannot be applied to attacks using it. You must take a specific primary skill (at 1 point per skill rank) to have any bonus with it.

A weapon marked with (Thrown) means you can use it for any Melee combat action with the Fighting skill, or use it for any Ranged combat action with the Throwing exotic weapon skill. And it does not get a -3 when thrown.

Melee Weapons

Weapon Name	Heft	Hands	Damage	Reach	Parry	Cost
Unarmed	/	One	1*	0	+0	/
Armored Gauntlet (Counts as Unarmed)	d4	One	1*	0	+3	50
Throwing Dagger (Thrown & Concealable)	d4	One	1	0	+1	10
Dagger (Concealable)	d4	One	1	1	+2	15
Duelist Dagger	d4	One	1	1	+3	65
Short Sword	d4	One	1	2	+3	40
Rapier	d4	One	1	3	+2	50
Duelist Rapier	d4	One	1	3	+4	650
Short Spear	d4	One	1	4	+1	20
Whip (Exotic)	d4	One	1*	5	+0	15
Sap (Concealable)	d4	One	2*	0	+0	18
Staff	d4	Two	2*	4	+2	12
Mace	d4	Two	2	1	+1	30
Hand Axe (Thrown)	d6	One	2	1	+1	25
Scimitar	d6	One	2	3	+1	60

Gladius	d6	One	2	2	+2	55
Long Sword	d6	Two	2	3	+3	60
Spear	d6	Two	2	5	+2	35
Morning Star	d6	Two	3	2	+1	40
Flail (Exotic)	d8	One	3	3	+0	65
Bastard Sword	d8	Two	3	3	+3	90
Katana (Exotic)	d8	Two	3	4	+4	400
Glaive	d8	Two	3	5	+2	75
Javelin (Thrown)	d8	Two	3	4	+1	30
Battle Axe	d8	Two	4	3	+1	70
Great Sword	d10	Two	4	4	+3	110
Halberd	d10	Two	4	5	+2	85
Wooden Mallet	d10	Two	4	3	+1	15
Warhammer	d10	Two	5	3	+1	90
Claymore	d12	Two	5	4	+3	135
Maul	d12	Two	6	4	+1	190

Ranged Weapons

There are a few crucial differences between melee and ranged weapons. Firstly, ranged weapons use Range, instead of Reach. Range is the number of feet away a target can be. Although this number can be modified with the Aim action. Ranged weapons have no need for Reach, as they cannot be Riposted with or against.

You must have a matching projectile to use the Reload action, but once it has been loaded it stays loaded until unequipped. Crossbows can stay loaded even after they are unequipped, allowing them to fire immediately. Throwing weapons do not need to be loaded, but a new one must be equipped each time. When using a thrown weapon for a ranged attack, you have access to every Ranged combat (except rapid reload and double shot) And if you Dual Attack with two weapons that both have the thrown tag you can use a combination of Melee and Ranged attacks.

Firearms are a very rare sight, the cutting edge of military technology. They are incredibly expensive, accessible to only the wealthiest; more of a novelty personal defense weapon than issued to armies. They are less accurate at range than crossbows and very loud when fired. But pack a hell of a punch, ignoring damage reduction. The same exotic skill (Firearms) can be used for both the Flintlock and the Blunderbuss.

Weapon Name	Heft	Hands	Damage	Range	Parry	Cost
Throwing Dagger (Thrown & Concealable)	d4	One	1	15	+1	10
Shuriken (Thrown & Concealable)	d4	One	1	20	+0	8
Sling (Exotic & Concealable)	d4	One	1*	25	+0	7
Hand Crossbow (Concealable)	d4	One	1	30	+0	95
Short Bow	d4	Two	1	40	+1	25
Flintlock (Exotic & Concealable)	d4	One	3	25	+0	1200
Hand Axe (Thrown)	d6	One	2	25	+1	15
Long Bow	d6	Two	2	50	+1	40
Crossbow	d6	Two	2	40	+0	75
Recurve Bow	d8	Two	3	60	+1	80
Heavy Crossbow	d8	Two	3	50	+0	105
Javelin (Thrown)	d8	Two	3	35	+1	30
Blunderbuss (Exotic)	d8	Two	4	15	+0	1050
Juggernaut Crossbow	d10	Two	4	60	+0	225
Great Bow	d10	Two	4	80	+1	120

Shields

If you have a free hand, equipping a shield there offers excellent defensive boons. Besides dodging, shields are the only way to protect yourself against ranged attacks. Moreover, it requires no point investment to become proficient with them and making attacks with Shields in your non-dominant hand are not halved. The Parry bonus is what you get always get to add to your defensive Parry rolls. The Block value is what you add instead if you spend your whole turn blocking.

Shield Name	Heft	Hands	Damage	Parry	Block	Cost
Buckler	d4	One	1*	+3	+5	35
Round Shield	d6	One	1*	+4	+6	50
Kite Shield	d8	One	1*	+4	+7	60
Tower Shield	d10	One	1*	+5	+7	100
Juggernaut Shield	d12	Two	2*	+6	+8	140

Armor

Engaging in combat without some form of armor is incredibly risky. On one hand, it allows you to dodge unhindered, but a single mis-step will most likely be the end of your story. The primary reason to wear armor is it's damage reduction value. Each time you are hit, you take the total damage (after modifiers from the type of attack) and reduce it by your armor's damage reduction. But this can never reduce a hit below 1. If you get hit you will always take at least 1 damage. Armor is padding, insurance against devastating attacks, but only Juggernaut Armor will make you immune to light attacks. No armor provides damage reduction against falling, fire or lightning damage.

Armor has a Heft, just like held equipment. For each die rank it is over your strength, you roll a lower Agility die for all actions (including attacks) and reduce your speed by 1. If it 3 Heft above you, you cannot move in it at all.

Name	Heft	Damage Reduction	Magical Penalty	Acrobatics & Stealth Penalty	Max Speed	Cost
Leather Armor	d4	1	-1	-1	5	45
Spider Silk	d4	3*	-0	-0	6	1,200
Light Chain	d4	2	-2	-1	4	600
Gambeson	d6	2*	-1	-1	4	50
Wooden Armor	d6	2	-2	-3	3	40
Chain Mail	d6	2	-3	-2	4	200
Plate Mail	d8	3	-3	-4	3	150
Blessed Plate	d8	3	-0*	-4	3	850
Articulated Plate	d10	3	-3	-2	4	500
Juggernaut Armor*	d10	3	-4	-5	2	325

*These armors only reduce damage from bladed weapons.

*Blessed Plate still has a penalty of -3 for all schools besides Divinity. It is possible to get Blessed Plate made for any one school, but covering even two schools is extremely rare.

*Juggernaut Armor grants immunity to 1-damage attacks.

Equipping and removing armor with Heft d8 or above takes 15 minutes, or 5 with an attendant. You can equip one armor and one helmet at a time.

Name	Heft	Critical Damage Reduction	Perception Penalty	Cost
Padded Cap	d4	1	-1	6
Kettle Helm	d6	2	-3	65
Chain Coif	d6	2	-1	180
Barbute	d8	3	-3	80
Armet	d8	3	-1	320
Bucket Helm	d10	4	-3	170

Durability & Wear

Sustained combat or exposure to the elements will wear and eventually damage your gear. Each time that you complete a combat with a weapon, it loses 1 durability. If that combat was in the rain or other wet environment it loses an additional 1. By default, each weapon can lose 10 durability before it is considered worn and deals 1 less damage.

Each time you complete a combat where your armor reduced oncoming damage, it loses 1 durability. If it reduced oncoming damage but you still took 2 or more damage it loses an additional 1. If that combat was in the rain or other wet environment it loses an additional 1. By default, armor can lose 10 durability before it is considered worn and it reduces 1 less damage per hit.

Masterwork arms and armor however, never lose durability. Although they are not commonly on the market and should only be obtained through narrative avenues, they are valued at x5 the item's default cost.

If equipment ever gets to -10 durability, is it broken and is rendered useless until repaired. A weapon can never be below -10 (broken), or above +10 (perfectly maintained). But is considered worn from 0 to -10.

Repairing equipment can be done in a few ways. Blacksmiths are commonplace throughout the cities and settlements of the world. Their prices for repairs and maintenance can be found in the following section on page 148. If a player character gains access to a forge, they can do anything a blacksmith can just the cost of materials (usually half). Each item worked on does take an hour of time though.

Repair kit are single use items that can be used by anyone with the Metalworking skill to repair a piece of equipment. It takes an hour to use one. When you do, roll you Intelligence + Metalworking and restore durability equal to your total. If the item goes above 0 durability it is no longer worn. But once a piece of equipment is completely broken (-10) it requires a forge to repair it.

Goods & Services

The universal tender of the Civil Kingdoms is the Imperial Silver Coin. Copper pieces are also standard, valued at a 4th of a silver, but such trivial denomination isn't often relevant for play. Gold is rarely minted into coins. It is normally kept in pure bars, each valued at 100 silver. Gold is not commonly in circulation, mostly reserved for use in bulk trade and real-estate settlements. The following prices are listed in silver coins, but those prices are only guidelines. In game, things are rarely as cut and dry. Your report with the merchant matters a great deal, and haggling is commonplace in most places of commerce.

You can roll Guile + Persuasion to try and effect the initial price.

1	+20%
2-3	+10%
4-5	+0%
6-8	-10%
9-11	-20%
12+	-30%

But if you are not particularly persuasive you are not without hope. Merchants will often offer you discounts for a multitude of reasons. Keep in mind all of these values are simple guidelines, it mostly comes down to how the character feels about you.

You have helped them with something:	-10%
You have saved their life:	-30%
You are Popular in their circles:	-10%
You are Celebrated in their region:	-50%
You are their relative:	-20%
They are your sidekick:	-50%
You are a member of their Organization:	-20%
You are the Leader of their Organization:	-100%

There are also other ways procure provisions and equipment besides paying for them. Theft is always an option, albeit a risky one. If you want to procure a common item through theft, a whole scene isn't necessary. Just spend an hour and roll an Agility + Stealth equal to a 10th of its price +4. That modifier can vary drastically based on the region it's security. A well policed trade district would be a +7, and a camp with things laying out would only be a +2. Any failure of a theft attempt requires you to fast talk your way out, escape or pay the fines of that municipality.

Being under the employ of a wealthy person is also a great way to get the supplies you need. A duke isn't going to deprive you of the tools and resources you need to succeed in the task he asked of you. But starting the game with such an arrangement would require the Benefactor trait.

Kits

Thieves' Tools	<i>Everything to need to pick locks.</i>	25
Tinkerer's Tools	<i>A set of tiny tools and spare parts.</i>	35
Medical Kit	<i>Can be used to treat wounds.</i>	20
Repair Kit	<i>Can be used to restore Durability.</i>	15

Food & Drink

Loaf of Day-old Bread	<i>Hard as a rock but will keep you going.</i>	1
Bowl of Stew	<i>Mostly bones and broth.</i>	1
Dried Meat	<i>Practical rations for the road.</i>	2
Prime Steak	<i>Seasoned and charred.</i>	8
Wheel of Brughnese Cheese	<i>A pungent delicacy</i>	24
Pint of Ale	<i>A frothy flagon.</i>	1
Bottle of Wine	<i>A simple red.</i>	5
Cask of Northern Spirit	<i>Clear as water, goes down like fire.</i>	30
Bottle of Fine Valen' Cian Wine	<i>Golden wine is their specialty.</i>	42

Hospitality

Night in a Bunkhouse	<i>A single bunk in a room with several.</i>	1
Room in an Inn	<i>Bed & chamber pot, little more.</i>	3
Suite in an Inn	<i>Large room, luxurious bed.</i>	12
Hot Bath	<i>The only way to clean the road off you.</i>	2
Hair Cut	<i>A good idea if you're going to show your face around court.</i>	7
Evening Escort	<i>A sanitary and sophisticated evening.</i>	120

Services

Equipment Maintenance	<i>Restore one item to full durability.</i>	20
Equipment Repair	<i>Repairs a broken item to full durability.</i>	50
Street Urchin Lookout	<i>For a half day of watching for guards.</i>	5
Bribe Guards	<i>To ignore minor crimes or move along.</i>	50
Armed Escort	<i>A mercenary to look tough for a day.</i>	15
Personal Cook	<i>To travel with you for a week.</i>	40
Swordsmith Commission	<i>In addition to the item's price</i>	100

Transportation

Cart to Nearest City	<i>Hop in the back with the cabbages.</i>	3
Carriage to Nearest City	<i>Make good time and keep your privacy.</i>	12
Spot on a Ship's Voyage	<i>Could be less if willing to work.</i>	50
Charter a Private Ship	<i>For a short voyage, three days or less.</i>	200

Work Horse	<i>A plain workhorse. 5 Speed, 2 Health</i>	150
War Horse	<i>A trained mount. 6 Speed, 3 Health</i>	500
Cart	<i>A single horse or donkey can pull it.</i>	55
Carriage	<i>Need a team of at least two horses.</i>	250
Fishing Vessel	<i>Little more than a canoe with a mast.</i>	300
3-Masted Sailing Ship	<i>You'll also need a crew of 20.</i>	4,000

Property

Rural Cabin	<i>Just a log structure in the wilds.</i>	350
Small Apartment	<i>A room above a business.</i>	500
Village Home	<i>One-room with a thatched roof.</i>	650
Blacksmith's Forge	<i>Equipped with everything you'll need.</i>	900
Modest Farm	<i>Enough land to support a family.</i>	1,000
Alchemist Lab	<i>Such specific instruments are expensive.</i>	2,000
City House	<i>Spacious and safely inside the city walls.</i>	2,500
Country Estate	<i>Enough land to worry about poachers.</i>	6,000

Ammunition

Sling Rock	<i>You can find them pretty much anywhere.</i>	Free
Arrow	<i>It'll fly true enough.</i>	2
Crossbow	<i>Shorter and sturdier than an arrow.</i>	3
Fire Arm Charge	<i>A volatile red powder called Tazurite.</i>	50

Magic System

There are many ways to implement magic or other super-human abilities into your game of Versus. I encourage each table to experiment with their own. Whether that is a set of purchasable syringes which grant super powers or a highly religious system where miracles can only be performed through a life spent in dedication to a single deity. As long as the same rules apply to everyone, and the whole table agrees on them, the Versus Role-Playing Game can support it.

This magic system is one I created for the setting of Nell, but the system itself is not dependent on that world. It could be a great system for any medieval fantasy setting. I built this magic system on 2 tenets:

Magic can only effect tangible things. Things like luck, fate, time, opinion are too abstract to be affected by magical forces. In this magic system spells cannot promise prosperity, although many characters in the setting believe in luck charms. Nothing is destined, prophecy is just the best educated guess of an incredibly knowledge entity.

Secondly, I don't want magic to make other skills irrelevant. A wizard shouldn't be able to charm someone better than a trickster can or track someone better than a hunter can. They built those characters for that reason and shouldn't be outshined by a jack of all trades. Magic can't be used as a social crutch, and most often won't be superior in battle to a trained warrior. Where it shines is its utility and flexibility.

In Nell, everyone acknowledges magic is a real force, but very few understand its inner-workings (even those who use it). This leads to superstitions, myths and religions being the base of most people's understanding of magic.

It is open to interpretation where the power comes from, the stars aligning upon the day of your birth, the closeness of your bloodline to the Ancients, or the favor of a one of countless gods. Many magic users believe their power

comes from something other than them, a deity or spirit, and that belief is real enough to affect their abilities but does not prove the origin of magic itself.

No matter where you believe your power comes from, all can agree there is an innate difference in character's magical abilities. In order to do magic of any kind, you will need a die rank in Magic, which is an optional 5th attribute. It represents your ability to manipulate this mysterious force, and you will roll the same magic die when casting spells of all kinds.

Unlike the primary attributes, the average person doesn't have a d6 Magic rank. You begin character creation with no rank in it. But it only costs 2-points per rank to improve instead of 3-points.

d4	Magically Active	2 Points
d6	Magically Able	4 Points
d8	Magically Adept	6 Points
d10	Magically Exceptional	8 Points
d12	Magically Extraordinary	12 Points

Just like the other attributes, you need a 2-point trait in order to have a d12 (found of pg. 47). In the world of Nell, only the Ancients of the Great Wood, or their descendants can achieve such arcane mastery.

If you do not start the game with a magical attribute, you cannot start with any magical skills either. But it is possible you will learn a magical skill during the course of the game. If you, do you must determine your natural aptitude for magic. Roll a % die to determine your magic die, the result must be final. If you want to play a spell-caster, make one, and pay the points for it, this should only be a last resort for players who never expected to learn magic.

None	1-50%
d4	51-70%
d6	71-84%
d8	85-94%
d10	95-100%

Essence

Just like the other attributes, Magic has a stat that is derived from your die rank. Your Magic die determines how much Essence you can hold.

d4	4 Essence
d6	6 Essence
d8	8 Essence
d10	10 Essence
d12	12 Essence

Essence is a resource the magic users can tap into to make their spell casting more reliable. After declaring which spell you want to cast, but before rolling, you may choose to spend any number of your available Essence. For each one spent, you add +1 to the Magic roll's result. But Essence cannot bring the die's result above its natural limit (6 for d6, 8 for d8, etc.). This way essence can be used in tense situations to ensure a spell doesn't fail, but can't be used to unlock more powerful spells. If a spell does fail anyway, from the total not reaching the spell's difficulty or a 1 being rolled, any Essence that had been invested in that spell is returned to the caster. But if you spent more than you needed, the excess is not refunded.

Once spent, casters regain 1 Essence every hour up to their maximum. This occurs regardless if the caster is sleeping, walking or fighting. But there are other ways to acquire Essence besides passively waiting for it to accumulate like dew on grass. There are places of power throughout the world which are endless fonts of Essence. These places are rare, ancient religious sites or places of natural phenomena, but not so rare that each region would not have two or three. Being at one restores 1 Essence every few seconds (1-round). Centuries ago, enchanters learned how to harvest essence from these places of power and store it in vessels. These vessels could be clay vials or ornate glass beakers, the enchantment is the same. Opening one (which is an action) will restore a 2d6 Essence to the caster closest by. They can be purchased in the Arcane Burrows for roughly 25 silver a piece.

The Schools of Magic

A magic attribute is only half of what you need to be a spell caster. You cannot just roll your magic die to shape the world in any way you see fit. Instead, the ways you can affect the world are broken into 8 schools. Each school has domain over one element or aspect of reality.

Arcana

Creating illusions and tampering with reality.

Necromancy

Cheating death and bestowing curses.

Hydromancy

Controlling water and shaping ice.

Geomancy

Altering matter and breathing life to plants.

Animalism

Communing with and transforming into animals.

Divinity

Restoring good and protecting it from evil.

Pyromancy

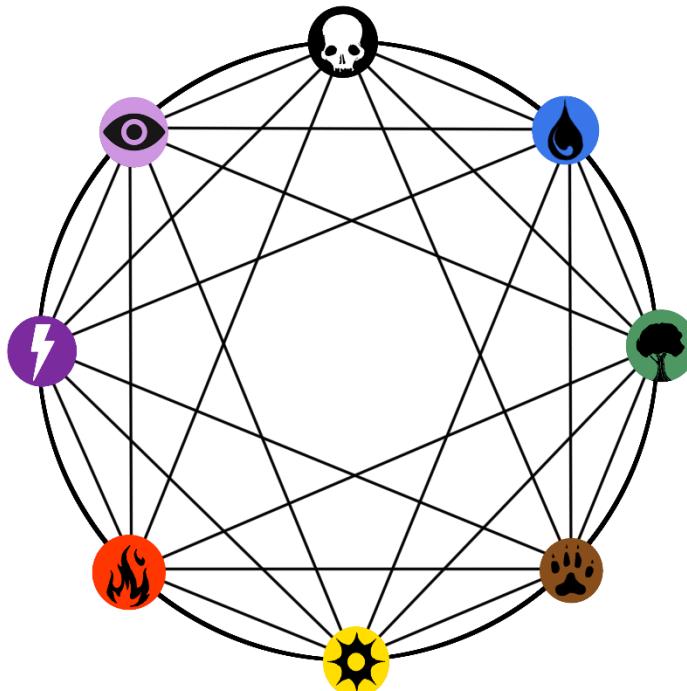
Conjuring fire and bending it to your will.

Aeromancy

Manipulating the weather, air and lighting.

Each of these schools is a primary skill (costing 1 point per +1, and being limited by your Mastery). As soon as you have at least a +1 in a school you can attempt to cast any spell from it, but obviously may not be powerful enough yet. When you want to cast a spell, you roll your Magic attribute die and add your skill in the relevant school to see if you reach the spell's difficulty. But once you have a skill in one school you cannot put any points into the school opposite it. This allows you to create a wide variety of thematically consistent magic builds. You can try to master just one or two schools or have some influence in up to four.

This chart shows each magic school's relation to each other.



Taking a skill in one school, blocks you from being able to take the one opposite it. So, you cannot have both Necromancy and Divinity, Arcana and Animalism, Geomancy and Aeromancy, or Pyromancy and Hydromancy. But there are still countless combinations.

Each line on this chart is a shared spell. Each school's shared spells can be found at the end of their chapter. The school in which the spell is found is what skill you will roll when casting it, but having a certain level of mastery over the other school is a pre-requisite to even try. Each school either gives a shared spell to, or gets a shared spell from, every other school. And if two schools are next to each other on the circle, they do both.

This way the combination of schools you choose will grant you access to exclusive spells. You can find a complete list of spells on page 165.

Under special circumstances a player can create their own school. If they want to be a magic user who focuses on a more abstract theme than the options above. Perhaps someone want to worship the god of travel, or war, or enchant others through musical magic. This is not an opportunity to make a grab-bag of the most useful and powerful spells. Each spell must be the most thematic of the options available and the Narrator has the final say on which spells do and do not fit.

A custom magic school (like all others magic schools) have 13 slots, one of each difficulty, 3 through 15. Each slot can contain any spell from any school (including shared spells) as long as its difficulty is equal to or lower than that slot's number. If you want to include two spells that are the same difficulty, you must increase one of their difficulties. For example, if you wanted True Shot and Change Weather (both difficulty 6), you would have to increase one of them, say True Shot, to difficulty 7. True Shot would always be difficulty 7 for you (even though it is printed at 6) and would take up your difficulty 7 slot. If you wanted to include another 7 it would have to take up a higher slot, and so on.

The trade-off for the limited spell list is that you only need one magic skill to cast all of your spells. Name the skill “_____ Magic” and treat it like any other magical primary skill. You cannot create multiple custom schools, and a character who uses a custom school cannot use regular schools in addition.

Here's an example custom school I made for bardic magic:

- 3: Calm Animal
- 4: Whispering Breeze
- 5: Inspire
- 6: True Shot
- 7: Pacify
- 8: Fear (up from 7)
- 9: Calm
- 10: Sleep
- 11: Howling Wind
- 12: Unnatural Growth
- 13: Animate Object
- 14: Mind Control
- 15: Aura of Undeath

Casting a Spell

When you try and cast a spell, declare the spell and how much Essence (if any) you are going to expend. Then roll Magic + Relevant Magic School to see if you reach its difficulty (including any relevant modifiers). If you do not, you cannot choose an easier spell to do instead, but any essence you invested is refunded.

If you reach the difficulty, you can describe the way you want your spell to affect the world (as long as it fits within the spell's description). If you surpass the difficulty, you can spend the difference on bonuses. Spell bonuses are optional ways to empower or alter the spell's effects.

Casting spells requires you to speak for the duration of the casting time, and do some hand movements. This does not require your hand to be empty (unless specified by a spell like Thunder Clap). If casting with a hand which is holding a weapon you could point with a single finger or draw symbols in the air with the blade. Casting a spell is not definitely discernable from speaking gibberish and waggling your fingers. No glowing runes or light is created by casting a spell (unless that is an effect of the specific spell).

If you want to cast a spell without speaking you can for a penalty of -1 to your total. And if you want to cast a spell without moving (or if your hands are restrained) you can try with a -2 to your total. If you want to be discrete but do not want to incur those penalties, a Guile + Deception roll must be made to murmur the incantation under your breath or disguise the gesture as a something unrelated. Anyone around you can roll an Intelligence + Perception to detect you, with a +3 if they know you are a magic user.

Casting a spell cannot be prepared by the Prepare action as that would cheat the longer casting times. It is not negatively affected by being grounded since it is not a combat action, but you do roll with a -2 if you are being grappled as you do not have free movement of your arms.

Some spells require eye contact with the target to work. This is to ensure these spells can't be cast from the shadows on an unaware target, but can be cast in conversation and confrontation. Its normally pretty easy to

determine when eye contact is established. You don't have to ask if that character has attacked or spoken to you this round. If someone is actively trying to avoid eye-contact to protect themselves from enchantments and curses they halve all attacks against that target. You cannot declare this in reaction to a spell being cast, you must have specified it on a previous turn.

When you are planning to cast a spell, look at its description and see which casting times are available. The spell always has the same effect, but spending even a little more time can make it easier. Spending a minute grants, a +2 to most spells. But this is only necessary when trying to reach spells beyond your normal range. If someone has 30 seconds, they could in theory attempt the spell 6 times and almost certainly roll their highest result. If time is not a factor, I allow anyone to cast spells at will as long its difficulty is less than or equal to their maximum magic roll + relevant skill.

If a spell can be cast as a free action, you can cast it instantly, instead of taking the seconds it normally takes. But if you fail casting a spell as a free action you cannot attempt it, or other spell, again for a full 5 seconds.

If you have the time, and the required reagents, you can perform a ritual. It takes an hour to draw out the ritual circle and write the complex glyphs required to focus magic. Charcoal is most commonly used, but if you don't have charcoal, you can use paint, blood, or even draw with your finger in the dirt. Any reagents that are listed as "consumed" are depleted during this process. Once the circle is ready, it will last as long as the intricate design is not disturbed or vandalized. The next time the chosen spell is attempted to be cast inside the circle (which must be wider than 5-feet) it is significantly easier. If the spell fails even with the +4, ritual remains until the chosen spell is successfully cast.

Rituals, also known as Empowering Runes are just one of the kinds of runes. Anyone with a magic skill can inscribe them for spells from that school. But the other kinds of runes are not so simple, they require a specific traits to write (pg. 51). You can find more information about them in the Runes & Wards section on page 159.

Ritual Reagents

Reagent	Description	Cost
Fish Scales	<i>Can be found at any sea side butchery.</i>	1
Candles	<i>Tall wax candles.</i>	2
Feather	<i>A large eagle plume.</i>	2
Rain Water	<i>Can be collected for free in a storm.</i>	3
Seed	<i>Can be found on the forest floor.</i>	3
Lead Shavings	<i>A handful of lead shavings.</i>	4
Salt	<i>A small pouch of sea salt.</i>	4
Glass	<i>Broken bottle or spectacle lens.</i>	4
Iron Shaving	<i>A handful of iron shavings.</i>	5
Charcoal	<i>Filed into a point for writing.</i>	5
Silver Shavings	<i>A handful of silver shavings.</i>	6
Bronze Shavings	<i>A handful of bronze shavings.</i>	7
Iron Stake	<i>An iron stake about 6-inches long.</i>	7
River Rocks	<i>A stone tumbled smooth.</i>	8
Bone Dust	<i>Ground bone of any animal.</i>	8
Incense	<i>A stick of slowly burning herbs.</i>	9
Summoning Sand	<i>1 pound of fine light blue sand.</i>	10
Holy Water	<i>A vial of blessed water</i>	10
Warp Root	<i>A gnarled root with magical properties.</i>	12
Gold Dust	<i>A pinch of gold dust.</i>	18
Silver Stake	<i>A silver stake about 6-inches long.</i>	20
Pale Horse Hair	<i>Tail hair from an albino horse.</i>	21
Anointed Oil	<i>Oil blessed by a powerful priest.</i>	35
Wild Seed	<i>A rare large acorn shaped seed.</i>	42
Storm Stone	<i>A large pointed amethyst.</i>	60
Figurine	<i>A palm sized cast of a miniature mold.</i>	75
Griffon Feather	<i>A huge distinctive feather.</i>	80
Gold Stake	<i>A gold stake about 6-inches long.</i>	100
Spirit Phial	<i>Any container filled with part of a soul.</i>	200
Uncut Gemstone	<i>A cluster of rubies lodged in a rough rock.</i>	250
Sanctified Relic	<i>Remnant of or personal item owned by a saint.</i>	500
Leviathan Eye	<i>A lidless eye the size of a human head.</i>	650
Dragon's Heart	<i>A huge red reptilian heart.</i>	900
Fallen Star	<i>A blue glowing fist sized meteorite.</i>	1,200

Runes & Wards

Runes store a single spell and trigger it at a later time. It can be a simple delay (anywhere from 5-seconds to 10-years) or as soon as someone steps into it. If you have the Runic Mastery trait, you can write other more specific triggers like a box being opened, or a phrase being said. Rune Masters can also write exceptions for people based on something more nuanced, like the type of clothes they wear or the color of their hair, but runes can never recognize faces or voices.

Leaving a rune empty is called a ward, and it is a tactic used by mages for protection from other spell casters. The ward will trap the first spell cast inside it, regardless of what it is. Wards can accept any spell but cannot have a trigger written in for it to be released again. One filled, the ward must be emptied by a Dispel Enchantment spell before it can be used again. But clearing your own ward is much easier than erasing another wizard's enchantment.

If you have the Runic Mastery trait, you can write a paradoxical clause into your ward that (for reasons that are still being studied) dissipates the magic energies completely. This ward can be used any number of times, effectively creating an area where spells cannot be cast. But enchantments that have already been cast are unaffected (including magic items).

Runes and wards must be perfect circles, but can as large or as small as you want (as long as the writing remain legible). A 5-foot one only takes 1 hour but larger ones can take much longer. Those with the Runic Mastery trait can make and fill runes as small they want, allowing them to hide runes inside boxes, letters or door knobs. If the inside of a box is runed to trigger with its lid is lifted, no one will be able to tell from examining the exterior, even with Seer's Sight.

The rune's conditions must be visible on the surface. They are often written in charcoal, but charcoal is easily tampered with so wizards create more permanent runes and wards by engraving them into the floors of their sanctuaries. The conditions must also be in a language the caster

understands. So, to conceal to exact nature of their contract, mages like to learn obscure or dead languages.

The rune has no allegiance, it follows the contract to a T. This highly literal approach has led some runic circles to act in unpredictable ways. A good rune scribe is as specific as possible. If the writing is physically re-written it will adhere to the new contract. Doing so is a risky process, for if the logic or grammar of the runic circle ever falters the spell is unleashed randomly. An Intelligence + (relevant magic school) can be rolled to re-word a rune. But it is much safer to disenchant the rune with Dispel Enchantment (pg. 173) and allow the stored magical energy to dissipate safely.

Once the rune is written it can be filled by anyone capable of casting the specific spell the rune was written for. You do not need to be able to cast a spell to be able to write the rune for it. In fact, many of the best Rune Carvers are not magically active. Runes cannot be filled by casting a spell with a ritual. Rituals are empowerment runes and as a general rule, runes cannot overlap. Like a magical feed-back loop it overloads the constraints and bursts out in random and often dangerous ways.

Two common uses of runes are alarms and traps. Storing a Whispering Breeze spell can serve as an excellent silent alarm (as long as you know the direction you will be going). Or a Flare spell could let everyone around know someone is trespassing.

Traps work similarly, you just have to ensure your spell has a proper target. If there is no thunderstorm outside when your Manipulate Lighting spell is triggered, the spell will fizzle out harmlessly. But if the room is well-lit with braziers, a Manipulate Fire spell targeting the first person to enter can be a lethal counter-intrusion measure. For the purposes of establishing eye contact and touch, since the caster may be miles away when the spell is cast, use touching and looking at the runic circle instead.

Runes have one final application, which is the storing of spells to be used later. Creating a rune that is small and stable enough to not be stationary, requires a level of expertise very few people every reach. Enterprising artificers have taken this concept and applied it to equipment. Rune

Carvers can be commissioned to etch a Storage Runes into armor. These runes can only hold the specific spell that they were designed for, but Firewalking or Mend are fantastic improvements to any defensive gear. Rune Carvers are in high demand, but if you aren't on particularly friendly turns with a Rune Carver you can normally secure their services for 100x the difficulty of the desired spell. The more powerful the spell the more intricate the runic circle and the longer it takes to complete (sometimes up to a week). And most Rune Carvers are not accomplished mages. They understand the basics of magic enough to work with it, but won't necessarily be capable of filling your rune once its completed.

Player characters may become a Rune Carver, or start as one for the hefty point investment of 8 (for it and its prerequisites). I would caution that allowing a player character to take this trait is akin to letting them take the wealthy trait. Rune Carving is far more lucrative than going on adventures after all.

If you have a Storage Rune that needs re-filling, seek out someone who is both capable of casting the spell, and has the Runic Mastery trait. Runes that are small enough to be on armor are never large enough to be stood inside. An old friend may do it for free, it only takes the time to cast it, but most charge x10 the difficulty of the spell. If you store a spell with a duration of "as long as maintained" such as an Animalism aspect, its duration is 1 minute instead. When you get a storage rune filled, record the total that was rolled. Activating a Storage Rune takes an action (just like casting any spell) it cannot be done as a free action, and spells with longer casting time are not reduced to one action, the casting time simply starts then. You do not have to roll, the spell automatically succeeds, the total you get is the one rolled by the person who filled the rune (although you determine the bonuses).

The Runefist Monks, of the Danerian Free State, have mastered a secret technique over the generations. They are capable of making Storage Runes that are tattooed directly on the flesh. Those with the Rune Marked trait (pg. 52) have one such masterwork on their skin.

Magical Conduits

Magic users have developed a way to invest their power into an object, animal or place, called a Conduit. Conduits are not enchanted items that can be bought, stolen or dispelled. It is a personal association you have formed which can amplify your power and only your power. It is an investment though. If you are separated from your Conduit, you will be even less powerful than you were.

There are 4 types of Conduits: Charms, Totems, Familiars and Sanctuaries. They grant a +1 to +4 bonus respectively to a specific school. These bonuses are not skills, but situational modifiers, so they allow casters to exceed their Mastery limit and reach the highest levels of magic. But you cannot have more than one of the same type of Conduit for the same school.

Charms, such as a pendant or hat must be worn to provide any benefit. They are the weakest Conduits, granting only a +1 to their school (and a -1 without it). But you can wear up to 4 of them at a time; one on each hand (bracelet or ring), one around the neck and one on the head (hat or circlet). But just like enchanted items, if they are worn too close together, they become unreliable or even dangerous. You cannot wear a Charm and a magical ring on the same hand without this risk.

Wizards have long used staves for a reason. Totems are more powerful than Charms, granting a +2 to their school when held in a hand (and a -2 when they are not in your possession). Totem are larger than a Charms as well. They can be any weapon but none smaller than a baton or wand. Outside of combat, you do not need to draw it to benefit from its power, simply touching the hilt will be enough, but in combat it does require a hand.

Investing your power into a living Conduit will forge a familiar's bond. Familiars grant a +3 to their school (and a -2 when they are not with you). Familiars must be an animal, no larger than a dog, which already has a connection to you. If they survive the ritual, they will look the same except that their eye color will change to reflect the school they are associated with. They gain significantly enhanced

intelligence and are able to telepathically communicate with you while within 10-feet. You only get their spell casting benefit when they stay this close, but they can be sent out on tasks as far away as they are willing to go. Familiars are not forced to follow your commands like an animated object, they are just grateful for the bond and will always try to be helpful. Although more self-sufficient than a pet, Familiars must still be fed and cared for, and if they are neglected, they can leave, taking their wizard's power with them.

The most powerful Conduit is a Sanctuary. You imbue a place with your magic, granting a +4 to its school while inside it. It must be a single building or location with natural borders like a clearing. You only get the benefits when inside your Sanctuary, but unlike the other Conduits, you are not penalized when away from it.

In order to make a conduit you must be a master of the school that it is going to affect, with +5 or higher in the skill. Or you must find a master willing to make one for you. The recipient must be present during the creation and be the one to endure any trials the ritual may entail. The rituals always require costly reagents, but their location and trials vary, based on what school has been chosen.

Conduits can only be created in a place of power that relates to the school. Charms can be created by simply completing a costly ritual at one.

Arcana	The site of a powerful enchantment. 350 silver of reagents.
Necromancy	A site of death, battlefield or graveyard. 400 silver of reagents.
Hydromancy	Far out to sea, or a coastal cave. 350 silver of reagents.
Geomancy	Deep underground, or sacred clearing. 300 silver of reagents.
Animalism	A den, hive or lair where humans don't rule. 250 silver of reagents.
Divinity	A site of a miracle, or important church. 400 silver of reagents.
Pyromancy	A volcanically active location. 250 silver of reagents.
Aeromancy	A high peak, or at sea during a storm. 300 silver of reagents.

Totems not only require the creator to seek out the same type of place as a Charm, but also pass a test relating to their school.

Arcana	Endure a mind-warping psychedelic journey that may strip away your sanity. 500 silver in reagents.
Necromancy	Take an innocent life in a ritual sacrifice. 150 silver in reagents.
Hydromancy	Complete the entire ritual while submerged. 450 silver in reagents.
Geomancy	There is no trial, but the gemstones required are the most expensive by far. 800 in reagents.
Animalism	Stare down, but don't harm a deadly predator. 350 silver in reagents.
Divinity	Commit a truly selfless act. 500 silver in reagents.
Pyromancy	Survive being burned or boiled alive. 350 silver in reagents.
Aeromancy	Weather a storm while at sea. 400 silver in reagents.

To forge a familiar's bond, you must already have earned the animal's trust. This means you must have invested the time (or points during character creation) into gaining an Animal Companion (pg. 26). Once you have a suitable animal, (they must be no larger than a dog) you can head to a proper place of power based on the chart above. Once there, the ritual can either cost you 500 silver in reagents or risk a 10% chance of the animal dying, and the ritual failing.

Sanctuaries are the most expensive type of Conduit. Like the rest, they must be created in an area that has a connection to their school. But because they are tied to that place, they can never be relocated. Infusing the ground with your power only costs 1,200 silver in reagents, but wizards often choose to invest much more into fabricating a tower or other structure there.

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9	Snake's Reflexes	
10	Bear's Claws	
11	Frog's Legs	
11	Dragon's Scales	Requires +3 Pyromancy
12	Eagle's Eyes	
12	Angel's Wings	Requires +3 Divinity
13	Monkey's Feet	
14	Nature's Protection	
15	Shapeshift	

Divinity

3	Illuminate	
4	Commune with Deity	
5	Inspire	
5	Grant Aspect	Requires +1 Animalism
6	Remove Curse	
6	True Shot	Requires +2 Aeromancy
7	Pacify	
8	Mend	
9	Bless	
9	Calm	Requires +2 Arcana
10	Confession	
10	Prophetic Flames	Requires +2 Pyromancy
11	Lay on Hands	
12	Divine Intervention	
13	Karmic Retribution	
14	Exorcism	
15	Miracle	

Pyromancy

3	Spark	
4	Fire Walking	
5	Sheathe in Flame	
6	Flare	
6	Smoke Screen	Requires +2 Aeromancy
7	Extinguish	
8	Manipulate Fire	
9	Singing Explosion	
10	Immolate	
10	Mesmerizing Lights	Requires +2 Arcana
11	Molten Touch	
12	Seeking Embers	
13	Fireball	
13	Holy Fire	Requires +3 Divinity
14	Wall of Fire	
15	Wildfire	
15	Incinerate Soul	Requires +4 Necromancy

Aeromancy

3	Gust	
4	Redirect Surge	
4	Whispering Breeze	Requires +1 Arcana
5	Slow Fall	
6	Change Weather	
7	Favorable Winds	
8	Manipulate Lighting	
9	Levitate	
10	Thunder Clap	
11	Shocking Touch	
11	Howling Wind	Requires +2 Necromancy
12	Whirlwind	
13	Flight	
14	Lighting Storm	
14	Blizzard	Requires +3 Hydromancy
15	Tornado	
15	Meteor	Requires +4 Pyromancy

Arcana

The school of Arcana governs perception, communication, memory and consciousness. It deals with all things cerebral, in stark contrast to its body-morphing opposite: Animalism. But it also tampers with the fabric of magic and reality itself; unweaving spells and enchantments and slicing holes through space.



Arcana is the wizards tool box and every magic user can benefit from the utility enclosed. Even the smallest amount of study grants access to Seer's Sight, which is an unapparelled tool for detecting and appraising magic. But full dedication to the school will turn the human mind into your play thing.

Fallen Stars, are the rarest substance in the world. They look like a fist-sized piece of glowing azurite, polished until perfectly smooth. But they haven't been tumbled or worked in anyway, they fell from the sky exactly as they are. One of these tiny meteorites fall to earth every decade or so, leaving a visible trail through the night. Kings and wizards alike scramble to retrieve them as they are the only way to open portals.

You can assume that most rulers have one or two. Even those that publicly scorn magic secretly acknowledge they are too valuable not to have. They can be used to escape an impossible situation, or move a small army hundreds of miles in an instant.

Because of their scarcity they are expensive, but not impossible to obtain. Besides their faint blue illumination, they serve no purpose to someone who can't perform powerful Arcana magic. Occasionally an oddities collector will put one up for auction. Or the highest-end alchemist in the city may one, locked away in their safe, and only for sale if someone requests it.

They evaporate in the process of creating a portal. But instead, they can be shattered. Doing so is not easy, but it results in a few angular shards: sharp edges of a substance that is naturally perfectly smooth. These edges have strange

properties, and can be used by a powerful wizard to open temporary, short-ranged portals.

These are known as Star Blades and can be used as many times as the edge remains sharp. They be as crude as a stone dagger, or as elegant as jewel encrusted saber. The fitting is not what's important, it's the edge. A simple shard, wrapped in leather so it can be gripped can be found for 800 silver in the Arcane Burrows. Much rarer are fine metal-worked weapons, the blades of which have been incrusted in Fallen Star shards. The very edge is razor-sharp, blue and faintly glowing. These serve as masterwork weapons (of whatever kind they are), but also a Star Blade for the purposes of the teleport spell. They can be commissioned for 2,000 silver.

Alternatively, if you have a Fallen Star and want to make a Star Blade, you can. A Shatter spell with at least a 14 total is capable of breaking a Fallen star into 1d4-1 useable shards (minimum one). From there they can be simply wrapped in leather and used, Or an Intelligence + Metal-Working of 10 can add a Star Blade edge to any bladed weapon.

The Illusion spell is probably the most complicated spell in this game, it certainly has the longest description. There is no way to determine if an illusion is an illusion or not without touching it. I made it this way so that whether or not a player believed an illusion would be up to their judgement, not the dice. But in order to balance this the illusions that you can create need strict limitations. When determining if an illusion is valid and how the targets should react, I go down this checklist.

Is it additive? Not removing something from their vision.

Is it singular? It can be a swam of insects that moves together, but not two distinct people entering from opposite sides of the room.

How believable is the illusion? Did the target see the caster use magic? Are they familiar enough with magic to anticipate an illusion? How does anyone around, who is not affected by the illusion, react to what the targets are doing?

Seer's Sight



Your eyes become a glassy and white-blue as you survey your surroundings. Everything looks identical except that anything magically active glows with a soft aura. Objects and people who are enchanted or cursed, currently casting magic users, and Runes with a spell stored in them all glow. You must have clear line of sight to these things, this spell doesn't allow you to see through wall or even the cloth of a pocket. For every round you have Seer's Sight active you can roll an Intelligence + Perception to further investigate one aura you see. A 5 or higher will reveal the school of magic that the aura is from. A 7 or higher will reveal the rough power level of the enchantment or spell that is being cast or stored. "Weak" encompasses spells with difficulty 3-7. "Moderate," 8-12 and "Powerful" is 13 and up. A 9 or higher gives you a one-word hint into the nature of the enchantment or spell effect. For example, "Perception," "Molten," or "Undeath." If you take damage during the duration, you must re-cast the spell to maintain concentration (but this is a free action without any penalty).

Difficulty: 3

Requires the caster to be able to see.

Bonuses

+3 to get a +1 on any Intelligence rolls used to investigate auras (repeatable).

+5 increase the duration to 1 minute.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action for a penalty of -2. A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

Duration: A few seconds (1 round).

Flicker



Someone within line of sight is affected by a brief sensory input of your choosing. This could be seeing movement out of the corner of their eye, hearing a crash in the other room, or even a tap on the shoulder. Depending on the situation this may cause them investigate or run away. At the very least they are distracted and get -3 to Perception and Initiative until the end of next round. If it is obvious that you cast the spell, they may ignore its effects by assuming the illusion is fraudulent, that is up to the Narrator's discretion.

Difficulty: 4

Requires the target or targets to be in line of sight.

Bonuses

+2: To increase the number of people effected by 1, but they all must be affected in the same way (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

Duration: Instant.

**Telepathy**

You meet the gaze of someone and they can hear your voice in their head. Once cast, this channel remains open regardless of distance for the duration of the spell. All targets can reply mentally. They can leave the channel at any time. This doesn't end the duration for everyone else but they must be brought back in by recasting. Telepathy allows people to communicate at the speed of thought, so you can complete short side conversations in-between beats of dialogue. Telepathy doesn't allow you to communicate with others who do not share a language though. Once the channel is open, you can bring others into it by meeting their gaze, up to a limit of 3 people (including yourself). Each person can only be affected by 1 Telepathy spell at a time. They must leave the one they are currently in to join a new one.

Difficulty: 5

Requires eye contact with the target.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the limit of people in the channel by 1 (repeatable).

+4 to increase the duration to 1 hour.

+9 to increase the duration to 1 day.

Casting Times

You can cast this as a free action for a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: 5 minutes, or until the caster chooses the effects to end.



Dispel Enchantment

You touch an enchanted item or person and the magic that surrounds it unravels. If you dispel an enchanted item it isn't destroyed, just made mundane. This includes magic items, and objects that have been transmuted, conjured, animated, or changed in size. If you dispel a rune with a stored spell the magic safely dissipates. If you dispel a person, you must choose one magical enchantment they have active to immediately end. This includes Seer's Sight, all aspects from Animalism, Water Breathing, Levitation, etc. All spells that target them and have a duration. This does not prevent them from casting spells, or dispel the enchantments they have active on things other than themselves (such as manipulated water or fire or enchantments they've granted to others). This spell is incapable of removing curses or the magic that animates undead, you need Divinity for that. This spell automatically succeeds if you were the one who cast the enchantment, or carved the rune.

Difficulty: 6

+2 if you don't have physical contact with the target (must still be within 20-feet).

+2 for each +1 in the relevant school the original caster has over your skill in the relevant school.

+5 if the animated object has an indefinite duration.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. An hour-long ritual that requires another possession or sample of the original caster and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.



Conjure Item

You reach into a bag of summoning sand and pull out the exact object you need. This can be any mundane item. Any tool or weapon, a rope, torch, shackles, mask, boots, etc. It cannot be something specific like "the key to that door" or something you don't understand how to make like a pocket watch. After the duration of this spell, the object turns back into Summoning Sand (regardless of how many pieces it's in). Summoning Sand can be enchanted and re-enchanted any number of times.

Difficulty: 7

Requires summoning sand in weight equal to the desired object.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the duration by 1 day (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires a drawing of the desired object and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: 1 day or until the caster chooses to end the effects.

Illusion



Someone within line of sight experiences an immersive vision of the caster's design. This can be as simple as seeing a bridge where there isn't one, or as intricate as someone walking up and delivering a message. In the case of the latter, the caster would have to know what that person looks like, how they walk and speak, but wouldn't have to have heard them say the exact words spoken. You have complete control over the illusion for the spell's duration and can move, change or completely morph illusions as a free action. Illusions can affect all senses besides touch, and be used to mislead, confuse, and distract. But they can never be used to blind, deafen, or cause someone pain.

Illusions must be additive, putting something that isn't there in the mind of your target. And they must be of a tangible object, not a "patch" of vision. You can hide behind an illusory wall, but you can't make an empty doorway appear to remain empty if something moves through it. Additionally, illusions cannot shed illumination on the real world. You can make someone see a torch floating in the air, smell the smoke, hear its wood burning. But it doesn't produce heat or reveal what hides in the shadows around it because the target's mind doesn't know what to see there. The brain is adept at patching illusions into their perception. If you see an illusionary figure walking toward you, their movements will look fluid, their foot falls will perfectly match the terrain and the shadows will fall on them exactly as they should. Illusions are very lifelike. There is no way to determine what is or isn't real, besides the sheer unbelievability of it. Seer's Sight cannot determine if something is an illusion, but it can determine if someone is maintaining a spell, or under the effects of an illusion spell. Interacting with illusions physically immediately reveals them to be fraudulent as objects pass right through them. If this occurs, that illusion disappears for that person (but not any others who are affected by the same spell). The best way to combat illusions is to guess what is not real and simply act like it's not there. You

may guess wrong and bump into a few real walls by accident, but there are worse fates.

Because this spell doesn't bend light and create a physical image (like the Mirage spell) its largest limitation is the number of people who can be manipulated with it. You can easily mislead one person, or even a handful, but a whole town square is beyond the abilities of even the most accomplished illusionist. The other limitation is the number of illusions one caster can maintain at a time. Illusions are amorphous, they can freely take the shape of a single figure, a swarm of insects, or a marching army in the distance. But only one thing at a time. If an illusionist wants two distinct people to walk into the room, that is two separate spells, each one slightly more difficult to cast than the last. Illusions have no duration; they last as long as caster can maintain them. But whenever the caster takes damage with an illusion active, they must re-cast the spell (with the difficulty increase for multiple instances) to maintain concentration. If they fail, all illusions end. This is an instant free action without any additional penalty though.

An application for this spell in social situations is to surround yourself with an illusionary disguise. As long you can see your targets and cast this spell before they see you, you can come around the corner, or walk out of a crowd as anyone you desire, wearing and holding the most convenient things. You have two options when speaking. You can include dialogue in the illusion, allowing you to change your voice to anyone that you know. That runs the risk of others seeing your target having a one-sided conversation with a silent stranger and becoming suspicious. Alternatively, you can use your own voice and just have your illusion look as if it were speaking the same words. In either case, be careful, if someone shoves you or shakes your hand, they will pass through and shatter the illusion on contact.

An application for this spell to protect the caster from harm is to create an identical copy of themselves running in the opposite direction they are. The target can make their best educated guess about who to attack or chase, but there's always a solid chance they will be choose the wrong one.

An application for this spell in the chaos of combat is to make someone see an attacking enemy in the spot where an ally actually stands. This only works in fights with enough combatants to be confusing. It won't work if your target sees someone change from one person into another, or become a

copy of someone else they can still see. It works best in large-scale battles where participants don't know the face of every other participant and loyalty is displayed in uniforms. The way the target reacts to this illusion is up to the Narrator. They may run, or try and say something to them. But in most cases I have the target roll an Intelligence + Perception of 6 to notice the rather sudden change in positions. If they fail, they will attack the chosen person on their next turn.

Difficulty: 8

Requires you to be able to see your targets.

+2 for each other active illusion the caster is maintaining.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the number of targets by 1 (repeatable).

+6 to erase yourself from the target's perception, rendering yourself invisible to them. You can still be heard moving at full speed, but roll Stealth with a +5. And if don't move more than 10-feet per turn or come within 10-feet of someone, you don't have to roll at all. If someone knew your location when you disappeared, they can still make attacks against you for one round, but halve their total against you. Consider all targets of your attacks Surprised.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires a mirror and consumes 1 charcoal and 2 candles grants a +4.

Duration: As long as the caster can maintain it, or chooses the effects to end.

Counter Spell



You reach out and unweave the magical energies that are starting to coalesce around another magic user. On your turn you can use the Wait action to prepare for someone to cast a spell later in the round. If someone does, you have the opportunity of spending your turn to try and cast this spell. If you succeed, their spell fails as if they rolled a 1 in the casting of it. But unlike other spell failures, any Essence invested is lost instead of returned.

Difficulty: 9

Requires you to have gone before your target in the round and be waiting. The target must be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the target is from you.

Bonuses

+3 to gain any Essence spent on the countered spell.

Casting Times

A reactionary second-long gesture and trigger word is the standard casting time.

Duration: Instant.



Sleep

The next person who meets your gaze must roll a Discipline of 5 to remain conscious. If they fail, they lean against the wall, sit down, whatever they can do to quickly get comfortable, and fall into a deep slumber. They are unmoving so all attacks automatically hit them. They cannot be awoken by loud noise and remain asleep for the duration of the spell or until they are awoken by taking damage or being jostled awake (which is an action). Iron-willed characters are immune to this spell.

Difficulty: 10

Requires eye contact with the target.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the Discipline required by 1 (repeatable).

+4 to increase the duration to 1 day. The target can longer be woken up by being jostled.

+6 to increase the duration to indefinite (until dispelled). The target can longer be woken up by being jostled or even taking damage. They don't need to eat or drink while in this state of stasis.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires a musical instrument and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: 1 hour or until the caster chooses the effects to end.



Amnesia

You press your hand against someone forehead and begin erasing memories. Once cast you can keep the spell going for as long as you want (or until you take damage). For every round that you maintain the spell, and contact with your target, you can erase up to 1 day of memories (or as little as 1 hour). You must start from the current moment and go backward, only the most accomplished wizards can cherry-pick which memories are expunged. This spell doesn't allow you to see their memories. To target a specific event, you must have learned about it from other sources and know roughly

when in their life it was. The memories effected by this spell still exist, they are simply buried so deeply they cannot be accessed until this spell is dispelled. Intellect, language and coordination can never be stripped away but with enough exposure to this spell someone will forget what they do, where they live or even their own name.

Difficulty: 11

Requires physical contact with the target's head.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the amount erased each round to up to 1 month.
+5 to target a particular event or span of time from the target's life.

Casting Times

After hitting an unarmed Critical Attack, you can cast this as a free action with no penalty instead of doing damage.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.
A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal, 2 lead shavings and a possession of the target grants a +4.

Duration: Until dispelled.

Teleport



You bring the knife down in a wide arc in front of you, slicing the fabric of reality itself. Choose a place you can see, and until the end of your next turn there is a narrow, flowing portal to and from it. Like a slit in a curtain, the temporary portal hangs in the air in front of you. Anyone can look through it to the other side, and people, objects and sound can move through the breach as if the two places were one in the same.

Difficulty: 12

Requires an equipped Star Blade and a free hand to swing it.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the duration by 1 round (repeatable).
+6 to increase the duration to 1 minute.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.
A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires a Star Blade and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: Until the end of your next turn (about 5 seconds).



Mirage

You bend light itself to the will of your imagination. This is not a manipulation of someone's perception, it is a hovering image visible to anyone. This can be used to conceal something behind the mirage, whether it is an illusory wall in front of a door, or a mountainside in front of a castle. Or your mirage can take the form of a living thing. A fearsome dragon flying through the sky or an intimidating bodyguard walking slightly behind you. On your turn, as a free action you can morph the Mirage's shape or change its movement.

The brain is adept at patching illusions into their perception. If you see an illusionary figure walking toward you, their movements will look fluid, their footfalls will perfectly match the terrain and the shadows will fall on them exactly as they should. Illusions are very lifelike. There is no way to determine what is or isn't real besides the sheer unbelievability of it.

Mirages are specially designed to not appear as magically active to anyone casting Seer's Sight. The image is silent and cannot affect any senses besides sight, but an auditory illusion can be cast on a few targets to make the Mirage extra convincing. Interacting with illusions physically immediately reveals them to be fraudulent as objects pass right through them. But doing so does not end the duration of the Mirage spell. Whenever the caster takes damage with a mirage active, they must re-cast the spell (with the difficulty increase for multiple instances) to maintain concentration. This is an instant free action without any additional penalty though.

Difficulty: 13

Requires line of sight to the location where the mirage will appear, and a clear picture of what it looks like.

+2 for each other mirage the caster has active.

Bonuses

+4 to increase the duration to permanent. It will not count toward how many active mirages the caster has, and does not require the caster to re-cast it when taking damage.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires a set of paintbrushes and consumes 1 canvas grants a +4.

Duration: 1 hour, or until the caster chooses to end the effects as a free action.



Mind Control

The next person who meets you gaze finds their every action controlled by you. You see through their eyes, can say anything in their voice, and do anything as them using their physical Attributes and your Skills. They do not obtain any of your spell-casting abilities but you can control any of theirs. You can communicate telepathically with the target, who is aware of what they are doing but unable to control it. If you try and force someone to do something completely abhorrent (such as murdering a loved one) they can roll a Discipline of 5 to end the spell immediately, or if they have the Iron-Willed trait, they succeed automatically. For the duration of the spell, you are unable to move or see your surroundings but can still feel physical sensations and are alerted if you feel pain. If you take damage during the duration, you must re-cast the spell to maintain concentration (but this is an instant free action without any penalty). It is obvious to those around you that you are in a trace like state that appears magical to anyone with Seer's Sight. You do not need to eat or drink while in this state of stasis.

Difficulty: 14

Requires eye contact with the target who has not been affected by Mind Control in the last 24 hours.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the duration to 1 day.

+6 to increase the duration to indefinite (until dispelled).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires a possession or sample of the target and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4

Duration: 1 hour or until the caster chooses the affects to end.



Portal

The power to open a portal is not one that was intended for mortals to ever possess. It is one stolen from the heavens in the form of Fallen Stars, incredibly rare meteorites. By destroying one you can open a tear in space itself to any place that you can vividly picture in your mind. The portal is about 10-feet wide and lasts for the duration of the spell. You can see through to the other side, and people, objects and sound can move through the breach as if the two places were one in the same. This can be used to return to anyplace that you have

been. Using a portal to travel to a place you have not been is incredibly dangerous. Sometimes you will make it, but not intact. But sometimes you will be trapped in a strange realm, that is fabricated from your ideas about that place. Other times, you will be lost, to forever wander the uncountable Plains of Possibility. The most confident (and insane) wizards travel to these otherworldly dimensions on purpose, by imagining a new place instead of remembering a real one. There is some debate whether these places are discovered or created by the first person who seeks them out. But once they are visited once, they can be revisited by others, if they have the talent and a clear enough picture of the place.

Difficulty: 15

Bonuses

+3 to increase the duration to 1 hour.

+5 to increase the duration to 1 day.

Casting Times

A two-round ritual that consumes 1 Fallen Star is the standard casting time.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 1 Fallen Star grants a +4.

Duration: 1 minute or until the caster chooses the effects to end as a free action.

Shared Arcana Spells

Telekensis



You focus on an object and lift it with your mind. You can manipulate it spatially in any way and apply d6 Strength of force to it. If you target an equipped object, you must roll a Strength (with the Telekinesis' die rank) subtracting 2, against their Strength. If you do not surpass their Strength the spell has no effect, but if you do, it disarms the object. For the duration, on each of the caster's turns, as an action (or free action on the turn that they cast it), they can move all objects effected by this spell up to 10-feet in any direction. In addition, before or after the move, they can do one of the following for each: Hand it to an adjacent character (including themselves) equipping it for free, which ends the duration. Throw it at someone within 15-feet, which ends the duration. Roll Intelligence + Aeromancy to calculate the trajectory and guide it past defenses. The target treats it like a 1-damage ranged attack. But if the object requires a d12 Strength to move, the

attack must be dodged and grounds the defender on a hit. Or you can manipulate the object with d6 Agility. This lets you turn doorknobs, whip reins, or interact with the environment in other ways. If it's a weapon, you can make a melee attack against an adjacent character (with the Telekinesis' Agility, and no Fighting skill). If you take damage during the duration, you must re-cast the spell to maintain concentration (but this is an instant free action without any penalty).

Difficulty: 5

Requires you to have at least a +1 in Aeromancy and the target object to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet it is from you.

Bonuses

+2 to move or the object an additional 5-feet each turn (repeatable, but cannot exceed 30-feet).

+2 to increase the duration by 1 round (repeatable).

+3 to increase the Strength applied by 1 die rank (repeatable, but cannot exceed d12). If you target an object that requires higher ranks of Strength, it will deal that much additional damage when thrown.

+3 to increase the Agility you can manipulate it with by 1 die rank (repeatable, but cannot exceed d12).

+5 to simultaneously cast this on another target.

+5 to be able to manipulate the object as a free action

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires 1 crystal and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: 3 rounds, or until the caster chooses the effects as a free action, or recasts this spell on a different target.



Scrying Pool

You gaze into the surface of a perfectly still pool, clearly visualizing a place that you've been. If a place has been transformed or remodeled since you've last been there the spell may fail. You touch the surface of the water and ripples extend outward revealing a vision of that place. For the duration of the spell, you can see what is currently happening there. The perspective is fixed, often from a high corner of the room. You can only see through the pool and not hear or smell anything. Anyone with a Rune Scribe trait can ward a place against scrying, preventing you from seeing inside their runic circle.

Difficulty: 10

Requires you to have at least a +2 Hydromancy. Unless you are using a designated scrying pool in your wizards Sanctuary (see pg. 162) you can only cast this spell every 24 hours.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the duration to 1 hour.

+5 to scry on a person instead of a place. The perspective reveals their face and a hint of their surroundings over their shoulder.

Casting Times

A minute-long ritual that requires a perfectly still pool of water (at least 3 gallons) is the standard casting time.

An hour-long ritual that requires a perfectly still pool of water (at least 3 gallons) and consumes 1 kraken's eye grants a +4.

Duration: A minute.

**Fabricate**

You write a ritual circle with clear instructions for the construction of a structure and your magical energy does the rest. Magic is not intelligent so you must have architectural knowledge for all the process involved, whether that be a structurally sound bridge, or locking door. The ritual circle must be within 50-feet of all tools and materials that would be required for a group of laborers to accomplish the same project (without the inclusion of scaffolding). This spell can cut down trees and turn them into planks, and cut bricks from stone, but will double the building time. The building location must be within 100-feet of the ritual circle. This spell can clear trees, and tamp earth to prepare a foundation or carve part of the design into rock provided with enough hammers. Once the spell has been put into motion the materials float and order themselves at brilliant speed, completing a day's worth of labor in just a few minutes. Huge undertakings such as 3 story towers can take up to a day to finish. The construction runs like a code, if someone tampers with the materials or the foundation, the spell will "notice" and correct it. If someone is physically in the way of the construction, the spell will wait for them to safely move out of the way.

Difficulty: 12

Requires that you have at least a +3 in Geomancy and have not cast this spell in the last 24 hours. If the structure is more complex than a bridge, wall or single room, you need at least a +3 Architecture skill, or a +5 for a true masterpiece.

-2 if the structure is built inside of the ritual circle.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

You can cast this as a two-round incantation that consumes 10 charcoal for a penalty of -2. (This does not shorten the building time, but simple structures can be completed in 1 minute).

An hour-long ritual that consumes 10 charcoal is the standard casting time.

Duration: Depends on the size and intracity of the structure.

Animate Object



You imbue an object with magical energy, turning it into a moving servant. It is simply animated matter with no consciousness but has basic senses (d6 Perception) and enough intelligence to carry out whatever purpose the object was built for. As long as it remains within 100-feet it will follow your telepathic commands to the best of its abilities, and you can give it instructions to carry out even when you are out of the range to issue new ones. The only way to stop them is to physically destroy them, and this can be difficult based on the material that they are made from. Objects are immune to Lightning damage and only take Fire damage if they are made from a flammable material or the fire damage comes from Molten Touch. Another Arcana magic user can dispel the enchantment returning it to a mundane object. The magic of the enchantment holds the object together based on its own perceived boundaries. A suit of armor would remain together, and animating a chain would animate every link, but you would have to individually animate each fork in a drawer. The spell also fuels the object with enough power to move itself as if it were malleable or jointed. Or in the case of hand-held objects, float in any direction they need to. Because of this, animating objects is far more draining than animating corpses, as bodies already have the framework for movement. Animating objects from your own power would be an inconceivable drain, so enchanters rely on Spirit Vials which can be purchased in the Arcane Burrows or created through Necromancy. This spell has three primary applications. Firstly, enchanting household objects makes a perfectly proficient servant you do not have to feed, pay or house. You can dictate to an animated pen or have it copy volumes. Animated carriages can carry you wherever you need to go with no need for horses or driver.

Secondly, you can enchant a weapon. When unsheathed it will float by your side and fight for you. Each round, it can either make an attack against a target of your choice, or defend a target of your choice. Targets must be within 15-feet of it. On your turn, it floats to the chosen target, or will choose a target on its own if you are incapacitated. It rolls an Agility inverse of the weapon's Heft, so d4 for d12 Heft weapons and d12 for d4 Heft weapons. When attacking, it does not have a fighting skill. But when defending it still gets the weapon's Parry bonus. If it is used for defense, until your next turn, the target (which can be you) can choose to use the animated weapon's Parry roll instead of their own (before it is rolled).

The third common application is the creation of Golem.

Animated matter that is the size and shape of a body-guard. The most common Golems are animated suits of armor for their natural humanoid shape and durable construction, but Golems can be made out of anything from a piece of furniture to a pile of rocks. Golems are inherently slow and heavy with a Speed of only 2. But in other respects, they have an Agility of d8. Their attacks normally deal 2-damage (unless otherwise equipped). Where they truly excel is in their resilience. Being made from metal, stone or wood. They are immune to all damage that couldn't break their substance (normally at least 4 damage or more which is reduced to 1).

Difficulty: 13

Requires you to have at least a +4 in Necromancy and for the target object to be within 15-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the target is from you.

Bonuses

+5 to increase the duration to indefinite. This requires you to use an Intact Spirit Vial which contains much more a person's spirit than a regular one. This does not possess the object like a true spirit would, it is still an animated servant. But it can communicate back telepathically and retains some personality and any skills it had in its past life. Intact Spirit Vials are very rare. They can only be made through the Annihilate Spirit spell. If one can be found at all, it is worth at least 1,800 silver.

Casting Times

A two round incantation that consumes a Spirit Vial is the standard casting time.

An hour-long ritual which consumes 5 candles, a charcoal and a Spirit Vial grants a +4.

Duration: 1 hour, or until you choose for the effects to end.

Necromancy



Necromancy is a pathway to understanding and manipulating the fundamental laws of life and death. Although taboo in many cultures, and most hated of all schools by the Order of Alric, there is nothing inherently evil about necromancy. Magic schools are more formed from cultural associations than from any inherent divisions. So,

Necromancy has become the catch all for forbidden magics, and dark curses.

Curses are a powerful tool available to the Necromancy school. Born from hate and resentment they cling to their targets and cannot be dispelled like regular enchantments. They have no duration, instead lasting until they are removed by a more powerful Divinity user, or you choose a new target for the curse.

Normally, you can only have one target cursed with each of your curses, but curse reliquaries are a work around for this problem. Once the curse is active on that person, it can be stored in a custom-made curse reliquary. This allows the caster to cast the same curse on a new target while maintaining the original curse.

The reliquary can be a statuette, doll, basket, tapestry, any physical object that has been made with a sample of the target's hair, blood or flesh. These can only be made by a character with the Hex Weaver trait (pg. 47) either a player character or a commissioned NPC.

You can make multiple reliquaries, but each one can only hold a single curse and requires their own sample. You can exchange what curse is stored in the reliquary as long as you cast the new curse as normal on the same person. The old curse is then removed. The curse immediately ends if its reliquary is physically destroyed. Regardless of what the object was made from, it becomes brittle or flammable when the curse is stored inside it. Curses stored in reliquaries have a +3 to being removed by a Divinity user, but if it they are successfully removed, the reliquary turns to ash.

Darkness



If pull the shadows around you like a cloak, concealing yourself in their darkness. If you are outside during the day or in a well-lit room this spell has no effect. But if you are not illuminated by anything brighter than moon or candlelight you are shrouded in pitch blackness. The shadows darken, but not enough look out of place. You can still see clearly out of the darkness but anyone trying to see in halves their Perception roll (unless they have the Dark Vision trait or other means of seeing in the dark). This applies even if they are as little as 5-feet away (as opposed to natural darkness which has a limit of 15-feet). If you become within 5-feet of a light source this effect is negated. The spell ends if you move from the space where you cast it or light from the Illuminate spell reaches you.

Difficulty: 3

Requires you to be in nothing brighter than candle light.

Bonuses

+1 to increase the duration by 1 round (repeatable).

+3 to increase the area effected by 5-feet allowing another person to be concealed as well.

+5 to increase the duration to 1 minute.

+5 to make the shadows follow you like a garment, allowing you to move without ending the spell.

Casting Times

You can cast this as a free action for a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 2 candles grants a +4.

Duration: 3 rounds (counted by the end of the caster's turn) or until you move.

Commune with Spirits



You open up a line of telepathic communication that any restless spirits around you that are willing. If they want to be heard, you hear their voice in your head. If they wish to be seen, you see a transparent image of them moving around your environment. Conversations can be conducted as normal with any necessary Guile rolls. Spirits only remain on the mortal plane if they have unfinished business. They cannot wander freely, tethered to a place, object or person from their old lives which they now haunt. Often, any disturbance caused by a spirit is a call for attention, unable to reach out through normal channels. But some spirits, after long stints of

restlessness have become more vindictive and powerful. These spirits, known as Specters can still be communed with but can pose physical and magical risks.

Difficulty: 4

-2 if you are a place of death like a graveyard or battlefield.

Bonuses

+6 to see any spirits that may be present in the area.

Casting Times

You can cast this as a free action for a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual which consumes 1 charcoal, 2 candles and requires one of the target's possessions grants a +4.

Duration: 5 minutes, or until either party wants to sever communication or is more than 50-feet from each other.



Feign Death

You close your eyes and put yourself into a catatonic state. For the duration you have no pulse, and appear to be dead to even a trained medical eye. You are unable to move, and cannot see as your eyes are closed but can still hear your surroundings. When this spell's duration expires, or you choose to end its effects, it takes a few seconds (1 round) to regain control of your body. You begin to stir and twitch as you do, which may be noticed. If you are laying in a pile of bodies, it would require a difficult Intelligence + Perception, but if you are being examined by a mortician, not so much.

Difficulty: 5

+3 to cast this spell on a willing target who you have physical contact with.

Bonuses

+4 to allow the target to end the effects instantly as a free action.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 3 worms grants a +4.

Duration: 1 day, or until the target chooses to end the effects as an action.



Drain Life

You kneel by a dying person, it may be too late for them, but it's not too late for you. You draw the last of their strength into your body, healing any wounds you've sustained. The spell kills an incapacitated character you are touching. Then either, restores 2 Health to yourself or someone else you are touching, or fills an empty Spirit Phial in your possession.

Difficulty: 6

Requires physical contact with an incapacitated (0 Health) but not dead (-5 Health) character. And that you have not successfully cast this spell in the last 24 hours.

+2 if you are healing someone besides yourself.

Bonuses

+2 to gain any Essence the target had.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time. A five-minute ritual which consumes 1 charcoal and 1 pale horse hair grants a +3.

Duration: Instant.

Fear

You point at someone and stare them down, uttering a string of ancient words. Terror grips them and for the duration of the spell the target must roll a Courage of 4 or higher when trying to move toward an enemy in battle, or attack. If the target didn't see you cast this spell, they will not be afraid of you, just terrified of whatever they face. Characters can react to fear in a wide variety of ways based on their personalities and circumstances. Combatants in a losing battle will run for the trees and never look back, but a Duke in his own castle will just frantically call for his personal guard. The caster of this spell gets a +3 to Persuade when intimidating anyone who is under its effects. Iron-willed characters are immune to this spell.

Difficulty: 7

Requires the target to be within line of sight and for them to be able hear your words.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the required Courage roll by 1 (repeatable).

+3 to increase the duration by 1 round (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the only way to cast this spell. You can disguise the casting of this spell by changing the verbal component to a threat in a language the target understands.

Duration: A few seconds (1 round), measured by the end of their turn.



Curse of Weakness

The next person to meet your gaze feels the strength and vigor leave them. They are cursed with weakness until it is dispelled or you curse a new target. While cursed they reduce their Strength die by one rank. Nothing can reduce their strength below a d4. This is used for all purposes including the calculating of Heft and Health.

Difficulty: 8

Requires eye contact with the target.

Bonuses

+5 to reduce the target's Strength by an additional rank (repeatable).

+6 to make the curse spread like pestilence. Anyone the cursed person touches reduce their Strength by 1 rank for 1 hour.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation which consumes 1 human bone grants a +3.

Duration: Until the caster puts this curse on a new target.



Curse of Misfortune

You choose one item, garment, weapon, letter, anything small enough to be on someone's person. You bestow it with negative energy so it will bring misfortune to whoever holds it.

Whenever the item is involved in a roll that gets a 1, it fails it the most horrible way possible. This is up the Narrator's discretion, and shouldn't be unrealistic, falling on someone's sword and dying is ridiculous, but missing and hitting their comrade would be more believable. The outcome should prioritize the user's anguish, not their injury. The item must be directly involved in the roll, blocking with a shield, attacking with a sword, or climbing with boots for example, and the misfortune need to be at the hands of the object, having a heart attack isn't an option.

Difficulty: 9

Requires physical contact with the object.

+2 if you don't have physical contact with the object but it is within 10-feet.

+5 if you don't have physical contact with the object but it is within sight.

Bonuses

+4 to conceal the curse, so it won't appear to people with Seer's Sight.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual which requires anything deformed or misshapen and consumes 2 candles grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster puts this curse on a new target.

**Curse of Muteness**

The next person to meet your gaze finds that their tongue cannot be moved despite it being perfectly intact. They gain the Mute trait for the duration of the curse.

Difficulty: 10

Requires eye contact with the target.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A five-minute long ritual which consumes 4 candles and a human tongue grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster puts this curse on a new target.

**Withering Touch**

You imbue your hand with necrotic energy. The next living thing you touch withers before your eyes. Small plants and animals die immediately. Any character who you touch (including being hit with a melee attack) feels excruciating pain as the section of flesh you are in contact with turns necrotic. They lose a rank of Strength, and for each round you maintain contact they lose an additional rank. If they would lose d4 Strength, they are incapacitated and fall unconscious from the pain. The target naturally regains one rank of Strength each hour. The effects of this spell cannot be healed magically as they are not damage. This spell can be used in

combat to incapacitate foes (and stacks with Curse of Weakness) or the pain of the touch can be used to interrogate.

Difficulty: 11

Bonuses

+2 to increase the duration by 1 round (repeatable).

Casting Times

After hitting an unarmed melee attack you can cast this as a free action with no penalty instead of doing damage.

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 2 charcoal and 2 bone bust grants a +4.

Duration: 4 rounds (counted by the end of the caster's turn) or until you choose for the effect to end. You may do this as a free action if you want to touch a living thing safely.



Last Breath

You exhale the last words of a forbidden incantation, and with it an imperceptible vapor escapes your lips. This vapor dissipates after a few inches, but if it finds its way into the mouth or ear of a living person, that person collapses to the ground, dead. This spell leaves no trace, like a wound or poison but can be detected with Seer's Sight for a few hours. This has almost no combat applications. But can be cast on someone who is completely restrained, sleeping, or while whispering in someone's ear.

Difficulty: 12

Requires your mouth to be a few inches from the target's ear or mouth.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time. You can disguise the casting of this spell by changing the verbal component to a secret in a language the target understands.

Duration: Instant.



Curse of Blindness

You are the last thing the next person who meets your gaze will see. The darkness on the edge of the vision closes in until they find themselves completely blind. They get the Blind trait for the duration of the curse.

Difficulty: 13

Requires eye contact with the target.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time. A five-minute long ritual which consumes 4 candles and a human eye grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster puts this curse on a new target.

**Reanimation**

You imbue a dead body with magical energy, turning it into a puppet with you at the strings. It is simply animated matter with no consciousness or knowledge of its past life. It will serve your verbal commands to the best of its ability, but these commands must be simple and direct. Their Intelligence and Agility are reduced to d6, their Strength is unchanged and they cannot roll Guile. They lose any skills they had their previous life, but have the common sense to use weapons, operate basic mechanisms and ride a horse. They will continue to follow your orders, even after your death. The only way to stop them is physically destroy them. At -3 Health they are assumed to have been hacked into pieces. Those pieces may still try to achieve your goals but can be ignored in most combat situations.

Because they must be physically separated to be stopped, they are immune to Lightning damage and take 1 less Fire damage each time they do (reduced to a minimum of 0).

Instead of dismembering the dead, a Divinity magic user can remove their curse freeing the spirit fragment trapped inside and returning them to a pile of inert bones. Continuous animation of undead with your own power would be an inconceivable drain, so Necromancers must rely on Spirit Phials. A spirit can be captured, and fragmented into a sort of battery for magical energy which is devoid of any personality through the use of the Drain Life spell.

Difficulty: 14

Requires the target lifeless body or skeleton to be within 15-feet. If you have at least Animalism +2, you can target animal corpses.

-2 if you are a place of death like a graveyard or battlefield.

-3 if the target is smaller than a full-grown human.

+3 if the target is larger than a full-grown human.

Bonuses

+3 to retain the target's original Agility.
+3 to retain the target's original Skills.

Casting Times

A two round incantation that consumes a Spirit Vial is the standard casting time.

An hour-long ritual which consumes 5 candles, a charcoal and a Spirit Vial grants a +4.

Duration: 1 year, or until you choose for the effects to end.



Aura of Undeath

You surround yourself with dark magical energy, turning the fallen bodies of those around you into puppets with you at the strings. Everyone within 30-feet that died in the last day become temporally effected by a basic Reanimation spell which expires after 1 minute. They are animated matter with no consciousness or knowledge of their past life. They will serve your verbal commands to the best of their ability, but those commands must be simple and direct. They remain animated until the duration ends, or until they are physically destroyed, but will continue to fight even in pieces. Continuous animation of undead with your own power would be an inconceivable drain, so Necromancers either keep the duration short or deplete Spirit Vials.

Difficulty: 15

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A two-round incantation that consumes a Spirit Vial is the standard casting time.

An hour-long ritual which consumes 1 charcoal, 5 candles, and a Spirit Vial grants a +4.

Duration: 1 minute (12 rounds).

Shared Necromancy Spells

Death's Sight



You can see the final moments of a deceased person's life through their eyes. You lay a hand on their forehead, close your eyes and focus. You can see and hear everything they did from 5 seconds before their demise until the end.

Difficulty: 6

Requires you to have at least a +1 in Arcana, and for you to have physical contact with the target's lifeless head.

+1 for each day the target has been dead.

Bonuses

+2 to extend the vision by 5 seconds (repeatable).

+8 to disregard any difficulty modifiers from how long the target has been dead. With this bonus, you can cast Death's Sight on ancient mummies and skulls.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual which consumes 1 charcoal, 2 candles and requires one of the target's possessions grants a +4.

Duration: 1 round + 1 round for each extension applied.



Blight

All the vegetation around you withers. Grass and bushes turn grey and die and trees lose their leaves going into the slumber of deep winter. For the duration of this spell all plants that come within a 20-feet radius of you die. They are unable to be eaten, harvested, or manipulated for one week, unless they are first affected by the Unnatural Growth spell.

Difficulty: 9

Requires you to have at least a +2 Geomancy and for your feet to be on the ground.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the duration by 30-seconds (repeatable).

+3 to increase the radius by 10-feet (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 pale horse hair grants a +4

Duration: 30 seconds (6 rounds).



Contaminate Water

The perform a profane ritual on the water's edge and infuse a terrible curse into it. Until purified or dispelled, anyone who drinks the water for more than 1 day will be haunted by terrible dreams. They obtain the Night Terror trait, and automatically fail the nightly roll if they drank from the contaminated water the previous day. They lose this trait if they do not drink the contaminated water for 1 week. This spell can target any water source, lake, river, well, pool, or stream, but the effect will be completely diluted anywhere further than a mile from the ritual site.

Difficulty: 12

Requires you to have at least a +3 in Hydromancy, and the target body of water to be at your feet.

Bonuses

+5 to add an additional effect to everyone who drinks. This could be a plague of weakness, all-consuming hunger, blindness, an inability to perform magic, unexplained violent acts, or anything else the Narrator approves.

Casting Times

An hour-long ritual that consumes 5 candles, 1 charcoal, 4 warp roots, and a Spirit Vial is the standard casting time for this spell.

Duration: Until it is removed by a powerful Purify spell.



Curse of Polymorph

The next person to meet your gaze starts to shrink and morph into an animal of your choosing. Any wounds sustained in their human form transfer their polymorphed form. But as a ratio of Health, not a 1-to-1 damage ratio. If they have taken 3 damage as a human, they will not be at -2 Health as a 1-Health frog. The stats of their animal form are at the discretion of the Narrator but should be identical to that of an average animal of that species, with the exception of Intelligence and Guile that are unchanged. While polymorphed they can still talk in their normal voice, and their eyes still look like their own, but they cannot cast spells.

Difficulty: 13

Requires you to have at least a +4 in Animalism, and to have eye contact with the target.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation which consumes a bone of the chosen animal grants a +3.

Duration: Until the caster puts this curse on a new target.



Annihilate Spirit

You incircle the possessed person or haunted object in ritual markings. When you complete this spell, you destroy the spirit completely, evaporating it into pure energy. You create an Intact Spirit Vial, and all magic users within 20-feet of the ritual circle regain all missing Essence.

Difficulty: 15

Requires you to have at least a +3 in Divinity and to have learned this spell in-game. The possessed person or haunted object must be inside the ritual circle. Or the ritual circle to be inside the haunted place. And you cannot have cast this spell (regardless of success) in the past 24-hours.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

An hour-long ritual that consumes 2 charcoal and 4 incense and 5 holy water is the standard casting time.

Duration: Instant.

Hydromancy

Hydromancy offers utility to anyone, but true power if you spend time around water. If you plan on sailing across an ocean, exploring a sunken cave or traversing a watery mire, Hydromancy is unparalleled.



All characters in Versus are assumed to be able to swim (provided they didn't take the Can't Swim trait). But that doesn't mean they are particularly fast. As a general rule of thumb, character's swim speed

is half their Speed stat, rounded up. But someone with a Swimming secondary skill can spend their turn and roll an Agility + Swimming of 5 to move ten extra feet. If you are trying to swim in Armor reduce all Swimming rolls by your armor's Acrobatics penalty. If you are in d8 heft armor or higher, you must roll an Agility + Swimming of 3 to stay afloat and move at all.

While swimming underwater, someone can hold their breathe for seconds equal to 10x their Strength roll. But in combat, if they are held underwater by the effects of a spell, they can only maintain it for 3 consecutive rounds. This is both to keep pacing fast and I imagine it is significantly harder to keep water from your lungs when swimming against a whirl pool.

Hydromancy not only governs water, but cold as well. If you intend on casting a lot of cold spells, be aware that the Winter's Tears potion (pg. 90) grants a sizable bonus to all cold related spells.

Boots of Water Walking

These can look like simple oiled boots or heavy plate greaves, what is important is the enchantment. They can be purchased in the Arcane Burrows for 750 silver and allow the wearer to cast Water Walking on themselves at will, without rolling. Even if they take damage, they can automatically succeed the recast required to maintain the spell.



Propel

The water around you, or someone you can see within 50-feet surges forward carrying them in a direction of your choice. They can't drown, even in armor, as the water itself keeps them afloat, and they increase their swim speed by 2. If you choose to cast this on yourself as a free action add +3 to your next Agility roll this round.

Difficulty: 3

Requires the target to be in water.

Bonuses

+3 to increase your swim speed by an additional 1 (repeatable).

+3 in increase your next Acrobatics roll by an additional +1 (repeatable).

+3 increase the number of targets by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

You can cast this as a free action for a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

Duration: 1 minute.



Water Breathing

You pull the oxygen from the water and make an air bubble that surrounds your head or the head of someone else. It moves with them and allows them to breathe underwater for the duration of the spell.

Difficulty: 4

Requires the target to be within 20-feet and submerged.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the target is from you.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the number of people targeted by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 3 fish scales grants a +4.

Duration: 5 minutes or until the target surfaces.



Freeze

You touch the surface of the water and it starts to rapidly freeze. Each round you maintain contact with the water you can increase the surface area by 5 in every direction. It is sturdy enough to support an average human per 5-foot zone, but can be broken with a Strength roll of 5 or higher.

If someone is swimming in the water as it freezes, they must roll an Agility + Swimming of 6 to climb out and avoid being trapped in the ice. If you touch someone who is damp with this spell, they are Chilled, and roll a lower die of Agility until they warm up.

Difficulty: 5

Requires you to be touching the surface of the target water.

-2 if you are in a cold environment.

+2 if the water is moving rapidly.

+4 if you don't have physical contact with the water source (must still be within 20-feet).

Bonuses

+5 to flash freeze, doubling the speed at which the water freezes.

+2 to increase the strength required to break it to 7.

+4 to increase the strength required to break it to 9.

+6 to increase the thickness of the ice to accommodate a wagon and horses, it can no longer be broken with a strength roll.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long incantation that consumes 1 charcoal (unless you can write in the snow) grants a +4.

Duration: Once the spell is cast, you can continue to cast it each round without rolling (as long as your concentration is not broken). The ice made this way cannot be broken on will and must be thawed like any other ice.



Icicle

You reach into a pool of water and pull out a sharp shard of ice. It lasts for 5 minutes before it melts. It has the stats of a Short Spear but the ice has a 5% chance of shattering after every successful parry and attack. On your turn, you can choose to throw it at a target. You have some magical control over it, but must throw it in the general direction with hand-eye coordination. Choose a target within 20-feet and roll Agility + Hydromancy. The target treats it like a 2-damage ranged attack and must parry with a shield or dodge. The icicle shatters on contact, either with the target or their surroundings.

Difficulty: 6

Requires you be touching a pool of water with adequate volume for the chosen weapon.

-2 if you are in a cold environment.

+2 if the water is moving rapidly.

Bonuses

+3 change the shape of the weapon to anything with d6 Heft or lower (the ability to throw it remains).

+4 change the shape to the weapon to anything with d8 Heft or higher (the ability to throw it is lost).

+5 to make the ice extra hard, reducing its chance of shattering to 0% and increasing the duration to 1 hour.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation that consumes 1 salt grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires 2 river rocks and consumes 1 silver shaving grants a +4.

Duration: 5 minutes.



Sway Currents

You persuade the natural currents to hurry your vessel to its destination. Works the same as propel but on a much larger scale. Reduces naval travel time by 20% whether on the ocean or a river. This effect can stack with Favorable Winds.

Difficulty: 7

Requires you to be on the target ship.

Bonuses

+3 to reduce the travel time by an additional 10%.

Casting Times

A minute-long incantation is the standard casting time.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 5 salt grants a +4.

Duration: 1 day.



Manipulate Water

A pool of liquid in your environment surges forward, in a direction your choice. It forms a column of churning water that you can control like a limb. Once formed, this water manipulation will last up for 2 sequential rounds. On each of the caster's turns (including the first) they can, as a free action, try and hit someone with a jet of water, extinguish a smoldering character or anything else the Narrator approves. It can reach up to 5-feet away for each foot of depth the source has. If someone wants to avoid being shoved by the water jet, they must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 5 or be grounded and pushed in a direction of your choice 5 feet. If you successfully slam the water into someone, it disperses, splashing everywhere and this spell ends. If you take damage during the

duration, you must re-cast the spell to maintain concentration (but this is a free action without any penalty).

Difficulty: 8

Requires the target water sources to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the water source is from you.

Bonuses

+2 increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).

+2 increase the distance someone is pushed by 5 feet (repeatable).

+4 cast this simultaneously on another water source.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires 4 river rocks and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: 3 rounds (counted by the end of the caster's turn) or until it hits a character, the caster ends the effects as a free action or re-casts this spell on a different water source.

Water Walking



You strengthen the surface tension of the water beneath your feet allowing you to stand on, and run across it at full speed.

This requires constant concentration. If you take damage during the duration, you must re-cast the spell to maintain concentration (but this is a free action without any penalty).

You can cast this on someone else you can see.

Difficulty: 9

Requires the target to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the water source is from you.

Bonuses

+3 increase the number of targets by 1 (repeatable).

+5 increase the duration to 1 hour.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action for a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal, 2 rain water and 2 silver shavings grants a +4

Duration: 1 minute (12 rounds) or until the target chooses the effects to end as a free action.



Whirlpool

The surface of a body of water you can see starts to swirl and churn. A 10x10 foot section of is transformed into a whirl pool sucking everyone toward the bottom. This spell must affect everyone in the area, you cannot choose targets. At the start of each of their turns they must roll a Strength + Swimming of 6 in order to move any direction besides down. If they fail once, and the water is deeper than they are tall they are swallowed by the waves. While submerged they are unable to take any actions besides trying to reach the surface. If they fail 3 rounds in a row, they fall unconscious and start to drown. If anyone manages to leave the area, they are no longer affected by the spell.

Difficulty: 10

Requires the target section of water to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the water source is from you.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the Strength required by 1 (repeatable).

+3 to increase the radius by 5-feet.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

A five-minute long ritual that requires 3 river rocks and consumes 5 salt grants a +4.

Duration: 1 minute (12 rounds) or until the caster chooses the effects to end as a free action.



Freezing Touch

One or both of your hands drops to sub-zero temperatures. That hand is immune to fire and can harmlessly smother any flames. You drain the heat out of any character who you touch or hit with an unarmed melee attack, immediately chilling them. Shivering, they lose a rank of Agility until they warm up. A character can warm up by ending their turn in a warm environment such as a cozy inn, beside a brazier or a summer day. For each round you maintain contact, they lose an additional rank. If they would lose d4 Agility, they are incapacitated from hypothermia. If incapacitated this way the target must spend an hour in a warm environment to regain each lost rank. The effects of this spell cannot be healed magically as they are not damage.

Difficulty: 11

-2 if you are in a cold environment.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the duration by 1 round (repeatable).

Casting Times

After hitting an unarmed melee attack you can cast this as a free action with no penalty instead of doing damage.

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

Duration: 4 rounds (counted by the end of the caster's turn) or until you choose for the effect to end as a free action.

**Crashing Wave**

If there is a large enough body of water in your environment, you call it forth into an enormous wave. Draw a 15-foot-wide line away from the water source in any direction. Everyone on its edges must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 5 to dodge to an unoccupied space outside of the line, or a Strength of 8 to resist the force. Everyone in the center of the wave must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 8 to dive out of way, or a Strength of 8 to resist the force. If there is nowhere for them to go, or they fail the roll, they are grounded and pushed along with the wave. The wave dissipates after 25-feet and deposits any collected people and debris there. If a character was carried 10-feet or farther they take 1d6-3 damage (1 being the lowest). The damage is inherently random, with a higher amount of damage representing their head colliding with something hard. This damage uses helmet damage reduction. The Narrator can modify the damage roll based on the situation. If a lot of blades or rocks are caught in the wave, it may be 1d6-2. Or if the characters are thrown onto a mossy forest floor, it could be 1d6-4.

Difficulty: 12

Requires the target source of water to be within 20-feet and at least 15-feet wide.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the water source is from you.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the Agility and Strength required by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires 4 river rocks and consumes 1 charcoal and 1 rain water grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.



Part Waters

You stand before a massive body of water, and command it to open a path for you. Starting at your feet, it parts making a 5-foot-wide pathway that is up to 100 feet long. You can walk along the bottom, with sheer walls of water on each side, as tall as the body of water is deep. There is no barrier, someone can step into the water, or swim from it into the path, the water simply obeys your will. If you are already submerged or swimming you cannot cast this, you must be on one bank.

Difficulty: 13

Requires the target body of water to be at your feet.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the length of the path by 50-feet (repeatable).

+3 to increase the width of the path by 5-feet (repeatable).

+3 to increase the duration by 1 hour (repeatable).

Casting Times

A two-round incantation is the standard casting time.

A minute-long ritual that consumes 2 salt grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires 4 river rocks and consumes 10 salt grants a +4

Duration: 1 hour.



Wall of Ice

You manipulate the water around you up into a wave and then flash freeze it into a thick wall of ice. 15-feet wide and 10-feet tall, 1 foot thick. If there is room for it to be vaulted over, it can be bypassed with an Agility + Acrobatics of 9 (each attempt being an action). In they have proper tools like picks, axes or hammers (not swords) character can try to break through it. It takes 5 people 10 minutes, or 10 people 5 minutes. No more than 10 people can work on it simultaneously.

Difficulty: 14

Requires the target source of water to be within 20-feet and at least 15-feet wide.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the water source is from you.

-2 if you are in a cold environment.

Bonuses

+2 to extend either the height or width by 5-feet (repeatable). If you increase the height increase the Agility required to climb over it by 3.

+3 to double the thickness of the ice, doubling the time it takes to break through.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time. A two-round incantation that consumes 2 silver shavings grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 2 charcoal and 2 silver shavings grants a +4.

Duration: Instant. The ice made this way cannot must be thawed or broken like any other ice.



Flood

You anger the sea itself. It lashes out across the coast line in a wave of devastation. The half-mile of coastline which contains the caster is struck by a massive tsunami. It levels all wooden structures and sinks all boats harbored there. It can also cause serious damage to coastal fortresses. Unless the caster is performing the ritual on a sea-side cliff or top of a stone structure, there may be significant threat to themselves (but the exact nature of those challenges will be up to the Narrator).

Difficulty: 16

Requires you to be within a 500-feet of target sea or river.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A four-hour long ritual that consumes 2 charcoal, 5 salt and 3 kraken's eyes is the standard casting time.

Duration: Instant.

Shared Hydromancy Spells



Purify

You wave your hand over a drink or wound and instantly extract all contaminants and poisons from it. Any glass-sized amount of liquid becomes safe to drink. Or any poisonous effects from a wound are instantly nullified. Ingested poisons cannot be targeted with this spell. You can see if anything is extracted. The contaminates float as droplets above your palm. You have a few seconds to roll an Intelligence + Alchemy to try and identify them and then they are destroyed by the spell.

Difficulty: 4

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Divinity. You must be able to reach just a few inches above the target, which cannot have been targeted with this spell (regardless of success) in the past 24-hours.

Bonuses

+5 to increase the volume of liquid to a 5-foot pool.

+10 to increase the volume of liquid to an entire water source.

This bonus can be used to dispel Contaminate Water.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 holy water grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.

**Steam Jet**

You throw out a hand, evaporating the moisture from the air in front of it. It forms a hissing jet of super-heated vapor. You can shoot the steam into someone's face who it within 5-feet.

They must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 6 or be temporarily blinded until the end of their next turn. They get a -3 to

Initiative and halve any attack rolls they make. On a result of 1, they are also scalded for 1 damage.

Difficulty: 7

Requires you to have at least a +2 Pyromancy.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).

+4 to hit two targets who are standing within a straight 10-foot line of you.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

Duration: Instant.

**Feeding Frenzy**

You point at a swimming character and a roiling school of fish surrounds them, obscuring their sight and biting them. The type of fish is dependent on the biome you're in. Most of the time they are do not have teeth, so the target is distracted and get -3 to all Perception and defensive rolls. If you are in a tropical area where toothed fish are present, this spell will summon them. If that is the case the target takes 1 damage at the end of each of their turns. If the target spends a turn swimming their full movement in one direction and roll an Agility + Swimming of 7, this ends the spell's effects. The Narrator may decide that there are no fish in the body of water if it is a pool or canal, in which case the spell has no effect. Or the fish may be far away, delaying the effects by 1d4 rounds. Alternatively, if they are in a place with a high fish population

you may be able to choose additional targets without using the bonus.

Difficulty: 8

Requires you to have at least a +3 in Animalism, line of sight to the target and a school of fish within half a mile.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the number of targets by 1, as long as they are adjacent to another target (repeatable).

+4 to increase the number of targets by 1 regardless of their position (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 3 fish scales grants a +4

Duration: 1 minute or until the caster chooses the effects to end, the target is no longer submerged or takes specific actions.

Manipulate Blood



You appraise a combatant, guessing that they are on their last leg from their numerous wounds. In a brutal flourish, you pull the blood from their cuts and gashes, killing them instantly. Instead of spilling to the ground, the blood forms and twisting arc toward another target. You can target anyone with this spell but if they are not at 1 Health it has no effect. Your Narrator cannot tell you outright if they are at 1 Health, but you may be able to form a guess from what you can see of their physical appearance. If you guess correctly, this spell kills the target, reducing them to -5 Health as gallons of blood is drawn from them. This is no way to dodge this spell as it effects the blood in the target's veins. Instead of targeting someone else, you can deal 1 damage to yourself to cast the second half of this spell (centered on you). Once formed, this blood manipulation will last up for 2 sequential rounds. On each of the caster's turns (including the first) they can, as a free action, try and hit someone with a jet of blood, extinguish a smoldering character or anything else the Narrator approves. The crimson torrent can reach up to 5-feet away for each point of missing health the target had when you cast this spell. If someone wants to avoid being shoved by the blood jet, they must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 5 or be grounded and pushed in a direction of your choice 5 feet. If you successfully hit someone with the

blood, it covers them, ending this spell and affecting them with the Fear spell.

Difficulty: 11

Requires you to have at least a +3 in Necromancy and for the target to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the target is from you.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).

+2 to increase the distance someone is pushed by 5 feet (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

Duration: 3 rounds (counted by the end of the caster's turn) or until it hits a character with a shove, or the caster ends the effects as a free action or re-casts this spell on a new target.



Geyser

The earth cracks and erupts with a torrent of water. A single 5-foot zone is turned into a geyser. Anyone on it must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 6 or get launched 10 feet in a random direction, grounded and take 3 damage (ignoring damage reduction). That space continues to spew water, if anyone tries to occupy that space, they are affected by the spell again. It floods the environment around it with a few feet of water (depending on the volume of the space of course). After 5 rounds, the water slows to a harmless trickle but continues to for about an hour.

Difficulty: 14

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Geomancy and for you to have not cast this spell in the last 24-hours. The target area must be within 20-feet and must be natural ground.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the target ground is from you.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the Acrobatics required by 1 (repeatable)

+3 to increase the distance thrown by 5-feet, and damage dealt by 1.

+2 to choose the direction any characters are thrown.

Casting Times

A two-round incantation is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal, 2 silver shavings and 2 bronze shavings, grants a +4.

Duration: 1 hour.

Geomancy



Geomancy governs both inanimate substances and living vegetation. The study of Geomancy brings you closer to nature. Understand the eternal processes of growth and erosion and realize how much wisdom hides behind the stoic bark of trees.

In the world of Nell, trees are very much alive. Sentient in the same way that animals or even people are. They are notoriously indifferent to the outside world and they do not feel pain. But this fact, proven by the magic used to awaken them, is the justification for the Witch Queen's strict lumber regulations.

Out of all the elements, plants are the most dexterous substance to manipulate. Instead of painting in broad strokes tendrils and vines can act as an extension of your limbs with a finesse the other elements do not offer.

Seismic Maul

This magic weapon can either be a War-Hammer or a Maul, but must be a Heft d10 or higher. It has a huge, stone head and is of Masterwork quality. It allows the wielder to, as an action, bring down the hammer slam it against the earth and casting the Tremor spell without rolling. Like all spells cast without rolling, no bonuses can be applied. But the wielder of this hammer is immune to the effects of Tremors they cast (with or without the hammer). Once used the Hammer cannot be used again for 24 hours, or 1 hour at a Place of Power.

Boots of Tremor Sense

These can look like simple oiled boots or heavy plate greaves, what is important is the enchantment. They can be purchased in the Arcane Burrows for 900 silver and allow the wearer to benefit from the Sense Vibrations spell. This isn't an enchantment on the wearer that can be dispelled, it is just an effect of wearing the boots.



Tendril

You focus on a vine, branch, sapling or grass and it reaches out as an extension of your will. The reach is typically 5-feet, but may be longer if a vine, or shorter if grass, based on the discretion of the Narrator. Once enchanted, the Tendril is under your control for 2 sequential rounds. On each of the caster's turns they can, as a free action, telepathically command the tendril to pick up an object or move a held object up to 10-feet (within range of the plant's roots). It can lift and carry objects up to 10 pounds, and rolls a Strength of d4 for contests. Alternatively, if the tendril is not carrying an object, when someone moves through a space within its reach the caster can, once per round as an instant free action, try and trip that character with the tendril. The moving character must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 6 or a Strength of 4 (their choice). If they fail, they are grounded and stop moving.

Difficulty: 3

Requires the target plant to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the tendril is from you.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).

+3 to increase the Strength die it rolls by 1 rank, and the Strength required by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 seed grants a +4.

Duration: 3 rounds (counted by the end of the caster's turn) or until the caster ends the effects as a free action or re-casts this spell on a new target.



Stone Skin

The skin of yourself, or someone you are touching, takes on a cracked granite texture. It is hard to the touch, providing 2 damage reduction from physical attacks (this does not stack with normal armor). It is heavy on the bones, reducing all Acrobatics and Stealth rolls by 3 and all push effects by half (rounded down). It does not, however, have spell casting penalties like regular armor. If an attack does 2 or more damage over the damage reduction provided by Stone Skin, the stone plates crack ending the spell's duration and instantly casting Shatter. The Shatter spell is centered on the target on the Stone Skin who is immune to its effects.

Difficulty: 4

Requires physical contact with the target (if not yourself).

Bonuses

+3 to lighten the stone, reducing the Acrobatics and Stealth penalties by 1 (repeatable, but cannot be reduced below 1).

+3 to make the plates more brittle. The spell is broken by any damage but can reduce the incoming damage to 0 instead of 1. Cannot cast this bonus as a Free Action.

+4 to increase the duration to 1 hour.

+5 to strengthen the outer plates of stone increasing the damage reduction to 3.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires an uncut gemstone and consumes 1 charcoal and 1 bronze shaving grants a +4.

Duration: 5 minutes.

**Entangle**

The plants around a target's feet swirl and twist about them, trapping their feet. They must roll a Strength of 4 to not be trapped. While trapped they cannot move and halve their dodge rolls. Each round, as a free action, they can attempt to break free by rolling a Strength of 5. They, or an adjacent character, can spend an action hacking away the foliage. If they have a blade or suitable tool, roll an Agility + Fighting of 5 to free the target. If the target is grounded when affected by this spell, they are at a -3 to Strength checks against its effects. Failure results in being completely bound by the vines. They cannot move, dodge, cut themselves free or attack, and attacks automatically hit them.

Difficulty: 5

Requires the target to be in standing in grass within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the target is from you.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the Strength required by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

A five-minute ritual that consumes 2 seeds grants a +4.

Duration: 1 minute or until the target succeeds a Strength roll, the caster ends the effects as a free action or re-casts this spell.



Shatter

A single fist-sized stone within 20-feet of you explodes into shards. Everyone within 5-feet of the stone must roll Agility + Acrobatics of 5, if they fail, they must take a damage or be grounded. If they get a 1, they are affected in both ways

Difficulty: 6

Requires the target stone to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the rock is from you.

+5 to target a head-sized stone, if you do the shards do an additional damage.

+8 to target a 5-foot section of stone wall, if you do the shards do an additional damage and only go away from you.

Bonuses

+3: The shards explode out faster, increase the Acrobatics required by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

If you target a rock that you threw this round, you can cast this as a free action with a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires 1 bronze stake a hammer and consumes 1 charcoal and 2 bronze shavings grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.



Branch Whip

A particular tree in your environment suddenly whips a heavy branch in a direction of your choice, slamming into all characters within reach on one side of the tree. It can reach 10-feet away in a straight line. All characters in that line must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 5 or they take 2 damage and be pushed 5-feet away from the tree in any direction (the direction must be the same for all targets). If the branch collides with a structure or object, it carries a lot of force behind it and rolls a 1d10 Strength for contests. You can cast this on a tree already under the effects of Grasping Branches, as long as there are enough branches on the desired side.

Difficulty: 7

Requires the target tree to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the tree is from you.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).

+3 to increase push back by 5-feet and ground the characters who fail the Agility roll (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 4 seeds grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.



Grasping Branches

A particular tree in your environment reaches out a branch in a direction of your choice, its smaller offshoots forming a grasping hand. A single target within 10-feet of it must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 6 or be ensnared by the branch, they cannot move and halve their dodge rolls. On their next turn, as a free action, they can attempt to break free by rolling a Strength of 6. An adjacent character with a blade or suitable tool can use an action to roll an Agility + Fighting of 5. If they succeed the held character is freed. On each of the caster's subsequent turns, as a free action, the caster can command the branch to drop them, throw them up to 30-feet in any direction (causing 3 damage which ignored damage reduction) or if empty-handed, try and grab someone else within reach. If you take damage during the duration, you must re-cast the spell to maintain concentration (but this is a free action without any penalty). At the end of the duration the tree releases its grip and returns to its normal posture.

Difficulty: 8

Requires the target tree to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the tree is from you.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).

+2 to increase the Strength required by 1 (repeatable).

+4 to increase the duration to 1 hour. The tree must be within line of sight to deliver new commands, but it can hold for the full duration regardless of the caster's proximity.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 4 seeds grants a +4.

Duration: 1 minute (12 rounds), or until the casters ends the effects as a free action or casts this spell again on a different tree.



Tremor

The ground around you shakes violently. It is a struggle for everyone around to stay sure-footed. Objects are tossed from their resting places and a land slide could be triggered if you are an area prone to such events. All characters within 20-feet (including yourself) must roll an Agility + Acrobatics (or Agility + Riding if mounted) of 5 or be grounded.

Difficulty: 9

Requires your feet to be on the ground.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).

+3 to exempt yourself from the spell's effects.

+5 to cause an aftershock. At the end of your next turn, this spell is cast again without a roll from the same location.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires 2 bronze stakes and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.



Transmute

A single item you are touching is transformed from one solid substance to another. Although it can target objects of almost any substance it can only turn them into things governed by Geomancy (wood, stone, glass and metal). You cannot liquefy objects or turn them into complex textures such as woven cloth. The transformation spreads from the point of contact with your hand like a fungus. So hand-held objects can be transmuted in a single round, but whole suits of armor or doors take 2. You cannot transmute anything larger than that. The spell isn't aware of object boundaries so if you try and transmute a chest, the effect would spread to the contents inside. Additionally, the transformation paints in broad strokes. A transmuted lock wouldn't still function, and transmuting a book would fuse its pages together for the duration of the spell. When the duration of this spell ends, the target object is returned to its original substance but is not repaired in anyway. You can use this spell to turn a section of a stone tower into glass and look through it, or turn lead into gold long enough to exchange it. Or any number of other creative applications. Weapons that are turned into stone increase their heft by 1. Weapons that are turned to wood

reduce their damage to 2 (non-lethal). Armor that is turned into wood changes its stats to that of Wooden Armor.

Difficulty: 10

Requires physical contact with the target object.

Bonuses

+6 to conceal the enchantment, it won't appear to people casting Seer's Sight.

Casting Times

After hitting an unarmed melee attack you can cast this on their armor as a free action with no penalty instead of doing damage. If you parry a weapon with an unarmed hand (+0 parry) you can cast this on their weapon as a free action with no penalty.

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires a sample of the desired substance and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: 1 day or until the caster chooses the effect to end as a free action.



Shrink or Enlarge

A single item you are holding grows to twice, or shrinks to half, its size. This can only target inanimate objects that you can hold. You can't shrink a door or a section of a wall or manipulate the proportion of the object in anyway. You can use this spell to conceal something large on your person, or block a doorway with something small, make a bastard sword from a dagger in pinch, or shrink someone's weapon to little more than tooth pick. In combat, you can't maintain contact long enough for a true doubling or halving of size. But you can increase the size of someone's armor enough to increase its heft by 1. Or you can shrink it enough to open up holes, giving anyone who targets it with an Avoid Armor attack +2. If you manage to grab a weapon, you either increase or decrease its heft and damage by 1.

Difficulty: 10

Requires physical contact with the target object which is not already under the effects of this spell.

Bonuses

+6 to conceal the enchantment, it won't appear to people casting Seer's Sight.

+3 double the amount the object shrinks or grows (repeatable but requires you to maintain contact for twice as long).

Casting Times

After hitting an unarmed melee attack you can cast this on their armor as a free action with no penalty instead of doing damage. If you parry a weapon with your hand (+0 parry) you can cast this on their weapon as a free action with no penalty.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires a bronze figurine and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: 1 day or until the caster chooses the effect to end as a free action.



Petrifying Touch

You reach out and instantly transmute someone to stone. While petrified they cannot move or speak but can still see, hear, communicate telepathically and cast spells (with the -3 penalty for lack of vocal incantation and gestures). They cannot feel pain and can ignore all damage that would be dealt to them (except in extreme situations like a cave-in or explosion that is powerful enough to crack stone). If any limbs are broken off, they will only start bleeding from those wounds when the duration of this spell ends and the target is returned to their original substance. Additionally, the target is kept in perfect stasis while petrified, so they don't become hungry, thirsty or age. This can be used as an extreme way to stabilize a dying person, but moving hundreds of pounds of stone is not easy so aid may have to be brought to them.

Difficulty: 11

Requires physical contact with a target who is not already under the effects of this spell.

-5 if the target is willing.

Bonuses

+1 to increase the duration by 1 round (repeatable).

+4 to increase the duration to 1 day.

+6 to increase the duration to indefinite (until dispelled).

Casting Times

After hitting an unarmed melee attack you can cast this as a free action with no penalty instead of doing damage.

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 1 uncut gemstone grants a +4.

Duration: 1 round (counted by the end of the target's turn) or until the caster ends the effects as a free action.

Unnatural Growth



All the vegetation around you becomes vibrant and green. Leaves unfurl and branches, roots and vines grow outward in every direction as an explosion of life. For the duration of this spell all plants in a 20-foot radius of you grow unnaturally quickly. The grass around you will grow tall and spread to cover the area, and if you are on natural ground without grass some will sprout there the first round and be knee-high by the second. Trees unfurl green leaves and put-on fruit, providing food or reagents regardless of the season. Once a plant has been affected by Unnatural Growth it cannot be affected again for a week as it recovers from the growth spurt.

Difficulty: 12

Requires your feet to be on the ground.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the duration by 30 seconds (repeatable).

+3 to increase the radius by 10-feet (repeatable).

+3 to have grass find its way through wooden floors (only on the first story).

+4 to have grass find its way through cracks in cobble stones in exterior spaces.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 Wild Seed grants a +4.

Duration: 30 seconds (6 rounds).

Fissure



The land in front of you is split asunder. When starting the incantation, you must declare a direction. When it is finished, a crack moves in that direction in a 30-foot straight line, widening into a 5-foot chasm. Everyone in its path must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 8 (-1 for each 10-feet away from the caster they are) if they fail, they fall in. The fissure is 10-feet deep, so everyone takes 2 damage (ignoring damage reduction) from the fall unless they roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 5 to negate it. Those trapped inside can move up and down the fissure but can only get out with an Agility + Acrobatics of 9 (or assistance from above). The fissure remains there indefinitely, and anyone who wants to cross it must leap over

with an Agility + Acrobatics of 3 or fall in. If the fissure passes under any structures, they have a chance to collapse, split in two, or the fissure may simply continue under them (this is determined by the Narrator).

Difficulty: 13

Requires your feet to be on the ground and that you have not cast this spell in the last 24-hours.

Bonuses

- +1 to extend the length of the fissure by 5-feet (repeatable).
- +3 to extend the width of the fissure by 5-feet, requiring an Agility + Acrobatics of 6 to cross.
- +3 to extend the depth of the fissure by 5-feet. The roll to negate fall damage is increased by 2, and it cannot be climbed out of.

Casting Times

A two-round incantation is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires 2 bronze stakes and consumes 5 charcoal and 2 uncut gemstones grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.

Awaken the Trees



You form a ritual circle around an ancient tree and bring it to life. They say each tree has a mighty spirit that is merely slumbering, and you have awoken this one. It is not your mindless servant and different trees have different personalities. Some may be irritable from being awoken, others appreciative at the opportunity to stretch their legs. But almost all can be persuaded into helping you protect nature. They cannot recount anything about their surroundings as they've slumbered for most of their lift (use Commune with Animal for situations like that). They can move, not by lifting up legs but their roots churn the ground and pull them along, leaving a trench of turned earth behind them. They have a Speed of 2. This is much faster than they normally move, but they don't like to move great distances and cannot move through paved stone or any place without soil. Each round in combat they can make both a Branch Whip and Grasping Branches attack, or one twice (see the above-mentioned spells for the details of these attacks, but they do not have to roll to see if the spell fizzles). Normally, awakened trees have around 1d8+10 Health, and 2 Armor from their bark. They only roll a d4+3 for Parry and can't dodge. The Narrator may alter any stats based on the species and stature of the tree.

Difficulty: 14

Requires your ritual circle to fully encompass a tree that is at least 100 years old.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the duration to 1 day.

Casting Times

You can cast this as a two-round incantation that consumes 1 Wild Seed with a penalty of -2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes a 2 Wild Seeds is the standard casting time.

Duration: 1 hour.

**Earthquake**

The earth shudders under your ritual circle. Then heaves as if trying to dislodge you from its back. The earthquake ripples outward in a mile radius. The ground breaks apart in places, fissures open and structures topple. This could cause caverns to cave in, towers to collapse or whole parts of a city to crumble, but the exact nature of the damage is random. Being in the center may be significant threat to the caster (but the exact nature of those challenges will be up to the Narrator).

Difficulty: 15**Bonuses**

None

Casting Times

A four-hour ritual that consumes a 2 charcoal and 5 uncut gemstones is the standard casting time.

Duration: Instant.

Shared Geomancy Spells**Quick Sand**

You pull all the underground moisture to the surface, turning the terrain into a muddy trench. Choose a patch of ground either 10x10 or 20-feet long, 5-feet wide. The ground must be natural and soft, not rocky or paved. As soon as you start casting this spell, the chosen area becomes soggy. When you finish, it becomes an ordeal to cross. People who try sink up to their thighs in mud and must spend 2 Speed to cross 5-feet. Anyone who ends their turn in the mud is at a -3 to Acrobatics. Everyone must roll a Strength of 4 to leave a space effected by this spell. If they fail, their movement immediately ends and the difficulty of further Strength rolls is increased by 1. If the

chosen ground is sand this spell is extra deadly. If someone fail 3 times in a row, they are sucked under and start to suffocate.

Difficulty: 7

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Hydromancy and be within 20-feet of the targeted area.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the targeted area is from you.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the area by one 5x5-foot zone (repeatable).

+2 to increase the Strength required by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A two-round incantation is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal, 1 rain water and 1 copper shaving grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.

Cone of Rust



You extend your finger and a spray of red-brown particles shoot from it. Any metal that the particles come into contact with rapidly rusts and begins flaking away. This spell affects a cone 15-feet wide and 10-feet long in the direction you point. Any metal inside that area when this spell is cast, or that enters the area while this spell is maintained starts to disintegrate. After 2 rounds of being subject to this spell metal bars become brittle enough to break with a Strength of 5, and they are completely reduced to dust after 1 minute. Any equipped weapons and armor lose 1d6 durability, (see additional rules in the Durability & Wear section on page 145). Once cast, you can maintain this spell without rolling each turn. On your turn, as an action you can readjust the direction of the cone, and then the spell's effects repeat. If you move, the duration ends. And if you take damage, you must re-cast this spell as a free action with no penalties to keep it in effect.

Difficulty: 8

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Aeromancy and to have learned this spell in-game. You must also have a free hand to point.

Bonuses

+5 to increase the intensity of the cone. The first person to attack you each round that this spell is maintained with a metal melee weapon finds their weapon completely disintegrated.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

Duration: As long as it can be maintained.



Devouring Flora

You imbue a chosen vine with carnivorous energy. Its buds open, revealing not flower petals but sharp teeth. The vine sprouts sensitive spines along its length that it uses to sense vibrations and “smell” the air. It cannot be blinded, and does not need light to detect others, but it cannot detect anything beyond 30-feet. It cannot be spoken to, charmed or negotiated with; all it knows is hunger. Once enchanted you cannot control or command the plant, but it does take an action at the end of each of your turns (including the first). For this spell’s duration it will try to devour anything living that comes within 5-feet of it. It rolls a d10 to attack and defend and has 3 Health. If it hits it deals 1 damage with its teeth and effects the target with Entangle. If the target is already entangled it grounds them. And if the target is already entangled and grounded it deals 2 additional damage.

Difficulty: 9

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Animalism and for the target vine to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the target plant is from you.

Bonuses

+3 to have the plant recognize your scent and not attack you.

+4 to enchant a larger tangle of vines (if one is available). This gives the plant 6 Health instead of 3.

+5 to increase the duration to 1 hour.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal, 1 Wild Seed and 3 animal teeth grants a +4.

Duration: 30 seconds (6 rounds) or until the caster ends the effects as a free action or re-casts this spell.



Secluded Sanctum

Through a complex ritual, you manage to imbue a whole location with protective energy. This area, either a room, building or clearing must have natural boundaries of some kind, and cannot be larger than 100-feet on any side. This

sanctuary cannot be found by anyone you do not consider righteous. It doesn't make the structure invisible; people just wander past it, their route feeling straight to them but meandering around it. They can find it through a methodical search of the area, or if they are led there by a loud sound or someone who knows where it is. Once found, it can be automatically re-found. Additionally, your sanctum has restorative properties. Anyone you consider righteous who rests there and regains Heath gains 2 instead of 1.

Difficulty: 10

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Divinity.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

An hour-long ritual that requires 4 bronze stakes and consumes 4 incense is the standard casting time.

Duration: Until the caster re-casts this in a different location.



Eruption

The earth cracks, sending a spray of magma into the air, then begins to ooze molten rock. A single 5-foot zone is turned into a volcanic rupture. Anyone on it must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 6 or take 3 fire damage and becomes smoldering. This can only be cast on natural ground, and that space continues to ooze lava which spreads 5-feet downhill at the end of each round. Anyone can look and predict where the lava flow will go next. But if anyone is in that space, or moves through it, they must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 4 or take 2 fire damage and becomes smoldering.

Difficulty: 14

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Pyromancy and for you to have not cast this spell in the last 24-hours. The target area must be within 20-feet and must be natural ground.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the target ground is from you.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A two-round incantation is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal, 2 iron shavings and 2 bronze shavings, grants a +4.

Duration: 1 hour.

Animalism



Animalism is a pathway to becoming attuned with your inner beast. Every animal is buried somewhere, deep in your heritage. It is just a matter of bringing them to the surface and unlocking their potential. Masters of Animalism can shapeshift freely into the most useful shape. Or even just as a form of expression. It asks the question if you had access to the whole animal kingdom how often would you choose to be human? “Aspects” is an umbrella term for the list of Animalism spells that have the “Animal’s Feature” naming convention. Bear’s Claws for example grants long claws and physical endurance. Snake’s Reflexes grants lightning fast reaction time and poison immunity.

All Aspects can be cast as a free action. This means you can do an action on your turn and then adjust your aspect before or after that action. But you must spend the rest of the round in that form until your next turn. You cannot take free actions on other people’s turns unless prompted by specific trigger like the one on Turtle’s Shell.

You can only have one Aspect at a time unless you take the Spirit Animal trait (pg. 48) which makes a chosen Aspect permanent. You cannot dismiss it even if you want to but you can have another Aspect active at the same time.

If you get an Aspect or Shapeshift spell stored in a rune to be used later, either through the Rune-Marked trait, or having a piece of equipment made by a Rune-Carver, the duration is reduced to one minute.

Gaining access to the Shapeshift spell is just the start of the journey. Each animal form must be added to your repertoire through a complex ritual that consumes a sample of the chosen animal. This can be any part of their body, blood or hair, tooth or claw. Once mastered, the form can be retaken much more quickly and without the need for a sample.



Calm Animal

You meet the gaze of an animal and put your hand out in a gesture of peace. They can sense your common soul and find themselves at ease. As long as you maintain this spell the target animal will not attack you or anyone else. They will remain clam enough for you to approach and touch it, maybe even cut a lock of fur. This spell's duration is as long as you are willing to concentrate. If you take damage during the duration, you must re-cast the spell to maintain concentration (but this is a free action without any penalty). You can only maintain one instance of this spell at a time.

Difficulty: 3

Requires eye contact with the target animal.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the number of targets by 1 (repeatable).

+3 to keep them calm enough for you to take a painless sample.

+8 to affect all animals within 20-feet.

Casting Times

You can cast this as a free action for a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

Duration: As long as is it in maintained.



Commune with Animals

You lock eyes with an animal and open up telepathic communications with them. You can ask them questions and roll charm and persuasion rolls as if they were any other character. The intelligence of their response is normally determined by their size. Insects can offer little more than one-word responses, but you might gain some astute insight from a 20-year-old turtle. Some animals are craftier than others, rats, ravens and foxes are known for telling lies. But you can always roll intuition against them like any other character.

Difficulty: 4

Requires eye contact with the target animal.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

You can cast this as a free action for a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

Duration: 5 minutes, or until the caster chooses the effects to end.



Wolf's Senses

Your ears grow long and hairy, your nose distorts into a short snout giving you the Disfigured trait for the duration of this spell. Your senses are heightened to super-human levels. You do not halve your Perception total when trying to see in to darkness. You get +5 Perception when using it for smell or hearing.

Difficulty: 5

Bonuses

Requires you to have seen a wolf at least once.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2. A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and a wolf sample grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster chooses the effects to end or casts another aspect on themselves.



Turtle's Shell

Your skin takes on a tough, mottled texture, giving you the Disfigured trait for the duration of the spell. You have thick carapace on your back, chest and arms providing 1 damage reduction (this does not stack with normal armor). Perfectly incorporated with your body, it does not have spell casting or acrobatics penalties like regular armor.

Difficulty: 6

Requires you to have seen a turtle at least once.

Bonuses

+5 to increase the durability of the shell, improving the damage reduction to 2.

Casting Times

When you are attacked, or on your turn, you can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and a turtle sample grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster chooses the effects to end or casts another aspect on themselves.

Fish's Gills



Slits appear on the sides of your neck and your skin becomes pearlescent and scaled. You get the Disfigured trait for the duration of the spell. You can breathe underwater and your swim speed is doubled.

Difficulty: 6

Bonuses

Requires you to have seen a fish at least once.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2. A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and a fish sample grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster chooses the effects to end or casts another aspect on themselves.

Horse's Hooves



Your feet shrink and harden in hooves and your legs sprout coarse hair giving you the Disfigured trait for the duration of the spell. You get +2 Speed and +3 Acrobatics when running and crossing difficult terrain. This doesn't correct a limp.

Difficulty: 7

Requires you to have seen a horse at least once.

Bonuses

+5 to increase the Speed bonus to +3.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2. A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and a horse sample grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster chooses the effects to end or casts another aspect on themselves.

Animal Guide



You send out a magical call and the creatures of the area answer. The call doesn't have to be audible; they can sense your need telepathically. How quickly they respond is determined by your environment. It may be 10-seconds if an animal was close by, or up to several minutes. But after a short time, an animal, native to your area, finds you and leads you to anywhere you need to go. You cannot specify the type of

animal that comes. You can use this spell to have rats lead you out of the sewers, or have a deer lead you to a hard-to-find place in the woods. You do not have to tell the animal where you are going, they know telepathically from when you cast the spell. But you can ask it questions on the way. If the trip is longer than 4 hours, or goes out of their native domain, they will lead you as far as they can and then tell you directions for the rest of the way (if able).

Difficulty: 8

Requires you to have not cast this spell in the last 24-hours.

Bonuses

+4 to specify the type of animal that comes (if available).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires some sort of whistle and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: No longer than 4 hours.



Snake's Reflexes

Your tongue becomes long and forked and your skin becomes scaled. You get the Disfigured and Quick Reflexes traits for the duration of this spell. Quick Reflexes lets you roll a higher die of agility when reacting fist to something and you roll a higher die for Initiative. You are also immune to all poisons. This doesn't clear poisons from your system, so if you change aspects or drop this one the poison may start affecting you again depending on its duration.

Difficulty: 9

Requires you to have seen a snake at least once.

Bonuses

+3 to give yourself a venomous bite. When you land an unarmed melee attack on a grappled or surprised target you may choose to bite them. If bitten they must, at the end of their next 3 turns, roll a Strength of 5 or take one damage.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and a snake sample grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster chooses the effects to end or casts another aspect on themselves.

Bear's Claws



Your arms and shoulders bulk up and you sprout coarse hair. Your nails lengthen and harden into sharp claws. Your unarmed attacks are now lethal and deal an additional damage. You have the Disfigured for the duration of the spell. Increase the Strength by 1 die rank. This increases your Health by 1, and can increase your Health even if your die rank cannot exceed d12. If you change aspects or drop this one your health is decreased back to its normal, which may cause you to become incapacitated from the amount of damage you've sustained.

Difficulty: 10

Requires you to have seen a bear at least once.

Bonuses

+5 to increase your Health by an additional 1.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2. A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and a bear sample grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster chooses the effects to end or casts another aspect on themselves.

Frog's Legs



Your fingers and toes become webbed and your skin becomes a glossy turquoise. You get the Disfigured trait and can breathe underwater for the duration of the spell. Your jump height is increased to 10 vertical feet. You roll a d12 Agility when jumping or falling. Your fingers are sticky and which allows you to scale surfaces with no handholds. You get a +5 Acrobatics when climbing, jumping or falling and can roll to climb things other people couldn't even attempt. If you go slow, you can scale sheer surfaces with no need to roll.

Difficulty: 11

Requires you to have seen a frog at least once.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2. A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and a frog sample grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster chooses the effects to end or casts another aspect on themselves.

Eagle's Eyes



Your eyes become large and yellow, but they are not as hideous as the other aspects. You get +5 to Perception when looking and suffer no penalties for darkness or distance. You can clearly see faces and detail from up to 1000-feet. Your eyesight also improves your marksmanship. You get +1 to Archery (which can exceed your Mastery) and an additional +2 when using the Aim action.

Difficulty: 12

Requires you to have a seen an eagle at least once.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2. A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and a bear sample grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster chooses the effects to end or casts another aspect on themselves.

Monkey's Feet



Your feet become hairy and your toes articulated. You become nimbler and more coordinated. Increase your Agility by 1 die rank and you get +5 to Acrobatics when climbing in addition to any skills you already have. If you are not wearing shoes you can use your feet for fine motor tasks like holding objects, writing, juggling or even picking locks. Your kicks (unarmed power attacks) push the target back an extra 5-feet.

Difficulty: 13

Requires you to have a seen a monkey at least once.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2. A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and a monkey sample grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster chooses the effects to end or casts another aspect on themselves.

Nature's Protection



You send out a magical call and the creatures of the area answer. The call doesn't have to be audible; they can sense your need telepathically. How quickly they respond is determined by the direness of your situation. If you are in the wilderness and your life is in danger, they will find you in 5 to 10 seconds but otherwise it may be a few minutes. They are not conjured, they are called, so they must enter from somewhere, that makes sense. No bears charging out of outhouses. One large animal, or a group of smaller ones, native to your area, finds you and protects you with their life. You cannot specify the type of animal that comes. If you need help with a complex task, you must use Commune with Animals, this is only for protection in an emergency. As soon as the animals discern you are no longer in danger, or you leave their territory, they return to their natural routine.

Difficulty: 14

Requires you to have not cast this spell in the last 24-hours.

Bonuses

+4 to specify the type of animal that comes (if available).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires some sort of whistle and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4

Duration: No longer than 4 hours.

Shapeshift



Your body morphs and changes until you have taken the form of an animal. You can choose any animal as long as it isn't smaller than a rat or supernatural (so no dragons or monsters). You must have a sample of the chosen animal (feather, claw, vial of blood, etc.). Or if you've already taken that shape before, you can retake it much more quickly and without any reagent. You look identical in shape and size to the chosen animal, but your eyes are still distinctly human (which can be noticed with an Intelligence + Perception of 6) and you can still speak in your normal voice. Any wounds sustained to

your Shapeshifted form transfer to your human form. But as a ratio of Health, not a 1-to-1 damage ratio. If you take 4 damage as a bear (half of its Health), your human form will be at half Health as well (rounded down). The stats of your animal form are up to the discretion of the Narrator, but should be identical to that of an average animal of that species, with the exception of Intelligence and Guile that are unchanged. Your shapeshifted form can't cast spells or maintain any Aspects. This is not an enchantment. Magic was used to change your physical body but magic is not required to maintain the shape. It has no duration and it cannot be detected with Seer's Sight or dispelled.

Difficulty: 15

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and a sample of the chosen animal grants a +4. If this is the first time you have taken the chosen form you must use this option.

Duration: Until the caster chooses to change back or is incapacitated.

Shared Animalism Spells

Familiar's Sight



Your eyes become a glassy white-green for a moment as you see through the eyes of your familiar. While this spell is active you can issue commands to your familiar, ignoring the normal limitation of 10-feet. For the duration of the spell, you are unable to move or see your surroundings but can still feel physical sensations and are alerted if you feel pain. If you take damage during the duration, you must re-cast the spell to maintain concentration (but this is an instant free action without any penalty).

Difficulty: 4

Requires you to have at least a +1 in Arcana and have a bound Familiar (see pg. 162).

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

Duration: As long as can be maintained, or until the caster chooses to end the effects as a free action.



Sense Vibrations

You close your eyes and grant yourself inhuman sensitivity to the earth beneath you. You become aware of anything within 30-feet that is moving on the same surface that you are standing on. This doesn't increase your hearing in anyway, but provides an additional sense. Through your feet you can feel any vibrations, their distance, direction and intensity. But this is a crude picture, it may be difficult to tell the difference between two people and five, or fifty people and a single monstrous centipede.

Difficulty: 5

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Geomancy and your feet to be on the ground.

Bonuses

+1 to increase the radius by 5-feet.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 3 worms grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.



Swarm of Insects

You point at a character and a buzzing swarm of insects dive them, biting, stinging and harassing them. The type of insect is dependent on the biome you're in. They may be locusts, bees, wasps or any other flying insect, the effect is more or less the same. The target is distracted and gets -3 to all Perception and defensive rolls. If they spend a turn running their full movement in one direction and their action swatting away the insects the spell's effects end. The Narrator may decide that there are no insects in the area, in which case the spell has no effect. Or that they are far away, delaying the effects by 1d4 rounds. Alternatively, if you are in a place with a lot of insects, like an apiary, you may be able to choose additional targets without using the bonus.

Difficulty: 8

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Aeromancy and line of sight to the target. There must be enough flying insects within a mile to form a swarm.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the number of targets by 1, as long as they are adjacent to another target (repeatable).

+4 to increase the number of targets by 1 regardless of their position (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 3 insect wings grants a +4.

Duration: 1 minute or until the caster chooses the effects to end, the target becomes submerged or takes specific actions.

**Dragon's Scales**

Your skin is incased in metallic red scales, and your eyes take on a hungry reptilian hue. You get the Greedy trait for the duration of the spell. Your skin is immune to fire and provides 2 damage reduction (this does not stack with normal armor). Perfectly incorporated with your body, it does not have spell casting or acrobatics penalties like regular armor. As an action, you can breathe out a bout of flame. All characters in a cone 15-feet wide and 10-feet long must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 5 or take 1 fire damage (ignoring damage reduction) and become Smoldering (pg. 138). If any targets have a shield equipped, they are immune to this effect.

Difficulty: 11

Requires you to have at least a +3 in Pyromancy.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2. A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 3 iron shavings grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster chooses the effects to end or casts another aspect on themselves.



Angel's Wings

Your back sprouts a pair of majestic wings, feathered and perfectly white. You get the Honorable trait for the duration of the spell. You have a Speed of 6 and can move omnidirectionally. If traveling great distances by flight, you travel 3-times as fast as you would on horseback, and can save even more time by avoiding obstacles and non-direct routes. As an action, you can beat your wings to buffet everyone in front of you with wind. All characters in a cone 15-feet wide and 10-feet long must roll a Strength 5 or stumble backward 10-feet. If they roll a 1, they are grounded.

Difficulty: 12

Requires you to have at least a +3 in Divinity.

Bonuses

None.

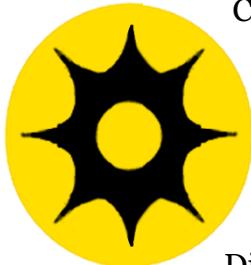
Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2. A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal, 4 feathers and 3 anointed oil grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster chooses the effects to end or casts another aspect on themselves.

Divinity



Contrary to the name, there is nothing inherently religious about divinity. It is simply the school that governs light, mercy, healing, justice and protection. You don't need to be devout to practice it, but most practitioners are. Because of the inherent "goodness" of its spells,

Divinity has sparked more religions than any other school. Including the Order of Alric, which is the most populous religion since the fall of the Zytharian Dynasty.

Because the school of Divinity deals with justice, it is the only school to take into account moral judgements. A few different spells can only benefit "righteous" characters. The exact definition of righteous is completely dependent on each Divinity caster's personal code. One may deem all criminals not righteous as they broke the law. Where another may forgive someone, as long as they stole to provide for their family. Targeting someone with one of these spells doesn't reveal anything about their true character. If someone has secretly done atrocities, but the caster is unaware of them, the spell will still work. But if the caster knows someone is not righteous, or works against their deity's goal, they cannot cast Mend on them, even if they want. The spell simply doesn't meet its requirements and fails.

Divinity grants access to the Exorcism spell which can strip a spectral presence from a haunted person, place or object. Most spirits are limited to knocking vases off shelves, but the longer they go without settling their score the more powerful and hateful they become. These Specters throw objects, mutilate your flesh or even dominate your mind. If you intend to have any kind of dealings with Specters remember to wear some kind of protection.

Opal Pendants can be purchased in the Arcane Burrows for 250 silver, or requisitioned from the Order of Alric. They provide protection from spectral meddling, one-time before shattering.



Illuminate

An object you are holding glows with a pure white light, providing as much illumination as a torch. Once ignited, you can dim it or brighten it at will, but if extinguished the spell must be re-cast.

Difficulty: 3

Requires physical contact with the target object.

-3 if the target object is under the effects of a Bless spell.

Bonuses

+4 to make the glow much brighter. It is blinding to look upon and illuminates 100-feet around you in day light.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: Until the caster chooses the effects to end as a free action or casts this spell on a different target.



Commune with Deity

In a quiet moment of reflection, you make an offering to whatever it is you worship in hopes of gleaning some guidance or insight. If your character is religious this could be a named deity that they converse with and pray to. But if not, the insights could come from reflection on whatever ideal or philosophy is most important to them. Even if your character believes their deity to be omniscient, they are not. Imagine them as an ancient and wise spirit that sees everything their worshipers see. They know a lot, but have their own personalities, flaws and goals. The most common goal is often to spread their religious order and the presence of what it is they represent, peace, progress, famine, etc. And because of this, sometimes their information is inaccurate or misleading. This spell can be used to get advice from a very ancient and powerful perspective. Since a deity retains all information their worshippers knew, even after their death, they can be a great resource for researching history. But even the gods don't know what other people are thinking or what their true intentions are. Gods can't just look down from the sky and see where you and where you need to go if lost. They can't fly around and scry on other people for you unless that person also worships them (in which case they would likely be unwilling to pick favorites). As a general rule, deities are reservoirs of knowledge and experience which can offer

guidance. They shouldn't be used to answer plot-specific questions, solve mysteries or provide convenient short cuts through challenges. And often they will say this out right, they know the importance of the journey, and even if they know the destination, it's important that their followers walk it for themselves. The one exception is if the destination is very dangerous, or goes against what they stand for in which case they should warn the caster against that course of action. Some examples of fair answers are:

Caster: "I seek the Orb of Melthizar, where is it?"

Deity: "It hasn't been seen for generations... but I have heard whispers that it rests with him in his crypt, wherever that may be."

Caster: "I intend to fight a duel tomorrow; will I win?"

Deity: "I cannot see the future, but I know his duel is not what it appears. More is on the line than honor, and forces work against you from the shadows."

Caster: "Can we trust our host Lord Malcom?"

Deity: "Even I cannot see into the minds of others, but Lord Malcom's reputation is spotless."

Deities are very busy, jumping from follower to follower, offering guidance and providing protection. An offering is required to show that the caster is not taking advantage of their bond (to ask what they should eat for breakfast, for example). But in special circumstances, an offering can be omitted if the caster is in grave danger. What the offering is should be determined by the nature of the chosen deity.

Burning incense for Alric is the standard practice of the Order. But whatever it is, it should be common enough to get anywhere, and cost around 10 silver pieces.

Grand offerings can be given if hopes of pleasing your deity, and gaining more concrete information. If you do this you can ask a question which they will look into for 1 day and then tell you what they discover. This is normally much more information than a simple question would have gotten, but still has the same limitations. Grand offerings must be worth 500 silver pieces or more, but aren't always available for purchase as they must be something of meaning to your deity. The Order of Alric is prevalent enough to sell Sanctified Relics in most major cities. Grand Offerings don't have to be physical; it could be a reward for completing a great deed that pleased them. Like recovering a long-lost book for a god of remembrance, or saving someone from drowning for a god of protection.

Difficulty: 4

Requires you to have not cast this spell in the last 24 hours.

Bonuses

+6 to gain crucial insight, or concrete information by sacrificing a Grand Offering.

Casting Times

A minute-long ritual that consumes 1 incense (or other offering) is the standard casting time.

Duration: A brief conversation no longer than a minute.

**Inspire**

With your blessing, the target is filled with the courage to do anything that need to. They gain the Brave trait for the duration of the spell and are immune to magical effects that require them to roll Courage.

Difficulty: 5

Requires the target to be able to hear your words.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the duration to 1 hour (repeatable).

+3 to have your target find their strength renewed by the sudden burst of confidence. For their first turn of being affected by this spell they roll a higher die of Strength and deal 1 extra damage with melee attacks.

+5 to increase the number of targets to everyone you consider righteous within earshot.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. You can disguise the casting of this spell by changing the verbal component into some words of encouragement in a language the target understands.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires a book of fables or scripture grants a +4.

Duration: 1 minute.

**Remove Curse**

You touch a cursed item or person and the sinister magic surrounding it unravels. You can only remove one curse at a time this way. If you remove a cursed from an item it is returned to its mundane form not destroyed. If you touch an undead with this spell they fall to the ground, truly lifeless. The soul trapped in the spirit vial escapes to the proper afterlife.

This spell has no effect on enchantments from schools besides Necromancy, only curses and reanimation.

Difficulty: 6

+2 if you don't have physical contact with the target (must still be within 20-feet).

+2 for each +1 in the original caster had in Necromancy.

+5 if the curse is stored in a Reliquary.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires another possession or sample of the original caster and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.

Pacify



You lock eyes with someone about to act out of aggression. You make them confront the brutality of their actions, and for the duration of the spell, the target must roll a Callous of 5 or higher to make attacks, cast spells that do damage or take actions that cause non-direct harm. Iron-willed characters are immune to this spell.

Difficulty: 7

Requires eye contact with the target.

+3 if they have already been attacked.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the required Callous roll by 1 (repeatable).

+3 to increase the duration by 1 round (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the only way to cast this spell. You can disguise the casting of this spell by changing the verbal component to a rebuke in a language the target understands.

Duration: A few seconds (1 round), measured by the end of their turn, or until they are attacked.

Mend



You focus on a wound, saying an incantation, and when you run your hand across the broken skin it is left miraculously repaired. If you succeed, they immediately regain one Health. You can target yourself, or anyone that you can touch. You cannot target characters who you do not consider righteous

(whatever that means for the caster). If you cast this more than a dozen times in a day the strain will render you exhausted.

Difficulty: 8

Requires physical contact with the target who has not been magically healed in the last 24 hours.

Bonuses

+4 to increase the amount of Health regained by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 1 incense grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.

Bless



You choose one item you can touch, a worn garment, a weapon, a letter anything. You bestow it with protective energy so it will never fail whoever holds it. Whenever the item is involved in a roll the result of which is a 1, re-roll it. If the re-roll is also a 1, that is the final result. This doesn't apply if the character is using the item for something that goes directly against the caster's philosophy. And the item must be directly involved in the roll, blocking with a shield, attacking with a sword, or climbing with boots, etc.

Difficulty: 9

Requires physical contact with the object.

+2 if you don't have physical contact with the object but it is within 20-feet.

+5 if you don't have physical contact with the object but it is within you sight.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual which consumes 2 candles and 1 anointed oil grants a +4.

Duration: Until dispelled or you cast this spell on a new target.



Confession

You stare someone down and compel them to be honest. You must start the spell by accusing them of something specific. If they did do it, they feel immense remorse for it and must roll a Callous of 5 or higher to not blurt it a confession. For the rest of the spell's duration, when asked a question by you, they feel compelled to tell the truth, and must roll a Discipline of 4 or higher to even attempt a Deception roll. Iron-willed characters are immune to this spell.

Difficulty: 10

Requires eye contact with the target, who has not been targeted with this spell (regardless of success) in the past 24-hours.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the Callous required by 1 (repeatable).

+2 to increase the Discipline required by 1 (repeatable).

+3 to increase the duration by around 10 seconds, or time for 1 additional question.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. You can disguise the casting of this spell by changing the verbal component into an accusation in a language the target understands.

Duration: About 30 seconds, or enough time for 3 questions (including the first accusation).



Lay on Hands

You chant an incantation, over and over again, kneeling beside someone's broken, unconscious body. Somehow, through sheer force of will or the hand of god, all their wounds are healed. If you succeed, they immediately regain all Health. You cannot target yourself or characters who you do not consider righteous (whatever that means for the caster). This restores any reduced attributes from wounds, or conditions like chilled. It does not restore missing limbs or remove curses.

Difficulty: 11

Requires physical contact with an incapacitated target who has not been targeted with this spell (regardless of success) in the past 24-hours.

Bonuses

+3 to remove any fatigue from the target, refreshing them as if they just awoke from a night's sleep.

+4 to also restore the target to full Essence.

Casting Times

A minute-long incantation is the standard casting time. An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 2 anointed oil grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.



Divine Intervention

Having a momentary insight into the danger someone is about to be in. You fall to your knees and pray to a higher power to intervene. Name one character. The first time they would take damage during this spell's duration all of it is miraculously prevented. Some slip of the hand, blinding sunbeam, or unexpected distraction. This doesn't remove them from danger completely, just prevents the first instance of damage. You can target yourself, or anyone whose name you know, regardless of distance. You cannot target characters who you do not consider righteous (whatever that means for the caster).

Difficulty: 12

Requires you to not have cast this spell successfully in the past 24-hours.

-2 if you ground yourself (which you can do as a free action).

Bonuses

+2 to increase the duration by 1 round (repeatable).

+4 to increase the number of times damage is prevented to 2.

Casting Times

You can cast this as a free-action for a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 2 bone dust, and 2 holy water grants a +4.

Duration: 2 rounds (counted by the end of the target's turn).



Karmic Retribution

You offer a verbal warning to someone who is about to act out of aggression. You tell them the error of their ways and beg them to be righteous. If they do not heed your warning, the next time they deal damage to another person the same wounds miraculously appear on their own body. This damage ignores damage reduction, as it simply appears on their body. But if their attack had its damage reduced, they only take the reduced amount. This also applies any conditions like maimed, chilled, smoldering, etc. For the purposes of oath of pacifism, these wounds are considered self-inflicted.

Difficulty: 13

Requires the target to be in ear shot and for your warning to be in a language they understand.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the duration by 1 round (repeatable).

+4 to increase the number of times damage is transferred to 2.

Casting Times

You can cast this as a free-action for a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

You can disguise the casting of this spell by changing the verbal component into a warning in a language the target understands.

Duration: 2 rounds (counted by the end of the target's turn).

Exorcism

You incircle yourself and a possessed person in the ritual markings. If the spirit is not already in control of the host, it gains control as the spell begins to take effects. Even if the spell fails, this step occurs. After 1 hour, if they leave the ritual circle, the target will regain control of their body (unless they did not have it to begin with). As the spell continues, you know you are face to face with whatever spirit is haunting the target. They speak in the first person, and have full range of movement (so you should likely restrain them). At this stage, roll to see if you can strip the spirit from their host and how effectively you can redirect it. Without any bonuses, you barely manage to sever the bond between the spirit and host. The spirit can then choose to haunt the location where this took place, any object or any living character within 20-feet of the ritual circle except for you or your target.

Difficulty: 14

Requires the possessed person or haunted object to be inside the ritual circle. Or the ritual circle to be inside the haunted place.

Bonuses

+3 to force the spirit to haunt a new character of your choosing within 20-feet of the ritual circle (yourself included).

+4 to force the spirit to haunt the location where the ritual took place.

+5 to force the spirit to haunt an object of your choosing.

Casting Times

An hour-long ritual that consumes 2 charcoal and 4 incense and 5 holy water is the standard casting time.

Duration: Instant.



Miracle

You implore all that is good in this world, and beyond it. And through absolute faith and a complex ritual you harness goodness in its purest form, bathing your target in it. This spell can resurrect the target. As long as they were righteous and have been dead no longer than 1 week, they awake with 1 Health and no recollection of their experiences after death. Or this spell can restore to your target any missing senses. If they are blind, deaf or mute, they find that now they can now see, hear and speak. Or this spell makes the target's body full once more. If they have any missing appendages or cannot walk. Those capacities are returned to them, and they are restored to full health. Or this spell can repair any object that has been broken, even if not all the parts are present. As long as the object fits inside the ritual circle. Or this spell can allow you to speak with anyone who has died. The soul of that person is summoned (as long as they are not wandering as a spirit or specter). They can remain for up to 1 hour and can communicate with anyone present.

Difficulty: 15

Requires your target to lay in the ritual circle for the full casting time and for you to not have cast this spell successfully in the past 7-days.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal, 3 incense, 1 anointed oil, and 1 sanctified relic is the standard casting time.

Duration: Instant.

Shared Divinity Spells



Grant Aspect

You lay your hand on someone, entrusting them with a fraction of your animal soul. If willing they start to shift and change, taking on an aspect spell of your choice. You need at least a +3 Pyromancy/Divinity to grant Dragon's Scales/ Angel's Wings respectively. When you cast this spell, choose an aspect spell with a Difficulty equal to or less than the total of this spell. If you surpass it, you can apply bonuses like usual. They get the effects of that spell for the duration of this one.

Difficulty: 5

Requires you to have at least a +1 in Animalism, and physical contact with a willing target.

+2 if you don't have physical contact with the target (must still be within 20-feet).

Bonuses

+4 to increase the duration to 1 day.

+5 to increase the number of targets by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal, 1 anointed oil and 1 sample of the chosen animal grants a +4.

Duration: 1 hour, or until the target chooses the effects to end, or the caster targets someone else with this spell.

**True Shot**

You see an arrow about to be shot and you give it the wind's blessing. If the target arrow is shot in the next 10-seconds, the wind guides it toward its mark. The person shooting it rolls twice and takes the higher of the two results. Alternatively, you can cast this on an enemy's arrow to try and blow it off course. They roll twice and take the lower of the two results. You must decide to help or hinder as the spell is cast.

Difficulty: 6

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Aeromancy and be able to see the target arrow which must be within 40-feet.

Bonuses

+3 to increase or decrease the attack's total by 1 (repeatable).

+4 to increase the number of targets by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

Duration: 2 rounds (counted by the end of the caster's turn) or until you cast this spell on a different target.

**Calm**

You address the room and encourage everyone to think before they act and remain calm. Everyone within ear shot must roll a Callous of 5 or be calmed. This does not change their opinions about the topic, but they will pursue discourse and lawful channels instead of acting rashly through emotion. If someone is panicking or hysterical they are returned to normal state. Iron-willed characters are immune to this spell.

Difficulty: 9

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Arcana. Your targets must be able to hear you.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the Callous required by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. You can disguise the casting of this spell by changing the verbal component into a deescalating statement in a language the targets understand.

Duration: Instant.

Prophetic Flames

You burn an offering to your god and are shown a vision of the future. What the offering is should be determined by the nature of the chosen deity. Burning incense for Alric is the standard practice of the Order. But whatever it is, should be common enough to get anywhere, and cost around 10 silver pieces. The vision you glimpse is not destined to happen. Things can change based on chance and choice. What you see is just what your deity anticipates will happen next. This may show you the event of a war that will be sparked in a years' time, or the betrayal that will occur tomorrow. It is up to the deity to show you what they think is important. They might repeat themselves if nothing meaningful has changed since the last vision or they feel like a certain point needs to be emphasized. If you burn a grand offering you can request to see the future of something in particular you care about instead of what your deity wants you to see. Grand offerings must be worth 500 silver pieces or more, but aren't always available for purchase as they must be something meaningful to your deity. But the Order of Alric is prevalent enough to sell Sanctified Relics in most major cities.

Difficulty: 10

Requires you to have at least a +2 Pyromancy. You must be next to an open flame and cannot have successfully cast this spell in the last 24 hours.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A minute-long ritual that consumes 1 incense (or other offering) is the standard casting time.

Duration: A brief vision no longer than a minute.

Pyromancy



Pyromancy is the most dangerous and volatile of the schools, and therefore the most easily weaponized. But be careful. A pyromancer who gets carried away by the potential of an inferno can find themselves frantically battling it instead of their original enemy. Fire spreads whether the caster intended it to or not. As long your environment isn't a wet cave or barren beach, using pyromancy will likely start a few fires. You can intentionally start a fire by targeting a space with a spell that does fire damage. Or whenever a character dies from, or is missed by a spell that does fire damage, one space will start burning. Each round, the fire has a chance to spread to an adjacent space. The speed and direction of this should be determined by the Narrator. Each fire normally spreads a 5-foot zone in a random direction per round. But if it a highly flammable environment like a stable or dry thicket, it will spread a 5-foot zone in every direction.

If fire moves into someone's space, they must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 3 to leap into another space. Or if someone wants to cross a burning space, they must roll the same thing to avoid getting the smoldering condition. If they are trying to cross more than 5-feet of fire, they also take 1 fire damage.

Fire is incredibly lethal against armored combatants. The armor makes avoiding the flames very difficult and fire damage ignores armor completely. When hit with fire damage the target gets the smoldering condition, which does 1 damage to them each turn until they spend an action padding themselves. The smoldering conditions (like all conditions, grounded, stunned, poisoned, etc.) cannot stack. You can only reapply it to a target once they have lost the first instance of the condition.

Spark



Merely snapping your fingers creates a spark as if your thumb was flint and your hand was steel. This candle flame can be used to light flammable materials, straw, curtains, cigarettes and the like. But remember flames caused by this spark are not under your control unless otherwise enchanted. If you cast this while touching someone their clothing starts to smolder. They get the smoldering condition.

Difficulty: 3

Requires one hand free to snap.

Bonuses

+4 to increase the amount of flame produced to a torch-size ball hovering in your palm. It can be manipulated once before being expended.

Casting Times

After hitting an unarmed melee attack you can cast this as a free action with no penalty instead of doing damage.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.

Fire Walking



Through sheer force of will, and one-ness with the flame you can hold a flame to your skin and be left unscathed. It is easier to maintain on a localized part of your body or for a short time. For the duration of the spell, you are immune to all fire damage, this doesn't prevent your possessions from being burned or gaining the smoldering condition.

Difficulty: 4

-2 if you limit the effects to a single appendage instead of the whole body.

Bonuses

+2 increase the duration by 1 round (repeatable).

+6 increase the duration to 1 minute.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action with a penalty of -2. A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal, 1 oil, and 1 scales of any kind grants a +4.

Duration: 2 rounds (counted by the end of the caster's turn) or until the caster ends the effects as a free action.



Sheathe in Flame

You run your hand along a weapon and it becomes incased in fire. The flame burns without a fuel source and doesn't damage the weapon if it's made from metal. As much as the weapon is swung the fire holds on, trailing behind in arcs of orange and yellow. Whenever the target weapon hits a melee attack it deals 1 fire damage (which ignores damage reduction) in addition to any regular damage. While alight, the wield halves any Stealth rolls.

Difficulty: 5

Requires physical contact with the target weapon.

+2 if you don't have physical contact with the target (must still be within 20-feet).

Bonuses

+4 to increase the size of the flames, applying the smoldering condition (pg. 138) to anyone hit with the weapon.

+5 to increase the number of targets by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal, 1 oil, and 1 iron shavings grants a +4.

Duration: 5 minutes, or until the weapon is submerged, sheathed or the caster re-casts this spell.



Flare

A singular fire source suddenly bursts into a blinding light, consuming all its fuel in a second. If thrown up, the flare can be seen for miles around. If anyone (including you) is within 10-feet of it and looking at it, they are temporarily blinded until the end of their next turn. They get a -3 to Initiative and halve any attack rolls they make.

Difficulty: 6

Requires the target source of fire to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the fire source is from you.

Bonuses

+6 to increase the amount the time the spell blinds to 2 rounds.

Casting Times

If you target a flame that you threw this round, you can cast this as a free action with a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

Duration: Instant.



Extinguish

You focus on a burning space or smoldering person, and suffocate the flames with your will. This can affect one fire source, 5-foot zone that is on fire, or character with the smoldering effect and extinguish it. This does not dispel Sheathe in Flame.

Difficulty: 7

Requires your target to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the target is from you.

Bonuses

+1 to increase the number of target fire sources by 1 (repeatable).

+2 to increase the targeted area by 5-feet (repeatable).

+3 to increase the number of targeted characters by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 1 ash grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.



Manipulate Fire

You bend a fire source to your will. This isn't all fire around you, it must be a single torch, brazier, conjured flame, or 5-foot area of a burning environment. Once enchanted, the fire manipulation will last up for 2 sequential rounds. On each of the caster's turns (including the first) they can, as a free action, command the fire to spread in a particular direction. If it enters an occupied space, the occupant must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 5 or take 2 fire damage (ignoring damage reduction) and become smoldering. Alternatively, you can throw your manipulated flame at any character within 15-feet of the target source, but that extinguishes the original source and ends this spell's duration immediately. If you take damage during the duration, you must re-cast the spell to maintain concentration (but this is a free action without any penalty).

Difficulty: 8

Requires the target fire source to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the target is from you.

Bonuses

+2 increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).

+1 increase the distance the flame can be thrown by 5-feet (repeatable).

+4 cast this simultaneously on another fire source.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires 1 iron stake and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: 3 rounds (counted by the end of the caster's turn) or until the caster re-casts this spell on a different fire source.



Singing Explosion

A single flame in your environment sizzles, then pops loudly, exploding outward in a shower of sparks and embers. All characters (including you) within 5-feet of the fire source must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 4 or take 1 fire damage and become smoldering (see Spark).

Difficulty: 9

Requires the target fire source to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the water source is from you.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).

+4 to increase the fire damage by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

If you target a flame that you threw or manipulated this round, you can cast this as a free action with a penalty of -2. If the casting of this spell fails, the flame is harmlessly extinguished. A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

A five-minute long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 4 iron shavings grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.



Immolate

Target a character who is already smoldering from being hit with a fire spell or stumbling in a burning environment. You fan the flames with your mind, what was embers or licking flames becomes a blaze that threatens to consume them. They can no longer lose the smoldering condition from someone else putting them out. The only way to lose it is to drop and roll, grounding themselves. If they don't, they take a recurring damage at the end of each of their turns until they do.

Difficulty: 10

Requires the target to be smoldering and within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the target is from you.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the number of targets by 1 (repeatable).

+3 to fan the flames immediately doing 1 fire damage to them.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

Duration: Instant.

Molten Touch

One or both of your hands starts to heat up until they're glowing red hot like a forge's coals. Up to the middle of your forearms emanates a dull red light that offers meager illumination. They feel heavy, almost leaden, and are immune to fire and physical damage. Anything besides stone that you touch will start to burn or melt from the volcanic heat. It takes about 10 seconds to melt through a metal rod or shackles. If you touch someone (including hitting them with an unarmed melee attack) they take 1 fire damage (in addition to the melee damage) and become smoldering. You can parry with your molten hands like an armored gauntlet (+3 to parry). When you parry a bladed weapon, if you have not taken your turn yet, you can use your turn to grab the weapon and roll a Strength against the attacker. If you win you hold on to the blade long enough to melt through it, reducing it to a misshapen dagger.

Difficulty: 11

Bonuses

+2 to increase the duration by 1 round (repeatable).

Casting Times

You can cast this as a free action for a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 5 iron shavings grants a +4.

Duration: 4 rounds (counted by the end of the caster's turn) or until the caster chooses for the effect to end as a free action.

Seeking Embers

You point and several burning embers fly from your finger tip like lightning bugs. They dance around each other in a choreographed arc toward your targets. They can go around corners and seek out your targets regardless of where they are or how evasive they are. Choose a target that you have seen in the last 10 seconds. If they are within 50-feet of you, they must

roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 9 to avoid the homing projectiles. If they fail, they become smoldering. You cannot target the same character twice with the same casting of this spell.

Difficulty: 12

Bonuses

+2 to increase the number of targets by 1 (repeatable).

+2 to increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

Duration: Instant.



Fireball

You condense two fire sources into a fist sized ball and hurl it in a direction. Then it expands outward into a violent inferno of flame and force. Choose and extinguish 2 adjacent fire sources, pulling one into each hand and pressurizing them into each other. Next round, as your incantation is complete you throw the fire ball at a space you can see, up to 30-feet away. Everyone within 5-feet of that space must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 6 to dodge out of the radius (or behind cover if available). If they fail, they take 2 fire damage and become smoldering. If the targeted space is occupied that character must Roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 8 or take 3 fire damage and become smoldering. If they succeed, they must dive 10-feet in a direction of their choice to avoid the brunt of the explosion, they are grounded and become smoldering.

Difficulty: 13

Requires 2 fire sources to be within 5-feet.

Bonuses

+1 to increase the range you can throw the fireball by 5-feet (repeatable).

+3 to increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A two-round incantation is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

Duration: Instant.



Wall of Fire

You manipulate the fire around you up into a burning barrier 15-feet wide and 10-feet tall, 1 foot thick. It continues to burn for the duration regardless if it is runs out of fuel and does not spread naturally. If anyone crosses through the wall, they take 2 fire damage and become smoldering. You can place the wall anywhere within 15-feet of you, facing any direction. If any of its spaces are occupied, the occupants must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 3 to dodge to either side of it.

Difficulty: 14

Requires the target source of fire to be within 20-feet and at least 15-feet wide which is extinguished.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the fire source is from you.

Bonuses

+2 to extend either the height or width by 5-feet (repeatable).

+3 to increase the duration by 1 minute (repeatable).

+3 to increase the intensity of the fire. Anyone who passes through it is also affected by the Immolate spell.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1 round) is the standard casting time. A two-round incantation that consumes 2 iron shavings grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 2 charcoal and 2 iron shavings grants a +4.

Duration: 5 minutes or until the caster ends the effects as a free action or re-casts this spell.



Wildfire

You fan the flames into a raging wave of destruction. A half-mile wide wildfire that marches much more quickly than normal fires spread. It burns all forests and wooden structures in its path and all stone structures must be evacuated. It burns for a day, covering several miles, and may cause other fires to start and burn long after the duration has ended.

Difficulty: 15

Requires you to be within 500-feet of fire that covers at least 50-feet.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A four-hour long ritual that consumes 2 charcoal, 5 ash and 1 dragon's heart is the standard casting time.

Duration: 1 day.

Shared Pyromancy Spells

Smoke Screen



Dense white smoke billows from a near-by fire source. The cloud starts as a 5-foot cube and expands by 5-feet in all directions at the end of each round. It lasts for the full duration of this spell but cannot expand further than 20-feet in any direction from the original fire source. No one can see into or through the cloud and everyone inside it (including you) can't see more than 5-feet away. But an Intelligence + Perception of 6 may be able to give you a glimpse into or general sense of what is happening inside. If the fire source is extinguished, the cloud stops growing and dissipates after 3 rounds.

Difficulty: 6

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Aeromancy and for the target fire source to be within 20-feet.

+1 for each additional 5-feet the target is from you.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the maximum radius by 5-feet (repeatable).

+5 to control the cloud. At the end of each of your round you may choose where the smoke expands and what areas are covered, but the smoke can't be split into two clouds.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

Duration: 5 minutes or until the fire source is extinguished.



Mesmerizing Lights

You conjure a cluster of curious blue lights that float anywhere you can see. If anyone investigates them, or looks into them for longer than a few seconds, they must roll an Intelligence of 5 or be mesmerized. If someone knows how to cast this spell or saw you casting it, they get +3 to the roll. Once mesmerized they halve all Perception rolls and count as surprised if combat is instigated. They will follow the orbs wherever they go for the duration, but not off cliffs or into harm. On your turn, as a free action you can move the lights up to 20-feet in any direction (including up) as long as they remain in your sight. If someone has succeeded the Intelligence roll in the past 24-hours, they are immune to the effects. The effects can be broken by them taking damage or if someone physically shakes them out of it (which is an action). If you take damage while this spell is

active you must re-cast the spell to maintain concentration (but this is a free action without any penalty).

Difficulty: 10

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Arcana.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the Intelligence required by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

A five-minute ritual that consumes 1 will-o-the-wisp sample grants a +4.

Duration: 5 minutes or until the caster end the effects as a free action or re-casts this spell.



Holy Fire

You press your hands together in an expression of faith.

Speaking soft words of a severe request, you must declare a direction on the first round of this spell's incantation. When your hand's part, a sweeping inferno is unleashed. Brilliant white flames roll outward in the chosen direction, covering a cone 30-feet wide and 20-feet long. The fire doesn't blacken or char the environment and doesn't start any smaller fires. It washes harmlessly over characters you consider righteous. All characters who you do not consider righteous must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 6 to dodge out of the area of effect. If they fail, they take 3 fire damage (ignoring damage reduction) and become smoldering. If they succeed but have no adjacent space that they can dodge to that is outside of the cone, they take 2 fire damage. Undead take double damage.

Difficulty: 13

Requires you to have at least +3 in Divinity and have your hands free to move in front of you.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).

+3 to increase the length and width of the cone by 5-feet (repeatable).

Casting Times

A two-round incantation is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 4 iron shavings and 2 anointed oil grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.



Incinerate Soul

You reach out, grabbing someone by their neck or face. You muster all of the destructive energy you can. This strain either deals 1 damage to you, or depletes a Spirit Vial you have on your person. Then you release it in a single devastating surge. The target's eyes erupt into flame, killing them instantly. The soul is not released, it is incinerated. Even a miracle cannot contact or resurrect them. When the spell is finished, all that remains is a statue of ash where your target stood, that starts to slowly float away on the breeze.

Difficulty: 15

Requires you to have at least a +4 Necromancy and physical contact with the target's head.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

After hitting an unarmed Critical Attack, you can cast this as a free action with no penalty instead of doing damage.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

Duration: Instant.

Aeromancy



Aeromancy lets you ascend to the clouds and look down upon the earth to which you were once bound. You can use storms to strike down those that oppose you, but be warned, lightning is a fickle mistress and those scored by her rarely live to speak of it. Storm Stones are magically charged crystals that are very useful for

Aeromancers. Normally, anyone struck down by lightning must be visible from above. But if you hold up your hand, you can call the lightning to you and channel it through the stone in a direction of your choice. The stones, that look like foot-long pointed amethysts are brittle and whenever one is used it has a 5% chance of breaking. Artificers have made several magical items that incorporate Storm Stones into their designs. They can be used exactly like Storm Stones but with a few additional properties.

Storm Scepter

A 3-foot-long steel rod with a Storm Stone mounted on the tip. It was designed for battle casters. It has the stats of a short-spear, but when the wielder hits with it they may cast Shocking Touch, with a +3, through the scepter as a free action. This does use the Storm Stone and therefore, the chance for it breaking must be rolled. If it does, treat it as a short-spear until a fresh stone can be slotted into place.

Staff of the Tempest

A full quarterstaff of gnarled wood that clutches a Storm Stone. It is a legendary artifact that cannot be reproduced. Enchanted by one of the first Aeromancers and passed down through a long line of apprentices, its Storm Stone can never break. The Tempest Staff is infused with primordial energy and grants its wielder a +2 to all Aeromancy spells (but cannot be used in addition to a totem). Also, they get a +8 when casting the Flight spell as long as they are in a storm. And they can re-roll the first 1 when casting the Redirect Surge spell.



Gust

You shove your hand outward and a concussive blast of wind follows a second later. All objects are tossed back from the force and all characters in a cone 15-feet wide and 10-feet long must roll a Strength of 4 as they are buffeted by the wind. If they fail, they stumble backward 5 feet. If they roll a 1, they tumble to their feet and are grounded.

Difficulty: 3

Requires you to push outward with at least one hand.

-2 if you are in a storm.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the Strength required by 1.

+5 to increase the Strength required by 2 and the amount targets are pushed back to 10-feet.

+8 to increase the Strength required by 3, the amount characters are pushed back to 15-feet, and ground all characters who fail the Strength roll, regardless if the failure was from a 1 or not.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

Duration: Instant.

Redirect Surge

Unlike pyromancers who can grant themselves immunity to what they manipulate, Aeromancers handle an even more volatile force than fire. Trying to stoically weather a storm will leave you dead. You must act as a conduit and let it flow through you. Complete immunity to electricity can only be obtained through powerful enchantments, but storm casters have created this spell to mitigate the risk of a rogue bolt.

When you would take lighting damage, you may cast this spell as a free action, if you succeed you can redirect the damage to someone else within 15-feet. They must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 6 or take 3 lighting damage and be Stunned (pg. 138) unless they roll a Strength of 8.

Difficulty: 4

Requires a living character within 15-feet as your target.

Bonuses

+5 to hold the lightning for 1 round. On your next turn, if you cast a spell that does lightning damage, spend the charge to increase its damage by 3. If you are struck with a conductive weapon before then, you may spend the charge to deal 3 lightning damage to them (this doesn't prevent their damage).

Casting Times

A free action when you would take lightning damage is the standard casting time.

Duration: Instant.

**Slow Fall**

As you concentrate your fall decelerates to a leisurely decent like a leaf gliding in the wind. You can target yourself, or another person or object within line of sight. For the duration, the target descends about two feet a second and doesn't take any damage from falling. If you cast on a target who has already fallen a great distance, there is some whiplash from the de-escalation but no damage. If the spell fades before contact with the ground, only calculate falling damage from the height you were when the spell faded. Because you are suspended in the air you halve dodge rolls. You cannot move any direction intentionally or use this spell to glide. The fall's trajectory is the same, just slower, and harmless.

Difficulty: 5

Requires line of sight with the target.

+3 if the target is heavier than an adult human.

+8 if the target is as heavy as several tons of falling rock.

Bonuses

+1 to increase the duration by 1 round (repeatable).

+4 to make the effects unable to be ended early by the target.

+5 to increase the number of targets effected by the spell by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

You can cast this as a free action with a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation that requires a feather grants a +3.

Duration: 2 rounds (counted by the end of the target's turn) or until the caster or target ends the effects as a free action.

**Change Weather**

The skies above you change to reflect your mood. At first, you cast this spell without even being aware of your influence. But as you master Aeromancy, you can make the weather bend to your will. This is an aura that follows you for the duration, effecting about a half-mile around you. You can clear the skies to make travel easier and more comfortable. You can cause a thunderstorm which provides lightning strikes for your Manipulate Lightning spells. You can cause a dense off fog to

roll in around you that obscures vision past 50-feet. Or any other weather condition approved by your Narrator.

Difficulty: 6

Requires you to be able to see the sky.

-2 if you are calm trying to clear the skies.

-2 if you are mad and trying to call in a storm.

-2 if you are sad and trying to call in fog.

Bonuses

+2 increase the duration by 1 hour (repeatable)

+6 increase the duration to 1 day.

Casting Times

You can cast this as a minute-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal at a penalty of -4.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal is the standard casting time.

Duration: 1 hour, or until the casters chooses the effects to end as an action. If they do, the weather slowly returns to normal.



Favorable Winds

You persuade the natural winds to hurry your vessel to its destination. Your sails are always full and the winds seem to change with your course. Reduces naval travel time by 20% as long as your vessel is wind powered. This effect can stack with Sway Currents.

Difficulty: 7

Requires you to be on the target ship.

Bonuses

+3 to reduce the travel time by an additional 10%.

Casting Times

A minute-long incantation is the standard casting time.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 5 feathers grants a +4.

Duration: 1 day.



Manipulate Lightning

You feel the energy in the air, gathering. Right before lightning would strike, you grab the reins and send it to a spot of your choosing. A single target within 40-feet of you (inside the storm and visible from above) must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 6 or take 3 lightning damage and be Stunned (pg. 138) unless they roll a Strength of 8. If the thunderstorm is natural or was caused by Change Weather a lightning strike occurs every 1d4-1 rounds. When a lightning strike is available, the Narrator

announces it at the beginning of the round and only the first caster to successfully cast Manipulate Lightning will be able to.

Difficulty: 8

Requires your target to be inside a storm a visible from the sky. Or, if you meet the above requirements and are holding a Storm Stone you can target anyone within 40-feet who you can see.

Bonuses

- +2 increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).
- +3 increase the damage by 1 and the Strength required by 1 (repeatable).
- +4 if using a Storm Stone, target up to 2 different characters in a straight 40-foot line.
- +6 if using a Storm Stone, chain up to 2 targets, one within 20-feet of you and one within 20-feet of the first target.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

Duration: Instant.



Levitate

You harden the air beneath your feet, allowing you to walk on it as if it were a staircase that leads wherever you want it to go. This requires constant concentration and time to solidify so you must reduce your speed to 1 while in the air. If you take damage during the duration, you must re-cast the spell to maintain concentration (but this is a free action without any penalty).

Difficulty: 9

Bonuses

- +2 to increase speed that you can move while levitating, but it cannot exceed your natural running Speed stat.
- +4 to increase the duration to 1 hour.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action for a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal and 4 feathers grants a +4

Duration: 5 minutes or until the caster ends the effects as a free action.



Thunder Clap

You clap your hands and a sonic boom resounds. All characters within ear shot are deafened for 15 seconds (3 rounds). All characters in a 30-foot radius (besides yourself) must roll a Strength of 5 to not be Stunned and skip their next turn. If a Strength of 1 is rolled, they fall to their knees grounding themselves. Characters who covered their ears as an action prior to this spell's effects roll with a +3, but they cannot do any other action while covering their ears. Deaf and deafened characters are immune to this spell.

Difficulty: 10

Requires you to clap with both your hands.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the Strength required by 1 and the duration of the deafened effect (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation that consumes 1 gold dust grants a +3.

Duration: Instant.



Shocking Touch

You focus and charge your body with a huge amount of energy. The next person that you touch (including you hitting them with an unarmed melee attack) takes 3 lightning damage and is Stunned unless they roll a Strength of 8. Additionally, if they are touching anyone while you affect them with this spell, those characters are affected as well.

Difficulty: 11

Requires physical contact with the target.

Bonuses

+3 increase the damage by 1 and the Strength required by 1 (repeatable).

+3 to still effect the target if they successfully parried with a conductive weapon, shield or unarmed.

Casting Times

After hitting an unarmed melee attack you can cast this as a free action with no penalty instead of doing damage.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation that consumed 1 gold dust grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.

Whirlwind



You swirl the wind between the hands, spinning faster and faster until it tears off in front of you, a miniature tornado with the force to throw people and obstacles into the air. You must declare the direction when you begin the incantation and when you finish it the whirlwind moves out in a 40-foot straight (and 5-foot wide) line in that direction. Everyone in its path must roll an Agility + Acrobatics of 8 (-1 for each 10-feet away from the caster they are) to dodge out of its path. If they fail, they are picked up by the whirlwind. They are grounded and must roll a d6.

*On a 1, they are carried to the end of the line, take 3 damage.
On a 2, they are tossed 10-feet to the right and take 2 damage.
On a 3 they are tossed 10-feet to the left and take 2 damage.
On a 4 they are tossed 5-feet to the right and take 1 damage.
On a 5 they are tossed 5-feet to the left and take 1 damage.
On a 6 they are tossed into the air, and land back where they were, taking 1 damage.*

All damage caused by this spell is from falling and ignores damage reduction.

Difficulty: 12

Requires the use of both hands.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the Agility required by 1 (repeatable).

+2 to subtract 1 from the d6 roll of each target (repeatable).

Casting Times

A two-round incantation is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal, 4 feathers and 2 gold dust, grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.

Flight



As you concentrate the air coalesces around you, lifting you up and carrying you in any direction you choose. For the duration of this spell, you have a Speed of 6 and can move omnidirectionally. If traveling great distances by flight, you travel 3-times as fast as you would on horseback, and can save even more time by avoiding obstacles and non-direct routes. If you take damage during the duration, you must re-cast the spell to maintain concentration (but this is a free action without any penalty).

Difficulty: 13

Bonuses

+2 to increase the duration to 1 hour.

+4 to increase the duration to 1 day.

Casting Times

You can cast this on yourself as a free action for a penalty of -2.

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time.

A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires a Griffon feather and consumes 1 charcoal, 3 gold dust grants a +4.

Duration: 5 minutes or until the caster ends the effects as a free action.

Lightning Storm

The sky above you dramatically darkens as clouds gather and churn. Soon it starts to crackle with energy, caged within, ready to break out. You conjure a small, but intense, localized storm in a half-mile radius around you. Rain comes down in sheets, providing puddles and shallow rivers of run off.

Everyone must shout over the thunder. And lightning crackles constantly, much more often than natural storms. It provides 1d4-1 lightning strikes every round. Any that are not manipulated hit a random target at the end of the round. They have a 50% chance of striking the ground, or trees, and the other 50% chance should be distributed between all characters within 50-feet (including the caster).

Difficulty: 14

-2 if you are furious or distraught.

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

A two-round incantation is the standard casting time.

A minute-long ritual that consumes 2 gold dust grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires 4 gold stakes and consumes 1 storm stone grants a +4.

Duration: 1 hour or until the caster ends the effects as an action.

Tornado

A twisting column of wind snakes down from the sky at a point you can see within 500-feet. It kicks up dust and debris in a cloud hundreds of feet wide. You can control the tornado with your mind, moving it across the landscape that you can see, or sending it off on a path of destruction in a certain direction.

Anyone in the outside cloud is buffeted by winds and cannot see more than 15-feet in any direction. Anyone on the ground in the central 100-feet, must roll a Strength of 7 every round or be affected by Whirlwind every round. Anyone trying to fly in this area must roll a Strength of 6 to not be pulled inward. Anyone caught in the very center of the vortex is presumably killed, sometimes being thrown hundreds of feet. Wooden structures in this area are demolished completely, ripped off of their foundations and tossed like leaves in the wind.

Difficulty: 15

Bonuses

None.

Casting Times

An hour-long ritual that consumes 3 charcoal and 5 griffon feathers is the standard casting time.

Duration: 1 hour.

Shared Aeromancy Spells

Whispering Breeze



You entrust a message to the wind and it carries your words over miles, seeking out the chosen recipient. When you cast this spell, you speak a short message (10 words or less) and clearly picture the face of the person you wish to contact. You must entrust your message to one of the four winds, guessing which of the cardinal directions the target is in. If you guess correctly, the target hears your words whispered in your voice, but everyone around them just hears a feint breeze. If you guess incorrectly your message is never delivered. This spell gives no indication if it was or not. The winds carry your message at 50-miles an hour so there might be a delay over great distances, and cannot carry a message more 100-miles.

Difficulty: 4

Requires you to have at least a +1 in Arcana, be able to speak, know what the target looks like and have not cast this spell in the last 12-hours.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the maximum range by 100-miles (repeatable).
+10 to have no maximum range.

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal grants a +2. An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.



Howling Wind

The wind picks up, shrieking its way in a cardinal direction of your choice. It's more than just a howling wind, it carries an unnatural scream, a disturbing sound that makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. Everyone within one mile of you (in the cardinal direction of your choice) must roll a Courage of 4 or turn around. If they are already moving away from you, they must double their efforts, not wanting to learn what it was that make such an awful noise. If used in battle, everyone in earshot who is not allied with you must, for one round (counted by the end of their turn) roll a Courage of 4 when trying to move toward an enemy in battle, or attack. Iron-willed characters are immune to this spell.

Difficulty: 11

Requires you to have at least a +2 in Necromancy and have no cast this spell in the past 12-hours.

Bonuses

+3 to increase the required Courage roll by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A few-second incantation (1-round) is the standard casting time. A minute-long incantation grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that consumes 1 charcoal, 3 feathers and 1 pale horse hair grants a +4.

Duration: Instant.



Blizzard

Biting winds begin to whip around you as the temperature plummets. Soon, snow starts to fall obscuring vision past 30-feet in a half-mile radius. This intense, localized blizzard is no normal storm. You stand at the very center, high-speed winds encircling you. In a 10-foot radius around you, at the eye of the storm, no one (including yourself) is affected by the extreme cold. The storm follows you the best it can, but cannot move more than 10-feet each turn (so neither can you if you hope to stay sheltered). Everyone within 30-feet of this safe area is in the most extreme section. At the end of their turn, they must roll a Strength of 5 or become Chilled and roll a lower die of Agility until they warm up. Everyone further away than 30-feet, but still within the half-mile radius must roll a Strength of 5 every minute (including as soon as the spell begins) or become Chilled. No one can lose multiple ranks of Agility from this spell alone, but it does stack with other spells which Chill. A Chilled character can warm up by ending their turn in a warm

environment such as a cozy inn, beside a brazier or a summer day. But the inside safe-zone is not warm enough to do so.

Difficulty: 14

Requires you to have at least a +3 in Hydromancy.

+5 if in a hot environment such as a desert or summer day.

Bonuses

+2 to increase the radius of the inner safe-zone by 5-feet (repeatable).

+2 to extend the most extreme conditions outward by 10-feet (repeatable)

+3 to increase the Strength required by 1 (repeatable).

Casting Times

A two-round incantation is the standard casting time.

A minute-long ritual that consumes 2 silver dust grants a +2.

An hour-long ritual that requires 4 silver stakes and consumes 1 charcoal grants a +4

Duration: 1 hour or until the caster ends the effects as an action.



Meteor

You align the stars into a prophecy of devastation. If your ritual is not interrupted, you call down a flaming meteor from the heavens. It strikes a location within 1-mile of your ritual circle. The damage caused by it is not mathematically quantifiable. It can incinerate a castle and everyone in it, or take a bite out of a city. The shockwave from it can be felt for miles around and fires and sure to spread.

Difficulty: 15

Requires you to have at least a +4 in Pyromancy and be able to see the place where the meteor will strike.

Bonuses

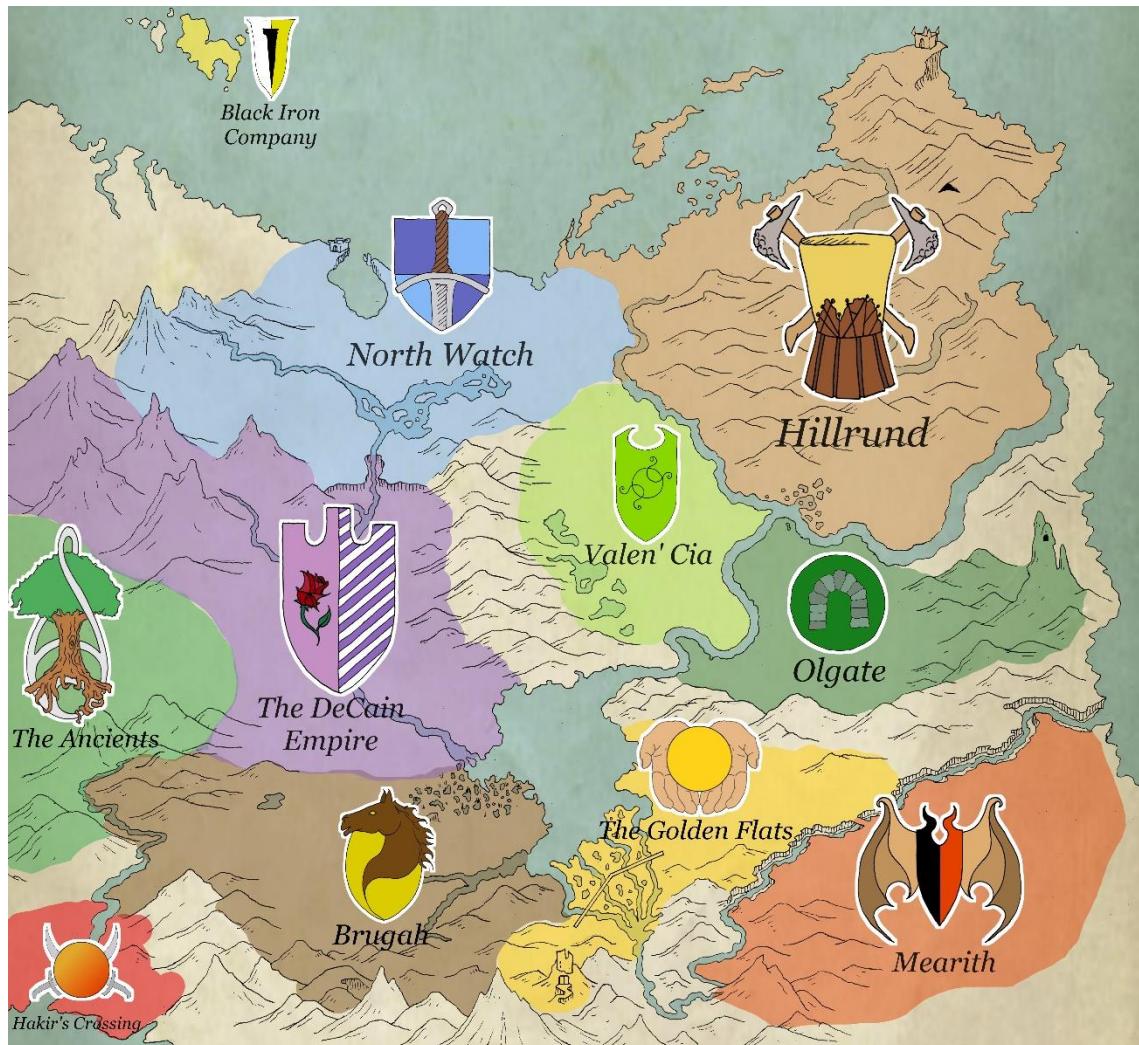
None.

Casting Times

A four-hour long ritual that consumes 2 charcoal, 4 iron stakes and 1 fallen star is the standard casting time.

Duration: Instant.

The World of Nell



Welcome to the world of Nell. Named after the river that runs through the continent's heart, Nell is much larger than what is shown on this map. Depicted above are the Civil Kingdoms, a temperate region nestled between the Frozen Expanses to the north-west and the Endless Sands to the south-east.

The DeCain Empire is a powerful nation founded on both chivalry and ruthless ambition. It has conquered Brugah through

war, enveloped the Golden Flats through marriage, and it doesn't plan on slowing its crusade of unification.

Brugah is a war-scarred land, whose people fought for nearly a century to oppose subjugation. They eventually fell, and became a duchy of the Empire, but their rebellious spirit burns to this day.

The Golden Flats are fertile plains that were first settled by a religious prophet. Now, the Emperor's Castellan reigns over them in a colossal tower of his own design.

Valen' Cia is a culturally rich democracy which offers political asylum to all. It governs the rolling highlands of the northern Greenvale. To the south the forests are protected by the Witch Queens of Olgate, a line of powerful sorceresses, who dictate all their subjects must live in harmony with nature.

North Watch's cold coastline is home to a practical and rugged sea-faring people. Descended from Giant slayers, they are renowned warriors, shipwrights and sword smiths.

Mearith is the last fragment of a collapsed civilization. Built on a natural bridge across an otherwise impassable canyon, everything is for sale in its bustling markets. It is a city of unparalleled opportunity and cruelty.

And there are many lands to explore outside of the self-titled "Civil Kingdoms."

Hillrund is a brutal land of roaming tribes. Money is worthless, only strength has any value there. Warring giants used to fight for territory there, but the tide has turned and now humans have driven giants to the brink of extinction.

Little is known about the Great Wood. The Empire has burned and harvested many miles of the mysterious forest only to scratch its surface. The powerful and elusive Ancients inhabit it, and claim to have since humankind was in its infancy.

The following chapters will elaborate on these places. Their histories and cultures and the points of interest found within them. But some locations have been left intentionally vague, just a name on a map to inspire you. A perfect place to insert your ideas and creations, so you can tell your own stories and make the World of Nell your own.



Olgate

The Greenvale was humanity's cradle. A verdant, fertile land where man first domesticated beasts, organized into settlements and founded religions. Its southern half is forested in ancient, mossy trees. Rain is frequent and the vegetation lush. The plants and animals are protected by royal decree so wildlife has grown abundant and bold. Large packs of leaping deer are a common sight, and rare flora flourishes there. At the forest's heart, is the oldest city in the Civil Kingdoms, continuously inhabited for over two millennia: Olgate.

Founding of Olgate

Founded before the invention of writing, little is known for certain about Olgate's earliest years. We assume that for long-lost reasons, people gathered around the megalithic stone arch which still stands to this day. Obviously beyond the abilities of primitive humans, the titular Old Gate's origins are shrouded in mystery and religious proclamations. But it is speculated that roughly 2000 years ago the humans of the Greenvale built a circular wall to fend off raids from Hillrund. Naturally, they incorporated the gate which was already standing, and so, Olgate was born. The wall has been expanded and fortified many times throughout the city's long history, but has fallen into disrepair since the ascension of the Witch Queens. They assure their inhabitants that magical barriers will protect them in the case of a siege, but that claim is yet to be tested.

Government of Olgate

Olgate is a theocracy. Its ruler, the Witch Queen, derives her sovereignty from the tenets of the Allway and her unparalleled magical prowess. But it has not always been this way. For its first 1200 years, the city was a feudal monarchy.

The last king of Olgate was Cicel, the Penny King. He ordered the construction of a mighty aqueduct that would support his fountains and bathhouses. He wanted a monument that would outlive him by centuries. But he bankrupted the kingdom before its completion. His people were smothered by taxes and close to rioting when a young woman approached the castle. Her name was Janys Starborn and she proclaimed publicly that Cecil's greed and gluttony made him unfit to lead Olgate any longer. Before his knights could silence her, she performed a great miracle. A natural spring welled up from the ground at her feet and burst through the cobbles of the courtyard. She told the people that she was a prophet, and that her gods would provide for them in a way the kings of Olgate never had.

King Cicel was tossed out on the street, penniless. His aqueduct was abandoned, unfinished. Its crumbling silhouette still looms over the city's eastern wall. The people of Olgate had as much pure water as they needed. They built a fountain around the spring and named it Elden's Tears, after the god that had saved them. The first thing Janys Starborn did as ruler, was write the tenets of her religion into law. The Allway is a spiritual, ethical and legal code. She preached that her subjects should live in harmony with each other, and with nature. It became illegal to harvest trees for their lumber or animals for their meat. As well as many other radical reforms. She declared that anyone who was persecuted for witchcraft elsewhere would have sanctuary in her city.

She ruled graciously for 200 years before choosing a successor, Hepta. According to the legend, she didn't die, but walked up into the sky one evening, returning to the stars from whence she came. Ever since, Olgate has been ruled by a single female figurehead, each chosen by the last for their wisdom and faith in the Allway.

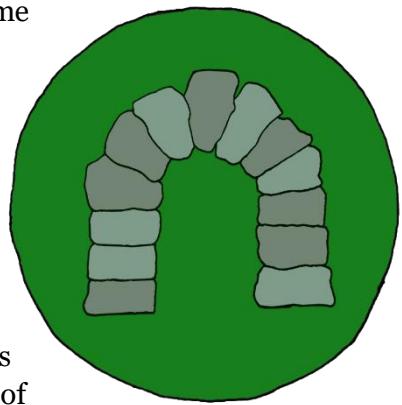
Culture of Olgate

Olgate is a deeply religious place. Nearly everyone raised there follows the Allway. They don't eat meat and even killing an insect is considered very bad luck. But regardless of if you personally hold the beliefs, you must adhere to the laws of the realm which are based on the Allway's tenets. Hunting anywhere is considered poaching, and is not only a crime against the queen's authority, but the gods themselves. Felling trees is also forbidden. Families only heat their hearths with the broken branches and rotten trunks that can be found on the forest floor. Fortunately, winters are very mild in the Green Vale. If proper documentation is provided, one can import lumber from outside the queen's domain, but doing so is prohibitively expensive. The vast majority of buildings are made from stone with thatched or slate roofs.

The Allway is a naturalistic, polytheistic religion that deifies the seasons, and the cyclical nature of life. There are four deities, each one being the primary figure of worship during their season.

Elden, the Creator, is the deity of spring, birth and creativity. Elden is depicted as both a young, vivacious goddess, and an old bearded god who imparts inspiration. Elden's day is a city-wide celebration of new-life, which is held whenever the trees show the first leaves of spring. Everyone wears garlands of flowers and it is considered very good luck to have been conceived on Elden's Day.

Alric, the Protector, is the deity of summer, family and strength. Alric is depicted as both a motherly goddess of cultivation, and an encouraging god who wants to see everyone reach their full potential. There's a proverb of the Allway that says, "You have to start in spring, and end in winter, but it's up to you how long your summer will last." Alric attempts to keep everyone in their prime forever. But eventually all things must fall, as is the natural order. What has been planted must eventually be harvested.



Ultar, the Destroyer, is the deity of autumn, the harvest and inevitable change. Ultar is depicted as a gathering storm or a marching army of torches. No one can predict when, or how Ultar will come for you, but running from him is as futile as trying to outrun a storm.

Ultar's Day is a great harvest festival where everyone feasts with their families and friends. The point is to enjoy life, because you never know how long you have left. Unlike other religions, the Allway doesn't villainize death. Ultar is not some foreboding wraith, he a necessary and natural force. The Allway teaches you to not fear death itself, but to fear not reaching your full potential before you meet it.

Once destroyed, or irreparably changed, all things belong to Ithil, the Preserver. Ithil is the goddess of winter, burial and memories. She is depicted as both an aged crone who remembers all things as they once were, and an inquisitive young boy who knows nothing of the world.

Ithil's Night is a time for somber reflection in the dead of winter. You don't drink or revel, instead paying respect to those who are no more. The practice doesn't promote sadness, just reverence for what has been.

Each god has a circle of priests and priestesses that serve an important role in Olgate society. Elden's circle, the Wardens, travel the Green Vale protecting nature from poachers and loggers, and restoring balance to habitats which have been disrupted. If any animal population has grown too great and is hurting farms, a Warden will be sent to lead the pack into the woods where it can sustain itself off the bounty of the trees. Or if a predator is getting too close to civilization, a Warden can befriend it through magical means and take it to the Queen's Menagerie. The palace of Cedar Rest has a private garden, where all manner of ferocious beasts can somehow coexist. The leader of the Wardens, Qurin Fairgrove looks after this preserve personally and trains her acolytes in Animalism and Geomancy.

The Goodfellows are those who dedicate their life to Alric. In stark comparison to the severe theologians of The Order of Alric (the Empire's official religion) the Goodfellows are normally quite jovial. They are encouraged to lead by example, supporting large

families and serving as community leaders. Most villages have a Goodfellow, who is granted some authority by the Queen and the respect of his countrymen. Small disputes, marital affairs and personal feuds will be taken to the local Goodfellow before getting the guard involved. Some devout Goodfellows practice Divinity and Hydromancy magic, but being magically active is not a requirement for the position. The Goodfellows are the least centralized of the four congregations. They have no official head, but Brewmaster Jon Merrifist is a well-known Goodfellow who makes beer and bread for the poor at his Millflour Monastery.

Ultar's Harbingers are now more an academic institution than a religious one. The Harbingers were once a powerful order of Aeromancers capable of flight and sending messages across great distances. They were tasked with warning the city of invasion, or in the rare times of drought, traveling from farm to farm calling forth the rains. But now, after the invention of Harken's Horn, any common soldier can use the magical instrument to warn the outer holds of a hill tribe crossing the river. So, over the generations, the Harbingers have morphed in purpose. Now, their primary goal is finding magically gifted potential heirs and grooming them for succession at the Spire. Any young woman who shows exceptional magical potential has the chance of receiving a coveted invitation to the Spire, where they will be taught sorcery, law, history, etiquette, and be refined into the makings of a queen. Any young man who shows the same potential can fulfill the antiquated duties of the Harbingers. Although there is no written law ensuring this, every Witch Queen since its founding has studied there. Now, instead of foretelling storms or war, the Harbingers of the Spire foretell who will next be the Witch Queen of Olgate.

Founder's Knoll is a sprawling graveyard right outside of the city's walls. It contains grand mausoleums for the Witch Queens of the past and plaques for paupers alike. It is tended by the Keepers, who care for the elderly, recording their lives and helping to usher them into Ithil's eternal care. Some of the Keepers practice necromancy and travel the Greenvale helping put to rest troublesome spirits. They commune with the deceased and resolve whatever issue is keeping the spirit tethered to our world.

Summer Campaigns

No feud has lasted as long as the one between Olgate and Hillrund. The farmland on the southern side of the river has always been more productive, and raids from the hills have been happening for longer than records have been kept. If the centuries of bad blood didn't make diplomacy hard enough, both sides seem perfectly content with the feud. Olgate has no reason to displace their citizens and give up good farm land when they can protect their borders through force. And the chieftains of Hillrund couldn't possibly trade fairly for the resources they raid each year. There are countless goods and luxuries that are only manufactured in the Civil Kingdoms, but none are more important to Hillrund as forged steel.

Alric's Day marks the start of the Summer Campaigns. On the first hot day of the year, the queen pays all the taverns and wine-houses in the city to give out free drink. A grand tournament is held for the knights, and the peasants compete in contests of strength. This fanfare is in hopes of boosting recruitment for the Summer Campaigns. Every year, the Knights of Olgate lead a great host into Hillrund as a show of force. This tradition was started three-hundred years ago, after a particularly disastrous raid from Hillrund, when the city was nearly sacked. The Knights of Olgate, who take an oath to protect the city, had become complacent after years of manageable relations with the tribes, and were woefully unprepared for the investable assault. So, the Summer Campaigns ensure Olgate's military is always prepared, and they don't let the hill tribes forget the city's true might.

Olgate

Government: Theocracy

Ruler: Witch Queen Shannah

Stability: ★★★★

Might: ★★★

Wealth: ★★★

Main Exports: Herbs, Fruit, Potions and Enchanted Items.

Stereotypes: Nature worshipping traditionalists who are stuck in the past.



Olgate

The city of Olgate is home to many sights that are renowned throughout the Civil Kingdoms. The titular stone arch is the most obvious of them, standing over 50-feet tall and wide enough to let two wagons pass abreast. Although a heavy guard is always present, there is no wooden gate that can be closed, installing one would be seen as modifying a relic. So, unlike most other cities which have a curfew, travelers seeking respite can arrive at any hour.

The palace of the Witch Queen is also a marvel. Cedar Rest sits atop the city's highest hill. The walk up toward it is lined with beautiful mansions of stone, with expensive wooded accents. This district, known as the Patron Slopes is home to Olgate's wealthiest citizens. The castle itself is not nearly as large as the DeCain's Royal Palace, but careful craftsmanship has been poured into every decorated gable and balcony. And the throne room is a sight to behold. Tall windows flood the room with light and the vaulted ceiling is supported by living cedar trees whose branches have been magically manipulated into support beams. The throne itself is also alive. A squat, ancient cedar whose roots have grown into a regal seat. These miracles of Geomancy are attributed to Janys Starborn herself.

The palace courtyard is home to the fountain named Elden's Tears. Its pure water runs down a channel through the city.

for any to drink from. It ends up, like all the city's run off, at the Herborium. The ancient tower, predates the ascension of the Witch Queens. Even when king's ruled Olgate, the secrets of alchemy needed to be explored.

The Herborium is built at the city's lowest point to ensure its courtyard is always flooded. It has eight gates, and eight pathways leading to the tower, but between each stone walkway is a pool where rare swamp flora can be grown. The Herborium serves two functions: a laboratory where the Proctors can do experiments in order to discover new properties of plants. And a school, where the next generation of Proctors are trained. Being a ward at the Herborium involves a lot of cleaning and busy work that the elderly Proctors cannot do. But it also provides the unique opportunity of assisting with experiments and learning from the most knowledgeable alchemists in the world. The Herborium's gates are not open to the public, but if someone finds a particularly rare plant sample, they will identify and possibly purchase it. Or, if you find yourself in the service to the Witch Queen, you might be sent there for potions that will assist you with your task.

The district around the Herborium is known as the Arcane Burrows. Winding mazelike streets that are far too narrow for wagons to traverse. Sedimentary layers of architecture, as new building have been built on top of crumbling foundations. The Arcane Burrows are known worldwide as the best place to acquire enchanted items and powerful potions. But this reputation has done little to make the district safe or regulated. Mountebanks peddle fraudulent charms and tonics. It takes a discerning eye to prevent yourself from being swindled.

A gang of illusionists called the Impossible Players effectively rule the Arcane Burrows. They run a legitimate business out of a domed theater called Orthial's Auditorium, where they perform fantastic feats of acrobatics, magic and daring. But it's an open secret they also have their hands in a verity of illegal activities. They charge many of the store-fronts in the Arcane Burrows protection fees. Their masked leader, the Puppeteer is incredibly illusive, not even those in his organization know his true identity. Magnifico handles the day-to-day operations but insists the final say on everything the Players do is up to the Puppeteer.

Corkscrew

At the beginning of the Summer Campaigns, every important person in Olgate floods to Corkscrew to see the knights off. The inns are booked with nobles and generals. Hundreds of different banners fly above the war camps which surround the town. The army is ferried across the river with full fanfare. But after the send-off, everyone clears out as soon as possible.

For the other three seasons out of the year, Corkscrew is a semi-abandoned backwater. Those that live there year-round have a reputation for being odd. They live so close to the border that they aren't afraid of trekking half a day into Hillrund. And many in Corkscrew make a living by trading common house hold goods for information and furs with the more friendly tribes.

After the Summer Campaigns have ended, and the town had returned to its isolated normalcy, Harken's Horn remains a constant reminder of the military's presence. Year round, a detachment of soldiers mans the citadel that overlooks Corkscrew. An enormous brass horn curves out, over the top of the tower's ramparts. Enchanted by the legendary artificer Nobin-Ry, the horn can carry its call over the Green Vale all the way to the Spire, warning every outer hold of an imminent invasion.

The Outer Holds

The Outer Holds is a blanket term for the patchwork of fiefdoms that make up the majority of the southern Green Vale. These fiefdoms range in size from small rural estates to huge swathes of hunting land which contain several villages. Each is either passed down through noble families, or awarded to landed knights who have distinguished themselves. Each landed lord is responsible for maintaining their own soldiers which enforce the Queen's laws in that region and contribute to the Summer Campaigns each year.

Heraldry is a vibrant tradition in Olgate. Each lord has a family crest, and every landed knight has a personal sigil. Knights who break their oaths (but do not deserve death) are stripped of all lands and titles and their shield is "blackened." Placed face down in a fire until their once colorful sigil is reduced to charred wood.

The Tower of Many Facets

Few men are as famous as the artificer Nobin-Ry. Born 300 years ago far to the south of Mearith; he made a name for himself in the Civil Kingdoms as an enchanter without peer. He proved himself capable of making wonderous items that other Rune Carvers dismissed as impossible. He was commissioned by the most powerful rulers and helped found the Royal Academy.

But as he neared the end of his natural life, he realized that despite his skill he was unable to create something that could grant him immortality. So, the story goes, that he created a terrible weapon and traded it to a mysterious figure for eternal life. He refuses to say what the weapon was, or who carries it, but he has since taken an oath to never create another weapon.

For the last century he has led a solitary existence working on his Tower of Many Facets. They say the illusive tower is located somewhere south of Mulbry, but no one can find it without a pair of True Step boots which he sends to anyone he wishes to invite. Those who have been fortunate enough to garner an invitation, say the structure is one of the strangest they have seen. Six stories, with each story being made of a different substance. The ground floor is rough-hewn stone blocks, followed by floors of polished marble, ceramic, iron, gold and lastly glass. Nobin-Ry claims there is a seventh floor above that one but no one besides him has ever entered it.

Whatever it was that granted him eternal life did not return his youth. And the decades of isolation have not been good for his mind. He was always eccentric, but in recent years he has turned paranoid. Insisting that all guests wear enchanted bracelets before entering his tower, which would protect him if they tried to raise a hand against him.

But despite his age, his talent is still unquestionably without equal. If you are able to get the honor of commissioning him you would be able to describe an item (not weapon) with almost any properties. Whether it be winged sandals, a circlet that lets you telepathically communicate across any distance, or a miniature mansion that can shrink you down to its size for as long as you wish, there are few things that are beyond the artificer's skill.

The Spire

This 300-foot-tall pillar of rock is a geological marvel with a long and storied history. Over a thousand years ago, the fledging nation of Olgate faced just as much threat from the giants to their east as across the river to the north. These power-hungry warlords periodically tried to take land from the king of Olgate by sending raiding parties of humans or sometimes even coming themselves. One such warlord, Agahar, carved spiraling steps around the Spire's side and used it as a watch post.

After Janys Starborn ascended to the throne, she started training the circles of the Allway, devout magic users that could help protect the people of the Greenvale. Once the Harbingers were finished with their Aeromancy training, she took a detachment of them and flew to the Spire. Janys Starborn had a reputation for handling most things peacefully, she overthrew King Cicil without a drop of blood. Her taking of the Spire is in stark defiance of this reputation. Perhaps it was the influence of the Harbingers who worship Ulter, the destroyer most of all, or just revenge for years of hardship and suffering Agahar was responsible for. But the stories tell of Janys and her Harbingers calling a vicious storm. It blew Agahar off the top of the spire to his death, and scoured the surrounding land with lightning, striking down anyone who proclaimed loyalty to the tyrant.

As a reward for their service, she gave the Spire to her Harbingers to use as a base of operations, and worked grand rooms and hallways into the pillar with magic. Ornate balconies and open-air colonnades can be seen from the ground, elevating the Spire from a natural wonder, to one of architecture as well.

The Spire was perfect for their circle. Although able to be reached by foot, the climb is tiresome and perilous. It is as if the structure was designed to accommodate those capable of flight. After the decline of the Harbingers, the Spire now acts as an exclusive academic institution. They are now more instructors than priests. Although Aeromancy is still their primary calling, they have world-class experts in history, law and etiquette. Avery Caldwell is the current head-master of the Spire. He is a shrewd man with a beak of a nose and great feathered cloak, who values his school's reputation above all else.



Valen' Cia

The northern half of the Greenvale consists of rolling highlands, accented by jagged rock outcroppings and clusters of trees, a stark contrast to the dense forests of the south. Founded by Ancient envoys from the Great Wood, Valen' Cia literally translates to "the city in the vale." Although no longer ruled by the immortals, it is a hub of fair commerce and a beacon of policy, philosophy and education that the other city-states aspire to.

Founding of Valen' Cia

While Olgate was struggling through its infancy, the Ancients of the Great Wood had been highly sophisticated for millennia. Two of them took pity on, or interest in, the primitive mortals. Valiana Avar and her twin brother Levarian Avar, left the comfort of their home, against the warning on their father the River King. They gathered the human shepherds and farmers of the northern Greenvale and helped them found the beautiful city of Valen' Cia.

They taught them how to work steel, blow glass and weave silk, advancements that may have taken centuries without the guidance of immortals. They also utilized powerful magics capable of shaping the very earth to ease the construction, and enhance the beauty, of the city. It took years of back-breaking work to construct the walls of Olgate. They say it took the two Ancients a few short months to raise the walls of Valen' Cia, and they didn't break a sweat. The walls still stand today, twelve-hundred years

later. Its mortar shines green in sunlight, a testament to their other-worldly origins.

Life in Valen' Cia was good for a handful of centuries. It led the mortal world in philosophy and art. People flocked there to live under the fair elves. Valiana and Levarian were good and just rulers, but there was no hope for a mortal to ever govern. The highest they could climb was the status of Steward who watched over the city whenever the twins grew old and traveled home to the Great Wood to rejuvenate. After a few years away, they would return to the city, having been returned to their prime.

But one steward, Mallus, got a taste of the power and didn't want to relinquish it. In the twin's absence he called a council of influential, likeminded men and woman who believed they could rule themselves. In fact, they *should* rule, as they understood what their human subjects needed, better than any Ancient ever could.

When Valiana and Levarian returned, they found their palace, the opulent jewel at the center of the city, occupied by Mallus and the others. The council informed the twins that their immortal guidance was no longer needed. They accused Levarian of using Valen' Cia as little more than a seasonal retreat. And said that he didn't truly care for the city as its own citizens did.

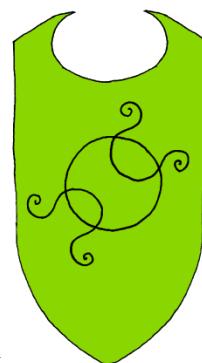
Levarian was powerful enough to incinerate Mallus with a gesture, but he had grown to trust this human as a friend and laughed at the accusation. He said that Valen' Cia wouldn't exist without him and his sister and that no one else had thousands of years of experience to guide the city. When Mallus saw that his demands weren't being taken seriously, he lashed out and broke Levarian's neck. The Ancients are capable of many things. They can live forever if they return to their birthplace every lifetime, and can regenerate from minor wounds, but they can be killed all the same. Valiana struck down the council in her rage, except for Mallus, who she devised a special prison for. She locked herself in the palace and tried to rule with an iron fist for a few months, but it was obvious the city agreed with Mallus. The people of Valen' Cia drove her out and tore down the elvish palace, unknowingly burying Mallus under what would eventually be rebuilt into the Inner Quarter. They elected a council of humans who set up the system which runs the city to this day.

Government & Culture of Valen' Cia

Valen' Cia is a representative democracy. Every man and woman of age, who has had permanent residence inside the city for over a year, gets to vote. Every spring, anyone who gets enough signatures in support, may challenge one of the four councilors for their seat. If a councilor remains popular and respected, he may go years without being contested, such as Jarus has. But if a councilor doesn't follow up on their campaign promises, their philosophy becomes passe, or they're involved in a scandal, it is likely they'll be removed the following spring. The two candidates, the current councilor and his contender, have a number of public debates as the day of election approaches. These are greatly attended events as it is seen as very fashionable in Valen' Cia to be well-read and politically involved. Of course, nobles, politicians and their retinues get the best seating in the New Forum. But low born tradesmen and merchants fill the balconies in order to inform their vote. And even some peasants from the surrounding areas who won't be able to vote attend for the entertainment of the verbal joust alone.

When election day arrives, two huge clay columns are erected on the steps in front of the New Forum. To cast a vote, you must prove your residency with one of the clerks and leave your signature or seal on the column of the candidate you support. Votes are not secret because it is expected you should be able to eloquently articulate the reasoning behind casting it. And on what specific topics you agree, or disagree, with your candidate- being unable to marks you a Naif or "Herd Voter." A deeply shameful title within Valen' Cian society, for someone who compromises their convictions in order to ingratiate themselves with a group.

Being a councilor doesn't pay, as the city doesn't want to encourage people to run out of greed. But despite that, and the long hours, each of the four seats are highly sought after. The first council members devised this glyph to represent them. Four unique points, intertwined through collaboration and the common good of the city.



The councilors have two primary responsibilities. They meet in the New Forum and discuss policies they want to reform or implement. These discussions are open to the public to listen to, and many voters attend to stay informed. A councilor cannot just stand on the policies they managed to pass, but the tactics they implemented to get the council to agree on it.

For a new policy to be codified into law, or for an old law to be altered, the vote must be unanimous. So, progress is very slow and methodical in Valen' Cia. When a law does change, the precise wording of the amendment is posted on every street corner for all to read. It is this practice that encourages even the peasants of Valen' Cia to be able to read and contributes the city's unparalleled literacy rates.

The second duty of the councilors is to judge over criminal accusations and civil disputes. Although they could hand over the trivial cases to lesser magistrates, most councilors want to appear dedicated to even the lowest of citizens. Councilor Jarus, in particular, will continue to oversee cases well after the sun has set.

If you are arrested for a crime in Valen' Cia it is a random chance which councilor will pass judgement on you. Although the death penalty has been outlawed there for centuries, you can still be imprisoned, fined or given difficult tasks to complete that benefit the city's most needy. The four Councilors of Valen' Cia, are at the time of writing this are:

Jarus, comes from a long line of councilors. He is well-respected for his unwavering lawful ideals. And his judge of character is world renowned. It is said that he is impossible to deceive, and attempting to simply reveals your true intentions.

Antillus left the city as a young man to lead a mercenary company. Although it is not fashionable in Valen' Cia to be armed, he always wears a gladius at his hip as a reminder of those days. Having traveled the world, he now knows the true value, and rarity of a place like Valen' Cia, and values the defense of the city above all else.

Laventus has connections within the powerful merchant guilds of Valen' Cia. They help him remain on the council, and in exchange, he passes profitable trade regulations.

Josephus is a humanitarian and deep thinker, constantly trying to find the ethical approach to every problem. He is known as the most merciful judge and his policies focus on the welfare of the poorest Valen' Cians.

The Fate of the Old Forum

It was about 500 years that Valiana Avar was cast out of the city and the first human council was elected. But the city's tribulations did not end there. 240 years later, the city was pushed to the brink of anarchy. It was the night of a pivotal election, and every notable figure in Valen' Cian society was gathered at the Old Forum. When the doors were barred from the outside, and the building set ablaze. Hundreds perished in the fire, but the city was able to elect new commoners to lead them. It is speculated, but unproven, that the catastrophe was orchestrated by a vengeful Valiana Avar. Some say she still lives, lurking in the shadows of the realms of men, planning her revenge on the ungrateful city which took her brother from her.

Valen' Cia

Government: Representative Democracy

Ruler: Councilors Jarus, Antillus, Laventus and Josephus.

Stability: ★★★★★

Might: ★*

Wealth: ★★★

Main Exports: Wine, Glass, Philosophy

Stereotypes: Overeducated philosophers who just argue and never act.

*A might of 1 represents that Valen' Cia has enough soldiers to patrol their roads, and offer asylum to political refugees, but never gets involved in wars. They are fiercely neutral in the squabbling of the other city-states. If they support a cause at all, it will be in the form of supplies, doctors or a persuasive essay on why others should come to their aid.



Valen' Cia

Valen' Cia is a beautiful city. Its streets and districts make up a patchwork of varied colors and architectural styles. But no matter what bright color the plaster has been painted, almost every building is topped with an orange roof of terracotta tiles. The clay needed to make such shingles is bountiful across the River Whines. And despite the dangers of Hillrund, the merchant guilds of Valen' Cia travel to Owimesh for the signature clay.

Another feature that persists through most sections of the city is an open-air design. Manor houses that are large enough to incorporate an interior courtyard, always do. The northern Green Vale's climate is consistently temperate. The rain is not as persistent as it is to the south, and the coldest days of the year only bring a dusting of snow (if any at all). It is commonly accepted in Valen' Cian that being cut off from fresh air and vegetation leads to close-mindedness, a most deplorable characteristic. So, the Valen' Cian nobility spends as much time as they can in their

courtyards, dining with their families, hosting parties, even drafting essays and contracts.

Unlike other cities that sprawled out naturally, Valen' Cia was designed from the ground up by Valiana and Levarian Avar. Their design had two main parts: the wall and the palace. The outer wall was constructed first, to offer shelter to the humans who wanted to join their settlement. It encompassed enough land to have some farms safe inside the walls. And in the center was the twin's massive palace complex. It took them a human life time to complete. They spent a fortune in materials, but did not conscript their population into working on the project. According to legend all the labor was done on its own by floating, unseen servants. There are some sketches that were done of the palace at the time of its completion. It shows the structure to be over a dozen stories tall with spiraling steeples and decorated parapets. But we cannot confirm that the sketches were not exaggerated since the palace was torn down 500 years ago in the riots that exiled Valiana.

But such a massive structure cannot be reduced completely to dust. The foundation of the palace still stands, more so in some places then others but covering dozens of city blocks. The wealthiest Valen' Cians have made a home for themselves among the ruins. It is now a city district known as the Inner Quarter (as it sits directly at the city's center). Its streets are lined with rows of columns, which haven't had anything to support for hundreds of years. The villas are built in the modern Valen' Cian style, but on foundations of ancient stone. Hundreds of tunnels run beneath the Inner Quarter. What were once the cellars of the palace now serve as secret entrances to Valen' Cian estates. And it is rumored that the lowest levels of the palace's dungeons and vaults are sealed off and unexplored to this day.

On the edge of the Inner Quarter sits the Old Forum, a charred reminder of the city's tribulations. All the wooden elements burned away long ago, but the amphitheater's foundation still sinks, like a tiered pit, into the ground. A few blocks away, the New Forum has been erected. The New Forum is round, like the old one, but twice its size and made of stone (just in case of another fire). Its interior is designed in a similar fashion, with a grand amphitheater, where the orator's voice will be carried

up from the bottom to not only to those sitting in the seats, but everyone in the three levels of balconies. It has a domed roof and is surrounded by a stately colonnade. Idol worship is not fashionable in Valen' Cia. Instead of bronze heroes or golden gods, the steps of the New Forum are flanked by ceramics pillars that have been used to tally up votes. Bearing thousands of signatures and seals, they have hardened, and will be replaced for the next election each year.

The School of Thought, Valen' Cia's primary university, is the only truly secular academic institution in the Civil Kingdoms. The Empire's Royal Academy is deeply tied to the Order of Alric, and has incredibly strict regulations about the study of "Black Magic." The Spire is used to determine a spiritual successor to the Witch Queen, and even the Herborium, although very distracted by the properties of certain roots, exists to "unravel the mysteries of Elden's creation."

At the School of Thought, you are encouraged to question everything, even the beliefs you hold closest to your chest. Although there are experts of nearly every subject there: law, music, religious studies, poetry, alchemy, history and even a dedicated branch focused on History of the Ancients, their research is conducted in order to better inform philosophy. Creating a perfectly ethical and logically consistent philosophy is the school's ultimate goal. After 400 years, it seems as unreachable as ever. But by striving for perfection, they have helped form thousands of keen minds and revolutionary politicians.

"Elf" is a slur for the Ancients of the Great Wood common in the DeCain Empire. And so those who study the History of the Ancients are often known, unfortunately, as the "Elvish History Department." They have a huge collection of artifacts that have been excavated from beneath the Inner Quarter. Professor Therope curates the museum, and is interested in any recovered relic, especially those that relate to his city's past.

Since its early days, the city has grown to fill the walls completely, pushing the farms out to the countryside. The city is now large enough to include many districts besides the Inner Quarter. The Street of Glass is a high-end shopping district where

some of the finest glass in the world is blown. Caterer's Plaza is where fine cafés and winehouses can be found. And the Arboretum is a sprawling manicured garden inside the walls. Astonishingly, there are no slums in Valen' Cia. There are still poor of course, but even those without homes are sheltered and fed by the government's generosity.

Because of their legal system's emphasis on precise wording, literacy is more important in Valen' Cia than other regions. Therefore, the government offers free schooling to any citizen who can spare the time to attend. The education provided at these vocational centers is naturally more rudimentary than the lofty philosophies that are taught at the School of Thought. But they give every Valen' Cian a solid foundation of writing, law and history, and optionally, enough understanding of a trade to be eligible for a proper apprenticeship within a guild.

Terrace Hill

Lorenzo Terrachini has been a making wine for 50 years. Over his career he has made Terrace Hill one of the most recognized (and well respected) wineries in all of the Civil Kingdoms. White grapes grow very well in the northern Green Vale so Terrace Hill is famous for its "Valen' Cian Ivory" a light (sometimes effervescent) wine unique to the region. But Lorenzo has mastered extravagantly flavored red wines as well. A single bottle of the coveted "Ravenell Reserve" can cost as much as 800 silver and is only available if you make it to the front of a long waiting list.

The vineyard itself is a huge property in the foothills northwest of the city. Lorenzo lives in a lavish three-story villa of brick. It sits atop a hill which has had one side carved into large steps where grapevines can grow. A collection of other buildings cluster at the foot of the hill, servant quarters, cooper barns and even a small inn. Terrace Hill routinely has visitors from the city, wealthy wine-lovers mostly. Surrounding this little community are miles upon miles of grape vines. Hundreds of varieties, each with unique needs and conditions, that are meticulous cared for by Arnestus and his team of groundskeepers.

Nell Port

Many people in Valen' Cia remember when Nell Port was no larger than Fairburrow. Just a small town, used to resupply passing ships and unload cargo for trade. Now, it is almost the size of Olgate. Everything changed 25 years ago when the mayor of Nell Port, Alfred Garmon lobbied the Valen' Cian council for independence. He argued, quite persuasively, that Nell Port's growth was being stifled by Valen' Cia's high taxes. The council uses the steep taxation to maintain all of their charitable policies, but Alfred Garmon proved that Nell Port was not getting as many of those benefits as they should for all the revenue his little port town was contributing. Most decisively, he made maintaining ownership of Nell Port look greedy and exploitative, two characteristics that no councilor, hoping for reelection would want associated with their name.

And so, after raising some funds from the harbor masters and merchants of Nell Port, he purchased the land around the city from Valen' Cia. Now known as Lord Mayor, Alfred Garmon appointed his friend Morgan Thorne as captain of the guard. And under their rule the city boomed. More forgiving taxes brought a flood of new craftsmen and ship captains and Nell Port soon became the primary point of trade between the DeCain Empire and the Green Vale.

For thousands of years, people had crossed the River Nell by raft, but the ferry system was slow and crowded the now-flourishing docks. So, Alfred Garmon gathered the brightest inventors and most seasoned engineers to design a great draw-bridge the likes of which the world had never seen. After 3 years in construction the mechanical monstrosity was completed. It had 2 support towers and spanned the full 200-foot-wide river. Giant chains on the city's side could raise both halves of the bridge up allowing ships to pass.

Everything was good, until 2 years ago. Alfred Garmon secretly struck a deal with the imperial castellan Marcellus Wren. For a sizable fortune, he signed over control of the city to the DeCain Empire. His detractors claim that Garmon was always motivated by greed. But those who were there say the address he made to the council in his youth was too passionate and

compelling to be fraudulent. Perhaps 23 years of managing a city slowly eroded his ideals, we can only speculate.

Morgan Thorne was offered half the fortune by his once friend but he refused. And when the imperial legions arrived to secure the city and instate their own guard, Morgan Thorne kept the draw-bridge up. Independence was what he had fought so hard for and he wouldn't sell out for any amount of silver or gold.

The siege didn't last long, only half the city guard sided with their commander. The other half sided with the man who paid them and opened the gates to the Imperial forces. But when they searched the city, they found Morgan Thorne and his soldiers had fled. For the two years since, Morgan Thorne has been fighting a revolution against the imperial occupation of Nell Port. He doesn't have a large enough force to take the city back, so he wages a war of harassment and sabotage. He will attack imperial supply ships, and scouting parties. And when his camp is discovered, he simply flees and relocates.

Many people secretly support his movement from inside the walls, and some even go out into the forest around the city to join the fight directly. The life of a revolutionary is not easy, sleeping outside in small war-camps, always watching the perimeter for imperial scouts. But they get enough food donations from the city and local farms to continue their fight. Their resistance is just as symbolic as it is tactical. Morgan Thorne is an excellent strategist and knows that right now the fight is not one that can be won. But the longer they fight the more people will come to their side. If they fall, it may be generations before anyone in Nell Port gathers enough courage to defy the Empire again.

Meanwhile, life inside Nell Port continues. The city is still a bustling trade port. The castellan doesn't tax the city as much as Valen' Cia, but law enforcement is much more martial than it was under Morgan's command. A curfew is enforced, and people are always under suspicion for being a spy or saboteur for the resistance. To avoid this, a little unwalled town called Freeton has sprung up on the other side of the river where the Lord Mayor has no jurisdiction. Not to say he wouldn't risk a minor border dispute to finally catch Thorne. And the unregulated nature of Freeton makes it only marginally safer than a slum.

The Lowlens

The Lowlens is a region of the northern Green Vale where all the runoff from the border mountains and highlands collects. This swamp has wide, shallow lakes that change dramatically in size and shape based on the recent rain fall. Weeping willows and cypress trees are abundant and the harmonies of toads can be heard almost year-round.

Crops get washed away and the soft ground will slowly devour any foundation laid on top of it. It is said that hidden somewhere in the Lowlens are a few villages of wicker houses on stilts. But if they do exist, they do not communicate with the outside world enough for most people to know their location.

Myran's Rest is a sleepy little town on the edge of the Lowlens. It gets its name from an old legend. Long, long ago, before even the founding of Valen' Cia, the whole Green Vale was ruled by one king. Myran, his eldest son, was strong and boastful and bold, but also quite slow-witted. Many people in the kingdom were hopeful about Myran's reign, but his younger brother Mythis was not. Mythis was scrawny, and scheming. And he worried that the kingdom would suffer under his brother's blundering rule.

So Mythis tromped into the Lowlens and struck a deal with a mischievous spirit of the forest. Ayle, the Passion Weaver is a primordial spirit who wants to elicit emotions in humans whether it be ecstasy or anguish. Mythis didn't want any harm to befall his brother, but perhaps the people of the realm would support his claim if they knew what a fool Myran was.

As the king was on his death-bed, Myran went on a tour of the lands that he would soon rule. He stopped at a small town on the edge of the Lowlens whose old name has long been forgotten. Myran brought a procession wherever he went with drinks and merriment aplenty. While celebrating, he was approached by Ayle who wore the face of a beautiful maiden. Ayle harnesses desires like men harness horses, and so Myran became quite smitten with the spirit. Ayle told the prince how impressed it would be if Myran could swim across the shallow lake in his armor. And despite the sound counsel of his advisors... he tried. Myran never made it to the far shore. And so, this unassuming village on the edge of the Lowlens became forever known as Myran's Rest.



North Watch

The continent's rocky northern coast is home to a resilient people. World class shipwrights, and fierce warriors, they have remained independent due to their rugged tenacity and the inhospitality of their homeland. Practical and mostly secular, the people of North Watch are not guided by religion but by superstition and the collected fables of their past heroes.

Founding of North Watch

All of North Watch and Hillrund's lands used to belong to giants. 12-feet tall with squared jaws and prominent brows, this primordial race lived alongside, and enslaved early humans. The giants never consolidated their power, if they had, they might still be ruling today. But they were individualistic to a fault, each proclaiming themselves a warlord and conquering any land they could. Instead of working together they warred with each other over territory with armies of primitive humans.

One particularly ambitious giant, Byruk, left Hillrund and claimed huge swaths of northern coastline for himself. He constructed a mighty fortress on the cliffs, one to rival the mightiest warlord's castle. Giants are incredibly long-lived, and Byruk ruled with an iron fist for 400 years, but even they grow old and weak. And around a thousand years ago he started to lose control over his subjects. Human populations were exploding with the cultivation of grain, and the success of cities like Valen' Cia and Olgate showed the importance of cooperation rather than brute strength.

As the legend goes, Cauldor, the bravest man of North Watch, challenged Byruk to one-on-one combat. A death sentence for any normal man, the giant agreed. But he was slowed by age and Cauldor managed to wound his massive foe, who retreated into his castle. Cauldor didn't stop there, he rallied the city, stormed the front door, and slew the tyrant, giving the fortress its name: Giant's End.

Such a heroic deed earned him the title Brenn. A leadership position equivalent but different to a southern king. During his reign he helped organize a northern resistance which slew or chased the other giants back to Hillrund. He took the castle of Giant's End for himself and wed the wise and beautiful Theya, who bore him seven sons. When Cauldor finally died of old age, his sons held a council to determine who would lead. They all agreed that no single one of them could live up to their father's legacy so they decided to rule together. And that is how, the legends say, the Brethren of the North came to be.

Government of North Watch

North Watch's government is closest to a principality. The Brethren of the North is a council made up of the Brenn's children who are of age and interested in matters of state. But the Brethren of the North is not a true principality. Although normally, the majority of those who sit on the council are the Brenn's sons, it is not uncommon for it to include daughters, cousins, advisors and even close family friends. Anyone, regardless of birth or station, can earn a seat at the Stone Table, as long as they distinguish themselves and garner the respect of the other members. Famously, at one point, 21 people had "seats" on the council but they couldn't fit that many chairs around the Stone Table.

There is another distinction between the Brethren of the North and a principality. The Brenn's children are not strictly "princes" because he is not a king. The title is earned through merit, not blood. Cauldor, the first Brenn, was granted the title by the people after liberating the city from its giant overlord. But he was not the only one throughout North Watch's history to save the city, earn the respect of the people, and claim the title of Brenn for themselves.

Each time this occurs it completely changes the bloodline of the Brethren. These turn overs are not always cordial and without blood-shed, but often the old Brethren can be appeased by maintaining a seat or two at the Stone Table. The only alternative is desperately clinging to power, and everyone in North Watch knows the fate of tyrants in Giant's End.

Obviously, an opportunity for such a grandiose deed doesn't come around every generation. Brennship is most often passed down from father to oldest son, but there are countless exceptions to this rule. Often a second or third born, even a cousin, will display the virtues of a ruler, and be chosen. Unlike strictly hereditary principalities where family branches will turn on each other for a chance at power, in North Watch ruling is seen more a responsibility than a privilege, and a Brenn will only succeed with the full support of his extended family.

Although the power of the Brenn is great, it is not absolute. It is checked by both the consent of the Brethren, and also the Stone Table: A 12-foot tablet that lays on its back atop 4 marble bear-feet and serves as the meeting table in the council room of Giant's End. The top and sides are covered in dozens of carved paragraphs which explain the attributes that constitute a good leader, and some laws of the people that they should never break. According to the legend, Yolwyn was a wise wizard and statesman who traveled the land and gifted the table to Cauldor's children.

The current Brenn is Brom Frost, a prudent ruler in his fifties. His children, nearing adulthood are preparing to start leading. His younger brothers, Vlad and Sven sit at the Stone Table with him. Vlad is a merciless naval commander who always prioritizes the defense of North Watch, even if that means making preemptive strikes. Sven, the youngest, is an advocate of the people, beloved at feasts for his wit and skill with a lute.

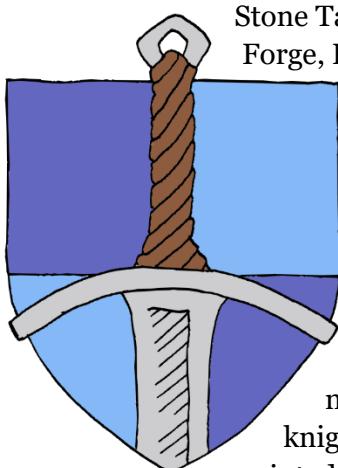
North Watch's domain is vast. The Brethren do not have a standing army to maintain peace. They rely on the loyalty of the Loch Lords to protect the borders and control the citizens. Each has their own village, either on an island in the Loch or around the shore. They proudly act as North Watch's buffer for both potential Imperial invasion and the monstrosities that emerge from Forhelst.

Culture of North Watch

North Watch has no centralized religion like the DeCain Empire or Olgate. They are too independent to be unified by something as inconsequential as spiritual belief. This is not to say they are completely atheistic. The people of the north hold a wide variety of superstitions, with prayers and customs sometimes being as localized as the crew of a single ship or nameless sea-side village.

Instead of religion, the children of North Watch are taught morals through fables. Each village has a storyteller, an occupation seen as essential as a cobbler or herbalist. They practice a rich verbal tradition which hands down legends about heroes of old. Their heroes are real historical figures whose great deeds were immortalized (and sometimes aggrandized) in narrative verse.

These bards sing stories of Cauldor, the giant slayer, first Brenn of North Watch. Of Hildebran the Silver-tongued, a trader and diplomat without peer. Yolwyn the Wise, who carved the



Stone Table. Salunbrine the Trickster, Etten of the Forge, Kearigan the Wicked, Trystain Harpsong and countless others. These characters are used to teach the real history of North Watch, but they are also cultural icons, that all exist as contemporaries in a time of legend and fable where they can argue, love, swindle, fight and adventure together.

The northern nobility and Loch Lords do not put as much stock in heraldry as the knights of Olgate. Instead of detailed crests, painted shields and embroidered capes, the practical north men will choose a simple color or pattern to identify their allies on the battlefield. The checkered light and dark blue were chosen by House Frost, and have represented the Brethren of the North for 175 years. When a Brenn from a new bloodline obtains the title, they have the right (according to the Stone Table) to change the colors. But the sword always remains. Not a sword raised high in a gesture of conquest, but pointing down, representing the victories North Watch have already won.

North Watch

Government: Principality

Ruler: The Brethren of the North. Currently the brothers Brom, Vlad and Sven Frost

Stability: ★★★

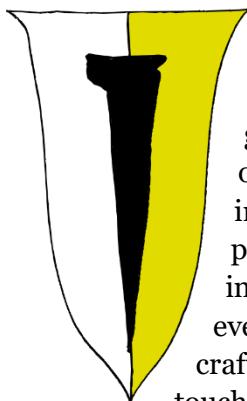
Might: ★★★★

Wealth: ★★

Main Exports: Ships, Steel, Salt, Liquor

Stereotypes: Superstitious sailors who are only one step above the tribesmen of Hillrund.

The Black Iron Company



Although politically affiliated with none but the highest bidder, The Black Iron Company is associated with North Watch through geographical proximity to its headquarters. It has offices in every “civilized city,” a list that intentionally excludes Mearith. The two largest powers of capital have unreconcilable differences in ethics. The Black Iron Company deals in nearly every kind of wear, from weapons and tools, artisan crafts, ships and even mercenaries, but they don’t touch the slave trade.

The Black Iron Company was founded in the Imperial Capital just over 100 years by a group of aspiring merchants. But when it grew in success and influence, it chose to relocate to a region with fewer regulations and taxes.

45 years ago, the company moved its headquarters to Knox Landing. The rocky islands in the heart of the cold sea are far from hospitable, but they are home to the winter diamond mines that rapidly became the company’s most valuable asset. The “town” of Knox Landing is little more than a permanent mining camp, with over ninety-percent of its inhabitants being on the Black Iron payroll. The island is a frigid rock where nothing can grow, so firewood must be imported daily from North Watch just to keep the workers warm. Nearly all the barracks are built partially underground in order to conserve heat. The pay for a miner is not

terrible, it has to be good to get folks to brave the cold. But the only shops allowed to operate on the island are owned by the Black Iron Company, so workers are often compensated with food, shelter and tools. There are no police or governing body, the peace is kept by Black Iron mercenaries and all disputes are handled... internally.

This is by design of Chairman Armin Cassander, the company's preeminent executive. A ruthless capitalist, with a shrewd mind for people and accounts. He oversees the company's mining operations on Knox Landing and any large-scale mercenary operations abroad. Mostly their mercenary contracts are the escort and protection of nobles and wealthy merchants, but they have gotten involved in some border disputes in the Endless Sands and helped defend Valen' Cia from barbarian raids. Not including any jobs that are intentionally kept off the books.

Although Armin Cassander is one of the most powerful men in the world, and has some autonomy, even he is beholden to the wishes of the shareholders. The shareholders are the descendants of those original founding merchants, or those who have traded and swindled them out of their holdings. They are the ones who decide which contacts are accepted and what ventures are invested in. To make matters more complex, this is an often-anonymous position. Powerful people from throughout the Civil Kingdoms secretly have a say in the Black Iron Companies' dealings and earn a portion of its profits. This makes the company's intentions and next move very difficult to deduce, beyond the assurance that it will highly lucrative.

Black Iron Company

Government: Corporation

Ruler: Chairman Armin Cassander

Stability: ★★★

Might: ★★★

Wealth: ★★★

Main Exports: Winter Diamonds, Mercenaries

Stereotypes: Shady businessmen who care about their profits more than their own employees.



The Cold Sea



North Watch

The city of North Watch sprawls like no other, having grown over the generations like creeping ivy around the perimeters of Colbreth Bay. The city has no walls, which gives some southern nations a primitive picture of it, but that is far from the truth. It would be a futile task to enclose the miles of buildings that wrap along the shore, and the city has proved to have no need for such fortifications. It is protected from the sea by the high coastal cliffs and an overwhelming navy. Pike's Point, the lighthouse on the eastern side of the bay, can see ships approaching from miles out. And the city has never been besieged. A few ambitious emperors have tried, but either the Loch Lords or the inevitable winters have prevented them from even reaching the city itself.

The Brethren of the North still live in Byruk's old castle, now called Giant's End. The front stairs have been modified by

masons to better accommodate human-sized pedestrians, but other than that, the fortress remains largely unchanged. All the doorways are at least 15-feet tall, and the vaulted feasting hall's ceiling is over 80. The furniture has obviously been replaced long ago, but still the feeling of being diminutive lingers.

North Watch has several districts, the Wharfs being the largest by far. Incomplete hulls fill the shipyards like the shells of monstrous crustations washed ashore. Countless raucous bars, fight-clubs and brothels cater to the sailors looking to cram as much merriment and debauchery into their rare nights on land.

One such tavern, The Maiden's Wish, is the tromping ground of Salizar, the Sixth-wind. He owns and captains the Fair Weather, a three-masted sailing ship for hire. Salizar is an alleged pirate and rumored Aeromancer. But he fervently denies both. Magic is not illegal in North Watch, but the boastful sailor would much rather his exploits be attributed to skill than spell-casting.

The Smelter's Shore is the only section of coastline not dominated by docks. Close to Giant's End, it is reserved for the master sword-smiths of the city. Blacksmiths travel from all over the Civil Kingdoms to get a glimpse at the techniques used there. It is a common sight to see master sword-smith wading into surf with a red-hot blade to dowse it in the sea. Whether because of some magical rite, or chemical reaction, "Salt Steel" does hold an edge longer than any other metal.

Godfrey's Auction House is another attraction that brings travelers to North Watch. Auction-master Godfrey is a discerning man, well into his seventies. He famously claims to be able to "spot a counterfeit from 30-feet." His appraisals are taken as gospel by most collectors, since he's only been proven wrong a handful of times in a very, very long career. He is blunt, even rude to those who waste his time, but when you only have a few years left perhaps that curtness could be excused. Anyone with a small fortune weighing them down should attend one of his auctions. Properties, historical relics and enchanted objects are available to be bid on. But prices aren't final until you've scared away the other interested parties. And if you have something of real significance that you want to get the highest price for, there's no better place to go in all the Civil Kingdoms.

Stahl & The Loch

North Watch is surrounded by expanses of untouched tundra and pristine coniferous forests. The county side is crisscrossed with roads which are little more than unpaved trenches, carved out by generations of wagon use. They connect the dozens of unnamed villages, and smaller towns to Stahl.

The walled town of Stahl is the largest in North Watch's domain. Stahl serves as a gateway into the north for all travelers from the Green Vale. Built on the edge of the Loch it also benefits from the internal travel between the isles.

Life on the Loch is different than anywhere else in North Watch, or the whole Civil Kingdoms for that matter. Canoes and longships are used instead of horses and carriages. The map displays the largest isles which are big enough to support whole communities, but there are countless smaller islands which may be inhabited by a single family, hermit, or no one at all.

The great lake is frigid for most of the year, constantly fed from the melting snows of the Silver Peaks. But the pure waters are teeming with fish. Through fishing and farming the island communities support themselves, and any luxuries of the outside world can be traded for in Stahl.

The three Loch Lords maintain order on the lake. But the brunt of this responsibility falls to Lord Coster. His tower, Lochold, stands on the island closest to Stahl and overlooks the bustling town. Unruly drunks and horse-thieves alike are rowed out across the lake to spend their sentences there. And if you manage to escape few survive the freezing swim ashore.

Forehelst is a snarl of ancient pines that grow so densely it keeps the whole forest in the gloom of perpetual evening. Lord Bract's ancestors built their tower close enough to keep a watchful eye on the shifting shapes of whatever moves in the shadows of the tree line.

With the eastern and western fronts taken care of, the southern front falls to Lord Filli. But imperial invasion hasn't been a real threat for generations, even since the abandonment of Alterav's Fall. So, Lord Filli has let his attention be diverted by feasting... a lot of it. The name Filli's Fast was derived from "holdfast" but in recent times has taken on a more ironic meaning.



Golden Flats

The Golden Flats is a region, not a city-state. Although Canvelton has long been the largest city there, it does not exert its will over its surroundings in the same way as the other city-states. First discovered by the religious prophet Sanctus the Second, the warm plains seemed a promised land. A perfect destination for those who were willing to follow their faith in Alric into the unknown. But that was just the peaceful beginning Golden Flats' long story.

Founding of The Golden Flats

The Allway is Janys Starborns interpretation of the folk religion which had presumably existed in the region since Olgate's founding. When she took control of the city and converted it to a theocracy, there were theologians within the city who had different interpretations of the divine. Among them, Sanctus the Second was the most vocal. Since the Prophet Ishani, the First had disappeared into the southern mountains, he was the only one who had manifested the same abilities, and connection with Alric.

He, and his numerous followers, had long held Alric as the primary deity since Alric's intentions were the purest and most worthy of imitation. This had not been a problem until their new Queen demanded a more wholistic approach from all her citizens. After lengthy spiritual debates, with neither side budging on their convictions, only one recourse remained: exile. This was not a sentence given to Sanctus for speaking out, but a mutual understanding that his people no longer had a place in Olgate.

The mountains around the Greenvale had long contained the humans who lived north of the Chasm. Daring explorers had climbed them, but settling any of the lands beyond had been very difficult and needless, considering the natural bounty contained within. Until 750 years ago, when Sanctus the Second led his followers from the city. The accounts say that thousands marched out into the unknown behind him, with only what possessions they could carry and faith in Alric's prophet.

When confronted with the mountainside, it is said that Sanctus prayed to the Protector and performed a great miracle. A tunnel opened up in the very rock, leading them to the promised lands beyond. This tunnel, Pilgrim's Pass, is still in use today and is the easiest over-land route between the Empire and the Greenvale. As long as you are willing to pay the Castellan's toll.

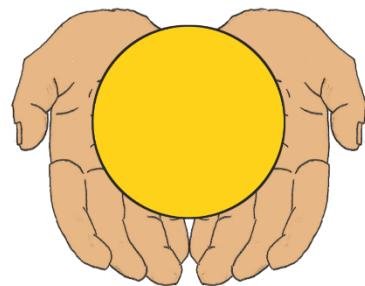
On the other side, Sanctus and his settlers found an untouched plain. Amber grasses, as tall as a man's waist, as far as the eye could see. The sun shone hotter here, but since Alric was associated with the sun, the pilgrims only took comfort in the warmth. In gratitude to Alric for delivering them to this new land, the first building they built was a church. While still living in camps, they dug stones up from out of the plains and assembled the first official temple to their new order. This tiny church could only fit 50 of them at a time, so Sanctus would preach from sun rise to sun set each day so that all might get a chance to sit and listen to the instruction of their god.

The Order of Alric, now concretely monotheistic, turned its back on the other gods. The ones that had misled their countrymen into supporting the Witch Queen. They did not want to rely on such corrupting forces to build their new city, they wanted to labor in Alric's name. The use of all magic was forbidden, except the gifts of illumination, encouragement and restoration that Alric himself bestowed. This distinction grew into the concept of "black magic," a term used by the Order to refer to all schools besides Divinity. The practicing of black magic is a severe crime, punishable by burning if used to harm others.

Over Sanctus the Second's lifetime, the bustling town of Canvelton grew around this tiny church. People came from the Green Vale to hear him proclaim Alric's word and see him perform

miracles of healing. With the city's growing wealth, many implored him to expand his temple so more might sit together. Sanctus refused, saying that he did not want to attract followers through ornate stonework, or awe-inspiring architecture, but through the sincerity of his word and the fellowship of his Order. When he died of old age, Sanctus the Second was buried in a modest crypt beneath the dais of that temple. But he was not forgotten, his life was a seed that would grow into the most populous and far-reaching religion in the Civil Kingdoms.

Since his death, the Order of Alric has spread to have followers in every corner of the Civil Kingdoms, and has become the official religion of the DeCain Empire. Everywhere it's seen, the emblem of hands proffering the sun is a sign of brotherhood, justice and charity.



Government & Culture of the Golden Flats

During his life, the people of the Golden Flats followed Sanctus the Second. He did not need a crown or a title to rule, for his authority was divine and indisputable. But after his death, they needed someone new to lead. They did not want to replicate the system that forced them to leave the Green Vale in the first place. So instead of a theocracy, they chose an incredibly pious king.

Lord Siglane was a righteous man and the city's first choice. He was coronated with the clear understanding that he was given authority by the Order of Alric, who were the true power in the city, and the real representatives of the people. But this arrangement was beneficial to the church as well, who did not have to appear as controlling or oppressive. The message to the outside world was clear: The Golden Flats is a place of good, pious people, but everyone is welcome, regardless of belief.

Sanctus' death did not slow the flood of pilgrims and converts coming to Canvelton. They could no longer hear his sermons or be blessed by his hands, but they could still visit the temple that he built and pray at his tomb. Siglane knew Sanctus personally, and the last thing he wanted was to go against the prophet's last wishes, but he saw the long-term effects of such

incessant visitations. The thousands of daily foot falls were beginning to wear down the steps to the crypt and pilgrims from afar would take chips of mortar and loose stones home with them for luck.

And so, King Siglane relented to the clergy who had been clamoring for a larger cathedral for years. The Basilica of Sanctus took 142 years to complete. A vaulted cavernous space of stained glass and carved stone built *around* the already standing church. It protects the historic building from the elements and from passersby. Now, the closest visitors can get to Sanctus' tomb is the rope divider outside the front door. Congregations of over 700 can now gather in the Basilica and listen to speeches by the current leader of the order, Father Adler.

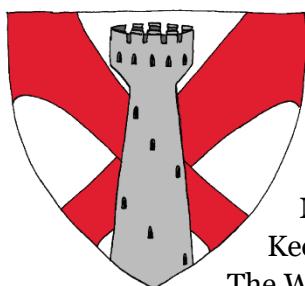
Although religion is the gnarled roots of Canvelton, faith alone cannot support a city. The sun-washed plains support productive grain farms, and Canvelton's proximity to Mearith makes it a bustling trade hub. The early kings of Canvelton, like Siglane and his descendants were too distracted with the piety which allowed them to ascend in the first place. The city was changing around them, yet they did not adapt. And so, House Wren took the throne of the Golden Flats about 400 years ago.

House Wren guided their people through a time of great expansion. Canvelton was rapidly becoming as large as its bitter mother Olgate. And with such success, something new was required to keep the peace besides the fellowship and brotherhood of a common faith. Bandits were starting to become a menace on the periphery of the city's influence. It was time for Canvelton to form an army, claim the whole of the Golden Flats, and become a proper city-state.

But Calister's conquest of Brugah was not some band of outlaws that could be put down. Martin Wren was the king of the Golden Flats 258 years ago. He was astute enough to realize the Golden Flats were the next stop on the DeCain march. His people were not warriors, they were merchants and priests. Instead of resisting and being crushed like Brugah had, he negotiated for the most beneficial terms. Marrying his daughter into the royal family and making the Order of Alric the official religion of the whole Empire was more beneficial than most in his court dared to hope.

Ever since that deal was struck, the Golden Flats have been a duchy of the DeCain empire. But unlike Brugah, who has worn their bridle with contempt, Canvelton has benefitted immensely from the union. Free trade across the Trade Sea and the protection of the Imperial Legions, in exchange for the title “king.”

The current duke of the Golden Flats, Marcellus Wren has earned himself the title of Imperial Castellan. And for a decade when Emperor Darius was wracked by grief he ruled in every way except name. Celebrating his 83rd birthday this year, his age has not stripped him of his shrewdness, only some manners and the patience to suffer fools.



House Wren’s crest is that of a bird on a striped field of white and yellow. But Marcellus prefers to use his personal sigil, which is reminiscent of his ancestral crest in pattern only. The sigil is a reminder of Marcellus’ greatest achievement, The Castellan’s Keep, and that only he is responsible for it.

The Wrens are a divided house. Martus Wren, Marcellus’s eldest son, had a falling out with his father after a tragic fire claimed his sister, the empress, and her son. Martus is nearing his sixties and bitterly awaits the death of his father so he can finally become duke. It is whispered that Marcellus has only lived so long in order to deny Martus the satisfaction. Marcellus could choose another heir, but won’t let such pettiness destabilize his family’s legacy. Martus oversees his family’s rural, ancestral estate and only visits his father’s keep when decorum demands it.

Golden Flats

Government: Vassal State (Duchy)

Ruler: Marcellus Wren

Stability: ★★★★

Might: ★★

Wealth: ★★★★★

Main Exports: Minted Coinage, Grain, Gold

Stereotypes: Two-faced hypocrites who claim to be pious and charitable while hoarding wealth.



The Castellan's Keep

For the last 50 years, Canvelton has been dominated by an enormous tower structure called the Castellan's Keep. Modern advances in engineering completed the project in a decade, instead of the century and a half it took to complete the Basilica. The castle complex is of Marcellus' own design, it extends a dozen stories into the sky and, it is said, just as many down into the earth. But there are few who know for certain. The Castellan's Keep contains the personal quarters for his whole family and court, the Imperial coin mints, armor foundries, training yards, treasure vaults and the hardest to escape cells in the Civil Kingdoms. It is practically a small city itself, with markets, housing, and restaurants.

The city of Canvelton still exists around the castle's walls, but it is relegated to those whose business is not official enough to be conducted inside the Keep, or pilgrims who have traveled to the city to see the Basilica of Sanctus. The distinction has become so pervasive that over the last decade people have started referring to the whole city as "The Castellan's Keep" instead of Canvelton.

The Dawn Fort

The Trade Sea is actually an enormous lake that serves as a heart of commerce for the DeCain Empire. Goods are easier and faster to transport by ship. For example, it would take someone three-times as long to get to Brugah from the Castellan's Keep over land as it would by sea. Additionally, routes are often safer thanks to the protection of the Imperial Navy which makes birth at the Dawn Fort. The massive military complex trains and houses sailors, soldiers and naval officers alike. All pirates, smugglers and any other maritime rogues know to give the Dawn Fort a wide berth.

The High Road

Shortly after Canvelton's founding, settlers exploring southward found an impassible marshland. The swamp was reportedly home to deadly creatures and haunting lights. But strangest of all, it had a stone road cutting straight through it. Everywhere else the explorers had found hadn't been touched by human development, with the exception of Mearith, but this road was beyond even the Zytharian's architectural abilities. Perfectly straight, and made from seamless grey stone, the High Road protrudes twenty-feet out of the marsh, built on unseen foundations below the waterline.

Scholars posit that it was built by the mysterious architects of Dun' Dor. But it is debated if the High Road was even intended to be a road. It is quite narrow for a highway, only accommodating one wagon at a time. So, some argue that it is simply the top of a wall or great dam. But if its purpose was to stop the waters of the Southern Mountains from reaching the Trade Sea, it has ceased functioning long ago.

Unless you plan on wading through waist-deep water, and camping on protruding hillocks, while watching for venomous snakes, and monstrous reptile predators, the only way to reach Dun' Dor from the Golden Flats is by paying the High Road's toll. Wooden platforms and way-stops have been constructed periodically along the High Road, so that travelers have a place to rest their feet and sleep. Wagons can only travel one way at a time so the Castellan's men manage a strict caravan schedule.

Dun' Dor

If the High Road seems like an unbelievable creation, it does little to prepare you for the sight that is Dun' Dor. The fortress seems to be a *part* of the mountain itself. Not that it was carved into the cliffside, but the whole mountain top was shaped into a castle. Hundreds of feet of seamless stone, with countless windows, balconies and parapets. The base of the colossal tower is swallowed by rock, and then at the foot of the mountain is a pair of massive doors: perfectly smooth, angular and impenetrable. A winding ramp of switchbacks leads up to the doors. And buildings cluster around it, like toadstools around the roots of a mighty tree.

The town of Dun' Dor (named after the fortress) would be unassuming if not for the 80-foot-tall doors looming over it. Its social strata are as starkly divided as the red and orange stone of the Southern Mountains. Lavish marble villas, closest to the ramp, surrounded by wooden buildings of one or two stories. Beyond that is a sea of tents and temporary hovels, home to the Civil Kingdom's most desperate. But a potent anticipation hangs over the richest and poorest alike.

Olmsted, owner and proprietor of the Waylaid Wagon was there, 14 years ago, the last time the doors opened. "I heard a great rumbling as the doors slid open, it shook the whole ground. Everyone dropped whatever they were doing and grabbed their offerings. The Underking walked out, alone, his robe weighed down with pockets of gemstones and golden ore. The Underking was a kindly old man, didn't talk much, seemed to have no real concept of money. I sold him a basket of fresh-baked rolls, and got enough to buy this inn here. Maude, she sold him her prized goose and is living easy up in Valen' Cia now. Some are like Maude, they take what they get and leave this town, but others are like me: trapped, waiting their whole lives to feel the ground shake again."

It is said that the wealthiest thief to ever live grabbed the Underking's coat. He made it twelve whole steps before being ripped apart by the crowd. Now there is an almost religious reverence around the door's opening. Just in case, the most powerful family in Dun' Dor, House Amberose, maintains order. They ensure everyone gets a chance to meet the Underking, while selling him whole carts of grain and rare goods gathered from afar.



Brugah

The proud people of Brugah would rather break than bend, and they have proven this over centuries of stubborn opposition. Fighting, regardless of the odds, to preserve their freedom. But the cost was high and the cause, ultimately futile. When the smoke cleared, Brugah had been conquered by the DeCain Empire and much of it was left a war-scarred barren. The land is not the only thing that hasn't recovered from the conflicts. A smoldering ember of resentment lives on in the spirit of the Brugahnese, just waiting to be reignited.

Founding of Brugah

After Sanctus the Second showed the abundance that could be found outside the Green Vale, people started migrating westward in droves. But many were not motivated by the religious promises of the Golden Flats. Instead, they sought true freedom, and followed the possibility of prosperity across the Trade Sea.

Between the Southern Mountains and the mouth of the North River they found an untamed wilderness. Bountiful forests of lumber that had never been felled. And rolling plains with wild horses that had never been tamed.

These industrious explorers immediately began transforming the wilds into farm land. And settlements sprung up, free of any outside sovereignty. Within two generations the city of Brugah was founded and people began to flood there, to live free and prosper from the sweat of their brow.

Culture of Brugah

In Brugah, independence is valued above all else. Freedom to live wherever and however you choose, worship whatever god you want, and marry who you please. But also, the freedom to follow any occupation you are called by. And, as long it serves your community in a tangible way, support yourself and family, and prosper if you do it well.

Brugah culture acknowledges the necessity of soldiers, scholars and merchants, but it idolizes craftsmen above all. They see a noble practicality in even the most mundane of trades. A cobbler, who has mastered their craft through a lifelong dedication and meets the needs of their community deserves far more respect than a wealthy and successful merchant who succeeded from the advantages of their birth.

Unlike other regions, in Brugah you cannot simply order the local peasants to build a road or harvest a field. You must find the proper guild that represents those craftsmen and pay them wages determined on their certifications and experience. This makes Brugah a destination for craftsmen and laborers from across the Civil Kingdoms. But it is difficult to become established there. There is a cultural code to give priority to the craftsman who has served the community the longest, not the one who offers the best price. Unless there is an overabundance of work, it is seen as quite taboo to take food from the mouth of community member just to keep a few silvers in your pocket.

This is how the Brugah culture shows charity. They will pay you more than they need to, to make sure you have enough, but will never hand money out to a beggar on the street. Begging is illegal in fact, although the enforcement of this mandate is often more trouble than it's worth. There is a saying "Nothing is lower than a beggar with an able-body and a sound mind. Even without an able-body they could sell their wisdom. And not having a sound mind hasn't stopped half the Emperors from getting a job." Obviously, this is a joke, but it is rooted in a serious mindset.

Artists are seen as only slightly better than beggars. Painters and poets who toil for thousands of hours, not serving a function but creating needless frivolity. If such a squandering of time wasn't bad enough, the only way an artist can prosper is by

selling goods of subjective value, essentially swindling those in their community out of hard-earned money. There are, of course, still plenty of artists in Brugah. The wealthy enjoy a variety of “guilty pleasures,” poetry among the most innocuous. But artists will face some prejudice from the more traditional Brugahinese, and it is much harder to reach celebrated status there than say, Valen’ Cia.

That is not to say that artistry is not valued in Brugah, it is simply seen as the highest level of mastery that can be achieved in one’s craft. Potters, jewelers, weavers and trades people of all kinds are encouraged to express themselves and beautify their products. But foolish is the stone-carver who makes his column so elegant it no longer supports the roof.

Regardless of your profession, one thing is true for every Brugahinese man and woman: You have to be able to ride. Every child dreams of the day when they can afford their first mount. And in Brugah, the pedigree of your horse, and how well-groomed it is, says far more about to you than how finely you dress. The highest quality horses in the Civil Kingdoms are bred in Brugah, which is a point of national pride. The Emperor himself rides a Brugahinese Wildstrider which are valued at ten-times the cost of a standard stockhorse. Unlike in the Capital, where it is common to settle disputes with a duel, it is far more common in Brugah to settle such matters of reputation with a race instead.

Government of Brugah

For three-hundred years after Brugah’s founding the vast majority of its population lived in a network of villages across the countryside. These ranged in size from only a few families to small towns like Cobblestone is today. They were self-sufficient communities, but could lean on those around them if a crop failed. Mostly self-governed, each village could elect their own officials, amend any laws, and create their own customs. The king only had to intervene to squash violent feuds or dispose officials who had strayed toward the tyrannical.

The king’s seat of power was the city of Brugah itself, which had been constructed at a central crossroads so it could reach all of the outer villages quickly. At the time, it was tiny compared to

other contemporary cities. Little more than a hillfort with wooden walls, while Calister, the city that would become the Capital of the Empire, was already a sprawling metropolis.

According to legend, the city was founded by Raridon, the first king of Brugah. He broke an untamable brown stallion who he named Truth and chose its likeness to represent the fledgling nation. Many different royal families reigned over a free Brugah, but none tried to change the emblem. It aptly represented the strength and unbreakable spirit of the Brugahne people.



House Hammerford was the last family to rule a free Brugah. Alister Hammerford was king when the king of Calister, Dara DeCain declared war on the Ancients of the Greatwood. Dara said that Brugah had an obligation, as a nation of humankind, to unite against this universal evil. Brugah had only petty grievances with the Ancients. They had skirmished with a few who had been living in seclusion and protecting the strange Everfall forest. But they had no interest in inflaming relations with their mysterious neighbors and refused Dara's call to action. Unable to pursue his vengeance without reinforcements, the King of Calister turned his fury southward. He expected to swiftly conquer a group of small villages and conscript them to the *real* war. What began was a century-long conflict that would forever scar the face of Brugah.

When the war was finally over, the region lay burned and broken but Calister had wrestled control over Brugah and an Empire was forged. Dara DeCain, the last of the silver kings, had died of old age during the conquest. But his son, Dantus DeCain, the first Emperor, instated House Harsyth as his vassal governors. And they have ruled over the Imperial Duchy of Brugah for the last 200-years. Things have changed under Imperial sovereignty. The villages of Brugah have grown into proper townships and no longer have the autonomy that they once did. They are subject to all the laws of the Empire. Magic is outlawed, they can only worship Alric, and must send young men to the Imperial legions

every year. But for those unconcerned with where their taxes go, life goes on. Brugah still has an independent spirit and unique culture that flourishes under a different flag. And in secret, the Brugahnese speak of the golden age of independence and that it may come again.

The current duke of Brugah is Crawson Harsythe. The mustached man is known for his practical politics and straightforward discourse. He refuses to wear the coronet of his station, preferring instead a bronze chain of office. He wears a long fur coat, open in the front to accommodate his rotund midsection. He always carries a gladius at his hip and was said to have some skill with it when he was younger.

Duke Harsythe has been blessed with five daughters but no sons. His wife, the Duchess Anolia, can no longer provide him with an heir. His eldest daughter, Corina, is well into her twenties and is yet to be married. There are those within his court who are anxious to find a good heir. When prodded about the subject he was recorded saying: "What would you have me do? I am no Marcellus who will go through wives like the phases of the moon. I love Anolia and made a vow to her in front of Father Aldor himself. I take my word very seriously. So, I am left waiting. Waiting for a worthy heir to reveal himself. So far, I have only been approached by sycophants from minor houses who want to use Corina as a way to elevate their station, or flirtatious peasants who have attracted her affection but have not had the character required to manage a kingdom."

Brugah

Government: Vassal State (Duchy)

Ruler: Crawson Harsythe

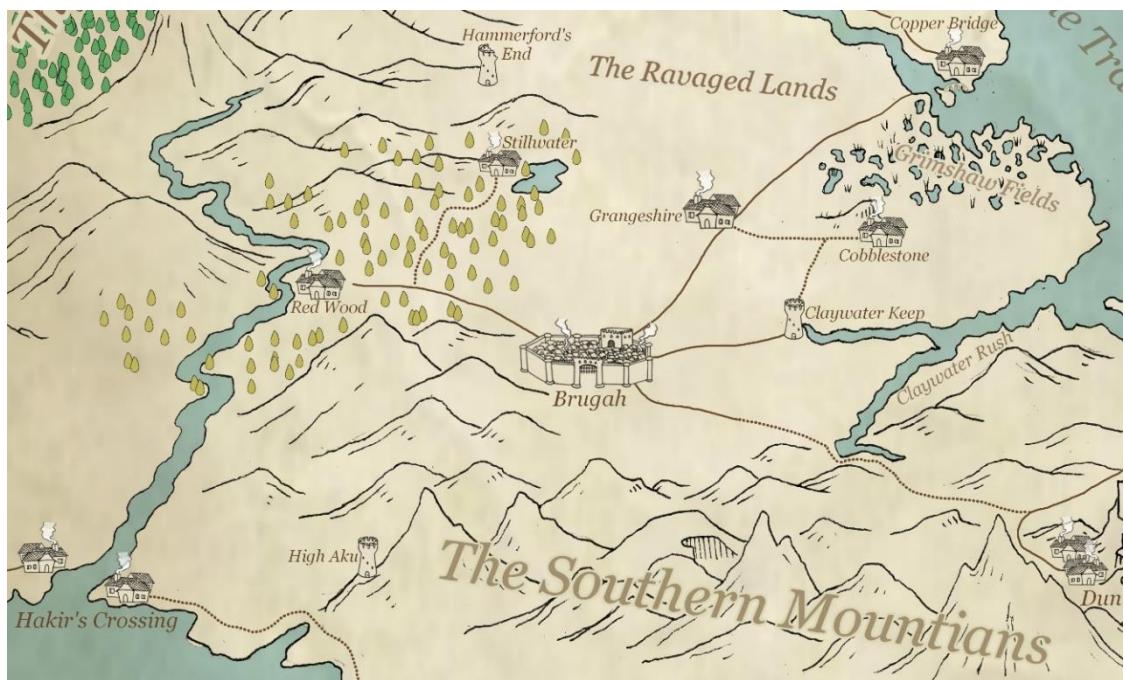
Stability: ★★

Might: ★★★

Wealth: ★★

Main Exports: Horses, Lumber, Cheese, Bronze.

Stereotypes: Unsophisticated, miserly hillbillies that have a chip on their shoulder the size of a boulder.



Brugah

Although maybe not as grand as the other cities, Brugah has them matched in size. A sea of slate roofs and belching chimneys, encircled by an unembellished wall of tan stone. The walls of Brugah have had to be repaired many times over its violent past. And due to lack of funding, there are still sections that are no more than the wooden stakes of a hillfort's defenses.

The city has four gates, each facing a cardinal direction. The eastern gate is the most used. It leads to Claywater Keep, which serves as Brugah's link to the Trade Sea. Both overland routes to the city are arduous, so most visitors first see Brugah from her eastern side.

Carts of lumber are constantly rattling into the city through its western gate from Red Wood. The shops and taverns around that gate cater to the lumberjacks and caravanners who frequent the district. They are cheap, but do not tolerate the lowlifes that infest similarly affordable establishments.

The north gate's road leads through Grangeshire and to the Ravaged Lands beyond. A desolate region of old battlegrounds where crops can no longer grow. Since it cannot be settled by honest folk, it has become home to roaming bands of brigands and highwaymen who hide out in the crumbling towers that litter the landscape.

The southern gate is the least used of all. The winding mountain road to Dun' Dor is long and poorly maintained. It is not traveled often enough to support roadside inns, so those looking for shelter must camp or seek refuge in the occasional goat-herder's hut.

Unlike the Capital and the Castellan's Keep, the ruler of Brugah doesn't live in a high tower above the city. Brugah does have a fortress on its south-western side, but its purposes are purely martial. It serves as a barracks, and a holdfast to fall back to in the case of walls being breached. Although Duke Harsythe will host meetings there occasionally, he lives in a relatively humble manor house in the city itself. He prefers to walk amongst his people, and often goes on rides through the outer towns and villages. He has a detachment of guards with him at all times, a fact that he never ceases to complain about, but the real protection comes from the sincere respect of the Brugahne people.

Grangeshire

The DeCain Empire's initial invasion of Brugah, a campaign later named the Long March, was halted at Grangeshire. Alister Hammerford, the king of Brugah, used the town as his headquarters for twenty years as the two armies struggled against each other. He managed to push the invaders back to the North River a few times. But eventually his line broke. He died in the first sack of Brugah. In the years of unstable peace following his death, his supporters built a sturdy stone wall around Grangeshire and a bronze statue of Alister Hammerford in its central square.

Hammerford's End

The Brugahne resistance lasted for almost a century, even after Alister's death. For generations the people of Brugah fought back through sabotage, protest and even a few open rebellions. It would only end when Alister's great-grandson, Alinor, was slain at a tower on the western border of Brugah, now called Hammerford's End. He wasn't out-maneuvered martially. He was betrayed by his friend and lieutenant, Corbin Harsythe who sought an end to the war.

Red Wood

The Everfall Forest in the west of Brugah is a truly unique biome. Its trees remain in the fiery hues of autumn year-round. We cannot say with certainty if this is attributable to an anomaly in climate or the strange magics that pervade the Great Wood. But considering that the settlers of Red Wood had to chase away a few Ancients who had been living there, most lean toward the latter.

Its surreal beauty is not all the Everfall Forest has to offer. The trees there grow straight and quickly, and their lumber is incredibly hard. And it is this industry that supports the bustling town of Red Wood. Felling and processing the lumber is the easy part. It is transporting it from the remote border of Brugah that poses the largest challenge. The smaller planks can be hauled to Brugah, and then shipped from there. But overland transport is costly and tedious. The larger logs must be shipped downstream to the sea. The trip around the Endless Sands is long, but the real danger is Hakir's Crossing.

Hakir's Crossing

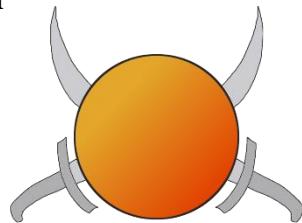
The ruthless crime lord Hakir has set up a “toll post” at the mouth of the river. He has no official right to demand payment, but rights matter little to a man with an army of thugs and enforcers. The sawmill owners and shipping magnates of Red Wood have implored the Imperial Legions to get involved. But Hakir's Crossing is technically outside their borders in The Danerian Free State.

What started out as a blockade built for extortion has grown into a floating town of ships and quays. Permanent enough to have districts and landmarks, but shifting enough where house-boats and tavern-barges can move around or even disappear completely. These ever-changing canals are most commonly navigated by raft, as the water is shallow enough to reach with a pole and the currents are gentle.

Amet is dice game of chance and bluffing that is very popular in Hakir's Crossing. The gambling dens accept both the silver coins of the DeCain Empire, the strange iridescent shells

which are traded in the Danerian Free State. Those desperate enough can even wager their house-boats on a toss of the dice.

Everyone knows Hakir's emblem is twin sabers behind a setting sun. But little is known about the man himself. Rumors circulate of course. Some suspect that he has secret government connections in Vista, the thriving tropical capital of the Danerian Free State. Some favor or blackmail that is stopping their army from marching westward and crushing his little criminal empire. Others whisper that he was once a Sworn Sword, who turned his back on the order to pursue power and wealth.



High Aku

The mountainside fortress of High Aku is home to warrior monks known as the Sworn Swords. They spend their lives mastering the use of a single weapon (most often a curved two-handed blade). They do not use magic or any other avenues to power besides practice and dedication. But their abilities with the katana are legendary, accomplishing feats of battle prowess and athletics that other men believe to be impossible.

Once their rigorous training is complete, the Sworn Swords take an oath to uphold a code of honor. They protect the helpless and deliver justice to those who have escaped or exploited the law.

Normally a Sworn Sword's journey is a solitary one. Traveling from village to village and protecting them from threats for as little payment as a place to rest and a hot meal. But sometimes, when word of a true atrocity reaches their mountain top retreat, they will rally and march in the dozens or hundreds.

High Aku is outside the domain of both the DeCain Empire and the Danerian Free State, although their agents are more commonly seen in the latter. The Sworn Swords operate outside the laws of both nations. Assassinating corrupt politicians who have avoided punishment through technicalities of the court has made their presence unwanted in some cities, but they are always welcomed by the peasants they've helped protect.



DeCain Empire

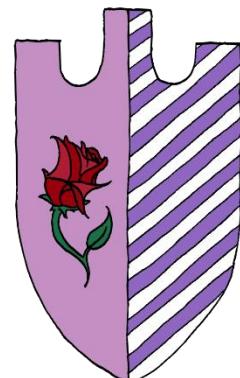
The DeCain Empire is the most powerful state since the fall of the Zytharian Dynasty. More than half of the lands in the Civil Kingdoms are already under its control, but that doesn't mean it is content to sit back and rest on its accomplishments.

Constantly looking for opportunities for expansion, their mission will only be complete with all of human-kind if unified under one flag: The purple stripes and red rose of House DeCain.

Founding of the Empire

In the rush of excitement and exploration that followed the opening of Pilgrim's Pass, two brothers from an insignificant Olgate family led an expedition into the unexplored north west. They simply wanted to seek their fortune, not forge a dynasty that would last over 600-years, but men rarely achieve what they intend.

According to legend, after a long journey through a dark wood, the brothers and their people reached an impassable river. The younger brother wanted to go downstream and find a good place to settle. But the older brother wanted to go upstream and find the source of the water. Words turned to shouts and soon, swords were drawn. Unable to be swayed by arguments, they agreed that a duel would decide which direction they went. Whoever drew first blood would dictate the future of their expedition. So, on the banks of the North River, brother dueled



brother. Their fighting was blindingly fast, and ruthless. But their fury was matched by the other's skill. And as the sun-set, they both collapsed exhausted, neither scathed from the intense bout.

The next day, after their tempers had cooled, both brothers realized the many fortunate qualities of the location. Close to a water source, flat ground ready to build on and a nearly endless source of lumber nearby. The city of Calister, which would eventually become the Capital of the Empire had humble beginnings: log homes surrounded by a meager wall. But that spot on the riverbank, where the DeCain brothers once quarreled, is immortalized. Both in the regal river-side plaza called Duelist's Square, and in the long tradition of dueling that is integral to Imperial culture.

The elder brother ruled as the first King of Calister, while his younger brother became one of the best duelists in the world. They did occasionally butt heads like they did as youths, but together they saw Calister expand. Expand quickly. So quickly that after a few generations, the woods around the city had been cleared. They had to turn to the magnificent pines on the other side of the river. Strange things started happening after that. Loggers reported animals... just watching them. And sightings of figures in the trees who would disappear if approached. Most of these rumors were dismissed as peasant superstition or tricks of the light. Little did they know, they had started an invasion.

The Ancients of the Great Wood do not conduct warfare like we do. Why would they when one can level a tower without lifting a sword? Instead, they made the environment itself their weapon. The forest became a cruel, inhospitable place with a reputation for misfortune befalling those who entered. But if one logging expedition was sent home by some gruesome accident or natural phenomenon, two more would take its place. Warnings and nuisance did little to slow the march of human progress.

Perhaps there is a gentler history where this is as far as the conflict escalated, but that is not our history. 500-years ago, Valiana Avar's twin brother was murdered in Valen' Cia. Consumed by grief and anger she fled to her home in the Great Wood. But Ancients do not cower in fear or sneak under the cover of night. She became a storm and flew.

Thaumaturgists at the Royal Academy insist that this is a figurative interpretation. It is more likely that she simply conjured a storm than actually turned into one. But the full extent of Elven magic isn't fully understood. Ancients use magic as innately as we breathe and speak. Some argue that her emotions manifested the tempest and it was out of her control.

Whether it was simply the most direct route home, or a vindictive choice against the species that killed her brother, Valiana flew over the city of Calister. The storm gathered unexpectedly, rolling from the eastern horizon like a wave. People were out laboring in the fields when the sky darkened. The storm consumed them before they had a chance of reaching shelter. Those who were inside didn't fare much better. The city had stone walls but many of the houses were still wood. Valiana devoured the city with lightning teeth and breath that ripped off roofs and tossed them like leaves in the wind.

When the storm had passed Calister was in ruins. Thousands had been killed... including the queen. King Damien DeCain's grief was not a furious tempest like Valiana's was. It was a cold metal thing of ruthless determination. He saved the ones that he could who were trapped in the wreckage and started rebuilding. But as soon as his city was stable, he rallied his banners for war. He did not have to coerce his subjects into service. Nearly everyone in Calister had lost a loved one on that terrible day.

This wasn't a war for resources or borders, it was a vengeful extermination. Damien DeCain realized that the Great Wood itself was the Elves' greatest weapon. They hid amongst its branches and the animals were their spies. And so, he set it aflame. The precious lumber that his ancestors had risked their lives for was worthless compared to revenge.

The Elves were not prepared for such an assault. They fled deeper into trees with the woodland creatures who had called those shady glades home since time began. But they could not escape without a few of their numbers being shot down by Damien's archers. For the first time, humans were able to examine the corpse of an Ancient and realized how close the two were.

Perfectly proportioned, free of flaws, and eternally in their prime, yes. But other than that, identical to humans.

A handful of bodies didn't sate Damien's bloodlust. His armies pushed deeper and deeper into the Greatwood, setting fires and hunting down Elves. But they didn't know that they were simply scratching the surface. It is said that the Great Wood extends further to the west than the realms of men extend to the east. They had been killing the rural hermits who lived on the edge of Elven society. And they were about to encounter a king.

Yorath, the River King, is the Ancient who rules over the easternmost region of the Great Wood. He was infuriated by the unprecedented loss of life and the utter disregard that humans showed his home's ecosystem. So, he made a stand. The Ancients have no armies, no soldiers, no weapons. Every single Ancient, regardless of what peaceful profession they occupy has the capacity for immense destruction.

The Ancient's favorite medium is nature... but they can paint in all colors of magic. They waited for Damien to set his fires and then they turned the inferno back on him. Less than twenty elves worked together to weaponize the wildfire, and killed thousands of soldiers before the sun rose. Damien and his son were among the burned, so his infant grandson Dauren back in Calister became king.

The details of this terrible conflict are necessary to illustrate both the deep seeded hatred the people of Calister have toward the Ancients, and the desperation with which Dauren DeCain needed reinforcements. Luckily, fire and ruin were not the only things found on Damien's march westward. They discovered the edge of the Silver Peaks and the wealth of mineral deposits within. These riches would help build up Calister to new heights. An accident in Dauren's youth left him without the use of his legs, so instead of marching back into the Great Wood he spent his long-life amassing power and preparing Calister for war.

So it was that the burden of vengeance was placed on Dara DeCain at birth. When he came of age, he sent a plea to all the realms of men, to unify against the mysterious evil that lurked in the shadows of the Great Wood. Some sent soldiers, some sent sympathy, but their neighbors in Brugah sent scoffs. So, Dara

DeCain marched south to conscript the men of Brugah to the true fight. As long as this story has been, it has only been half the tale; the founding of Calister. But by definition, an empire must be founded by the fusing of two distinct kingdoms.

The Long March

This is my brief account of the numerous invasions, conflicts and rebellions that took place between Brugah and Calister between the year 96-Before Unification and the final sack of Brugah, which ultimately created the Empire and began the glorious reign of DeCain Emperors. Context provided, and excerpts compiled by Magistrate Zeb of the Royal Academy in the year 274-After Unification.

As King Dara DeCain began his invasion of Brugah, the villages along the North River were easily crushed. The brutality was a tactic that he expected would encourage the king of Brugah to surrender. Instead, it unified the remaining villages which were normally quite insular. People from every corner of Brugah rallied behind their king, Alister Hammerford. He had ruled for 10-years, proving himself to be just and popular. But because the only military experience a Brugahnese king got was keeping unhappy citizens in line, he was untested in most martial affairs.

His army was equally untested. The vast majority of it was made up of volunteer militia. Men, and even women, who knew how to ride but had never seen battle were equipped with repurposed weapons. Regardless, they banded together to defend their homes and the ideals of Brugah.

Below is an excerpt from Dara DeCain's personal journal during his initial march southward.

"I am well into my second week and still Hammerford's men refuse to engage my host. Granted, it is likely the most splendid army his backwater has seen. But I still expected him to conduct himself like a king, not some Elvish skirmisher. He continues to harass my supply trains and slow my march with ambushes and traps. But my progress is inevitable. I take no pleasure in burning these abandoned villages. But the price of resistance must be known."

Underestimated at the beginning of the war, by the end of it Alister Hammerford was renown as a brilliant tactician and impassioned speaker. He managed to stall out the initial southern march just short of Grangeshire. And he grew old, keeping the Empire at bay. Like a grand game of tug-of-war, the two nations struggled against each other, trampling the land over and over again.

But eventually the Brugahnese reached their breaking point. They could no longer sustain the resistance and fell back to the city of Brugah. In a final act, Alister Hammerford gave his life to ensure his wife and sons could escape the sack of the city.

This was the first of three times Brugah would be sacked. The final time would be 75 years later. A defeat that finally squashed the Brugahnese resistance once and for all. Scholars can only speculate how long the conflict would have dragged on if not for the merciful cunning of House Harsythe.

Dara DeCain, last of the Silver Kings, writes a few years before his death: “Ever since Alister’s impressive defense effort, House Hammerford’s sovereignty and defiance have been irrevocably linked. A Hammerford surrendering would be akin to a fish crawling onto land, or a mockingbird falling forever silent. They prove this by leading an underground resistance even while my forces hold their city.”

Alister’s son was only 12 when his father died, and yet he grew to be a notable thorn in the Empire’s side. He led a coup that would retake the city of Brugah but die at the young age of 27. His son, would manage to get the city sacked for the second time. But my purpose here is not to detail every chapter in this century long epic.

Alinor Hammerford, (Alister’s great grandson) would be the last of the Hammerford kings, and the end of the familial line. Corbin Harsythe was Alinor’s lieutenant. He knew his king’s stubbornness better than anyone, and saw the terrible effects such an extended war was having on their home. Calister was much better funded, and could maintain their offense with relative ease. Brugah on the other hand was pouring every resource they could muster into staving off the invasion. And more importantly, the battles were taking place on their soil.

Once fertile fields were now trampled and salted. And towers and villages were left as broken ruins. The desolation of warfare, a region called the Ravaged Lands, was spreading each generation the conflict continued.

So, Corbin did what he had to. While Alinor was isolated, and pushing the westernmost front, he betrayed his king. Corbin Harsythe's scouting regiment failed to mention the Imperial army that was surrounding their position. Alinor was outnumbered 10 to 1, but surrender wasn't in his blood. He dug his heels into a crumbling tower now named Hammerford's End.

Alinor Hammerford died at the age of 32, according to reports, with a sword still held in his hand. He had two sons back in Brugah, one 10, and one 4. It is the unfortunate nature of monarchies that leaving either alive would have been an incredible liability. Not only to the authority of the fledgling empire, but the stability of a recovering Brugah. A century long feud, as bloody and brutal as this one, cannot be ended with papers and promises. Both children were killed during the final sack of Brugah in the year 1-Before Unification.

House Harsythe has guided the duchy of Brugah ever since with prudence and compassion. They took great steps to facilitate the healing of their nation and the transference of power. Although some still spit at their name and whisper "traitor," most of Brugah's people recognize the necessity of what they did. They are not the war-forged heroes that the Hammerfords were heralded to be, but I hope they will be remembered as the heroes Brugah needed in its darkest hour.

Dara DeCain, who had started this war almost a century ago, was long dead when Brugah finally knelt. But his son, Dantus DeCain, was somehow still clinging to life. Perhaps unwilling to give up hope that he would be able to see his father's vision realized. At the age of 102, he was coronated the first emperor of the DeCain Empire, earning his father the title "Last of the Silver Kings." He reigned for 13 months before expiring peacefully, and passing the crown to his son. And so started a great dynasty. One that has lasted almost three-hundred years and will, with Alric's blessing, last many more.

Government & Culture of the Empire

After seeing the brutality with which Brugah was brought into the empire, the Wrens of the Golden Flats chose a path of lesser resistance. In the year 16-After Unification, the third kingdom joined the empire willingly through marriage.

A stipulation of the Wren betrothal, was the Order of Alric becoming the official religion of the entire empire. As the teachings of Sanctus the Second spread through the realm two major shifts occurred. The Order's disdain for "Black Magic" aligned perfectly with the people of Calister's fear of the Ancients. All magic (except the Divinity practiced by official priests) was made illegal throughout the whole Empire. This common ground also helped bring three fractured peoples together. Through a common religion, a common monarch, currency and enemy, an imperial identity started to emerge.

This unification led to unprecedented cooperation and the beginning of a golden age. The city of Calister was no longer just Calister, it was "The Capital." With the nearly endless wealth of the Silver Peaks, the Empire started leading the way in technological advances and setting trends in everything from fashion to battlefield tactics. The Royal Academy was founded to educate the line of DeCain emperors, and it attracted the best tutors from across the Civil Kingdoms (as long as they were willing to not teach anything against the doctrine of Alric).

And after a century away, the DeCains were able to return to the war in the Great Wood bolstered by the levies from all three duchies. They pushed the River King's forces back and built two permanent fortresses in the Great Wood, the Hold and the Reach. But over the years... the fervor for the war with the Ancients faded. That terrible storm was now a thing of legend, not a fresh wound. Their enemy was cunning and evasive, rarely providing a satisfying battle and every victory only earned them another few miles of identical forest.

It became much more practical, and profitable, to turn their eyes eastward, and bring more of the Civil Kingdoms under their control. They saw the explosive benefits of cooperation, the progress that unification brought. The Long March was a grueling,

terrible conflict. But without the Empire's toil, humankind would still be divided and bickering.

No matter how badly the DeCain emperors want unity, they are not barbaric conquerors like the chieftains of Hillrund. They always provide justification for their invasions (no matter how flimsy). They went to war with North Watch to settle, once and for all, the disputed mineral rights of the Silver Peaks. But it proved impossible to capture the city so they settled for seizing more of the mountains and mines.

Next, they tried to bring the city-states of the Green Vale into the fold peacefully. But unreconcilable differences in religious or economic beliefs ended every attempt. That appeared to be the end of the matter but Olgate is still worried that the emperor will try and reclaim his ancestral lands. House DeCain was originally from Olgate, and no one could prove outright they *weren't* tangentially related to Cecil, the Penny King.

Fortunately, the current Emperor, Darius DeCain is a conservative, tempered ruler. Usually, for a DeCain emperor, expansion is the least of his concerns. Twenty-five years ago, a tragic fire in the Royal Palace claimed his wife and son. The grief crippled him for almost a decade. The Empire was governed, in every way except name, by his Castellan Marcellus Wren.

Miraculously, a low-born woman named Jayne Winters caught his eye one day. A whirlwind romance that lasted less than a year led to the Empire having a new queen. Marrying for love, and not for political maneuvering, is a very un-imperial thing to do. But Darius' council were just happy to see their king break out of his gloom. His son and heir Darian DeCain was born later that year.

DeCain Empire

Government: Hereditary Monarchy

Ruler: Emperor Darius DeCain

Stability: ★★★

Might: ★★★★

Wealth: ★★★★

Main Exports: Silver, Wine, Fashion

Stereotypes: Pompous and deceitful sycophants who will duel you if you call them by the wrong title.



The Capital

The Capital dwarfs all the other cities in the Civil Kingdoms. A seemingly endless urban sprawl where many are born and die without ever setting foot outside the walls. Its massive population can support shopping districts for every conceivable niche. Like the Haberdashery District, which provides the city's upper class with the most fashionable accessories. The current trend is a long neck scarf worn loosely.

Imperials pride themselves on being well-read, cosmopolitan and fashionable. Literature and spices from every corner of the Civil Kingdoms, and beyond, find their way to the Capital's markets. The waterside cafes and winehouses of the Canal District are touted as some of the most romantic places in the Civil Kingdoms.

Many people come to see the marble statues of the DeCain brothers in Duelist's Square, their swords locked in an eternal clash. And it is not an uncommon sight to see two hot headed noblemen cross rapiers below them. Whether they are practicing for one of the outrageously lucrative tournaments, or settling a matter of honor can be determined by the amount of blood spilt.

It is said that if you take enough silver to the Capital, you can have anyone killed. The countless street gangs and slum lords are cheaper options. But if your target is really high profile, you'll need to contact Gorus Lem, which translates in Elvish to the "Hollow Soul." The secretive order of assassins swears all of their operatives to silence, and makes them prove it by cutting out their tongues. They have no known headquarters but the uncanny ability to always know whose been asking about them. Drop their name enough times in the right places and one of their agents might come to you. Just make sure to answer their questions honestly, and have the fortune required to hire them, or you might end up dead for wasting their time.

This unending urban ecosystem is watched over like a looming parent by the Royal Palace. Although the Castellan's Keep is very pointedly taller, the Royal Palace is more sprawling from generations of additions and renovations. Practically the size of a city district, the Royal Palace has been expanded to the point that the DeCain family rarely has to leave.

The majestic Belfry serves as the royal family's temple. Lady Satine Voyse, the Order's representative on the emperor's council, gives invigorating speeches there and performs with her choir of curated pupils. The Charred Wing, where the DeCain family used to live is still attached to the Royal Palace. It sits empty and unused but Darius refuses to let his advisors demolish it. The sapphire dome of the Royal Academy is attached to the Royal Palace by a high bridge, so that the emperor's children may attend their classes without crossing the street.

Magistrate Kiro is a controversial figure. A brilliant philosopher from the Danerian Free-State who became a tutor at the Royal Academy. He earned himself the title Magistrate just over a decade ago and has been proposing some radical ideas ever since. Eventually, he got permission from Darius to start the Thaumaturgy program. In the same way that priests of The Order can legally practice magic to help and heal, he argued that his students should be able to practice magic for the purposes of understanding it. And since it is the Ancient's greatest weapon, that argument worked. Whenever a magically active youth is discovered, instead of being punished they're sent to Kiro.

The Reach & The Hold

The Empire's upper class can only enjoy such a relaxed lifestyle because they know their borders are well secured by loyal soldiers. The Reach and the Hold were built to protect against Elvish invasion. But the centuries have proven that the Ancients have little interest in retaking their lands. And so, the two fortresses, once the mightiest imperial fortifications, have fallen into disrepair. The Hold, closer of the two, is still manned, but each year they receive less funding and fewer recruits. And the Reach has been almost completely claimed by the forest. Ivy covers every wall and only a handful of its roofs don't leak. Because of its isolated location and the risk of crossing paths with a dangerous immortal, the Reach has become little more than a disciplinary post to threaten unruly soldiers with.

Alterav's Fall

After the construction of the Hold and the Reach, the Great Wood front stagnated. So, the DeCain emperors turned their attention to other borders. They had long squabbled with North Watch over the mineral wealth in the Silver Peaks, and invaded hoping to bring a fourth realm into the fold. Such a massive military operation needed a staging ground, so Alterav's Fall was built. During its construction, it was named the Sentinel Towers as it had not yet earned its tragic name.

The fortress was erected at the top of a hundred-foot-tall water fall, its two towers joined by a bridge across the North River. Less than three years after its completion. The general who was put in charge of it, General Alterav, threw himself from the bridge, down the water-fall, to his death. When an explanation was demanded of his men, they reported that he had been driven mad by sounds from the nearby forest. At first, Alterav's insanity was dismissed as him putting too much stock in the northern legends surrounding Forhelst. But when his successor was killed in a mutiny after suddenly, and inexplicably commanding every soldier to march into the forest, the Empire abandoned the Sentinel Towers. Now the crumbling towers known as Alterav's Fall does little more than mark a border and generate ghost stories.



Mearith

Mearith was intended to be a fortress, not a city. A Zytharian border post that, when the dynasty tore itself apart, became the last bastion of the old regime. Now it acts as the sole bridge between the Civil Kingdoms and the Endless Sands, a bridge with a steep toll. In Mearith, everything has a price. A city built on extortion and exploitation, where wealth and power are synonymous.

Founding of Mearith

Nearly two millennia ago the Zytharian Dynasty was beginning to expand. They conquered the other nomadic tribes because of a supposed divine mandate which said the draconic god that had breathed the sun into existence, had also entrusted the Endless Sands to them, his chosen people. According to legend their god-king, Raz' Amon was immortal and capable of harnessing the power of the sun. But it is much more likely that these ancient records, which are inexorably entangled with religion, actually reference a whole line of rulers who shared one name.

The Zytharian Dynasty's northern border was protected by the impassable river canyon known as the Chasm. But that border had a single weak point, a naturally occurring land bridge shaped by the same river that carved out the Chasm itself. Raz' Amon proclaimed that the lands north of the Chasm were unholy. Any who crossed to the other side would enter the land of the dead.

Wander too long there and you would become a lost soul, called a Shade, who could no longer feel the warmth of the sun.

Roughly 1700 years ago, he constructed a towering citadel on the southern side of this bridge and named it Mearith. It served two purposes. To keep any unknown forces from the entering his domain, and to keep his subjects from exploring places that they shouldn't. For over a thousand years it was little more than a glorified gate-house.

Until, five-hundred and fifty years ago Zythar reached critical mass. Some reports say the indentured outnumbered the free ten to one. A massive slave uprising toppled the empire. They tore down monuments, and massacred the ruling class. They besieged Obar and nearly leveled Masak, so the god-king fled to Mearith, his last stronghold.

The Endless Sands were plunged into hundreds of years of war and turmoil. But while the ruins of his old empire burned, Raz' Amon started anew. Mearith's southern gate was permanently sealed off, so he built northward, across the land bridge. The northern "Shades" who Mearith was built to keep out became its first citizens. Mearith evolved into a bustling trade city that focused on supplying luxury goods to Raz' Amon's family. Valen' Cian silk and glass, produce from the Green Vale, and Calister's finest wines were all funneled into Mearith by merchants who grew rich catering to the reclusive royalty.

After seeing what befell Zythar the rest of the Civil Kingdoms outlawed slavery, it had never been the institution it was in Zythar. But Mearith existed outside of their laws, a last bastion of the old ways. Raz' Amon wanted the slaves that he was accustom to, and the merchants of Mearith weren't going to let a market go uncontested because of trifling ethics. The paranoid Raz' Amon rarely left his fortress, and didn't have enough sway over the city to properly tax it. So, after a few overindulgent generations, the royal family found their coffers depleted. Penniless, in a city of ruthless merchants who don't recognize their claim to divinity, they were forced from their castle and faded into obscurity. No one knows what happened to the decedents of the Raz' Amon. But if he is immortal like the histories claim, he is now just one of the countless beggars on the streets of Mearith.

Government of Mearith

Mearith is a Plutocracy. An unregulated capitalism, where the richest rule absolutely. With no centralized governance or public peace keepers the only way to survive in Mearith is to affiliate yourself with someone wealthy enough to provide protection. Those who have monopolized the most lucrative markets accumulate power at an exponential rate. Three merchant guilds dominate the economy and therefore the city as a whole:

The Spice Merchants control Mearith's primary export: spices. The rest of the world, both north and south of the Chasm, have acquired a taste for the spices of Mearith. Chefs, traders, and even kings are willing to pay heavy tariffs on the flavors harvested and cultivated by the Spice Merchants.

The Flesh Peddlers capitalize on Mearith being the last bastion of "legal" slavery (although the word legal implies there being any law at all). Three primary types of slaves can be bought at the Flesh Peddler's markets, each denoted by a tattooed Zytharian character on their left shoulder.

Shal' Kar are trained for the daily labors of life. The Zytharian script is angular and intricate, so cooks, couriers, masons, carpenters, and janitors all bear a subtle variation on the Shal' Kar mark depending on their expertise. Aging Shal' Kar who have led lives of exemplary service can be raised to the station of Kar' Enil, which are practically citizens. Although still property, they get to keep their wages and are entrusted with administrative duties. Chefs, master grounds-keepers, librarians and accountants are all Kar' Enil.

Lish' Kar are the pleasure slaves of Mearith's elite. Lady Scarlett, for example, claims her harem contains fifty of the most beautiful male Lish' Kar in the city. But the city also has brothels for the lower classes. All but the seediest operate under the guise of Temples to Felina. Felina is a local goddess of pleasure and love whose priests and priestess will show affection to anyone who makes a large enough offering to their temple. It is said that Lish' Kar have either the easiest or hardest lives in the Mearith, there is no in-between. Either doted on and practically married to a kind merchant lord, or at the whims of an abusive Flesh Peddler. But those who survive can become Kar' Ilid, the matrons who operate

these Temples of Felina. The profits go to the Flesh Peddler who owns the temple of course, but their lives are comfortable and their bodies their own.

Rho' Kar are the city's muscle. Without a city guard, each merchant faction enforces their own semblance of law through patrolling Rho' Kar. Shopping districts and neighborhoods are constantly changing hands from one "protector" to another. Luckily for the inhabitants these conflicts are normally settled with bribes or fights between Rho' Kar. The winner getting the right to tax the area.

Rho' Kar who prove too deadly to be wasted on patrols and bodyguard work are usually put to the test in the Arena of Jordyn. This starts off as fights against other Rho' Kar or wild animals, simple spectacle for the masses. But win enough and you will be elevated to Kar' Antis, or gladiator. The life of a Kar' Antis is one of training. Preparing for the most important day of their life. When they will be put forth as a champion for their master. Merchant lords routinely challenge each other, to see who has trained and invested in the better Kar' Antis. And they don't just wager their fighter's life, they wager a fortune. Win, and you will be showered with gifts from the slave trader who you just made even richer. Fine clothes and weapons, wine, luxurious feasts, Lish' Kar and the freedom to explore the city. If you lose... well you're most often dead. And if you're unlucky enough to survive, your master will usually punish you for losing so much money by demoting you to a Kar' Umok: the eunuch guards that protect the Temples of Felina.

The third, and wealthiest, kind of merchants are the Silk Lords. Despite what their name implies they don't make their fortunes from exporting fabric. They started as dye makers and now own the rights to tax the use of color. Lord Indigo, Lord Canary and Lady Scarlett are the most powerful as their colors are the most ubiquitous, but there are dozens more who stake claims on a more specific shade. Artisans and tailors have to pay a tax to produce goods of that color. Painting your house blue without Indigo's permission is a grave offense. This custom can seem strange to those outside the city. But they do not understand what a desirable status symbol certain colors have become, and just how much power the Silk Lords have to enforce their laws.

Culture of Mearith

Mearith is suspended between two cultures, influenced by both but having morphed into something entirely its own. The sun sees its vibrant colors, rich history and unique customs, but there is a shadowed underbelly that keeps the system working.

Mearith is a city of a great many delights. Every decadence can be indulged in for the right price. Many have lost themselves in its narcotic dens and temples of pleasure. But many, simply choose to lay in the sun. Clouds are scarce, rain an occasion, and the sun does not charge for its warmth. The wealthiest Silk Lord and poorest Shal' Kar alike bathe in the its rays.

Those born and raised in Mearith tend to have darker skin, and those who move there quickly tan. But it is a mixing pot of peoples from every corner of the world. The superstitious fear of wandering spirits has become a thing of the past, but the word "Shade" has been appropriated as a slur for pale northerners: Outsiders who belong in the shadows of trees, and do not understand the ways of Mearith.

The climate is hot, and Mearithian fashion accommodates that. Vests and sleeveless shirts at the norm, both for ventilation and to clearly display if you have a slave mark on your left shoulder. Loose-sleeved linen robes are worn, but only by those with attendants to fan them. And they are obviously wealthy enough that their freedom isn't in question.

The slave marks are characters from the Ancient Zytharian script. New Zytharian is the language of Mearith and the cities of the Endless Sands. A phonetic version of the dead language, mixed with some words from Vale Tongue, what those from the Civil Kingdoms speak. Vale Tongue is commonly spoken in Mearith, but if you want to know what the people you are haggling with are whispering about, bring a translator.

Despite its deeply flawed system, Mearith doesn't suffer from the same gender bias that hereditary monarchies do. There is no need for a male heir to maintain authority through blood. When a merchant lord dies, they can will their estates to anyone regardless of sex or relation.

The culture of Mearith has a strange relationship to its deceased father, the Zytharian Dynasty. The rest of the Endless Sands has a simple dynamic. They hated their father for the millennia of abuses and finally killed him. But Mearith still carries on his legacy, even if it is unintentional. The winged shield, Zythar's crest, still represents the city even though the royal family has been presumed dead for centuries.



The fortress on the southern side of the Chasm that was originally named Mearith is now referred to as Amon' Keep. It has sat abandoned and unused, except for the gate house which is manned to collect tolls from caravans. But recently, a minor Silk Lord named Marigold, the Lord of Rust and Ochre has purchased and restored

the ancient citadel. And more interestingly, declared himself to be Raz' Amon, the immortal who once ruled over all Zythar. Most dismiss this as some publicity stunt but there are those who claim the god-king has been in the city the whole time re-building his fortunes and planning his ascension to the throne of New Zythar.

Mearith

Government: Plutocracy

Ruler: None.

Stability: ★★

Might: ★★

Wealth: ★★★★

Main Exports: Spices, Dyes, Mercenaries.

Stereotypes: Ruthless slavers who would sell their own mother for a few silvers.

Mearith

Mearith has no lands and therefore requires no map. But the city itself is a densely packed ecosystem. When most people who have not visited the city describe Mearith, what they are really describing is the Span.

The Span is the natural land bridge that crosses the Chasm, and the city's wealthiest district. A grand street known as the Golden Thoroughfare runs the length of it, with bronze-domed temples and the manors of Silk Lords on either side. Heavily policed by dozens of different factions who have agreed to make peace in the name of profit, the Span is the safest place to do business in the city. But the license for even a road-side stall can cost a fortune. The Golden Thoroughfare ends at the base of the ancient Zytharian citadel, now known as Amon' Keep. Those hoping to enter the Span must pay a hefty toll to whichever merchant lord who currently operates the gate-house. The thoroughfare's northern edge is guarded (and similarly tolled) by the Castellan's fortification: The Plains Gate.

The Span has many sights, but none attract more visitors than the Arena of Jordyn. Around the colosseum's top, the massive ribs of a long-extinct leviathan protrude. They are linked by huge swaths of red fabric which shade the rings upon rings of stone seating. The very center of the amphitheater is a sandy pit with stone walls twenty feet high. The sun beats down illuminating it like a spotlight. Countless men and women have died in that ring. Some fought for glory, some fought for riches, some fought for freedom. But none fought as well as Jordyn, the legendary spear-wielding gladiator after which the arena was named.

The Span is only part of the city. Carved into the cliff faces on either side of the Chasm are thousands of dwellings, shops, and walk-ways. The Gulch, as it is called, is where most people in Mearith truly live. Those that do not want to pay the costly tolls to cross the Span can find passage down there. But you must be willing to carry everything down yourself as the cliffside paths are too narrow for carts. Sometimes you will need a ferryman to get you across, other times you can cross the Gulch on foot. The canyon floods and drains many times a year, in an unpredictable and sometimes volatile fashion.



Hillrund

Hillrund is an expansive primordial landscape. Although humans have lived and died in Hillrund for tens of thousands of years, their fleeting marks on the land have eroded away, leaving a mostly untouched wilderness. But the natural beauty of this place is belied by the harsh lives of its inhabitants. It is home to dozens of different tribes, which must compete for land and food to ensure they survive Hillrund's brutal winters. This punishing cycle along with a cultural contempt for the advances of the Civil Kingdoms have trapped Hillrund in a seemingly endless struggle where only the strongest and most ruthless survive.

Founding of Hillrund

Hillrund wasn't founded. It has always existed. It is the natural state in which human-kind was forged. It is speculated that humans have lived in Hillrund longer than even the Endless Sands, but the lack of lasting archeological evidence makes this impossible to prove. The only structures that survived the test of time are of giant design. So, although it is likely that these monuments were created with the help of enslaved humans, the ancient history of Hillrund is a story of giants.

No one knows for sure where the giants came from. The legends of Hillrund claim they arrived in great ships from a far-away land which had cast them out. But the only thing supporting this is that their oldest fortifications are built along the coast. They have been in Nell long enough for even the oldest giants to have forgotten their origins.

Although our modern perspective paints early humans as slaves to cruel warlords, that is only half-true. Many subjects followed their giant willingly, some even worshipping them as a demi-god. Without a giant's favor and protection, they would likely meet a far worse fate. This was the way of life for all mankind until enough independent humans escaped across the river to found Olgate.

But the people of Olgate weren't truly free. They lived in constant fear of giant raids, and without a giant to protect them fleeing and hiding behind their walls was the only option. So most chose to stay in Hillrund within the system they understood. Even when word reached them of Cauldor slaying a giant and creating a human-ruled North Watch, most dismissed that as an anomaly. Byruk was far from the most powerful giant and his lands were remote. But it planted the seed of resistance, and eventually the tribesmen banded together to start overthrowing their giants.

Naturally antagonistic, giants rarely cooperated, let alone bred. Even over a five-hundred-year lifespan it was rare to have more than one or two children. But humans were excellent at reproducing. Even if a hundred died killing one giant those numbers would be replenished within a generation. So eventually, despite a long string of devastating losses, human-kind won the war of attrition.

The remaining giants were forced into the northernmost mountainous region of Hillrund. They retreated high into the frozen peaks or back to the oldest of their sea-side fortresses. Only the most fanatical tribes continued to follow them, those that saw human subservience to giants as a natural and preordained relationship.

The newly liberated tribes instituted human chieftains, but didn't change the fundamental organization of their culture. The strongest single member of the group still led the rest, but that leader could now be anyone who proved themselves. There was too much animosity and old feuds between clans to unify them all into one nation. Perhaps they had inherited some of the giant's stubborn individualism. So, each tribe formed their own identity, with unique customs, beliefs, and methods for survival.

Culture of Hillrund

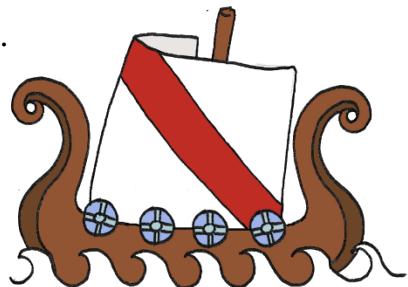
Hillrund doesn't have one culture but many. There are hundreds of tribes and factions fighting for dominance or just survival. Most are extended families, fifty members at most, with wildly different values and motivations. But some have accumulated enough influence and territory to be of note here.

It is possible that no tribe holds as much sway as the Godborn. Their leader, Ghala Godborn got her name by being the half-giant daughter of Ghod, the last of the giant warlords. 9-feet tall and strong willed, she wasn't content being a lieutenant in her father's tribe so she struck out on her own to found the Godborn. Some joking call her "The Queen of Gorum Gol." Although she has no more authority than any of the other high chieftains, her men are the ones who keep the peace in Hillrund's cultural heart. They can be identified by their golden tabards and disciplined formations. Although she does fight the Knights of Olgate for the betterment of her people, the Godborn do not pillage and raid like the other tribes do. This has led her detractors to accuse her of idolizing the Civil Kingdoms.

There are seven other high chieftains of Gorum Gol, but they spend most of their time with their respective tribes, only coming to the city when a meeting is called.

Sibyl Cruel-sea is the cynical but determined chieftain of the Fisher Nation. She rules from a massive whaling vessel named the Sunken Promise. And despite the prejudice her people face, she hopes to break into the world of trading with the Empire.

The Fisher Nation is the most prosperous tribe, so prosperous that they consider themselves a little removed from the other tribes. They still attend the gatherings at Gorum Gol but are seen as aloof or pretentious there. They think that trade is a necessary way of elevating their station in the world. And so, they do business with North Watch. Outsiders are welcome in their city of Kolbrak, as long as you bring something worth bartering for.



Paldrig, the Wise leads Carver Clan. Renowned builders, sculptors and craftsmen, Carver Clan are more peaceful than most. They will fight ferociously to defend their city of Owimesh, but do not raid outside their borders.

Rolbson, Root-finger leads the Gatherers who hold much of the forests on Hillrund's southeastern edge. Their territory's proximity to the Green Vale and their mastery of camouflage makes them excellent scouts. Knights of Olgate in the region have reported occasionally spotting mud-caked faces spying on them from the trees. They are rarely confronted by the Gatherers but their movements are reported to the other tribes with shocking accuracy.

High Chieftain Rocar encourages his tribe to embrace every advantage they can, regardless of tradition. Therefore, unlike most others, the Scrappers do not turn their back on wearing plate mail. They rove across Hillrund scavenging battlefields and assembling an iron collage of mismatched armor. They seek battle with the Knights of Olgate most of all, because the highest quality castle-forged steel can be found after a victory against them.

Tusk Clan are led by the cruel slaver Charl. Every tribe will take thralls, those spared in battle who repay their life-debt through labor. But Tusk Clan will raid villages and capture the non-combatants to ransom back or trade to other clans. Their ruthlessness is only half responsible for their fearsome reputation. The Beast-Blessed are berserkers who have been given enhanced abilities by the tribe's shamans. These warriors take on physical attributes of the animal god they are blessed by, including protruding boar tusks... hence the tribe's name.

Two high chieftains are granted positions out of respect, not because they have amassed power; Fallowden the Old Wolf, and Cathgah of The Mothers.

Hillrund is no place for children. One must grow up strong and fast if they hope to live to twenty. But a tribe of medicine women and midwives try to combat this. Known simply as The Mothers, they are one of the few stationary tribes. A rough translation of their cave's name is The Womb of the Earth. They live around this cave, taking in and caring for orphans and helping deliver newborns of every tribe.

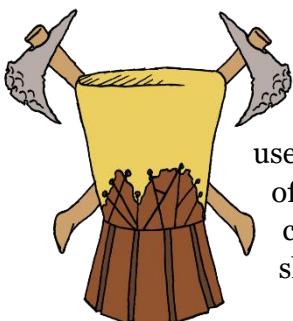
Fallowden is the eighth and final high chieftain. His order is the smallest by far. There are less than fifty Old Wolves as their creed requires that they wander Hillrund alone seeking out challenge and improvement. This is a deadly lifestyle, but those who survive quickly become some of the most formidable combatants in the world.

Those are just the largest or most respected tribes. There are countless more. Like the Wailers of the mountain passes who are known for their battle cry and ambush tactics. Shell Clan who rules the eastern coastline, and Frost Clan who rules the snowy peaks. Or the Stone-faced that will worship their giant ruler Ghod.

One of the most populous tribes is the Festermen, but they are too reprehensible to have a seat at Gorum Gol. The Festermen are the cannibalistic scavengers of Hillrund. Their leaders, the Witches of Rot, recruit outcasts from other tribes, the diseased, crippled, insane and starving. Only the truly desperate become Festermen. Through a dark pact with a vulture-headed god, they are able to eat raw meat. They wear stinking furs and the skin of their most recent meals, animal or human. Traveling across the landscape like locusts, they feast on the fallen. Feeble individually, they rely on swarm-tactics and the dark magic of their leaders. Cautionary tales warn against traveling alone, or else the Festermen will descend on you leaving only bones behind.

But for all of Hillrund's brutality, its inhabitants still value the modest pleasures of life. Marv's Band is a tribe of traveling cooks and musicians. They are welcomed by almost every other clan because of their honest reputation and the merriment which follows them. They trade hot delicious food, song and stories from afar for provisions and protection.

The people of Hillrund care little for heraldry, and if any icon is important to them, it would represent their clan not the whole region. This emblem, the war-drum and crossed axes is mostly used by the Civil Kingdoms to represent the Chieftains of Gorum Gol, since they don't know the dozens of clan-specific iconographies and the patchwork of shifting territories that make up Hillrund.





Gorum Gol

In Gol Speech, the tongue of Hillrund, Gorum Gol translates to "A Home for All." This permanent camp is a place where all tribes can meet and trade with an assurance that blood will not be spilt. Over the generations, Gorum Gol has grown into a burgeoning city, and the closest thing Hillrund has to a capital.

The eight high chieftains of Gorum Gol only meet when there is a matter of great importance to all people of Hillrund. They are not a ruling body that wishes to argue policy. But when a decision must be made, they meet in the great hall of Gorum Gol: a permanent tent over fifty feet tall made from the ribs of an unknown monstrosity.

The spring feasts are an annual celebration held in Gorum Gol. Every tribe is welcome there, even the Festermen. And it is a rare opportunity for clans to trade and breed with those from distant regions of Hillrund. Tribes are expected to put aside any

feuds and territorial disputes for the week-long feast. But this is not always upheld. So, the Godborn patrol the streets in twice their usual numbers.

Owimesh, the City of Clay

Carver Clan does almost as much trade with the Civil Kingdoms as the Fisher Nation. But because of their reclusiveness, those that wish to trade for their clay shingles or masterful ceramics must travel to the city of Owimesh.

Created before Olgate and Masak, Owimesh may be the oldest (continuously inhabited) human settlement. It was first constructed to be a refuge for those who had escaped the rule of giants. The city is carved into the clay of a massive hillside and then hardened with a technique only the Carver Clan remembers. The dwellings were little more than dim alcoves, but they were too small to permit giants, and the mud stairs would collapse under a giant's weight. But now without the constant threat of giants the city has expanded in both size and intricacy. Instead of hovels, multistory homes can be carved out of the hillside. And a complex network of ramps and walkways connect the districts of the city. It was purposed as a potential meeting place for the high chieftains, but that made the chief of Carver Clan too much like a king, so Gorum Gol was founded instead.

The Womb of the Earth

The home of the Mothers is a sacred place. A gaping cave mouth surrounded by bone-white trees. Only Cathgah and the other elders are permitted to the inner alcoves of the cave, where it is rumored, they make secret medicines.

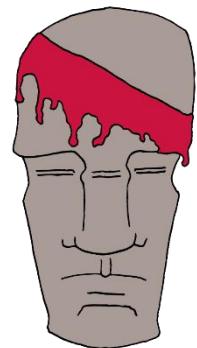
The Mothers and the orphans they care for are not protected by fighting men but by an ancient enchantment. If you spill blood there, your hands will be stained red and no amount of washing can remove the stain. Every tribe in Hillrund will turn those with red hands away... or hunt them down. The only way to rid yourself of this mark is to lose the hands themselves, which is often the punishment for staining them in the first place.

Kolbrak

Kolbrak is a city designed to be traversed by boat, not on foot. Although there's a permanent camp on the coast, the real city is out on the water, where hundreds of boats and barges are bound together. The Shivers, the thin rocky islands around the bay, break the waves and calm the tide. So, at night it looks like a field of gently swaying lights.

Chieftain's Cliff

Although some giants may live in hiding around Hillrund, only one true giant warlord remains. And only the strongest and most cunning could have survived. Ghod, also known as He Who Feasts on Men is the chieftain of the Stone-faced. More worshippers than followers, the Stone-faced wear heavy stone masks made in his image. Through some fanatical rite or alchemical transfusion their skin has turned grey and they do not feel pain or need to sleep. They stand guard for days at a time at the gates to Chieftain's Cliff, the oldest giant fortress which sits at the top of a 200-foot-tall coastal cliff.



Ghod's reputation has reached even into Civil Kingdoms because his ships are a scourge to any who try to skirt around the cape of Hillrund. But he is not the savage that some stories paint him as. His cruelty is a refined thing. Yes, he eats people, but he is not a bone-gnawing troglodyte. He cooks them with the finest seasonings. 300-years of life have left him with a hunger for only the newest, or strangest experiences.

Hillrund

Government: Anarchy

Ruler: None

Stability: ★

Might: ★★★★★

Wealth: ★

Main Exports: Furs, Fish, Clay

Stereotypes: Doesn't take a lot of imagination they are violent barbarians who don't work metal.

Timeline of Historic Events

Prehistory (2000 years ago)



“All we know about this era is from myths and legends. Unreliable at best and complete fancy at worst. The only reliable accounts are held by the Ancients, who claim to have existed for millennia before the birth of humanity. But they are protective of their secrets, as they are with all things. And any slim chance of reading them was dashed by the sparking of war many centuries ago.”

- Magistrate Kiro

Years Ago	Event
~4000	The giants arrived on Hillrund’s coast.
~3300	The beginnings of Owimesh were carved.
~2500	Raz’ Amon founded Masak.
~2000	Olgate’s first wall was constructed.

The Zytharian Zenith (1000 years ago)



“According to translated records, the Zytharian Dynasty reached its largest around 1100 years ago. It dominated huge swaths of the Endless Sands further south than this map allows us to illustrate. It is speculated to have been almost twice as a large as the DeCain Empire is today” -Magistrate Zeb

Years Ago	Event
~1700	The fortress of Mearith is constructed on the southern side of the Chasm.
~1200	Two Ancients leave the Great Wood to found Valen' Cia.
~1100	The Zytharian Dynasty reaches its height.
~1000	Cauldor, the Giant Slayor killed Byruk and created a free North Watch.

The Birth of a Star (700 years ago)



"Valen' Cia quickly became the cultural heart of the Green Vale. Valen' Cain silks, glass, wines and philosophy were desired by all, even King Cecil of Old Gate. His excess led to debt, and his debt led to stifling taxes on his citizens. Janys Starborn, a young visionary and powerful sorceress overthrew his oppressive regime. Olgate has been ruled by a Witch Queen ever since. She brought radical reforms to the laws and customs of Olgate. Not all of her subjects were pleased with these changes. A prophet named Sanctus, the Second, led a migration to a land of promised bounty he named the Golden Flats." -Magistrate Kiro

Years Ago	Event
~800	Janys Starborn disposes King Cecil.
~750	Sanctus the Second opens Pilgrim's Pass in the mountains and leads his people through.

An Empire's Seeds (550 years ago)

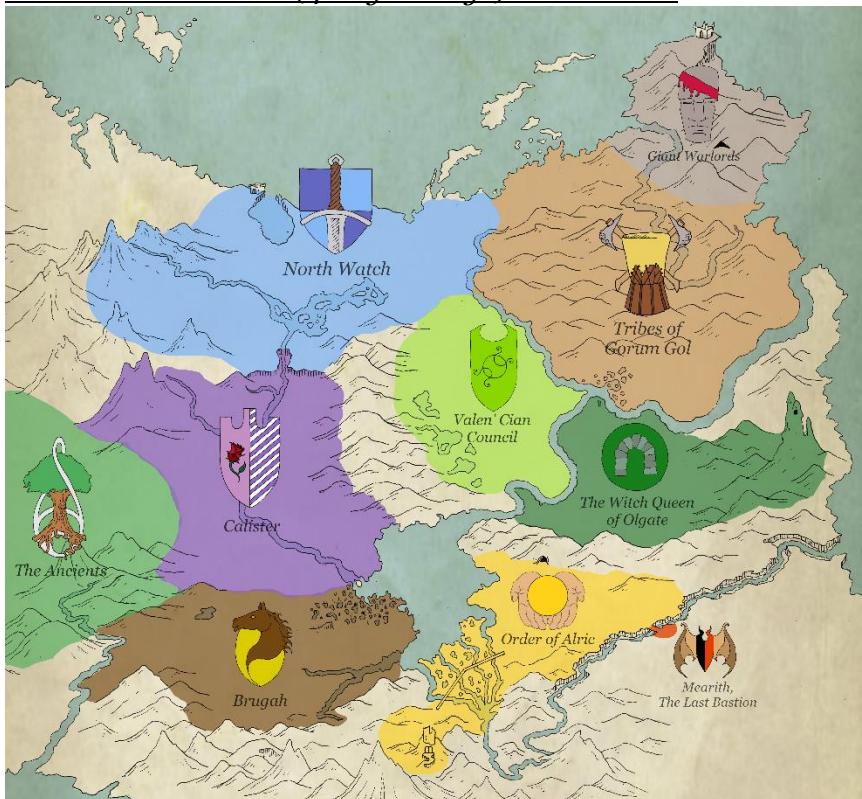


"Now that a way out of the Green Vale was open, many went forth, not for religious differences but to seek the prosperity of uncultivated land. And that they found. Two regions were settled, one to the north, one to the south. And two cities were founded, Calister and Brugah." -Magistrate Kiro

Years Ago	Event
~670	People begin to settle the plains of Brugah.
623	Calister is founded by two brothers from Olgate.
~600	The tribes of Hillrund start to overthrow their giant tyrants.
555	The Zytharian Dynasty collapses.

"The Zytharian collapse was instantaneous, in the timescale of civilizations. Within 3 years Raz' Amon went from controlling the largest empire in the world to a single fortress." -Magistrate Zeb

Valiana's Exodus (400 years ago)



Years Ago	Event
476	Levarian Avar is murdered and his sister Valiana flies across Calister causing a devastating storm. Damien DeCain declares war on the Ancients.
443	Damien DeCain, his son and his armies are incinerated by the Ancient Yorath.
436	Dauren the Lame, king of Calister is crippled in a horse-riding accident at the age of 14.
405	The high chieftains of Hillrund found Gorum Gol.

“The people of Calister were impatient for revenge, and disliked Dauren “the lame” DeCain because he was unable to lead his forces back into the Great Wood. But without Dauren’s caution, prudence and economic reforms, Calister would never have grown into the power that it is today.” -Magistrate Kiro

The Long March (274 years ago)



Years Ago	Event
375	Dara DeCain invades Brugah and the Long March begins.
351	Alister Hammerford dies during the first sack of Brugah.
274	Alinor Hammerford is betrayed by Corbin Harsythe and Brugah finally surrenders. The DeCain Empire is formed. Dara's aged son Dantus is named first emperor.

"It took two centuries for the dust to settle after the Zytharian Collapse. But when it finally did, the War Council of Masak ruled a strict stratocracy. They still hated Mearith, but since Raz' Amon was no longer in power, they begrudgingly did business with the merchants of the city." -Magistrate Zeb

The Wren Wedding (200 years ago)



“A religion doesn’t need to hold lands to be powerful, it needs to hold the hearts of men and women. And so, the Order of Alric exchanged sovereignty over the Golden Flats for its ideals and codes to be disseminated among all the people of the Empire.”

-Magistrate Kiro

Years Ago	Event
258	Martin Wren’s daughter married the DeCain prince bringing the Golden Flats into the Empire.
244	The Empire returns to the Great Wood and constructs the Hold.
235	The Old Forum in Valen’ Cia burns down.
229	The Empire pushes further into the Great Wood than ever before and builds the Reach.
212	The Royal Academy is founded.
185	The Empire tries to invade North Watch

Modern Era (Present)



Years Ago	Event
160	The Fisher Nation starts doing official trade with the Brethren of the North.
103	The Black Iron Company is founded.
51	Marcellus Wren begins the construction of the Castellan's Keep.
45	The Black Iron Company moves its headquarters to Knox Landing.
26	Hakir begins preying on logging ships.
15	Jayne Winters becomes queen of the Empire and Darian DeCain is born.
3	Marcellus Wren purchases Nell Port from Alfred Garmen.